INTERVIEW WITH CAROLE KARSCH

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Feinstein Center for American Jewish History
Temple University
117 South 17th Street-Suite 1010
Philadelphia, PA 19103
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INT: My name is Sally Benson Alsher and I’m here with Carole Karsch.

CAROLE: Carole Weinheim Karsch.

INT: Carole Weinheim Karsch. You’re presently the assistant executive vice president of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, among other hats you wear. Carole, tell me where you were born and when.

CAROLE: Philadelphia. I am a native Philadelphian. I have spent my whole life here. I went to school here. I was born at Jefferson Hospital, October 4, 1938.

INT: Let’s start with your grandparents, your paternal. What can you tell me about them? What do you remember about them?

CAROLE: Well, it’s basically my grandfather. His name was Emil Weinheim. My grandmother died when I was a very small child. I don’t remember her at all, except in pictures. I’m proud of her because she was born in Beauregard, Mississippi, so I consider myself a real Yankee in that sense, because my other three grandparents were all born in Europe or Russia. We often talk about that, and in fact, when I look at pictures of her, my oldest son is named for her, she looks more like a Southern lady than a modern Jew. Although she was Jewish and her family migrated there from Germany, as did many people who settled in the South, because that’s the way the boats landed. Her father supposedly made the first baseball uniform in America. From all reports, she was a lovely lady.

INT: How did she meet your grandfather?

CAROLE: She moved to Philadelphia. Her family moved to Philadelphia where other members of the family lived. In fact, there’s a connection with the Klein family, who are major benefactors of Einstein. Robert Klein’s mother and my grandmother had the same names because they shared a grandfather. It was in the days of second marriages in the families. My Grandmom’s name was Mina Daniels, and then Mina Daniels Weinheim. Klein’s was Mina Daniels Klein, and that’s on a building at Einstein. She met my grandfather in Philadelphia, but she cooked Southern as well, so that my father, who was a reform Jew, belonged to KI, never ate what we know as Jewish food, like lox and knishes or gefilte fish, until he met my mother. He didn’t know any Yiddish, which most people in that generation did. His mother was American-born, and she cooked chicken fricassee. It was his favorite dish.

INT: Your grandfather lived here?

CAROLE: My grandfather lived in Philadelphia. He came to America from Germany when he
was nine years old. I remember visiting him. My father was the youngest of four children and was raised in the Logan section of Philadelphia and went to Germantown High School. He was the baby, and when he moved—married my mother and moved to West Philadelphia, his parents also moved to West Philadelphia, but I think they were sort of fish out of water, so to speak. But I remember going to that apartment on Walnut Street as a child, and in later years, he lived with my father’s sister. My father had two brothers and one sister. They were four children. That’s the home that I visited him in. I remember when he died when I was nine years old, and that was the first funeral that I went to. He looked like a European man with the pince-nez glasses. The thing that I remember the most about him—two things really. Number one, he still wrote in exquisite German script penmanship, and so all of my birthday cards and the things that he wrote had that beautiful penmanship, which I do not have. I was a very poor eater as a child, hard as it is to believe. I could see him sitting in our dining room when we lived in Wynnewood when I was a child and saying to my mother, “Don’t worry about her. Someday you’ll put a lock on the refrigerator.” It was true. And it’s funny. Of all the things one remembers, I remember that. I remember the day he died, because my father had left the hospital—he had been there like round-the-clock, and they said, “Buddy,” he was the baby, “Go home.” My father didn’t have a car. He took the bus. He got on the bus in West Philadelphia, at 48th and Spruce, the old osteopathic hospital, and they ran after him. His father died and he quite missed being there, which was always something that bothered him that he talked about.

INT: Tell me about your maternal.

CAROLE: My maternal grandparents—I am named for my maternal grandfather whose name was Charles. My Hebrew name is Getzel, which is a very unusual name and when I got married, Rabbi Goldstein in Har Zion refused to allow me to called by that name, so he put my middle name, which was Joan, Getzel Yonah. But when I go to the cemetery now to visit my parents’ graves, and I see my grandfather’s name was Getzel, and they just took the name and made it mine. To me, it was more Yiddish than Hebrew but I don’t know. I don’t remember him except in pictures. He died when he was fifty-five years old. He was a tailor in West Philadelphia, and he was also a diabetic. He would sneak into the Horn and Hardart’s at 60th and Market to eat baked beans, and he did it one January day without a coat and got pneumonia and died. At his funeral, I am told however, all the students from the University of Pennsylvania were there. It was packed with young people because he didn’t charge them. He let them have credit. He was like a fixture for them. And he used to make my mother’s clothes for years. She was a beautiful lady and she loved, when she was young, not when she got older, loved clothes. He used to copy things for her. I was named for him.

My grandma, though, Lena Kaplan, who was always Grandma Kaplan to everybody, was a tiny lady, maybe 4’10”. Beautiful. Had four daughters, including a pair of twins. This tiny, little lady. My mother was the oldest. She lived in West Philadelphia with one of my mother’s sisters. I spent a great deal of time in her house and with her. She was a wonderful cook, and she used to make...we used to call it kamish bread, although it was not the dry, hard stuff. It was more like a strudel. None of the daughters could make it. I remember going to her house in West
Philadelphia when she still was able to bake, and say, “Alright, Grandma, I’m going to make it with you,” because she didn’t have measurements. She threw in. And I sat there with her and measured everything out as she threw it in. I’m the only person in the family who has ever made it. However, it’s a lot of work. Maybe when I retire I’ll make it again. I used to make it for special occasions, really just because she always did and after she died, I thought it was important. She ended her life, unfortunately, in a nursing home. My mother stopped working so that she could visit her every day. I used to go very frequently. My Grandmom stopped talking. The only time she really ever spoke was when I took my oldest son to see her, who was a little boy and knew her very well. When he was a little boy, the teachers tell me in first grade, “He’s a nice little boy but he tells stories.” I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Well, he said he has eight grandparents.” This was before divorce was rampant. She said, “No one has eight grandparents.” I said, “He has eight grandparents. He has four grandparents and four great-grandparents.” My Grandma Kaplan was the one from my side, so he knew her and remembers her. My second son met her but probably doesn’t remember her as well. When I once brought him into the nursing home, she talked to him in Yiddish, and it was the only time she talked. It was unbelievable. She was a special, little lady.

INT: How old was she when she died?

CAROLE: She was in her early eighties when she died, and it was almost as though she knew she was dying. She willed herself to die. One of the twins, the one that she lived with, was undergoing brain surgery, and it was at the same time as my Grandma became very sick. It was almost as though she said, “You girls have to concentrate on your sister now and not on me,” and she died. They were busy running back and forth. It was like the day that my aunt was having this horrible surgery. I had the Shiva in my house because my mother and my aunts were all really busy with her. But she was that kind of little lady. She kept house for my aunt so my aunt could have a grocery store. She buttered my cousin’s toast until he got married. She was that kind of a little, tiny lady.

INT: Where was she from originally?

CAROLE: She was from Vienna, and her brother was a musician. Her name was Rice, Lena Rice, and she came here as a young girl with her family. Had a very rich sister and lived in Springfield, Mass. where my mother was born for a while, but then they moved to Philadelphia where my grandfather’s family was. She was just this little dynamo lady.

INT: She spoke a lot of languages?

CAROLE: No. Really Yiddish and English. If she knew any other language, I was never aware of that. She probably did from childhood. But she and my mother used to speak Yiddish when they didn’t want me to understand something. But I really knew her, and I was the only girl. She had four daughters. They each had two sons and I was the only granddaughter growing up, so she did adore me. I see her in front of me as we speak today. She really was a special, little lady.
INT: How religious were they?

CAROLE: Not at all. My Weinheim family, my father’s family, were reform and always belonged to KI. My father’s sister intermarried my father’s best friend, who was his golfing caddy friend when they were little, and eloped, because even in those days, it would have really and did break her parents’ hearts. However, this was the daughter and son-in-law that my grandfather lived with and when my grandfather was sick, this was the son-in-law who carried him up and down the steps every day. But they also had a Christmas tree, my aunt and uncle, so that I used to have both worlds basically. My mother’s family was not religious in any way. It was clearly good people. I don’t think my grandparents belonged to a synagogue when they lived in Philadelphia. Maybe they did—to West Philadelphia Jewish Community Center. But in Springfield, Mass., where they first lived, they did. My aunts and my parents all belonged to synagogues but nobody was religious or observant. I married into that.

INT: Tell me about your father. What are your earliest memories?

CAROLE: You’re going to make me cry.

INT: I’m sorry.

CAROLE: I’m an only child. Clearly the light of my father’s life until my three sons were born. My father was an extraordinary man, as a human being. He never finished high school. Went to Germantown High but he didn’t finish. He went to work to help his father. He was a caddy as a kid. He was educated at KI. He was confirmed. They didn’t have bar mitzvahs. He didn’t know any Hebrew, which became a little bit of an issue in my growing up and how I got to Har Zion. But he was the kindest, sweetest man that anybody could know, and in fact, I put on his gravestone “a good man,” because he basically was. There was never anybody who ever said anything bad about my father, and he never said anything bad about anybody either.

INT: What was his occupation?

CAROLE: He worked in RCA, in a factory. He was an expeditor. When I was a child, a little girl, and money was very tight, he was in business with his best friend, when they were first married, in a business on Box Street. The business went bankrupt. It’s interesting. This best friend, who was a childhood friend and remained his best friend all of his life, a short time after seemed to go back into business somehow. My father never held it against him, and he made a lot of money. My father held down a number of jobs. He worked in the Acme stores—the American stores they were in those days, because his brother-in-law was involved in A & P, so he sort of like helped him get a job. He used to work in his American Store job all day and then go to work in Winston Books at night, to pack books, carried his dinner, a sandwich, in a brown bag, so that he could have money to buy me toys and books. Every week, he used to come home with something for me. He was very unusual. Very, very devoted to me and to my mother. You talk about Daddy’s little girl, Daddy’s darling—I always felt badly that my husband did not have a
daughter for that reason, because of the relationship that I had with my father. Everybody loved him, and he was the kind of person who always did favors for everybody. He just never knew how to say no. He was the person when he lived in an apartment house in later years, if anybody needed a ride to the doctor, to the market, to the store, needed something picked up, it was always my father who did it. He had started something in Har Zion, something he found a great deal of pleasure about in later years, with helping with the Har Zion’s Men’s Clubs, cooking breakfasts in the mornings, on Sunday morning, which led to his helping start a group in Har Zion, which has recently been reactivated, of senior citizens, and it’s called the Active Adults. The way he died when he was really very weak...my father died from complications of lung cancer. He had lung cancer. He had very successful surgery. They say five years you’re cured. Five-and-a-half years later, unfortunately it came back in his brain and then he lived another two-and-a-half years or so. The week he died, he was sitting on the telephone, doing nothing but calling people to come out to a program. After he died the whole thing died, and has recently been reactivated at Har Zion. He was just a very caring, wonderful man. I look like him. I’m built like him. My middle son looks like and “is” my father.

The greatest joy really that I think I gave him—he was very proud of me. I was a good student and all those things that made him proud. He loved my husband. I was married when I was nineteen, so my husband quickly became a part of our life. My husband was very respectful and good to him. But it was my three boys that brought him his greatest joy. In fact, everything that they did, all their firsts in their life, were with their grandfather and not with their mother or father. He was the person who took them to their first ball game, their first playground, their first amusement park. Taught them to play golf, taught them to drive before they should have, when they weren’t legally ready. All that kind of stuff. And he was their Pop-Pop. There was nobody like him. My father smoked. It was the only bad thing about my father. Part of it, I think, was a culture that he was raised in, in the neighborhood he lived in, the jobs that he had—very high-pressure and blue collar kind of stuff with a lot of drinking and smoking. My father wasn’t a drinker. He smoked. He had a bleeding ulcer when I was a kid and he almost died. My middle son, who is a physician...they used to sleep over at my parents’ a lot, and my son used to, when he was a little boy, he used to steal my father’s cigarettes, put them in his suitcase and take them home and throw them out. They really lost a piece of them when he died. Interesting—each of my sons named his first child for my mother or father, which I think is the true tribute. We never asked. We never discussed it. Usually the wife gets to make those choices. And fortunately, my two daughters-in-law—two of my three sons are married—both knew my parents. Actually, my younger daughter-in-law, I don’t think knew my father. My older daughter-in-law knew them both and they really adored her. They were so happy. He was just an extraordinary man. Both of my parents really were very special and I feel I’ve inherited a lot of the good qualities, I think because they were really such basic, good human beings.

INT: How religious was your father?

CAROLE: Not at all. Not in any way. As a matter of fact, when we moved to Wynnefield when I started first grade, I was five years old. We didn’t have a car. We didn’t have a car until I was
sixteen. My father wanted to take me by public transportation every Sunday to Sunday school at KI, which would have meant two buses and the subway. My mother put her foot down and said, “She will go to Sunday school with the same children she goes to public school with,” which is another whole story how I got to Har Zion, because they couldn’t afford to join, but I did. And I fought to keep Har Zion an open school as long as I could in my active days, because it was such an important piece of my life. Basically, that’s my father.

INT: Tell me about your mother.

CAROLE: On my mother’s gravestone I put “a kind woman.” Once again, my mother was much more to me than a mother. She really was like my girlfriend. I was an only child and I was very close to my parents. Unusually close. And I also grew up in a time when...they didn’t have a car, but on weekends, when their friends got together, we would all get together with their children, so I really was always with them. They never took a vacation without me. They never took vacations. We used to go to Wildwood in the summer. My mother was secretary. She started working when I was about nine, which was when I started working, when my youngest child was nine. Her only fault, I think, was bragging about me too much, but everybody knew what to expect.

Her nephews, the six nephews—all adored her. She was everybody’s favorite. She was a beautiful, beautiful woman and as a young woman, certainly the most beautiful of the four sisters, and loved clothes and all those kinds of things. When she got married in her early thirties and had me in mid-thirties, and I was an only child—she had a great deal of difficulty when I was born...once I was born, those things were never important to her. She didn’t have jewelry. She always looked lovely but she always looked at a price tag before she bought something. When she became ill, I couldn’t go shopping for clothes. I never bought a dress without my mother with me. I could still see her on the bench in Loehman’s, passing judgement. And even when she was sick, and unfortunately, the last year of her life also spent in a nursing home because she needed a lot of care, I would walk in and she’d say, “Pull that jacket down. I don’t like the way it’s fitting on your rear.” And she would try to keep me down and say to me, “You can’t be in two places with one tuchus, no matter how big it is.” But it didn’t work. And when I was president of Har Zion and I had a very responsible position at Penn at that time, I remember she said, “I don’t know how you keep two full-time jobs. At least you’re getting two salaries.” And I said, “Mother, for the Har Zion job, I’m sorry. It’s not on salary.” Fortunately, she was there when I was installed as the president. She was not there by the time I went out of office. Unfortunately, she wasn’t well enough. The other thing that she was not there for—my father was, and I felt very badly about—I was the first woman to carry a Torah in Har Zion on Kol Nidrei, and Har Zion has a very major Torah procession. My father was there but my mother was in the hospital at age seventy-nine having a hip replacement, and she was not able to come. I felt very badly.

She was a tiny woman also, 5’2”. I’m very tall. As I say, I take after my father. She took care of my father, who died when she was eighty—this very tall, six-foot man, who used to fall
constantly. She used to pick him up from the floor. I don’t know where she had the energy to take care of him, but she didn’t want help really till the very end. She had a lot of inner strength. She worked all of her married life. My father had a blue collar job and she wanted me to go to a good school, not knowing that I would win a scholarship. They really saved for that. They were certainly not people of means. They lived frugally. They never wanted to come to their children for anything. In fact, when we went to buy our house, my in-laws were very comfortable people. They gave us a nominal gift. My parents really gave us the money to buy our house. She was a wonderful, wonderful lady, who I think about every day. Both of my parents. I just had to write a sympathy note to a friend and I said, “You know, not a day goes by when I don’t have the thought of one or the other.” They were very major influences. My mother had very high standards for me. She never went to college. She could have gone to Normal School. She loved pretty clothes, and she thought it was more important to work, so she became a bookkeeper at J.E. Kunkel. They didn’t know she was Jewish. She had beautiful blue eyes. She looked very Irish. She was used to working, and she had very high standards for me, and pushed me, I guess, in a sense. A’s were expected. They were not considered special. And I did a lot of stuff as a kid, always with their encouragement. I worked as a young kid. My mother thought it was important. They were all good values. I would come home every day at lunchtime. We used to come home at lunch in those days, from elementary school. Practiced the piano, eat lunch, go back to school. It was expected. There was never any thought given to how I wouldn’t do well.

INT: What about your Jewish connection then?

CAROLE: When I was a little girl, one of my aunts was wealthy and lived in the same neighborhood. We moved to Wynnefield so that I could go to good schools and grow up...we had lived in an apartment in West Philadelphia when I was a little girl and they were first married. It was very important. My friends were going to Har Zion. It was a focal point really for me and the community in those days. My aunt and uncle belonged to Har Zion, and they made arrangements for me to be able to go to Sunday School. When it came time for me to go to Hebrew School, my parents still could not afford to join, although they did a couple of years thereafter. I went to Hebrew School there because it was an open school. They had an open policy for years and years and years. My mother was active in Hadassah in those days. She helped out with Sisterhood things. They never were synagogue goers really on any regular basis. It was not an observant home in any way. My mother didn’t bring seafood or things like that into the house, or pork, except they had bacon. That was done. Believe it or not, I had a stocking when I was a little girl, which my kids love hearing about. One of my neighbors came in with a present one night, and snooping, looking down the steps, and I saw that there really wasn’t a Santa Claus and that was the end of the stocking. I used to celebrate Christmas at my grandfather’s. But Jewish holidays were always celebrated with the family, with the aunts and cousins and my grandmother, with dinners, family dinners. It was very much a gastronomical religion.

INT: With traditional dinners?

CAROLE: Traditional everything. My grandmother was a wonderful cook. The family was
always together. My uncle used to say...when it was time to leave, he would never get up or put
his coat on until they all kissed good-bye. My mother was very warm and loving and affectionate,
and truly, I was an adored only child. There was no question. I think that a lot of my confidence,
self-confidence and self-esteem feelings that were helpful to me in different times of my life were
really because I did have a very secure childhood.

INT: What was your neighborhood like?

CAROLE: I lived in Wynnefield. We were in a row house. Most of my friends—not all, but most
of my friends came from much more affluent families, and I used to go in town when they were
young teenagers and they would buy cashmere sweaters with their mother’s Blum’s and Bonwits
charges, and I used to look. I wore hand-me-downs from my cousin in Massachusetts and we
shopped for bargains. That was what we had to do. I never felt deprived and I never felt that there
was something wrong with that. When I was a little girl, I used to wear my boy cousin’s bathing
suits, and my mother used to buy me a halter to wear on the top. There was so much love.
Wynnefield was an extraordinary community to grow up in as a Jewish child, and especially if
you had a connection with Har Zion, because you walked everywhere. You walked to synagogue.
They had youth groups. I was involved in Young Judea. Later, as I grew up, I was a high school
youth advisor. We used to all hang out on the High Holidays there. It was a very big meeting
place. It was a very Jewish neighborhood. I had very few friends who were not Jewish.

When I was in junior high school, and I went to Beeber, which was an elementary in
World War II, and I went there all the way through from first to ninth grade, I was selected to go
on an American Friends Service Committee trip to Washington. My parents let me go. It was
very heavily chaperoned. It was very interesting. It was my first exposure to Washington, to the
government, and there were a lot of non-Jews there from a lot of the private schools in
Philadelphia, and actually, it was my first and probably only encounter with a non-Jewish boy
who went to Germantown Academy and invited me to the dances, and my mother let me go,
which was probably very smart of her. I sort of got it out of my system, I guess, early. But it was
clear after a couple of dates and things that it wasn’t a world that I was comfortable in. It was a
very secure Jewish environment. We used to come downtown to what is now the Gershman JCC-
it was the YHMA-to take dancing lessons with Penny Davis by public transportation. We used to
go to the free library at 21st and the Parkway by public transportation at night to write all of our
papers. It was a very different world. I played the piano and I was in the orchestra and I used to
play solos. My parents could only afford like a secondhand fifty-dollar white upright when I was
studying. When I was, I think, in eleventh grade they bought me my good piano, a Baldwin
Acrosonic, which I still have and is about to go to one of my son’s who wrote his name on it
when he was little. It didn’t matter. I didn’t care if I didn’t have a baby grand like my friends did.
I took piano lessons and I was expected to practice. They tried to give me...I took dancing lessons
as a little girl. They tried to give me everything they could, and now that I look back and know
how little money they had, it’s amazing to me that they were able to do for me what they did.

INT: Describe your room. Tell me about your house.
CAROLE: We lived in a little row house. It was three bedrooms. My parents had the front bedroom with the only air-conditioner in the house. We had one bathroom. The middle room was our little den where we had my piano, and my rich cousin, when he had to move to Germantown and missed Wynnewfield, he used to come sleep over. Then I had the back room, which faced the driveway. (End of tape 1, side 1) ...a bureau and a bookcase, always had a bookcase, because I loved to read. And I used to do my homework in bed, even in college. Maybe because we didn’t have a quiet little place in the house. I don’t know. I never did work at a desk, although there was a desk in the den. I could never work at a desk.

INT: Tell me about your friends.

CAROLE: Friends, maybe one of who is still a lifelong friend from childhood days. I used to pal around with a lot with girls. I had a particular friend with whom I was very close who moved to Elkins Park. We really grew far apart. She was “fast,” which is what we used to call people in those days. I wasn’t. I was really a very straight, naive child. I did wear her wedding gown and she was an attendant at my wedding. Her parents loved me because they thought I was a good influence on her. They were wealthy and they used to take me away with them to Atlantic City in the summertime. We used to pal around. We had clubs when we were kids, which were fun. We had the typical, little parties, little socials with boys and girls in the house, in somebody’s basement, with parents always home. It was a wonderful community to grow up in. I went to services. I went to junior congregation. I was in the chorus, whatever it used to be called, the junior choir or something, in Har Zion. They used to have a wonderful little library. It was a marvelous librarian. Martha and Eric Mandel escaped Germany during the Holocaust and he was the music teacher at Har Zion and later at Gratz College. Gave his very extensive, fine musicology library to Gratz. The library at Har Zion was a general, not just a Jewish library; it was in a little house on the grounds of the synagogue, which later burned down. Martha Mandel was a major influence on my learning to read and love to read, and would guide me into certain books and try to discourage me from reading certain books but let me take them out. I used to read a lot as a child. I played the piano and did the normal kid kind of stuff.

INT: Do you have any-

CAROLE: Went to the Wynne Movies. That was the big event in Wynnewfield on Saturdays, to go to the movies.

INT: Can you think of a most memorable experience? You didn’t get bat mitzvahed?

CAROLE: No. I was not a bat mitzvah. I went to Hebrew High School in Har Zion and was confirmed. The bat mitzvah was very new and the first two girls that were a bat mitzvah at Har Zion was on Friday nights and were wealthy girls. It was a big concession for my father to let me be at Har Zion to begin with, and it was not something that we considered...nor when the rabbi wanted me to go to Camp Ramah. My parents didn’t let me do that.
INT: Why?

CAROLE: I would have hated overnight camp. I hated being away from my parents. I went for the first time when I was fifteen with all my best girlfriends. I ate myself into oblivion, and my mother cried when she came up on visiting day on saw me. I must have gained twenty-five, thirty pounds in six weeks, which I never lost. I remember my cousins’ bar mitzvahs very clearly. It was all good kind of stuff. Nothing really jumps out at me as being the most memorable childhood experience. One of the only things that I remember and remember very clearly is when I was probably about eleven years old. We lived in a row house and in the driveway...kids used to play in the driveway. I remember one Friday night being at one of my friend’s houses-I think it was on the same block but further down. There were a bunch of kids and we were playing, and all of a sudden I looked up in the sky and I started to cry, and it occurred to me, “What would happen to me if my parents died?” I remember going home-I left all my friends and ran up the drive to make sure my parents were still there. It was a very strange feeling. I could see what I was almost wearing and see where I was sitting on her stoop. I was very attached to them.

INT: What were some of your goals or aspirations growing up, like professionally or personally?

CAROLE: As I said, my parents set very high standards of achievement for me and that became very important to me to do well. I was really a goody-two-shoes kind of kid, so I was always teacher’s pet. It was okay. It didn’t bother me. I knew how to do it even then. That’s why I’m good at what I do at my job. But seriously, I always enjoyed being with people. I wasn’t the most popular girl in the class. I wasn’t the most popular girl in the class. I ran for a major school office and I lost. But I didn’t pal-around really with packs of girls, although I always belonged to the clubs and all the kind of stuff that my girlfriends belonged to. And I used to go to sleep overs and I had a few good friends. But I wasn’t a groupie ever, which I’m still not. It’s just not something that appeals to me. I would rather have a few good friends. I have a lot of friends. It’s just, I guess, the way I always was. I always had a leaning to be a teacher, and my mother had wanted to be a teacher and didn’t go to Normal School, and that may have been a reason. I don’t know. But I always loved school, loved reading, loved studying, loved getting good marks.

I always thought about being a teacher. At one point in my life, later in life, I wanted to be a lawyer but I didn’t. The biggest influence on what kind of teacher I became, which was foreign language-I majored in Spanish-was my high school Spanish teacher, whose name is Packy Contini, Pasquale A. Contini, who didn’t have any children. Teaching was really his whole thing. He was married, no children. My father, to the point, was very jealous of him. It was very interesting. I really was very attached to this man, and I studied Spanish with a vengeance. I was a Latin student and I took Latin for four years, and won both the Latin and Spanish and Phi Beta Kappa awards when I graduated from high school. But I majored in Spanish because of Packy Contini, and in fact, did my student-teaching with him, which was a great experience. So I think teaching was always something that I wanted to do. I taught Sunday school. I worked in Har Zion Day Camp. I didn’t like, as I say, overnight camp, although I went for a couple of years, and once where Packy Contini was the head counselor actually, and my husband, then my date, was in
another camp. That summer I liked overnight camp, but basically I didn’t like camp. So I think the teaching was sort of always something that I wanted to do. I was a good student. I should have won the full scholarship. There were two scholarships, two full scholarships to Penn, in Overbrook High School, and then a lot of partial-these were Board of Education scholarships. The number one place in the class was the boy who I dated at one time, who was clearly genius level. He was the smartest person in the class. Nobody was close to him. I was the second in terms of grades and everything else. One of the girls in the class who was also a bright girl’s father died while we were in our senior year, and she got that scholarship. I knew it was mine and I was very resentful. We graduated in January. In those days, there was also June. I got the partial Board of Ed, and I was encouraged by the counselor in Overbrook to compete for the Mayor’s Scholarship, which in those days was really...the first part was SAT scores. So I did win a Mayor’s Scholarship, which was full tuition to Penn. I never applied anywhere but Penn, which was probably very foolish. The school wanted me to apply to Bryn Mawr, and my father wanted me to go to Bryn Mawr. He always had this dream that I would go to Bryn Mawr. I wanted to go to a school where there were boys, and in fact, I met my husband the second week that I was at Penn as a freshman.

Teaching is probably something that I always wanted to do, and I loved doing it. It’s funny-many years later, in one of my positions at Penn, we were starting a new national volunteer network and I was responsible to really get it started and all that. I made a presentation to the trustee development committee and my boss, who was a professor of management in the Wharton School but also had taken a leave to be the vice-president for Development and Alumni Relations, came up to me and said, “You were so wonderful. Have you ever considered a career in teaching?” And I laughed. I said, “Ross, I’m here because I’ve been there, done that and didn’t want to go back to a career in teaching.” But it was funny. And I think that some of the things that I’ve always enjoyed doing is training, in whatever job I was in. I do like being in a position, I think, of making contacts with people and having them understand what I’m talking about and making those connections. It’s very rewarding and I understand why a teaching career is rewarding.

INT: Were there any events...what events inspired you early on to eventually become an active participant in the Jewish community? Can you think of anything?

CAROLE: As a young person, I always felt an obligation, I guess, to do something to give back. And I worked, so I was a youth advisor at Har Zion. I enjoyed that. I used to drive from my parents’ home to Beth Sholom in Elkins Park, where I taught Hebrew school, where I really wasn’t qualified to do it but in those days the standards weren’t what they are today. I think they affected my wanting to do things in the Jewish community. When I was first married, and I was married at nineteen when I was still in college-I was in my last year at Penn, we didn’t have a car. We lived on Penn’s campus. I taught Sunday school at Har Zion. I used to leave my husband sleeping, and in those days, change buses at 40th and Lancaster-can you imagine, and wasn’t afraid. I used to teach Sunday school at Har Zion and I also joined something that they had for young women called the junior league. It wasn’t like the “junior league,” the gentile one, but it
was like a junior sisterhood. And my husband’s sister, with whom I became very close—we are like sisters—was married and belonged and she said, “Come to the meetings you can come to, days that work out.” And I started. I very soon became active. I always loved public speaking. I began doing good odd jobs and chairman and this and that. That was my first heavy-duty experience, I guess, as a volunteer. I loved it. We joined the synagogue, thanks to my in-laws’ help financially. We probably couldn’t have afforded it in those days. It was very important to my husband who came from a very observant committed family—also Har Zion, but committed.

In terms of our keeping a kosher home when we were first married, it was something he expected. I was never raised in that tradition. I went to see the rabbi, Rabbi Goldstein, who loved me growing up. I was a kid who was not from a rich, prominent family. People used to say that’s all he ever paid attention to. He was a major influence on me, and wanted me to continue studying and always took a personal interest in me. He was wonderful to me. I learned to keep kosher basically by reading books and watching my mother-in-law. We eventually became more observant than they were with our kashrut outside the house, which they didn’t observe completely, which we did after a couple of years of marriage. I just liked it. I was comfortable. I made my very dear, dear friends, many of them are people that I first met in that junior league of Har Zion or in Har Zion at some activity or other. So in a sense, I never left home.

INT: How did your parents feel about you becoming so involved in the Jewish community?

CAROLE: Well, they were always very proud of anything that I did. I think the Jewish lifestyle... they adored my husband and they just knew that it was an expectation of his that I would be doing all these things. And he was very active as a young person in college and in graduate school, and also as a young man. He was part of the Young Men’s Council in the Federation when they used to do all that years ago, and always was really raised in a family where parents volunteered, and particularly his mother—she was very involved in the community. He felt that was something that was expected. It’s interesting. Usually in a family it’s the daughter who does that. In his family, it is he and his brother, not the daughter, who are observant and who are active as the volunteer. She does other very interesting things because they’re art collectors, and so that’s opened a whole other dimension in their lives, but in terms of carrying on tradition and religion, it was the two sons in that family who did it, not the daughter.

INT: Tell me about going to Penn. What was that like?

CAROLE: I commuted. Our children all went to Penn. They all lived there. Sam and I both commuted. It’s a very different experience than living there. My mother insisted that I join a sorority, because she felt “you work so hard in school to achieve what you do, you need to have some fun.” And she was also the kind of person that couldn’t stand having a bill, so the second year, I guess it was, my first full year in the sorority, the bill came for dues, and she insisted on paying the whole year, and then I became engaged and I probably never went in the sorority again. But I was often at Penn too. Even as a commuter student, I found I was involved in the Red and Blue, which was the student handbook. I got involved in the newspaper and the Spanish
club. There were different things that...I was always used to doing more than just going to school, so I always enjoyed that. I loved Penn. I loved Penn. It was academically challenging to me. I had a full scholarship, because I did win the Mayor’s Scholarship. I really needed to be serious. I wasn’t there to play. I was there-especially privileged to be there. We lived on campus the year we were married, which was my last year in college. I accelerated so I could finish with my husband in his last year of Law School, so that was really our only campus experience and we both did our own things. We used to meet people and they used to say, “Do you ever meet anywhere but in bed? You’re never seen having lunch together anymore. You don’t walk together on the campus.” We really kept our separate lives and I kept involved in my activities and things, honors societies and things that required meetings. I was on the dean’s advisory board in the Graduate School of Education as an undergraduate. I always did more and I loved it.

INT: How did that experience help or hinder your choices, do you think, in the future?

CAROLE: Well, I think that Penn was a credential that was always with me in a very positive way, and in fact, when I went back to work full-time and decided after a year of substitute teaching I didn’t want to go back to teaching...actually, I went back to work part-time. Until I came to Federation, my only professional career was at Penn. I think having gone to Penn, especially to a school of education where my first job was, gave me a leg up. In the days when I graduated from the School of Education, they had a policy where you were allowed to come back as a student. You could take a course a semester without being in a degree program, and so when I started working and I was making almost nothing, I went back to graduate school, a course at a time, but I didn’t have to be in a degree program until I was already halfway through. I thought I might as well do it.

INT: So you took it for audit.

CAROLE: No, I took them for credit and I wrote papers and did everything else. You could have, I guess, audited, but they were paying my tuition so I took them for credit. That was like a bonus of my job. When I was halfway through, I decided to take the GRE’s, which was an experience in itself, with my nine-year-old son teaching me math. I was a language person, not a math person. I really had to lay back now in terms of getting my first job and getting my graduate degree. The Penn connection with people has been so helpful to me in everything I’ve done in here as well. Having gone to the school, as I moved up the ladder in my jobs as Penn, it didn’t get me the gifts, but it got me in the door or at least it was an icebreaker for the conversation because they knew it was more than just a job, and I think to do well in development it has to be more than just a job. You have to believe in what you’re there to be selling. In a sense, you are a salesperson for the institution. In the university, where you’re traveling all around the world to meet people, you are the link and the presence of that institution in that person’s life. I made a lot of wonderful friends during my work at Penn in that way, in traveling. It’s very nice. I still have a file of letters from people whose names you would recognize in the newspaper when I left, including one of the most precious calls I got on my last day was from Walter Annenberg. My daughter-in-law was in the office helping me clean out some files, and when the secretary said it
was Ambassador Annenberg, they were sure it was somebody pulling my leg, but it was this
deep, very recognizable voice. It was very nice to really...it gave me, in my more senior positions,
an entre to people that I never would have had an experience with in my life, so it really enriched
my life in many ways, besides getting a wonderful education. I finished my Masters. I was
working part-time. I still have very fond memories of Penn. Of course, I courted my husband
there so that was a very big piece too. My three sons went to Penn as undergraduates. Two of
them took their graduate degrees there. My two daughters-in-law went to Penn. A lot of my
relatives. It’s a very special connection and an important piece in my life. No question about it. It
was very gratifying professionally.

INT: Who were some of your role models?

CAROLE: Role models? I don’t know that I had real role models.

INT: Mentors.

CAROLE: Mentors? That’s where, I think, men come very much into the picture. My first job at
Penn I really got with the help of a dear, dear friend who is still a dear, dear friend, that I met at
junior league at Har Zion, Ryda Rose. She’s a woman that you should probably interview. My
husband knew her growing up, although she was always...she’s one of these dynamic, incredible,
brilliant, marvelous women and dear friend. And she knew I was anxious to go back to work and
this opening came up and she helped me get there. I always looked up to her. I always looked to
her like an older sister. We’re ten years apart. I have another very, very dear friend, Barbara First,
who is sister-like to me. It’s important, I think, to have people not only as a mentor
professionally, but that you could share confidences with. My husband’s sister is that way very
much for me, an alter ago, and we have an extraordinary relationship. There is a third sister-in-
law whose name also happens to be Carol Karsch. We have the same maiden initials. She is the
Federation director in Tucson, Arizona. We don’t have that same relationship with her, although
we’re nice sisters-in-law. I think you’re blessed in life when you come across people like that.
The other people who were mentors...another dear friend who became a professional mentor for
me at Penn and is still a good friend and someone I may associate with in my next career, is
named Jane Williams—not Jewish, a whole different piece of my life—but who really encouraged
me in my Penn experience to look beyond where I was very satisfied, and my mother used to say
to me, “You know, you can’t be content with a good thing. You always want more. You always
have to keep proving yourself or trying to achieve more and more.” And Jane helped me do a lot
of that, and has been over the years a good mentor professionally in terms of helping me make
career decisions and things.

My other mentors were clearly men. I think that for...I think it’s still true, that for women
to achieve in man’s world, in men’s level of volunteer and professional positions, you need male
mentors. You really need men who are behind you, who believe in you, who recognize something
in you that they want to promote. I honestly don’t think it can be done without it. I told you my
experience of carrying the Torah for the first time at Har Zion and what a deep...it was really a
spiritual experience for me. However, no one knew about it but the rabbi and the president of the synagogue. I think my husband was chairman of the religious committee at Har Zion, and I’m not sure, but he probably knew about it. I walked into the robing room behind the bimah, because that’s where people line up to get the Torahs, and it’s an extraordinary procession at Har Zion. They have a huge number of Torahs. They’re brought out from everywhere. For High Holidays, the synagogue walls break down and it’s 2400 people in one auditorium. The connection with the women when I carried the Torah was...I felt like I was doing it for them. It was unbelievable to see the expressions in people’s eyes. It really was a spiritual feeling. When I walked into that room with a little hat on, there was dead silence. The only people who walked in that room were the people who were going to carry Torahs. I looked around. I looked at the way they were looking at me and I was so frightened. I said to them, “Now I know what it feels like to walk in the men’s locker room,” and they all broke up and I was okay. It was the first time in my life that I really felt that way. I had been an officer—you have a list of things. There are tons of other things that aren’t in there that I have done over the years. I had always been recognized in Har Zion for leadership positions of one thing or another. I had had some experience in the total Jewish community, which years ago were never as fulfilling as Har Zion was for me. It’s changed. In the old days, a lot of the things in Federation that they put women in were like playgrounds for rich men’s wives. You didn’t really do anything. A staff person did it all for you. It wasn’t what I was used to doing or what I was comfortable doing. I really didn’t like it. These men knew that if any woman at Har Zion had a right to be there, it was me. So they knew that internally, but still, the shock of dealing with it.

I ran into it, the woman issue, I guess, from my three sons when they were becoming a bar mitzvah. We’re very close to the rabbi, Wolpe, and when they first came to Har Zion, my husband, I guess, at that time was president of the Men’s Club, and I was chairman of the closing luncheon when they first came, before he was installed. They had four boys, we had three boys. We were similar in age. We bonded. I had them to my house where the boys would play ball—those kind of things. The rabbi was very supportive of my career and pushing me in Har Zion. There was no question. If he hadn’t been, I would never have gotten to the level that I did when I did, in terms of total synagogue and not just Sisterhood or things like that. When my first son was going to become a bar mitzvah, I was the president of the Sisterhood. The rabbi had been away in Israel on a trip but came back for his bar mitzvah a couple of days before, and we had talked. I said, “I would really like to participate in some way in the bar mitzvah.” I knew I couldn’t do it religiously because there were not religious rights for women at that time. My husband was chairman of the religious committee that made it happen. Because he had him as chairman, the rabbi and the president had the strength to do it. I wanted to read an English prayer or do something. He said to me, and this is my friend, the rabbi, my supporter, “Do you want this to be remembered as the day that Michael Karsch was so wonderful and read so beautifully,” because my son did read the Torah, the whole thing, “or do you want it to be having people talk about that’s the day Carole Karsch went on to the bimah?” Alright, well there he was. Was that like apple pie and motherhood? I said, “Well, I won’t do anything.”

The second son was ready to become bar mitzvah, and by then already we were beginning
to really seriously debate the women’s rights issues and all that. And I was a woman officer. I said, “I understood why I couldn’t do it for Michael. I think it’s time. There’s a different environment. We’re heading towards women’s rights. I would like to read an English responsive reading or something.” And he thought about it and he came back to me and he said, “I’m going to let you do it.” So the religious chairman at that time was not my husband. It was one of our very dearest friends who is very, very anti-women and eventually left Har Zion when women’s rights came in. He started such a fight with the rabbi, name-calling. It was horrible. So the rabbi called my husband who was very close and said, “Look, if Carole really wants to, I promised her she could do it. But for Sholom Bayit,” which is peace in the house, “it would be very helpful for me if she backed down.” So I backed down. Mad as hell, but I did.

By the time the third one became a bar mitzvah, we were in Penn Valley at that time. There were women’s rights—not an aliyah yet, but I could open the ark at my son’s bar mitzvah, which I did, so at least I finally did it. But that was a lesson to me in terms of what they could keep women back from doing and what they couldn’t. When I was an officer at Har Zion, Billy Perilstein was the president and he was very supportive of women’s rights. Actually, his wife Cookie, who was coming to say Kaddish for her father, and he had only daughters, and she was doing it every day, and one cold morning they didn’t want to open the ark because she would have been the tenth. That was the beginning of the end. It was a horrible, demoralizing feeling for women. I remember when I was president of Sisterhood. They had Sisterhood Shabbat, and it was perfunctory...it was very nice. The president gave the sermon and the women conducted the Friday night service, and I said to the rabbi...we did it the first year I was president. The second year I said, “You know, rabbi, it’s Women’s League Sabbath and all that. I can’t do it. I can’t go through the motions of something when I know that the next day it’s wiped out for another year. I want the women to do something that’s real. I would like them to read the Megillah.” Purim is the one time you could get away with it, even before we had women’s rights, because women are allowed to dress up like men on Purim and all those type of things. We talked about it at great length and we said, “You know, what we’re asking for here is not people who are coming to say, I want to do less. I want to do more. I want to be a Jew who’s knowledgeable and who has studied and who will make this commitment.” So after many conversations I wore him down and he said okay. However, the blessings—there is a blessing at the beginning of the Megillah and a blessing at the end—one of our sons had to read each of those chapters so he could read the blessings. So my son, my oldest son, read the blessing and the first chapter. I read the second chapter. Interspersed throughout the rest of the reading were women and boys, mainly young boys. And then when it came time for the last chapter, a boy read after his mother and read the blessing. But at least it was a start. One person walked out and left the synagogue, but only one. That wasn’t bad. By the end of that year, the women’s rights began. My husband was very supportive. We were very sensitive to our beloved cantor who had been there for many, many years, Isaac Wall, who really was against it, but in the end he accepted it. (end of tape 1, side 2)

INT: This is tape #2. It’s January 25, 1999. I’m here with Carole Karsch. We were talking about Har Zion, which I want to get back to, but I want to talk a little bit about you. How did you switch gears from the lecturer and assistant instructor in ’75, and then-
CAROLE: That's easy. When I finished my Masters degree, I was at that point working part-time and going to school part-time. When I finished my Masters I felt that just going back to work part-time is not enough. It would not be challenging enough for me. I was ready for more. I did try to get a full-time job at Penn in Annual Giving, and one of my husband's law partners was a trustee at Penn at the time. He was president of the Alumni Society—not Jewish, and helped me get some interviews. I didn't get the Annual Giving job, which was a great disappointment, and I went back to my part-time job. But the director of Annual Giving wrote me a beautiful letter, and I really thought it was a form letter. I didn't know the difference at that point, and said, "You know, I think you were really terrific and you have these skills, but at this time we needed different skills." I later found out that the person that they hired in my place who did have different skills, was much younger, and at that time they had only young people really working in Annual Giving. And her father was a very prominent physician in the University Hospital. It made sense. I don't fault them. The following May or June I got a call from this man who had written me the letter, who said, "Remember when I wrote that letter? That's not a usual letter. I really did mean it. I kept your resume. Are you still interested in working full-time because I'm leaving, and my successor has seen your resume and he'd like to talk to you. Would you be willing to come in to talk to him?" "Sure."

At the same time, I suddenly got a call from the Penn Counseling Center for a position that was opened up, and I began interviewing for that as well. I met this gentleman who was a mentor for me, Steve Derby. He was coming in from the Wharton School as Director of Annual Giving. He realized that there was nobody, no Jewish person in the development staff of Penn at that time, that experiences in the Jewish community were not tea and cookies, and he recognized that it wasn't paid experience, but in a sense, real work. I had chaired a big Israeli bond dinner. I had been involved in a capital campaign. I had done a lot of things in synagogue life and I was very active in my Home and School in Bala Cynwyd. I knew a lot of people. My husband was in a non-Jewish law firm, so that was that world. I was a little older, and that was a question that you could never ask today but one that I was asked at that interview process. "How would you feel about being with all these young people?" I was very flip in my answer to him which I think got me the job. I said, "You know what? You're talking to me and you're telling me about all these wonderful class that this 50th reunion is going to have. John Ware is one of the key trustees of the University, in next year's class there's Walter Annenberg, Bob Dunlop, who is the CEO of Sun Oil Company, Julian Bers. You have the leaders and shakers of Philadelphia in that class, and you're going to put a twenty-year-old in there? If you don't think that I could do more and could bring some continuity and stability to your department, then this isn't the right job for me." And he hired me. So there was a big crossover between volunteerism and...there really was the connection.

INT: Was the fact that you are Jewish-

CAROLE: It was very helpful in getting that job. He also knew that they didn't have anybody Jewish and you have all these Jewish alumni. Maybe some of them would feel that's a positive sign, which it was. It really was. And I was always very comfortable and open with my
Jewishness. It was never anything that I hid, and in fact, the game of Jewish geography, which I think is the world’s most favorite game, I played for Penn very well in terms of building relationships and connections to the University. I was very helpful to them. Now there are a lot of people there who are Jewish and working for development. No one on the senior level though. I achieved the highest level. There was one lawyer who was there when I first started in the treasurer’s office, mainly to handle the Lauder gift and then he left, but I was really the only Jewish development person.

I started with the Forties and Fifties reunions, and I did it for a year, and I loved it. They both broke records. Both achieved really new records in fundraising. John Ware, who was the former State Senator, donor of Ware College House, was chairman and president of the class. He became my most adored person. He used to invite my husband and me to all these dinners. We maintained really a lifelong friendship. It opened me to a whole different world of people. I think high-powered Jewish women are able to work at a level that most of my, G-d bless them, gentile colleagues did not know. It happened in the School of Ed too on a part-time basis. They weren’t used to us. We’re used to juggling a lot of things and doing a lot of things. After a year a position became open in what was major gifts in Annual Giving called the Benjamin Franklin Society. I had made plans that summer to go to Israel for three-and-a-half weeks with my husband, our youngest son, and his brother and sister-in-law. My other kids were going to be in Israel on programs. We were going to have an apartment of one of my brother-in-law’s friends. I decided to go for this job, and I said to my boss, “You know, I love what I’m doing and if I don’t get this job it’s okay. I will go back and I will love it,” although I think you burn out after a while in those kinds of jobs. I said, “But I think I would be foolish not to go for this job because I think I could bring a lot to it, and it would be a job I would stay in for a long time.” He was very upset because I was going to be away for three-and-a-half weeks, and all these things had to be done. I said, “Look. You have to make the decision. Do you want a short-time investment or a long-time investment? I can come in and hit the ground running. I can do scads of stuff to get it ready before I leave. You won’t miss a beat” because I had become very friendly with the woman who was older than I and leaving the position, the only older person in the department, and I said to him, “When you told me about all those young people when you interviewed me, were you hiding her in the closet?” She became my very dear, close friend and went on to become a Director of Alumni Admissions, and we remain good friends. Also not Jewish. He hired me.

I did that job for a couple of years. I began new gift levels. I did a lot of events for the university president who was new. I took him, Sheldon Hackney, around the country and started to develop a relationship with him. I started to develop and do some research into why women were not such good givers, and put together an alumnae group. Jane Williams then came back to the University. She had been at Temple. She came back to Penn in a major gifts position, and realized that when the VP for development retires, there was nothing on paper about major donor. Everything was going out with him. Penn raised more money in those days from corporations and foundations than individuals, and individuals, like from the hospital and the veterinary school, not even alumni. She really began to build up the network, and was starting it up and talked to me about coming over to that side. I was really so attached to Annual Giving.
There was a lot of grunt work to be done then in the new area. I didn’t go. And she came to one of my alumnal groups and heard me do a presentation, and came to me after and she said, “You are a major gifts person. You need to do it. You have to cut the rope.”

INT: What’s the difference?

CAROLE: The difference was that Annual Giving is like the Federation annual campaign. It’s repeated giving every year. It’s heavily based on friends’ groups in Penn or any academic institution tends to have similar programs. It’s alumni. People go back to the reunion and you make a big pitch for raising money. People just give money and their names are in it. Major gifts was much more going to be focusing on individuals of means, resources, who could make capital gifts. Annual gifts usually come from income. Capital gifts come from assets, and there was also endowment gifts; a whole really major, exciting new dimension to the university. I cried when I went in to tell Steve Derby, but I said that I really wanted to help be part of building this whole new area. He was my only real boss ever. The part-time in Grad Ed was with a lovely, little elderly professor, a lady who was my boss. I had very strong ties to him, and being an alum, I had very strong feelings about Penn. I moved to the other side of the hall, and in those days, it was the we-they mentality. There was clearly an invisible barrier between the two sides. I did a lot to bridge the gap between the two, which was helpful. I began staffing the president of the university who was new, in his development and outreach, built a whole volunteers network for Penn called the President’s Council. Did a mini-campaign called Building Penn’s Future, which was the precursor to the billion dollar campaign. Managed the whole trustee solicitation process, so that’s how I got to meet Leonard Lauder and Saul Steinberg and Al Shoemaker and Lenore Annenberg and Paul Miller.

INT: Did you know about money and math?

CAROLE: I didn’t. But you know what? There are stories about that when I became president of Har Zion. You could learn anything you want to learn. The important thing was to go around the country and reconnect alumni with the university. You identified people. You involve them in some way so that they want to make an investment in your institution, and it’s building. It was a challenge. What Jane tried to say to me was there’s not a finite beginning and end every year like you had in Annual Giving. That’s why you burn out in annual giving. You have goals. You meet the goals and you start all over again. It may be a different class...Here, at Federation, you start with the same people all over again. There it was always different classes. But here, sometimes...and a good development officer says, “It’s never over until the will is probated.” Sometimes it takes a lifetime to get somebody to make the principal gift. Anyhow, I then became director of Individual Gifts. I moved up the ladder at Penn. Jane left and when she left to become VP in New York University, the medical center, I got catapulted very quickly into her position. We were gearing up for the billion dollar campaign. It was a very exciting time to be at Penn.

Federation tried to steal me away in those days, as did a lot of other institutions, including the Philadelphia Orchestra. I have been in a position where...and people used to say, and so did I,
"You will never leave Penn." And I used to like talk to people, but I just couldn’t cut. I couldn’t cut Penn. And I developed...I staffed the president and in later years, when my staffing responsibilities changed, the person who I trained to staff the president reported to me, as did the planned giving endowment area. I really did the whole...oversaw the whole major gifts effort. I chaired a group that Jane had started, but I really developed. I wrote a chapter about it in a book—about Major Gifts and fundraising management. It was a very rewarding position and I was trusted. People trusted me that I wouldn’t favor any one school over the other. I ran this prospect assignment group (PAAC). I did things around the country. I built a volunteer network. I became personally very, very friendly with the provost of the university, Michael Aiken. His wife, Catherine Comet, was a musical conductor and wasn’t home a lot. He was raising a teenage daughter himself. He used to call us all hours of the day and night. We traveled together. He would bare his soul to me about things about the university that I probably never should have known, but I always served that role for people. It’s very interesting. Wherever I’ve been, it’s been the kind of office where people have plopped down. I always feel it’s my counseling degree or just caring about people—that’s probably been my biggest asset. People were bringing personal and professional problems. We could talk at a certain point here how that’s been helpful too, but I built up relationships for the university with a lot of people who became very major donors. I was an entry point with a lot of the very big...who became very big, important donors for the university. I was in the central part. Each school in the center of Penn had its own development operation, but we did things for the vice president for development. I staffed the trustee development committee. It was very exciting, big-league stuff, which I loved.

They were wonderful to me, including when I was asked to become president of Har Zion. I went to my vice president, Rick Nahm, who was wonderful. Once again—a man. Always men. Jane was the only woman who had an effect on my career. He said, “Will it be good for Penn?” I said, “Rick, I will get my job done, but it may require me to be out in the mornings or have people come. I will try to have meetings here. I’ll use the fax as much as I can.” He said, “I’m never worried about your getting your work done. I know you will.” He said, “I think it’s a feather in Penn’s cap that one of its people has been asked to do something as prominent as this.” He was wonderful. He was great. He was very good to me, very good to me financially and position-wise.

INT: What was the greatest challenge?

CAROLE: Professionally?

INT: Yes.

CAROLE: It’s hard to say. I don’t think I’ve met successfully the greatest challenge, which was here, which is really trying to bring the university model here, to Federation. For a lot of reasons, it has not been embraced in a way that I and some of the leaders who brought me here thought it would be. There’s a lot of stumbling blocks to that. I think it was a major challenge when I was at Penn to make the president comfortable in his development activities, Sheldon—the president,
Sheldon Hackney. He wasn’t, and he became very good with it, and there was a lot of hand-holding and preparing. One of the greatest challenges that I also had at Penn, which was also one of the greatest pleasures, was the senior development staff met every other week with the president and provost to talk about prospects and their visits and activities, but also often issues facing the university, and to be involved at that level was very exciting. I was the Jewish presence for the conscience sometimes in those things, and so for example when the Farakhan issue was so hot on Penn’s campus, they...they were both very good men, Mike Aiken and Sheldon Hackney. Southern Liberals, they both didn’t get it completely, where academic freedom sometimes had to be maybe twisted a little because of the bad that was being done. Would we had had the Ku Klux Klan chief spokesman come to speak on Penn’s campus? Probably not. They did too little too late, and I tried to explain to them what he represents, and not only that, but the program took place on Yom Hashoah, and I tried to explain to them what Yom Hashoah was. It was a challenge to be able to maintain my Jewishness in a way that was not obnoxious, which is a horrible thing to say but I see it sometimes with Jewish people who wear it on their sleeve. I never backed down from my responsibilities as a caring Jewish person, but I think it was the way-and I’m also very outspoken and I sometimes say things that maybe I shouldn’t, that I should learn to be more guarded about. So it was a big challenge in that environment because it was definitely a gentleman’s club, and how would I be able to make certain that certain principles that I thought were very important to the university-not only to Jewish people, but certainly there were many Jewish concerns. People used to call me when Penn changed some of its admittance policies, which they looked at as being cutting out Jews. That’s not what it really was and I felt very comfortable in defending what the university was trying to do. It was probably a major challenge-doing it in a way that was respectful of who they were and what the university stood for, but also not compromising my own value system.

INT: How did you get from the teaching to the gift giving? What made you want to do that?

CAROLE: Well, I felt, honestly...I never thought I’d stay at Penn all those years, and when I had to choose between the counseling and the annual giving job, I thought a job in development, fundraising, I could take anywhere-to a hospital, to another school. And I liked doing it. I enjoyed the people connection. Really my degree was in counseling-psychology. The people connection. I used the skills.

INT: But you didn’t have any long-range thoughts that this was all-

CAROLE: Not at all. No. Never. I really was so thrilled to get that job in annual giving. It brought me tuition benefits for my son immediately. He had been there for a year. I had paid full tuition. That was a kill. That was one of the pluses. And you know, I couldn’t even accept the job because my youngest son had broken his knee at Camp Ramah. He called me and offered me the job and I said, “You know what? It sounds good, but I can’t talk to you. I’m a mother. My kid just...I’m on my way to the Scranton area.” So I never had any master plan. I never did. Things sort of just happened for me. Once I was there, especially when I moved over to the capital side, the major gifts side, I enjoyed increasing responsibility. There’s no question. I love to be a take-
charge person.

INT: They said in the article that your approach to donor relations and gift-giving...do you want to mention that here?

CAROLE: That’s the university model. In the late Eighties, I had been a member of a task force at Federation, a volunteer task force, and I was a volunteer. They were looking at this whole new financial resource development model and really the way to change Federation fundraising and mentality. I participated on that committee with some very bright people, both volunteers and professionals. Another volunteer member was Jerry Wind, who is a well-known professor at the Wharton School. We were both volunteer members of the committee. When I was offered the position here, it was at a turning point in my life. Sheldon Hackney was leaving Penn to become chair of the National Endowment for Humanity. Mike Aiken was leaving Penn to become chancellor of the University in Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Rick Nahm, my vice president, was leaving Penn to become president of a small college in Illinois. I was traveling a great deal, sort of making up for the year of traveling I didn’t do so much when my mother was ill. I got sick every time I got off an airplane. And Ted Seidenberg was the president of Federation and he wore me down basically.

They had tried to bring me to Federation about five or six years before that, when I was helping them, as a volunteer. I wrote a job description for director of an endowments department, and helped look for a candidate. I remember having lunch with Bob Forman, the Federation exec, and Bennett Aaron, then the president of Federation, and I had just come back from an Ivy-MIT conference. There are very few Jews in the Ivy League involved in high positions of development. “I can’t find anybody. What do you think we have to do?” I said, “I think you have to advertise here. I think you have to do this.” He said, “We found a perfect candidate.” I said, “Really? I’m so pleased for you. Who’s that?” And they said, “You.” Anyhow, I thought about it, but it was during this capital campaign and I really couldn’t leave Penn. Later on though, Ted wore me down and basically said, “You know, you’ve raised a lot of money from Jews for Penn. It’s time for you to raise money from the Jews for the Jews.” And he said, “We want to move Irv Geffen, then the director of endowment development, into campaign. We’re getting rid of the campaign director. We think Irv could bring all the people skills into that area and change it, and if you come in to the endowment,” which by the way, I didn’t call endowment when I came in. I called it “gifts planning,” because I think any major gift requires planning. It was really my vision to do not only endowment but really a lot of major gift work.

About six months after I was at Federation, they had a major financial setback and they had to cut a million dollars and eighteen people from the budget. And Irv Geffen, who hated the campaign involvement, said, “It’s time for us. We can put this development plan that we have in mind in place.” Mimi Schneirov, the only woman president of Federation to date, understood the University model of development and urged me to come to Federation and to stay committed to the development model. I was hesitant to go as full scale as he wanted to, because I had come from that environment. I knew what it takes. I know the time. I know the people. Penn had three
hundred people in the developmental department. It’s a whole different bag of beans. But this Federation on paper was very much in favor of this, and we wrote a position paper and they adopted it. It was too much, too soon. It was fun. We did wonderful staff trainings. We did volunteer training. Professionals began to take a whole different role, which upset a lot of volunteers. We started slowly. Had it proceeded slowly, I think we would have been able to put it into place. Because we went full-scale, it was too much, too soon. So it was backtracked. Then they went through a series of top professional changes here at the Exec. level. When Howard Charish came in, he was a real good Federation professional. Irv and I went up to solicit him as a trial basis, and to meet with him in this new way. And he said, “You know, it was wonderful. You found all my hot points. You found out what could come along but you didn’t get a gift for the annual campaign.” The annual campaign still drives Federations. It doesn’t drive universities. He didn’t say that, but that’s an aside for you. He said, “You left that gift on the table. I may not give you that second visit to talk about...you keep talking. You talk about my interests and the other kind of gift.” He really shifted gears a little, and I think he made the right decision at the time. We should have a strong campaign and a strong endowment department. They had never been coordinated in the way they should be, that I would like to have done. One of my final acts here in this whole business vision process is...well, this year I co-chaired the endowment task force, it was really to get into an issue that we were charged by the big plan last year, of institutionalizing endowments. And it’s clearly coordinating, integrating more, making these two areas designate certain prospects, donors, who should be dealt with differently.

I think we’ve been successful and I feel some comfort in changing some of the ways they did business. We changed all the language, the kinds of pledge cards. There are thank-you notes being written where there never were before. I’ve done a lot of staff training and also have encouraged training in endowment for the campaign staff. So I see some success but not what I had in mind. It hasn’t been revolutionized the way I had hoped it would be. I’m not sure it ever can be completely in a Federation world, although I think nationally there is a move to doing much more of this integrated development model.

**INT:** Why do you think that is?

**CAROLE:** Because they’re seeing so much competition. There were years when Jews gave only to Jewish things because universities, orchestras, museum boards were all closed to them. It’s an open world. They are being courted. The second generation does not necessarily have the strong ties to synagogue, Israel, Holocaust, Jewish institutions. So there’s a shift, and I think they want to make certain that they continue to have Jewish institutions supported. I happen to believe very strongly in the umbrella concept of Federation. I do think that a community body should be making decisions. Otherwise, the little institutions that are important will be lost. I think we have to sort out what’s important and what’s not and what we should be supporting and what we shouldn’t. I don’t think we can be everything to everybody anymore, but I think that the group that doesn’t have a natural constituency or a rich constituency will not get support that they need. I’m worried about the little old ladies getting their dinners who should.
INT: So you also have a connection—you were the director of the Benjamin Franklin society.

CAROLE: That was in the Annual Giving program at Penn. That’s what we talked about when I made the transition from Annual Giving to the next level.

INT: We talked about some conflicts, your experiencing being Jewish and a woman in this way. What have you enjoyed the most about your involvement through the Jewish community?

CAROLE: Most of my key volunteer involvement time has been in the synagogue. I truly believe that I would never have given that amount of time to any other organization but the synagogue. I truly believe that it’s a different connection. You are, to me, perpetuating Judaism. There is a G-dlike feeling when you are walking into a synagogue. I resent when people talk in Federation or Jewish communal world that they’re doing G-d’s work. I think G-d’s work is in synagogue, in educating children. I was the chairman of the school committee at Har Zion. A strong school is, I think, one of the most important functions of the synagogue. We have an obligation to make that as good as it could be. Most American children do not get their Jewish education in the day schools, even though that’s what gets all the fuss. I’m going to say that at my party tomorrow night. One parting remark—the work that we’ve already done and must continue to do is recognize the Jewish supplemental school. That’s where most of the kids are going to get their education. I always felt like I was doing...my synagogue work was for the Jewish people, it wasn’t just for Har Zion. I really believe you’re entering G-d’s house when you’re working in a synagogue. It was a source of great satisfaction. It was a source of great satisfaction personally in terms of the friends that I made at the synagogue. They are my closest friends. They’re not always involved as I was, but one way or another—whether it was in a study group or in Sisterhood or on the board, I became involved with these people. I’m an only child. My husband’s sister and brother live out of town. Many of these people are my extended family, including the Rabbi and Elaine Wolpe. He’s retiring and they bought an apartment in my building. Part of it is because we do feel so close to one another. The cantor, who was the cantor for my husband’s bar mitzvah and when I was a little girl retired when I was the President of the synagogue. That was an extraordinary experience. He was part of my whole Jewish life. He now lives full-time in the apartment house at the shore where we have a summer home. So he’s still connected to my life. I go to his home for Shabbat dinner and hear him sing songs, and I feel like it’s a part of my life that will never be erased. An only child has a problem. When your second parent dies, your childhood dies. It’s wonderful to still have this connection to my childhood. We haven’t even gotten to Har Zion.

INT: That’s where it all really is. Carole, what have you discovered about yourself and the Jewish community in this work? What have you discovered about yourself?

CAROLE: What have I discovered about myself? Well, first of all, I think there’s a lot of ego gratification in taking major communal roles and I think anybody who tells you not is not really telling you the truth. (End of tape 2, side 1) The same thing here—I think in terms of Federation. If I have been able to help younger staff...I’ve always felt that was a very important responsibility at
Penn as well. I think that people in more senior position have an obligation to keep their doors open and make time. Now, sometimes it’s been at great personal expense. I don’t get the migraine headaches for nothing. But I just feel that I could never be a person who could say, “My door is closed. Don’t bother me.” If somebody needs me, I want to be there and I think that perhaps I’ve learned about myself that I respond well when there’s a need. I’m probably not a good person to come into something that’s running very, very well and needs a figurehead. That’s not me. I need to be needed. I need to feel—and maybe that’s because my parents made being good to people and doing things for other people and being loved such an important part of my own upbringing. I think that’s a piece of me that I love doing. I really do. I get a lot of satisfaction. My husband was president of Har Zion and in a sense we both lived it twice. I’m the only woman who has been president. I like to walk in that room and still see that I’m the only lady on the wall, but I wish there were others. As a matter of fact, I had been an officer for many, many years and some of the things that happened at Har Zion—women’s rights were achieved were because I was the officer in that position. For example, once on Sukkot, when they benched lulav and then they shake the lulav around to the four corners of the earth—Billy Perlstein was the president of the synagogue and he asked me to sit up on the bimah. They were going to bench the lulav. I had never done that in my life. It was unbelievable. I said, “Billy, what am I going to do? I don’t know the first thing about this.” He said, “Watch me. Just do what I do.” And you know what? Once I did it, other women were able to do it too. So I’ve always also felt good about serving that role for other women.

INT: About being a trail blazer.

CAROLE: It has been...but, when they asked me to be...well, anyhow, I was an officer and I stepped down. They wanted me to go back—I was a vice president—to being a secretary. I said, “You know what? I’ve been there, done it. Har Zion is not ready for a woman president.” And actually, my husband, soon after, became president, and he always stood in the background and allowed me, because he was so supportive of women’s rights, to do certain things that really he should have been the first one to do, and certain chairmanships and things. In a sense, he was really also my biggest mentor and advisor over the years, because he put women’s rights—women needed to achieve to do certain things, maybe because I’m such a strong woman. His mother was a strong woman. I don’t know. He stepped by and helped make these things happen, using me as the vehicle, and I was always willing to be used and to be the vehicle. You have to be willing. But I said, “You know what? I want to see other women trained and put into place so that when you’re ready—when this synagogue is ready, which is going to be in a long time,” it was really an old boys’ club, Har Zion, “there will be other women in place that you can choose.” And I laughed. I said, “And if you ever want me, you know where to find me.” Well, seven years later they came knocking at the door and said, “Well, we found you.” I didn’t say yes right away. It took me a long time to do it. One of my provisions when I finally said yes was I must never be referred to as the first woman president. It’s a very important point for women. I want to be here because I’m the best for what you need now. I’m doing certain things. And then when they went to the man who had expected to be the next president and they said to him, “We have to tell you that you’re not going to be next. We decided that it’s the right time in the synagogue’s history for
a woman and for certain qualities that she brings that we think this synagogue needs,” and he said, “Oh, it must be Carole Karsch.” I think there was an acceptance that I was the right person at that point, but it took me a long time to say yes.

INT: Why?

CAROLE: Well, I knew from having seen my husband do it that it was a lot of work. I felt very strongly about certain things being changed in the synagogue, and I never like to experience failure. I had a feeling I wasn’t going to be able to do everything that I thought I needed to do. I remember what my friend, a past president, said to me after I did say yes. “Remember, you’re going to have this big agenda. Pick one or two things you really need to do, and feel satisfied at the end that you did them,” which I thought was good advice. And you also have to remember in something like the synagogue, the rabbi and the other staff are usually there. The presidents come and go. The same thing here in Federation. The presidents come and go. The exec stays in place. Remember that. It’s a very good lesson in humility. But I did say yes and when I went out of office, the rabbi said, “I made a promise when she came in, but I don’t have to honor the promise now. She’s going out, and I’m going to talk about what the difference was in having a woman president.” And I think there was a difference. There definitely was a difference, and I think I brought a lot of good things to the synagogue. But I also had something to prove. You asked me about the math earlier. My first executive committee meeting and the executive committee at Har Zion, unlike many others, include all past-presidents. My first meeting was about a very complicated mortgage, financial package, that was being offered to somebody to attract that person to come to the synagogue. I made up my mind, as much as I went to my husband for everything, I always felt—he was a real estate lawyer—I was not going to go to him for this. I was going to get an education in what I needed to know for that meeting. And I did. I chose various past-presidents and other people I wanted to talk about it and I studied up like I would study for an exam at school. I knew that whatever I did at that meeting, either they were going to patronize me for the two years or they were going to treat me as an equal. They all sat with their mouths open, including my husband. He really couldn’t believe it. But you know what? I understood every financial contract that was going to be discussed. I had opinions. My opinion didn’t have to carry but I did have opinions.

INT: You were prepared.

CAROLE: I was totally prepared, which, by the way, is something in my life that has always been important in anything that I have done. To a fault sometimes. I make myself crazy when I’m doing a little presentation. I do the same thing. I make myself crazy when I’m giving this talk tomorrow in my big party, and I…it’s me. It has to be me. I sit and I agonize over it. That’s the way I am. I never can walk in unprepared in any setting. And I do agonize over it. That’s the way I am. I never can walk in unprepared in any setting. And I do write things down. It doesn’t mean I have to write everything down, and I can certainly give presentations without writing it down. When I was in college I took a course my last year, when I was married. I had one semester of courses and then one semester of student teaching. It was public speaking. At the end of the course he called me up and he said, “Miss Weinheim, you’re going to get an A in this course. Let me tell you something.
If anyone ever tells you you have a Philadelphia accent, don’t argue.” (Laughter) I did love speaking. I always loved public stuff and adulation, I guess because I had adoring parents. That was something about myself that honestly I’m very honest about. I do love it. I love to speak publicly. I used to love to be the star of piano recitals. That’s it.

INT: How difficult was it to combine the expertise in fundraising then to the Jewish community?

CAROLE: I think that the people who brought me here brought me here for a reason, and they recognized my ability. I think I was recognized as a development professional, which was very different from other volunteers who have made a transition to professional positions. They went right from being a volunteer, and some of them are very good, but I think I brought different expertise which was accepted and recognized here. In fact, I think that I showed that professionals can handle certain assignments that they never let professionals touch here before.

INT: What has been some of those stresses and strains, many stresses and strains.

CAROLE: Here?

INT: Yes.

CAROLE: And I knew it before I came.

INT: You came here in ’93?

CAROLE: Yes, the summer of ’93.

INT: And this is-

CAROLE: So this is five-and-a-half years. Many of these people are my personal friends. Many of them live in my apartment house, belong to my synagogue, we see at the seashore, on the boardwalk. Development is a position that you are “on” all the time. You always have to be smiling and pleasant and nice and all that. This was especially exacerbated here. Also, the volunteer component working in the Federation is very different than working at the University of Pennsylvania or at Temple or at Children’s Hospital. Yes, we do use volunteers in all those institutions, and we use their connections for fundraising, etc., but they don’t have ownership. The way Jewish people feel in Jewish communal obligations, in particular, I think, the Federation—part of it in recent years is because there were so many changing execs and volunteers took a stronger role. It’s been difficult. It’s been difficult because I’m never off-duty and I try very hard with my Federation close, close intimate friends that we don’t talk business, don’t talk shop, but inevitably you do. Whatever job you do—if you’re a doctor you’re talking about a sick patient. It’s been very hard. And they’ve been very good at respecting my professionalism, but some of it has been frustrating. It’s also frustrating—I’m not a number two person but I never wanted the top job. I had been asked at one time when it was open, did I want to go for it, but I
really didn’t...it was not sour grapes, and I don’t know if I would have gotten it anyhow. I didn’t need that much more stress in my life because I did have a lot of things going on. I should give you a copy of my retirement letter. I think it says it all.

I was an only child and very devoted to a sick parent. I raised three wonderful sons, I think. I’ve been a good wife, a good daughter-in-law, a good friend, active in the community. I wanted to be the home-and-school Mommy. I wanted to be at the games. It wears you down after a while. I really felt that my mother worked too long, that some of her physical problems in her older years were because she sat over a typewriter too long. She was a secretary. I just decided that I wasn’t going to burn myself out quite yet. I think I’m getting close to the burnout. I wanted to leave while I was ahead, feeling good about everything.

INT: What’s like a daily routine, a typical daily routine?

CAROLE: A daily routine. Well, I try to walk to work since I live in town. I’m having a lot of trouble with my back lately, so it’s not as frequent as I would like. I spend a lot of time on the phone, and in fact, when we were working with McKinsey and Co. in this planning process last year and they did an analysis of people’s calendars, how you spend your time, I am the professional who up to that time was spending the most time with top donors and families, when it really should be the chief exec. Well, there’s some shifting from his position now. I spend a lot of time on the telephone, talking to donors, being their connection. It’s something that I learned at Penn. I became the Penn connection for people in Tampa and Chicago and California or wherever.

INT: So you try to sort of be that person for everybody here?

CAROLE: So I’m on the phone a lot. I meet with colleagues a lot. Everybody is saying, “Who is going to solve the sticky issues. Who’s going to be the resource? Who’s going to solve the problems,” because I was here first and the CEO has a lot of pressures on him and I was here to take some of that off, and because people know me so well, they’re comfortable in dealing with me and knowing that they’re going to get the fair and honest answer. But that’s put a lot of extra pressures on me. Someone who’s more of a stranger in this position would really be able to do more of the management. I have a wide variety of responsibilities in management that are not just fundraising. The individual donor development. I have been doing a lot of the work in proofing-proofing, not in the sense of correcting punctuation, although I do that sometimes too, but with the Exponent, that I have felt really shouldn’t be me. It really should be the publishing staff. I feel somewhat resentful of that I might add. And as I’ve written this review paper for Howard, and suggesting other people into some of my responsibilities, it’s sort of a shocker when I see how much I really did and being able to sort it out. I think it’s worn me down. I’m really tired. I’m ready, and I think my husband sensed this and my children did. It’s a good time for me to cut back. Not just cold turkey. But I have to be careful that if I do consulting, that I don’t work harder or more than I’m doing now. I might as well stay here, where I’m getting compensated well. By the way, Howard Charish promoted me to this position three months after he came.
We’d known each other over the years in a variety of situations, but it was a wonderful testament. He’s very supportive of women. He has a son and two daughters, but he’s very supportive of women and I think it was a wonderful boost for me that he had faith in my ability.

INT: Who are your rivals in your professional life?

CAROLE: It’s interesting. I think at Penn I didn’t have any because I had a very unique position and was accepted in a very unique way. Also, I had the protectia of the president and the provost’s office. Here, there are, and I’m thinking of a woman in particular who would love my job or my positioning. I think she thinks it’s all front-line and accolade and doesn’t realize all the dirty work that I do sometimes and the difficult things that I do, and the difficult personalities and issues that I have had to deal with and donor issues that are very taxing, like the recent one that you’ve all read about in the paper with the Jewish day school here, Akiba. I think until you’re into a particular position you don’t realize what it encompasses, but you also create some of that yourself. Maybe I’ve created some of these problems. I know there’s one person here who has probably whispered things that I don’t think were appropriate to the exec here, and I actually had one, probably something that I probably would not appreciate being too public, but I did have one experience with my boss that I found altered our relationship a little bit, which was very disturbing because he was in Israel on a work-related matter and I was covering a lot of things here, some of which I really didn’t know about because he didn’t bring me into, but I was stuck doing. I was handling a lot of stuff that was mine and his. Somebody—and I think it was this particular lady—said something to him. He came back with a feeling that I wanted his job, which was so ridiculous, because if I wanted it I would have applied for it when it was offered to me. Hearing what he said, I said, “You know, if somebody said to you, “Gee Howard, Carole needs to spend more time with her grandchildren. I think she’s making noises about retiring and stuff, maybe you should listen.” This was a couple of years ago. This happened two years ago. “But why would you think that? I’ve never worked anywhere where anybody has ever said that to me. Ever. Not that I’m not ambitious, but I know what I want to do and I’ve been very fortunate that I’ve been able to do what I want to do. At this stage in my life, there’s no way that I need that or would want it.” It was a very uncomfortable time. We had a couple of very bad weeks with each other over that. I think part of it was maybe...I think some of the volunteers must have said to him, “You can go away as long as you want. Carole does a great job.” Plus, this person whispering into his ear about, “Oh, it’s out of control.” He made a comment to me, “I have people who are loyal to me too.” I don’t know exactly where it came from, and it had changed my feeling for that person who I was really very kind to when she first came to this community. That’s a shame in a working environment, that you feel somebody is looking for you to trip. I’ve never felt that way about people. I’ve always been somebody—and maybe it came from my mother who had a wealthy sister and always praised her and was glad for her and never resented anything that she had that she didn’t—that I’ve grown up with being very content with my life.

INT: What would you have done differently?

CAROLE: What would I have done differently? I would have done a lot differently. At one
point. I thought that maybe I shouldn’t have come here, that I should have stayed at Penn, that I made a mistake, early on in my career. When Howard came I felt better about being here. There was a lack of professionalism when I came here that I felt I had made a mistake at the time. I did miss Penn terribly. I’m glad I did this. First of all, Penn changed and nothing is the same. As I said to you, that whole group was leaving and all new people came in. It’s a whole different environment. I’m glad that I did this because I feel that it was an obligation. One of my favorite quotes is from Kay Graham, the publisher of the Washington Post. “To love what you do and think that it matters—what could be more fun?” And I have always felt that way about my professional associations. Probably I still have some guilt that I didn’t stop working when my mother wasn’t well the way she did when her mother wasn’t well. When my mother was still living at home and there was some part-time help, I used to leave here five o’clock and make her dinner and put her to bed and do her shopping and do all those things, but yet there’s still a touch of guilt about that. There really is. I don’t feel bad about anything else that I’ve done with my children, because I really think I did it all for them. Going back to work was in a sense also for them as well as for me. Probably in my lifetime that’s one thing that I regretted.

INT: Tell me a little bit about Har Zion, and then we’re going to talk about your children. We’re right at the point of Har Zion, which is really your big community volunteer.

CAROLE: Has been my main community involvement, right.

INT: Where did it start?

CAROLE: When I was a little girl basically I loved it and I’ve always felt a connection to Har Zion. I was married in Har Zion and my husband grew up in Har Zion. We joined when we were first married. We were connected to the synagogue. We went to a Bible home study group. It just evolved. It was something natural. And because I spoke well and because I have some Jewish background and I have a particular style of speaking where I always find some Jewish quote or passage which people used to like to hear...I also made a decision in the young Sisterhood that there all these old ladies were staying—I was still the young one—that I had to show them that they had to move on to the Sisterhood, otherwise young women wouldn’t want to come in to this junior thing. That was a big step for me. Once I went into the Sisterhood I had some major chairmanships for Sisterhood in the synagogue, and then I became a very young president of the Sisterhood. I was probably the youngest president ever. When I finished that and was appointed to the board of the women’s division here, I found it very unsatisfying. I was also very involved in Soviet Jewry which was a passion that really developed at Har Zion.

I just felt that...my children were at the synagogue. We went to shul every Shabbos, and that was something relatively new for me but it was an important part of my husband’s life. It just became as natural to me as my own home. I loved it, and I felt that I was connecting my children in an important way to something too. They went to Har Zion Day Camp and they went to Ramah. I think sometimes my children resented the time I gave and the money that we gave to Jewish institutions. We lived in an affluent neighborhood. We tried to raise our children with
good middle-class values. We took them to games but never season tickets and those kinds of things. And in later years they said something to us about how much money we gave to synagogue and all that, and community. Sam was always a very generous Federation supporter, much more than we should have and I resented that a little bit at one point in my life I’m ashamed to say. It’s interesting. Both of my sons belong to synagogues, and I’m very glad that they both married Jewish girls. We’ve been lucky in their choices. They’ve both been to Israel. They chose to go to Israel again as adults. It worked. It helped. And they know I loved it and it brought me satisfaction. I needed that. If I hadn’t...I needed more than just...and I loved being a mother. It was the happiest years of my life. I did not work until my youngest son was nine, and then I felt guilty about that too because for the older boys I was everything. I went on every class trip. And for him, I had to choose because I worked part time. It bothered me a little that I didn’t do as much for him. I didn’t nurse him and I nursed the other two. You know, all these mother guilts. But as they became men, or older, at least young men, they realized how important this was for me, that I needed something more than just being at home. To me, being a professional volunteer was a very serious issue—to act professionally in a volunteer role. You could still pick and choose, and if the kids were sick you didn’t have to go like you do for a paying job. Nothing to me ever was more important than my children. That always came first.

I remember my son who is the physician today once getting a call from a particular league that met on Friday night, and he made up all kinds of excuses why he couldn’t go, and he finally sobbed and said, “I have to be home for Shabbos dinner.” And that was okay. They’re not kosher. None of our children are kosher. We have a kosher home in which they were raised. We are kosher out. None of them are kosher. When we come, they either have fish in their house or buy kosher meat. We eat kosher meat in their house. We’re not that crazy. It’s okay. I respect their values. Their wives were both raised in reform backgrounds. My husband—it was very important for him and he just assumed I would do it. Their wives weren’t that interested so they didn’t fight for it. That’s okay. They’re good boys and they have good Jewish values. But Har Zion really fields a lot of stuff for me in my life, besides having friends, and I just feel a sense of comfort when I sit down on Shabbos, even if I fall asleep—it’s a special time. And Friday night dinner was always a special time in my house.

INT: To be the first women president though—it’s remarkable. And the recipient of the first Service Award.

CAROLE: Sam and I together won the first Service Award. He’s the only person in Har Zion who won the B.L. Jacobs Mens’ Award as a youth and as an adult too. We’re very committed to the synagogue. It was wonderful. It was exciting. It was marvelous. It was fun to have people suddenly look at what a president was wearing. That became a topic. I think that I brought a certain speaking style that the men did not have, by and large. They were not good speakers the way I was, and the congregation loved to hear me speak, and I’ve created opportunities that other presidents never did. To me, programming is very important in a synagogue, and what I was able to accomplish was to put together a leadership group and a whole different way of doing programming, for the first time in the synagogue’s history where all of the arms responsible for
I've always played a role in the school, a strong role in the school. When I was president, I was able to make certain things happen in the school that I couldn't as a school chairman, in terms of evaluation and accountability and doing certain things that I thought a school needed to be more professional about. I felt good about that. I was concerned about my friendship with the Rabbi and my husband was too when he became president. We had a very close personal relationship with the Wolpes. Being president puts you in a different relationship. It was a concern whether we could maintain that, and to all of our credits we did. But I once had to give a speech for United Synagogue when I was president on the president and the rabbi, with a rabbi from another synagogue, with my own rabbi there, which was difficult to do but I was honest. I think that I have been able to engender trust from people. They trust me. I don't have personal hidden agendas. I try to be fair, and I think that's very important in trying to look to the big picture, not only your own little piece. In the end-and I always say this-I said it when I did the BFS, directory-nobody looks at how gorgeous the paper is or the printing style. They open it up and they look for their name, and if it's wrong you're in trouble. And I have certain standards of excellence and professionalism that I have felt are very important. Perhaps I bear down on people a little too hard because of that. I remember when I left Penn, my VP said to me-who was also leaving, “Remember, you have extraordinary standards. The people that you're going to work with are good people. One of the reasons you’re going there is to help make them better, but don't get all excited and turned off because they're not going to be what you're used to.” Years before that, when I was encouraged to come to Federation, he discouraged me from coming. He really felt that I wouldn't be happy at that time. But then Federation changed some of the stuff they were doing with major gifts and then I did make this move. He was more supportive. It disturbed me that Jews don't go into synagogue or haven't taken a trip to Israel—people who travel all over the world in some cases, and they don't have feelings to go to Israel.

INT: How many times have you been to Israel?

CAROLE: Nine, I think. Several since I’ve been here obviously, but we’ve always been involved. We made two trips to the Soviet Union to visit refuseniks in the late Seventies. My husband was involved in starting Philadelphia Volunteers for Israel here during the '67 War. I went around collecting money for Israel with a baby in my arms. It was always important. And yet, I don’t wear it on my sleeve really. I resent...not resent, but I just get uncomfortable when people do, when people tell you how much they do.

INT: What’s your involvement now with Har Zion?

CAROLE: I’m a past-president and I’m still on the executive committee. I am on the search committee for the new rabbi. I love sitting on the bimah when I’m assigned. I don’t play the kind of role I used to. For example, when the Wolpes were recently honored at the Torah Fund
Luncheon, I was asked to be the presenter of the Sisterhood’s gift. Those kinds of things. And I still love doing those things when I can. But I don’t take...having been president and having lived through my husband being president, you don’t take the daily responsibilities. I do still come to as many executive committees as I can, not necessarily board, and I also try not to take charge, but I think a sense of history is important in an organization. We’re going to be one of the co-chair couples for the Rabbi’s retirement and the closing 75th. (End of tape 2, side 2)

INT: ...with Carole Karsch. Today is January 29, 1999. Carole, we ended the last tape talking about your work experience, your career. I know that you’re leaving this current job. Can you tell me some of the things that have motivated you to move on or to leave at this time?

CAROLE: The reasons are twofold, mainly personal though, because I was sixty in October and I decided that this was a great present to give myself, especially with the urging of my husband and children. It’s exhausting. I’ve had some back problems. My grandchildren are scattered all over and I want my time. I also have always thought and dreamt about being a consultant. I have considered it a couple of times in my life. I think it’s the right time. I think I have the right background mix now to do that in a variety of institutions. I think I need some separation from the Jewish community. For many years, even though I had been sought by Federation years ago, I was helping them do an endowment search. They told me I was the perfect person. They offered me a position when they were trying to gear up many years ago, and other organizations, I always felt that my personal and professional lives in the Jewish community should be separate. So all the years that I worked at Penn, I was a volunteer in the community, although not anything that conflicted in any way with fundraising because I thought ethically that was not something that should be done. But after I was president of Har Zion and I had really achieved something major as a volunteer and a woman, I was more open to considering a professional position. Everything was changing at Penn at a particular time when my Federation buddies began wearing me down. I had been traveling a great deal. Every time I got off an airplane, I came back with some other respiratory infection. All of the people with whom I had worked at the senior level of management at the university very closely were leaving because the billion dollar campaign was winding down, so that the president of the university, Sheldon Hackney, was going to be head of the NEH. Mike Aiken, the provost with whom I was very close personally was going to become chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The VP for development, Rick Nahm, was going to be president of a small college in Illinois. These were three men that I interfaced with at a very high level and the thought of all the changes...it was the right time for a lot of reasons, personal and professional. I didn’t realize that Judy Rodin at that time would become president, as a woman. It may have been a very interesting way to see yet another dimension, woman to woman, and the VP for development also became a woman who I had worked with closely. She was from the Wharton School and had helped me very early in my career at Penn and we had a great working relationship. But it was a good time in my personal life also to move on and to have some change.

I also felt that coming to work in the Federation was a way for me to give back personally in a way that I could not necessarily give financially at a certain level. My husband had been a
rather significant donor over the years to Federation. I always thought frankly-a fundraiser should never say this—but at a level that was much too high based on our resources, but it was something he cared very much about. He went through a very major career change, and it meant that we had to cut back our giving level. I looked at this as the way to make a gift, although I was certainly well compensated for my work, because I was coming in not the way many volunteers make the transition to a professional world in an organization, but with a strong professional background. So I came in certainly at the senior level. It’s been a very worthwhile and gratifying experience in many ways. In other ways it’s been not exactly what I had hoped it would be because one of the reasons I was brought here and encouraged to come here was to try to bring the university model of development into the Federation. It was like my friend Mimi Schneirov and Ted Seidenberg, who was then the president, recognized. In the late Eighties I was a volunteer member of the Federation task force that looked at trying to do fundraising differently for financial resource development. It was an opportunity to try to take what I had done as a volunteer and make it professional. For a lot of reasons, it was begun, it was stopped for some budgetary problems and people were let go. It started in a way that I thought was not appropriate and I turned out to be right. It was too big the way they tried to do it, instead of doing it in measurable, accountable pieces. And then a new exec came who really felt that the campaign needed more strengthening. An integrated model takes longer until you build relationships and all that.

I was able to affect a lot of the ways business was done and there has been some change in recognition. It may be timing now, some of that-hopefully in the seeds that I planted will begin maybe to take more of an effect. I think-and I had this extraordinary party, retirement party, Tuesday night, that some of the remarks that were made, besides the usual sweetness, really came from one of my supervisées, who’s the director of endowment development, and also the person who spoke for the agencies, Harold Goldman, who is the exec of the Jewish Family and Children’s Service. I think if some of what they said was true, maybe half, the fact that I have had a tremendous impact on my colleagues and staff and having an open door and always be willing to consult with agencies and feel that they were getting something worthwhile from it, was very gratifying to me. So if I wasn’t able to really put in all the fundraising changes I had hoped to bring about, I’m a people kind of person. They all talked about that. I always had an open door and it’s hard to do that in a busy organization like this, but I always tried. Sometimes it was at personal expense. I made time for that, for younger colleagues, which I thought was a very important piece of what my responsibilities were. So I feel good about the association.

The main differences between my experience at Penn, especially when my final experience when I was at a very high level and here are...first of all, Penn has a worldwide international constituency to choose from for donors. They have an incredible large professional staff that is dedicated to fundraising and that provides all kinds of support services—research, donor relations, stewardship, events management—all the kinds of things that help one do your job better. There’s very little of that invested in the Federation world.

INT: Why is that?
CAROLE: The resources are just different. As you do those kinds of things in running this kind of operation, you also have to balance the dollars that are available for service delivery. That’s why people are giving money here. So you have to be able to develop the kind of management that allows you to do some of the things. That’s one of the concerns, I think, in terms of in the way of doing business. It takes time to develop relationships. It doesn’t happen on the first gift...the Federation motto has been ask for the annual gift-I’ll see you next year. There are changes in that in terms of having events and sending people articles. I tried to change the way they thank people for gifts. Those kinds of things that help at all levels, regardless of the size of the gift.

The other biggest difference and the one that was difficult to manage, and I think the younger staff in particular have a hard time with it, was the volunteer piece. In a university, the volunteers are there. They will open doors for you. As close as they feel emotionally, and they give very large gifts, they don’t own it in the same way that the volunteers in the Jewish community think they own the institution and the people who work for it. There’s a lot of second guessing, a lot of armchair quarterbacking, a lot of...there has been a change in the way they’re treating professionals, and professionals-Mimi Schneirov spoke about this a little bit at my party-that she thought that I was so helpful in showing that professionals sitting at the table bring something to the process. They’re just not minute takers or card dealers. I think that that’s been helpful. I’ve seen some change in that direction. Federation went through a major planning process, and it’s still going on, with McKinsey and Company and the last page of the initial report, which is called the Infamous Page 38, talks about the culture, and it’s a culture really, mainly of volunteers in terms of touching things so many times until decisions are made and in terms of rehashing issues, in terms of having to operate in a way that you don’t offend donors even though it may be doing what’s best for the community. There’s a lot of issues. I feel that a lot of people who are volunteers have personal agendas that get mixed up with the community’s best interests sometimes. Not everybody, of course, but there are a lot of people who operate that way and you’re not sure whether they just want to promote themselves or they’re really combining the interests of the community and their own.

INT: So there’s a big difference between the professionals and the volunteers.

CAROLE: Yes.

INT: Do they train...do the volunteers consider themselves as a professional at some level?

CAROLE: Probably they do and there is training. It’s not as much as I think there should be of volunteers in terms of new ways of doing things. We started that-a colleague of mine who’s no longer here and I, when I first came, and then it got pushed by the wayside for a lot of reasons. Change, and especially cultural change, is very, very difficult and it’s slow. And yet, the whole Federation world and the way of doing business is up for very careful scrutiny, nationally it’s not just here. If they don’t do it in a way that will make second generations and baby boomers and people like that want to come in the door, then I think the whole system is in jeopardy.
INT: What’s your philosophy on fundraising?

CAROLE: Well, I have been involved for many years with major gift fundraising and major gift fundraising really requires relationship building, cultivating people, finding what they care about, and really taking the pieces of a puzzle and make it fit together. In terms of figuring out where a person is coming from, knowing about the institution you’re serving and believing in it I think are very important for being a successful fundraiser. I couldn’t work for certain organizations whose philosophy or manner of service I don’t accept. That’s why I loved being at Penn. I went to Penn. It was my school. It was more than a job. I’ve been a member of the Philadelphia Jewish community all my life. I’ll probably die here. I care about this very much. I think that you have to take the concepts of dealing with individuals and spread out around lower donors too, but there’s so much competition for resources that I think you have to focus more efforts and more stewardship with major donors. You can’t ask them for their opinions and then not act on it in some way. I think being able...the successful person is able to take what you learn about the person in your relationship-building, and present community needs in a way that the person wants to buy into it. Not everybody wants to be involved. Not everybody wants to be a president or a chairman. You have to sort that out and see who wants to be a leader too. So I think the fundraising piece has dimensions that are far greater than just the gift. Good development officers say it’s never over until the will is probated. I believe that very strongly. Sometimes you will cultivate a person over a lifetime, and you get different gifts at different stages in people’s lives, and you can’t be disappointed if it’s not always the home run that you expect.

It’s interesting—I use the word “home run.” One of the things I did early on in my Penn career was try to change some of the language that was used in just mailing solicitations because it was so male-oriented. The ball games and things like that. They were just turnoffs, I’m sure, to alumnae who just would toss them in the can. I think there’s a sensitivity of language that you bring to the table. I think there’s a professional approach...also knowing when to speak and when not to. You don’t always have to prove how smart you are. I think that good development people learn that you make other people look good, be it a volunteer or a senior professional that you’re staffing or managing. At Penn, we used to get a lot of jokes about that. They used to kid me about “my provost” because I did take it very seriously that he was my provost and my job was to make him look good.

INT: How difficult is it to be a woman fundraiser? Do you think that men have more opportunity because it’s the old boy thing and they can call their boyfriends?

CAROLE: I think so. But you’re talking to me as a professional. One of the ways women I think are beginning to acknowledge, women of wealth, that they have obligations and it’s okay to be rich but to use it for the right things. I think until women really are comfortable in making major gifts themselves, they will never really get into the major arena of leadership, and part of it is old-boys’ network and breaking through is very difficult.

INT: And maybe women being more financially insecure...
CAROLE: Yeah, it’s harder, but I think that one of the things to be a successful fundraiser, you have to not be intimidated by wealthy people. You have to be comfortable in shmoozing, in getting to know people and reaching out. That’s one of the biggest pieces that they all keep crying about that’s going to go when I go. But as I tell staff, I didn’t know all the Federation players when I came. I knew a lot of people because of my background, which is particularly Philadelphia. I’ve been here all my life. I worked at Penn. I was a leader at Har Zion which is a very active congregation. I know a lot of people, but I didn’t know a lot of these people who were Federation leaders before I came here. I had never set eyes on them. I’ve been given gifts and contributions and notes from some of the wealthiest people in Philadelphia who are certainly not in my social step. I didn’t know them at all, but I helped to bring them in and helped them feel good about the community. Listening is the major skill of any development person. If you are a good listener and you know how to study body language, and you walk into an office—not like mine, which is denuded today, and see pictures on the wall and on someone’s desk, and you begin to know...look at this person not with a dollar sign—that’s a person. I think a lot of our professionals are intimidated by wealthy people. I always talk at a staff training about these issues. I object when professionals walk into a room and wait until all the volunteers are seated and then they sit together instead of interspersing themselves among people they don’t know, and should be cultivating for the institution. I feel very strongly that my strongest skill is in people development and in caring about people, and that’s why I felt when I became a fundraiser with a Masters in counseling psychology, that I would use my people skills to do what I was doing. I thought it always helped me, instead of going that counseling route.

INT: And you have a tremendous amount of self-assurance and security, which I think...some of it is taught but some of it is just the person. You can’t always teach that.

CAROLE: You can’t.

INT: You can give skills for that, but you have that ability you can’t expect everyone to have.

CAROLE: I guess. And I was thinking about it. Your interview with me was very helpful though touching the other day, but I think a lot of it goes back to family. It helped me crystallize some things in terms of my parents and the kind of people they were, which sort of helped me become that kind of caring person that really wanted to know about people and who liked being around people. It’s funny—my boss said to me the other day, “I bet you were a leader always from the time you were six.” And I wasn’t. I lost major elections I ran for in school. I had a lot of friends and I belonged to the right little girls’ club when they had the neighborhood clubs and stuff, but I was never a leader or the kind of person that encouraged sleep overs with six people or traveled in packs the way girls did. It really was as I got older, I guess, although I always felt good about what I was doing. I always had high standards for academic achievement. I play the piano and I did different kinds of stuff, but never was the kind of leadership person. I guess it was part of the development of being a person and maturing.

INT: But it sounds like you always felt pretty good about yourself.
CAROLE: I think I did, but that I credit my parents with. I really do. I think that’s where it all comes from.

INT: Let’s talk about some personal things. Tell me about how you met your husband. Who is he and how did you meet?

CAROLE: He is wonderful. I met him, and that’s one of the reasons I love Penn, on a blind date the second week I was at Penn. We used to go mid-year. I started Penn in February, and he was a senior who was graduating in June. I remember very clearly—because one of my high school graduation presents from my parents was matinee tickets to see “My Fair Lady” with Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews at the Erlanger Theater which is no longer. I came home that night. I went out on a blind date with my husband to a Penn-Princeton basketball game. The story is a good one how we met. He had a dear friend who was at Princeton and he went to Penn, and he commuted. The friend was at Princeton. The big basketball game...there was a big rivalry between Penn and Princeton. And a friend of mine was going out with this guy who was at Princeton, and my husband needed a date. She gave him three numbers. We were all girlfriends. The first number was at the library. It came down to me and another girl, Louise Shetback, and we were very good friends. My sister-in-law, who is fourteen months younger than my husband and they’re very, very close—a lot of people think he married me because I look like her-said, “But you already know Louise from Har Zion. Carole Weinheim and I take piano lessons from the same teacher and she’s a nice girl. Why don’t you call her? She’s different, and she’s only around the corner.” We lived about two blocks away. I was the convenient date. So that was our first date. I was seventeen years old. He took me away over the state line to Princeton. We came back. We went to Howard Johnson’s on Roosevelt Boulevard on the way home for something to eat. Got home very late really, and my mother was still waiting up for me. She was concerned. I was in a car. You know how mothers are. And I remember going upstairs—we lived in a little row house in Wynnewood. I remember walking up the steps and my mother coming out of her room and saying, “Well, did you have a good time?” I said, “Mother, I think I met the man I want to marry.” And my mother said—in those days it meant different things than it means today—my mother said, “You don’t know the first thing about marriage. Go to bed.” As I said at his sixtieth birthday party, “Today if somebody says that, going to bed was a different kind of thing.” And that’s how we met. He didn’t feel quite as strongly about me as I did about him. This friend of ours, who unfortunately later died—he committed suicide, I often think what would have happened if I had married him. He was a son of a very prominent rabbi in Philadelphia. It was very sad. He asked my husband, Sam, whether he could take me out, whether Sam would mind, because it was a blind date. He said he didn’t think so because I was sort of convenient.

I had another friend who I was in high school with who was six months behind me but we were both very into Spanish. She came to Penn six months after I did, and her name was Carolyn. Mine is Carole. And we were once at a party which was probably a year into our dating, at my sister-in-law and brother-in-law’s apartment. They lived on the Penn campus. She was still a student and he was a resident at PGH. We were talking about unusual spellings of names, and I said, “Well, I’m Carole with an “e” because my father loved Carole Lombard and while I was
named for my grandfather, that’s why my name is spelled, with an “e.” My brother-in-law, now brother-in-law said, “I thought your name is Carolyn,” at which point my husband turned white, my sister-in-law kicked him, and he was clearly confused. Carolyn has never married, and I do see her occasionally. It’s interesting. Every time her mother looks over at me in synagogue I think she thinks, “My daughter could have been married and had all these nice children.” She has a boyfriend but she never married.

INT: That’s a great story.

CAROLE: Anyhow, he truly was and is the love of my life and my dearest friend. We came from different family backgrounds though, and truly had a major fight on our honeymoon and I was ready to pack up and come home. Clearly we resolved it, but there were sticky issues the first couple of years that we were married.

INT: What was your wedding like?

CAROLE: I had a fabulous wedding at Har Zion.

INT: Did he belong to Har Zion?

CAROLE: We both grew up at Har Zion. I remember when he asked me to marry him. I was teaching in Beth Sholom at the time on Sundays, and I used to stop at my aunt’s for lunch on the way home. She lives in Germantown. I stopped to just tell her, and she said, “You better hurry home. The Karsches are coming over to visit your parents, and your father needs a bottle of scotch.” So I ran home. My in-laws were wealthy, my parents were not. My mother-in-law was a very prominent volunteer in the community, a little haughty, and I remember when I was dating my husband, my aunt, who loved me very much but said, “You know what? I’m afraid his mother is never going to let him marry you.” To the contrary. My mother-in-law was very supportive and said to him, “Either ask her to marry you or stop taking up so much of her time.” She was really nice. But they came in and started talking, from the first day they met my parents, about wedding. My mother said, “We have always been saving money and we thought that we’d...because Carole had a scholarship and we were able to put money away that we had planned for college, we’d someday like to give her a down payment on a house, and maybe have a small wedding when she got married.” So my mother-in-law said, “That will not be necessary. Don’t worry about that.” At that time they were wealthy. Unfortunately, they lost a lot of money. They also never gave the way my parents gave, even though my parents were working people. The resource allocation was very different. Of course they had three children and my parents had one, but even so they just never gave. They weren’t the same kind of givers. All of that has changed in later years, but at that time when we sort of needed it more, they didn’t. Anyhow, the parents agreed that since we were both going to be in school we would get married, we should have our own apartment, they would subsidize us and each would pay for the clothes and things like that. We didn’t have a car for years. After we were married we lived in a little furnished apartment at Penn. And my mother agreed to have the big wedding at Har Zion. In the end, my
mother-in-law had many more people there than my mother. She kept calling. “Oh, how can I not have this one and that one.” It was a fabulous wedding.

INT: How old were you?

CAROLE: When I got married I was nineteen. It was two months before my twentieth birthday, and my husband was twenty-three. He’s four years older than I. He was going into his last year in law school. I was going into my last year of college. We lived on campus. Our friends used to kid us because they never saw us together. “Do you ever get together any time but at night?” But we did have fairly separate lives. I promised my mother I would graduate before I had children. I did become pregnant after I graduated from college. My husband had been deferred from the draft while he was in law school. The funny thing is at graduation—the Penn graduation has thousands of people from all its schools, but we thought we’d never see each other—the law school and school of education sat right behind each other, so I sat a row behind him at graduation. I really wanted to get pregnant so he didn’t have to go into service frankly. I did fortunately and I had my first son when I was twenty-one years old. And then I had my other children. The difference between my first and second son is two years and nine months apart, and my second and third son is three years and nine months apart. I think I may have told you this. I used to come by public transportation from Penn to go to junior league meetings at Har Zion. It was always an important piece of my life.

INT: Tell me what the fight was about on your honeymoon.

CAROLE: He had come from a family that really thought they were hot stuff, and they were in many ways. I didn’t come from that kind of family. There were some cultural difference kind of stuff, and I thought he was arrogant and I will tell you, for years—and it’s so hard for anybody to even think about this, knowing my husband today. I had a cousin from Massachusetts who said, “He’s got a bump on his shoulder.” That was the Massachusetts expression. He really had his nose up in the air. I wasn’t like that. He had a lot of value judgements based on what his family’s standards were, and it was wonderful. They had a lovely, lovely family. They raised three extraordinary children, my in-laws. But there was something with it that just gave off vibes—we’re better than anyone else. I know someone who said, “Growing up, I really resented the Karsches instead of admiring them, because my parents, who were their good friends, would say why can’t you be like them all the time.” So when you carry that vision of yourself and it’s been ingrained in you, it’s hard to shake. He is the most caring, compassionate man. He has truly been my mentor, advisor, confidante, consultant in really everything, and particularly in knowing how a committed, caring Jew should act. He is a kind and gentle man who really doesn’t think about himself. The things that he’s done have been extraordinary.

I was once very offended at something in the community where I felt he did not get just recognition and I know it was hurtful to him too. But he went on to continue to give tremendous money and resources of time to this agency. It was one of the Federation’s agencies. He is able to overlook that. That’s the kind of person he is. That was another reason why I didn’t know that
wanted to become president of Har Zion, whether he had to live through this all again because I
do make him crazy with my stories and he gives me good input. He’s always been very proud of
me. In fact, agreeing that I would become an officer and a public person at Har Zion when he
really should have been far before I, because he was chairman of the religious committee that
really made women’s rights happen at Har Zion. He always felt by helping to position me in
certain roles, things could happen that would be positive, long-term change for Har Zion. Not a
lot of men would do that. They really wouldn’t. When I backed off of being an officer, I said to
them, “Now I think my husband can get what he really should have gotten in all these years,” and
he very quickly thereafter became like the next president.

INT: So he was the man behind the woman.

CAROLE: Always. Always very much. We’re very much a partnership. When that first service
award was given, it was given to us a couple. It’s never been given to another couple. They have
people each year that they recognize, but never like a couple. He’s the only man at Har Zion who
won a very prestigious Mens’ Club award called the BL Jacobs Award as a youth and as an adult.
When he got it as a youth, it was right after we became engaged. My ring was very new and
flashy. Then he won it as an adult later, and he was the only person in the congregation. He’s
very unusual.

INT: Before we talk about your children, let’s talk about Har Zion. (End of tape 3, side 1)

CAROLE: I felt my time and resources should go there, that that is what Jewish continuity is all
about. That is where Jews gather. That is where they should gather. That is where you learn
ethical behavior, as well as confidence about who you are. Never bothered me a pin that I was
“the Jewish person,” because I felt very confident about my Judaism, and I attribute it to Har
Zion, for the education. There were various roles that I played in the Har Zion community. I’ve
met and made my very dearest friends, who are all from Har Zion with very few exceptions. I
would say 90% of my friends have a Har Zion connection. It’s been very rewarding in many
ways.

INT: Can you talk about your children?

CAROLE: Yes. We have three sons. The oldest, Michael, is an attorney in Boca Raton. He has
three sons and a lovely wife, Andrea, whom he met at Penn. My middle son, Robert, also has a
lovely wife, Abby, whom he met at Penn. He was helping his brother move in and she was living
in the same house with his brother. At his wedding, my youngest son made the toast. He hopes
that Robert has as much fun living with Abby as he did. He wasn’t truly living with her in that
intimate way. The eyes in the staid Chicago audience went around—what is this boy talking about?
Robert is our middle son. He’s an orthopedic surgeon in Atlanta. My three sons are very
different. Joel is our youngest son. He lives in Philadelphia. He’s a vice-president of Morgan
Grenfell. He is single. I put on his bar mitzvah invitation “acharon, acharon, chaviv,” the very
last is precious, and he really is. They’re wonderful boys.
They’re each very different. Michael was a strong, sweet, loving firstborn. The good kid in school, the one all teachers loved. He’s just that kind of boy. And he’s always been kind and caring. All three of them really were the love of my parents’ life, but my father and Michael had a very special bond. You had to see these three boys sob at my father’s funeral. It was really quite incredible. Michael is very special in his way. Robert is a true middle child. He was the biggest pain in the butt to me and his teachers. I always used to say he’s terrific, fun, he has an infectious laugh that always got him out of trouble. You can’t be angry at him. He is truly lovable and kind and caring. His little girl is exactly the same way. She laughs the way he does. She has his laugh. It’s incredible. He looks like me and my father. Very strong Weinheim genes in him. Joel lived in the shadow of two very strong older brothers, both of whom became professionals, which was very hard. He academically got turned off, I guess, because of them and didn’t really get serious until he was a senior in college, and then he took an MBA at Temple and did extraordinarily well and has a great job. He’s really a terrific kid. We’re very blessed. We have three wonderful boys. So far two of them married Jewish girls. I have one to go. I think we’re lucky in that sense. They call all the time. They have bedrooms in their houses for us set aside so that we can come visit with them, and one daughter-in-law asks us for advice much more frequently than her parents. We’ve developed good relationships with the children as adults. We were good parents. We also raised our children in an affluent neighborhood. We were not affluent, although we were comfortable. That was difficult, to give middle-class values.

INT: What was it like? What was your neighborhood like?

CAROLE: We lived in Bala Cynwyd. They went to school with some very wealthy kids, and to Hebrew schools with some very wealthy kids. You know, Michael never, ever got into trouble. Robert got into some trouble and Joel got into a lot of trouble. Because I was working by then so I only—the first two I was every time they spit in school or at a game I was there—I couldn’t do all that for Joel, which I always felt guilty about. I nursed the first two. I didn’t nurse him. Real Jewish mother guilt. A friend of mine who is a single woman, who was my boss at Penn and mentor for me, and not Jewish, came to one of my Passover Seders, and at the end of the evening she said to me, “You’ll get where you want to in your career. What you’ve gotten and what you’ve done is really something that you can’t put any tangible values on. It’s quite extraordinary.” And I do feel that way. We were and are very supportive parents. We had high expectations for the children.

They resented some of the time and money we put into Har Zion and the community. I honestly say that. They felt, I think, that we were giving away things that should have gone to them, and there was a little resentment about that. My two boys both belong to a synagogue, the boys who are married. I think they have good Jewish values, I really do, and I think they’re caring men. They really are kind and thoughtful and sweet, but also being very masculine. I was clearly the queen. To really be in a house of men is a very different feeling. You miss having a daughter, I’m sure, because I was very, very close to my mother. It’s something that she always felt badly that I didn’t have. And because I was so close to my father, I felt badly that my husband didn’t have that relationship with a daughter, and I see with my son, who has the daughter—it’s special. I
mean my other son is a wonderful father with his three boys. He is great. My friend, Elaine Wolpe, who had four boys said “G-d knew what he was doing when he didn’t give certain people girls.” And I may have been a very different mother with a girl. I don’t know. Maybe there is a reason. I think I was able to raise three fine young men.

INT: What were their bar mitzvahs like?

CAROLE: Great, wonderful. They were accomplished. They studied hard. They continue to be marvelous Torah readers in the synagogue and in fact read for their aufrufs, for their weddings. They were wonderful. The first one I was president of the Sisterhood at the time in Har Zion. It was in the old 54th Street. My house was also robbed five days before the bar mitzvah, and I spent the whole week in the police station. They took everything I had—every piece of jewelry. Two nights before, when we were trying up ribbons for the napkins, my girlfriends came and threw all their jewelry on the table and said “take whatever you want.” I always resented that my mother-in-law never offered, by the way, who has beautiful jewelry, not to give it to me, but to lend something to me. My mother didn’t have jewelry. She wasn’t a person who needed jewelry. And you know when you’re dressed up, it’s important to have some. I didn’t have a ring. I had a gold wedding band and that was about it. Fortunately, I had gorgeous diamond earrings which my husband’s grandmother gave me—not to her granddaughter but to me. It had been an exquisite four carat ring, two, two carat diamonds. But my husband was so good to his grandparents and their relationship was close. Even when they were little and she said “I need a quart of milk,” he was always the one. And as an adult, he was the one who took his children down. They didn’t. He’s special. It was difficult but it was wonderful. The second and third were...the second one was in 54th Street. The third one, my youngest son, was at the new synagogue in Penn Valley. For the second and third I had luncheons at home, which was a whole different kind of experience.

There were women’s rights issues with all three bar mitzvahs. In a sense, by the time I got to the third one and I participated, I felt really good. They were great. It was wonderful. They all went through confirmation and Hebrew high school and graduated from Hebrew high school and went through confirmation. Then they all went to Penn. Two of them took their graduate degrees in Penn as well. My two daughters-in-law went to Penn. One has two degrees. It’s a very Penn family.

INT: So your level of involvement in the Jewish community sort of started early on. What was it like in your home? What was Passover like? What were your holidays like?

CAROLE: My husband, as I think I told you, came from a more observant family that I did, and just assumed that we would be kosher, which we were at home and we are kosher out, although we weren’t in the beginning, but we are now. Holidays and rituals were a very important piece of our lives. We built a sukkah when we lived in Bala Cynwyd. When my father died I stopped. He used to help us build it, but we had a sukkah and we used to have a big open house for sukkos. I made everything that we served myself, for like a hundred people. Holidays were always
important. Friday night dinner was a must, not only when they were little but as they got to be pretty old. It comes to a point where life goes on, but as long as I really had control, Friday night dinner was at home. They were there. They were expected to be there. I felt that’s a way to connect them to who they are. In the early years, my mother-in-law had a lot of the Jewish family dinners, my mother had the...like the American dinners, because Sam’s sister and brother both lived out of town. I took on that responsibility from both of them at a certain point, so I did the two Seders in my house and I did Thanksgiving and Mother’s Day and everything else. Being the only one here on both sides, I got “stuck all the time.” But we did everything. We did everything. Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Thanksgiving, and did also all the major Jewish holidays.

INT: When did you go back to work?

CAROLE: I went back to work...when I finished being the president of Har Zion sisterhood was when I really needed more than just going back for meetings. I think it was when my youngest son, Joel, who is now thirty-two was about eight or nine. I worked only on a part time basis at Penn, twenty hours a week. I remember once asking my son Robert to sweep the floor or do something for me, you know, I didn’t have time, after all, I’m working, and he said, “You went back to work. That was your decision.” Joel, early on, resented it, and I realized why. I was making almost nothing, and I was so concerned about not having to pay to park, to look for a parking spot, that I used to get him up really early, get him out for school earlier than he had to be for the bus and all that, and he really didn’t like it. First of all, I guess it was part of “I don’t like Mommy not going to be there.” Once I got a parking spot that I paid for and I let him sleep a little later, he was happy about my working.

INT: Something so simple.

CAROLE: And the fact that I worked on Penn’s campus while they were all there was fun too, because they used to come to see me, I used to meet them for lunch. It was fun.

INT: Tell me about your grandchildren, the real loves of your life.

CAROLE: The joy. I once did a needlepoint for my mother-in-law that said “Grandchildren are G-d’s rewards for growing old,” and I really believe it. They bring a special joy. What everybody said is absolutely true. First of all, I think you look at your own child as a parent, and that connection is quite extraordinary when you first hold that child, and it’s a piece of you, so you’re assured continuity. You look at this child of yours in a whole different light, which is very rewarding. But the ability to have this-in a sense it’s unconditional love the other way-that parents used to give the children-grandchildren give to grandparents. That’s why with ours living far away...when they lived in New York it was hard enough. Our granddaughter was born in Atlanta. Actually, we were all there for the Olympics and she was born during the Olympics. It was great. The other grandparents were there and we were there. It was really wonderful. She was our gold I always keep saying. But my grandchildren in Florida call us Nana and Butch, and that could tell you something. I was supposed to be Grandma. My mother was alive when they were
born and she was Nanny and my son did not want anybody else to have anything like my mother’s name. So it ended up that I was supposed to be Grandma Carole and the other was Grandma Norma.

After my mother died I really wanted to be Nana, and that’s what they call me. We were taking care of our oldest grandson in New York once. It was one of these gorgeous January days. He didn’t even wear a hat. He had this blondish-brown hair. My husband rubbed his head and said, “You are the cutest little butch,” and he said, “No, you’re butch,” and ever since then he calls him Butch, and Butch once went to class when he was at Trinity in New York, where they had to introduce him. It was Parents Day but the kids were away and we were babysitting. And Brandon had to introduce him to the class and the class started laughing. He said, “Don’t you laugh at my Butch.” My daughter-in-law in Atlanta doesn’t like the Butch, so he’s Zaida, which he always wanted to be, and I’m Nana. When Emily was born, I said to my grandson Brandon, who is the oldest, “Do you think you could call Butch Zaida Butch or call him Zaida?” And he said, “No. We can’t do that. We already have a Zaida. Butch’s Daddy is our Zaida,” which was true. My husband gave one of the eulogies for his father when he died, and told that story, and he said, “Brandon, I guess now you have a Zaida.” However, they call him Butch and they love him and it’s wonderful. My middle grandson is just so precious. After the first one you think how can you share...like with children. How could you... He is just...I smile when I think about him. He is just the sweetest piece of sugar. The older one is tougher and he is just a little angel, sweetness. He talked late. He is a brilliant child. My other son and daughter-in-law, (not his parents) but who are a doctor and nurse, made me crazy. They told me he’s autistic, he’s this, he’s that. I didn’t sleep for months with this one, and he is like an angel. We just had our third little boy, who I will see this week-I can’t wait. Being apart from them-when they lived in New York we ran up there...the other two where...we would meet them on the Turnpike halfway and take them for a weekend and then bring them back to their parents. We spent a lot of time babysitting and taking care of them, and I loved every minute of it.

My granddaughter is a whole different experience. She’s named for my mother, and my oldest grandson is named for my father, which is very special. We never asked our children to do that but they did it. This Emily is like my little angel. I truly kvell from her, and I’m so glad to have a Karsch girl to break the mold. When she was born and we were there for the Olympics, nobody could believe it. And I knew Robert was going to do it. He was the kind of kid that always did something different. He had to be different from his brother in some way. I always used to think about my mother after she died and say, “You’re going to have a name. I know it. Robert is going to do it.” And he did. And his child is just so precious and it’s so wonderful to have. And we’re wonderful together, even though we don’t see each other that often. It really is a reward, and G-d willing, they will have another child in April. I don’t know what it is, but from being an only child to then have three children, two daughters-in-law and now four and hopefully five grandchildren soon, and one’s not even married yet—it’s just a whole different feeling for me. I never knew what I missed as an only child until I saw my husband with his brother and sister, because they’re very close. That’s why I have three children. It’s wonderful. It was wonderful being an only child. It’s very hard when your parents grow older and when they die particularly.
It truly is a reward.

INT: That’s great. This might sound strange, but do you have any leisure time and what do you do in it?

CAROLE: I do. I love to read. I was playing tennis a little bit but my back is not really up to it. What I do for fun is really be with friends, read. The summertime is my favorite time. We have an apartment at the shore and my greatest pleasure is to take a book, turn my chair to the ocean-away from all the talkers-and just sleep on the beach and read and do that kind of stuff.

INT: Who are some of your friends or other family members you’re really close to that you might want to mention?

CAROLE: I’m very, very close to my sister-in-law who lives in Florida, Ruth Stackner. She has been really a sister-like person. We look alike and we kid people all the time. We ask them, “How do you think we’re related?” And they say, “Well, of course you’re sisters.” To have that relationship has been really a special treasure. She and her husband and my husband and I are exceptionally close and connected. It doesn’t matter when we get together physically. We talk to each other about everything on the phone all the time. I speak to her more probably than my mother-in-law. Before my mother died, she made Ruth promise that she would take care of me and fill that gap and she really has. My husband has a younger brother who lives in Tucson whose wife’s name is also Carol Karsch, and she’s a professional in the Jewish communal world. We’re not as close with them, although he and his brother, I think, are, but we’re certainly close. It’s wonderful to have extended family, nieces, nephews, all these things. The Florida sister-in-law’s children I am much closer to, and my children are much closer to, because they all lived in Philadelphia when they were very little for a while and truly bonded.

I have two male cousins in particular, who are brothers, Carl and Marc Beresin, who live in Philadelphia, who are really like brothers to me. I am very close to them and their wives. We always laugh. If we have something for friends or family, we all always make both lists with each other because the ones who have a place in Florida near my kids filled in for us at the Bris when we had to come home, and my cousin played the grandfather role. So it’s wonderful to have cousins, friends, who are like family. It’s very interesting. Probably three of my closest friends are three men. One is my rabbi, Rabbi Wolpe, who’s had an extraordinary influence on our lives and relationship. Howard First, who delivered my three children. He was my gynecologist but he’s my buddy and his wife Barbara is truly one of my very, very dearest, closest friends. Also sister-like. She is a sister-like friend. And Ted Seidenberg, who’s the past-president of Federation, who brought me here, and his wife Bubbles...we moved to Independence Place because of them. We met them on a Federation mission in 1984 when we went to Poland and Israel. We were both volunteers, my husband and I, at that point. I didn’t want to go. I didn’t want to go to Poland. I didn’t want to spend the money. I didn’t want to go with them because I thought they were snobby, Bubbles, and we always laugh about it. We both fell in love with each other truly on the mission. We moved to Independence Place because of them. Bubbles is in
Florida now and Ted was up for a meeting recently, and I said to him...he was a happy man; he was between his two favorite girlfriends, Mimi and me, because we are. We are the two women, other than his wife, that he really loves. So the Seidenbergs have become marvelous, wonderful friends.

Mimi spoke at my party the other night, Mimi Schneirov, and you know she’s an extraordinary woman. Sam and Mimi always worked very closely together in the community. We were tangential friends, but we think so much alike about so many things. Our backgrounds are so similar. She has three girls and I have three boys. We have become very close friends on an intellectual as well as an emotional level. I hope I was there to support her when she needed me, when she was sick. She’s an extraordinary lady. Barbara First, Howard First’s wife, is probably my closest female friend. Their brother-in-law and sister-in-law, or brother and sister-in-law, Sandy and Stewart First, are also. I have a couple of friends who are like family. Cookie and Billy Perilstein. We were really synagogue friends. Sam knew them growing up, I didn’t, but we’ve become very, very close. Florrie Silvers is another extraordinary lady. She and her late husband Arnold...Arnold and Sam were very, very close. She’s the one who cares about me all the time, cares about my children. Just very loving and supportive. She’s a nice lady to interview for you too. Also, my friend Ryda Rose, a mentor who brought me to Penn and like an older sister.

INT: It’s a great network of friends.

CAROLE: Friends who are like family. I had an interesting situation on Yale Road. Two friends, one of whom became my friend at Har Zion although our husbands knew each other, Gert and Ed Joseph, and one we didn’t know before, became very good friends through the synagogue. The Josephs didn’t want to live next door to us when a house became available. They bought across the street. And we were very, very close friends. Debby Baskin, who also worked here (Federation), and my husband actually helped her get her job here, and her late husband moved into the neighborhood about two weeks after we did. Her mother and my mother-in-law were at a luncheon together and found out that they would have a child on the same block. I introduced myself when they first moved in. They used to call us the golden triangle. We were in each other’s houses. We were in each other’s lives. We were inseparable. Gert died when she was fifty-nine. It was a tremendous loss. This was a friend who was a full time mother-homemaker. She never worked. Intellectually, we were probably not at the same level but we were really like sisters, and Debbie with us. Her death was a terrible loss to me. Debbie is still very close.

INT: How old was she?

CAROLE: Fifty-nine. She had an aneurysm and she died in a few days and they finally disconnected her. It was horrible to see that happening. It was like a piece of me died. And once again, she was someone who my mother always loved. She called her Gertie. She was good to everybody. She also promised my mother that we’d always be together, and she died nine months
after my mother. It was a terrible year, to lose two people like that. They are probably the people that are closest. We developed other wonderful friendships through Har Zion, Albert and Arlene Perlstein. Albert was also a president of the synagogue. Arlene and I were in high school, through college, together. We traveled together. The Belmans-Cookie Belman and I were friends when we were five years old. We were very tangential friends, but since I’ve worked at Federation we went to London together last year. We see each other a lot in the summer. We go to chamber concerts together. My life, through my organizational work, my life is really connected with so many wonderful people. And I think as an only child, perhaps you reach out more. There was one cousin on my father’s side, a female cousin, my only female cousin really, that I bonded with, Pat Friedman. She lives in Florida so I don’t see her very much anymore. There’s been an interplay of family and friends and family-like friends who have been very important.

INT: What shape would you say your spirituality takes in your religious life, or your family life, or your communal life? How do you experience spirituality?

CAROLE: Interesting. Mimi expressed a little bit of that the other night. I’m always proud to be a Jew. I’m not afraid to have that commitment. It’s a piece of me that can’t be separated. It’s just part of my being. I love lighting the Shabbat candles. I feel very cheated in life that my children live out of town and that I don’t have the real Shabbat experience anymore, so I try to have friends for Shabbat sometimes. I miss that, because I do think that is a...to look around the table, an accomplishment. It’s funny. Har Zion’s Sisterhood did a wonderful cook book a number of years ago which was reprinted and is now out of print. I was on the committee, and people were selected to write a chapter about holiday celebration. They gave me the one I hate the most—Passover. However, at the end—because I change everything in my house and it is a big chore when you’re kosher to really do Passover right—I mean I hate it. And I don’t like to enter into competitions with some of my more religious friends about who’s better or does it better. That’s not the issue. It’s a lot of work, however you do it. I remember when I wrote that chapter, at the end of it I said, but when the Jewish woman sits down at the table and looks around at her family, there is a reward. I had a spiritual connection, as I told you, the first time I carried a Torah in Har Zion, and I felt a continuity of religion. I was a woman who was asked to read a prayer when they dedicated the new synagogue in Penn Valley twenty-some years ago. To have the opportunities I have had in my life, to look down on the pulpit on the high holidays to address 2400 people, to connect in a Jewish way, I think has enriched my life in many ways. I don’t think I wear it on my sleeve the way some people do, and I find that really objectionable, but it’s part of everything that I do, and there’s a comfort level that I’m not afraid to talk about things from a Jewish ethical viewpoint. I feel good about it. I credit my husband for bringing a lot of that into my life really. When I go to synagogue on Shabbat morning, and we do go regularly; we don’t go as early as we used to when we were presidents, but we go regularly. Sitting there is a period of tranquility and restfulness for me, even though I object to certain things about the service. I think things are changing. I’m on the search committee for the new rabbi. The rabbi is one of my dearest, closest friends but I know it’s time for change and talking about things that need to be changed, because I care about the next generation’s developing the kinds of things that I had about my Judaism. So I just guess it’s with me all the time. There are certain times, holidays, that we bring the family
INT: So your life choices have been motivated somewhat...

CAROLE: Somewhat. I would say somewhat. We find some religious or spiritual feeling. Do I talk to G-d the way a previous generation did? You’re shaking your head. On occasions. On occasions. On occasions I’ve been angry. When my mother died, my father died, terrible times. When my older son had some difficult, personal, professional experiences, and this is a child who never gave me a day’s trouble, and it really caused me great anguish and I started to think how could G-d do these things? When I went to Auschwitz for the first time. You have to ask those kinds of questions, but you can’t and I know you can’t and I know that we’re not here to question why certain things like that happen. I always feel that everything in life happens for a reason. I truly believe that. And you do have...I believe G-d really does have a master plan for people, but I do think that doesn’t excuse you from acting in your life as though you have control, because I think you do have control over a lot of things in your life. You clearly don’t have the control over when you’re going to live and when you’re going to die, and that affects so much else that you want to do.

INT: I wish I could bring you and your impressions with me when I have to give this speech.

CAROLE: I’ll come. I’ll come with you.

INT: You’re touching on a lot of things. I said this to somebody. I think one of the reasons I didn’t sleep so well this week was you, and a lot of things that you made me think about. (End of tape 3, side 2) We were talking about Gratz, other Jewish organizations that you’ve been involved with.

CAROLE: I just wanted to add one thing to what we were talking about in terms of how being a woman and a different style of leadership, I think, and Jewish background affected. I have always spoken publicly, which I love to do. Even early on when I did it in junior league and I did book reviews and things, and my mother-in-law just mentioned this to me-I always took those responsibilities very seriously. I prepared. I always had something written. Even if I knew it by heart, I just felt that it was serious when you present yourself in front of a group, and I love to use Jewish sources and Hebrew for quotes. Women don’t do that a lot. They’re not comfortable with it. Not only Hebrew quotes. I’ve used others as well, but it was always something that I did and it was interesting. Rabbi Wolpe spoke about that when I went out of office, that in terms of bringing that kind of perspective, I think, is a bit unusual. It’s hard work. I read the Sedra. I look through books. But it’s satisfying. You asked me about my leisure. It’s one of the things I enjoy doing, and spending a lot of time on and crafting and recrafting. There’s nothing more important than the printed and spoken word and communications. In writing, particularly when I was president of the synagogue, I instituted all kinds of things-thank-you notes to people who give high holiday gifts, things that men would never even think of. For years they never wrote a note, and they finally wrote it on a little card but they used the same kind of card, the same kind of
thing that I started. There are simple things like that that I think make a difference in people-to-
people connection that I think being a woman is very helpful.

I was on the board of Gratz for a short while. I resigned from that board because my
husband became president, the founding president, of the Central Agency for Jewish Education,
now Auerbach CAJE, and was president. They didn’t have a real executive director and then they
hired one a couple of years later and lost one. He had a longer term than most people do. He
really built the organization. I was very hurt when they had the dedication ceremonies and of
course we were there, but everybody got into I, I, I that day-Bennett Aaron, Mimi Schneirov,
Ted Seidenberg-all my good friends. Adina Potok, who followed him as president, who used to
call him seven in the morning and at eleven at night-she really couldn’t run that organization at
first without him until I finally said, “Adina, eleven’s enough, eleven o’clock at night, ten
o’clock at night, you don’t have to call for CAJE stuff.” Everybody...nobody recognized his role
except...at least he heard his name mentioned-Isaac Auerbach, when he spoke that day, said that
when Sam Karsch came to see him and talk to him about a gift for the agency, it was the first
time he really thought about doing something at this level and for this kind of institution. I was
fuming. I didn’t say anything to my husband. We walked into the new building, which is lovely,
for the supper, whatever they were having, and Helene Tigay, who was a good friend and still a
very good friend and is really a wonderful woman exec, and I knew Jeff, her husband, very well
from Penn. I helped Jewish studies a lot when I was at Penn, and that was something I did almost
as a volunteer rather than a professional. I did a lot of behind the scenes consulting for them,
being Jewish. I said, “Mazel Tov. This was marvelous.” Normally, when I have something bad to
say to people I never do it when they’re in the midst of their celebration. I guess I lost my cool.
She said to me, “You know, we never could have done any of this without Sam.” I said,
“Interesting that you should say that, Helene. I know that and you know that, but I don’t know
that anybody else here does, because he was not recognized in any way,” and I walked away. He
built it and Adina moved in, you know, took over the leadership and brought it into another
stage, but he had done everything that they talked about that night. Everybody was brought up
who gave a big gift. All these people that he worked with and did everything, and they never
mentioned his name. It was all I, I, I, I, I. And I talked to Mimi about it afterwards, much
afterwards. I said, “Nobody mentioned Sam. You worked so closely with Sam and you chaired
the search committee for the exec and then you lost one and you had another exec.” Bennett
Aaron and Bob Forman, the day after Sam finished being president of Har Zion, took him to
lunch at the Locust Club and said, “You’re the only person in Philadelphia-because there were a
lot of fights with Gratz College at that time...Gratz College was not producing and they were
taking away responsibilities from Gratz College-you’re the only person that will be accepted,
Sam and bridge the gap.” He was a graduate of Gratz College. He had been president of Har
Zion. He was on the Jewish education committee of Federation. He was always respected as
being a very fair person. And I said, “My husband is a bigger man than I am. I would have
walked away and never done another thing for that organization.” He continued to give it his
time, his money, his love.

That’s one of the problems in communal life. You don’t do it for recognition, but when
it's time, at an appropriate time, and it's very incumbent upon the professionals, I think, to remember that. You have to give people the recognition, the credit. Credit’s cheap, it doesn’t cost a penny. It really doesn’t.

INT: What about the Har Zion award? How did that make you feel?

CAROLE: The Har Zion award was wonderful. It was wonderful because I got it with my husband, and I think the fact that we were recognized together, and when we were recognized...the purpose of the award from the beginning has since changed—it was for people who gave service, as it was originally founded, not only to the synagogue but to the community. And it was wonderful that we were the first recipients, because we were like the apple pie and motherhood couple. You couldn’t find fault. It’s always hard when you choose the first anything. The first, I think, always has to be a little...first woman, first anything, a little...is looked at with closer scrutiny. Not that you’re any better than anybody else, but you have to be less questionable. You can’t raise doubts in people’s minds. It was wonderful to do it together. When we walk down, when the presidents of Har Zion walk down the aisle for something major, and we walk, we are each other’s partners carrying those Torahs on the High Holidays, it’s very special. Nobody else does that.

INT: Tell me about travels? We can do that real quick.

CAROLE: We love to travel. I’ve been to Israel many times. Our first trip to Israel was in 1969, with Efrie Specter, who had been the assistant rabbi at Har Zion and had left, but had put this group together. It was wonderful. We have been many, many times, both separately and together. Since I’ve worked here, I’ve had the opportunity to go without my husband a number of times. We made two trips to the Soviet Union in the Seventies to visit refuseniks. We were very active in the Soviet Jewry freedom committee. This, I guess, perhaps I can talk about now, which I couldn’t talk about then. There’s a very strong Soviet Jewry committee in Philadelphia. Connie and Joe Smukler were the leaders, the Silvers, a lot of people were involved. We were involved in it too, but we were tapped by an Israeli group to go under their auspices and differently. We never could talk about that publicly. We were briefed and debriefed in Brooklyn. It was a very different kind of thing. In fact, the group that we were sent by was really under the auspices of the Israeli government. It was a very special kind of experience. We never talk about that publicly, although we spoke here and in other places for years about the experiences, which were quite moving. Quite moving and a very profound Jewish experience to go into an apartment in the Soviet Union on Shabbat and see candles burning, and see people trying to maintain dietary laws at such great personal expense, and to see people putting themselves on the line because they were Jewish.

One of the most memorable things of one of those trips was...Sam and I got another award together from Federation and Har Zion in 1983. I spoke about the synagogue being the heart that helped me develop a reaction to things, and the Federation being the head that was able to put them into place. In those days, each person that went would find out what people needed
and the next chain would bring it back. There were some marvelous experiences to talk about like that. One-I remember standing on a very dark street corner in Leningrad with this handsome young man who I met outside the synagogue and then in someone’s apartment and we said, “What can we send you?” He looked at me and said, “Send us your voices,” which really meant the human connection, and it always stayed with me that what we were really doing was that we are really one people. There’s a wonderful Hebrew poem about from one stem we have been hewn, and it’s so true. We are one people and that’s why I think doing things for the Jewish community-although I always did things in both worlds-is special and different. I do believe that all Jews are responsible for one another and I do believe that that’s something special that we have.

I was always involved in PTA and all that kind of stuff. I started the Cynwyd school newsletter and worked on the Lower Merion Task Force for language study. I always wanted to do those things too. Always connected someway through in something that I cared about and knew about.

INT: I think you’ve answered a lot of these questions. These are the questions that are called being Jewish and being a woman. I’ll just ask very quickly and if you’ve answered them you can say “I’ve answered them.” What’s been your greatest challenge as a Jewish working woman?

CAROLE: Making time for everything and there is an expense. The expense is of you as a person really. There’s no question. I am tired, feel run down, feel like I have so much on my shoulders. My husband made a major career change about eleven years ago and decided to give up the practice of law. He was burned out. I remember the day he told me. I was still working at Penn. We just moved into our lovely Center City apartment. We were sitting on rented furniture at that time. Our furniture hadn’t come. He looked so terrible. He really looked awful. He said, “I have something to tell you and it can’t wait any longer.” I had just come in from one of these fabulous Penn events in New York. I mean something very glamorous, and here I was and I walked in. I thought he was going to tell me he was dying. That was the look he had on his face. So then when he told me he didn’t want to be a lawyer anymore, it wasn’t so terrible. And he was going to tell his partners and he was looking to buy a business. By the time he left, and they had one of these fabulous dinner-dances and all that, and lawyers walked out with just themselves basically, the whole market had changed. It was hard to get a business. I was the only person working for a number of years and I did resent it. I was doing a lot of things, and I must say it was a trying time for us. It was probably the only difficult, really difficult time in our marriage in terms of us and with friends. It included our dear friend Elaine Wolpe, who would say to me, “I don’t understand him. Why doesn’t he just take a job someplace, do something. Why is so much on you?” That’s why I think he’s been so supportive now. He knows I really did it. I was the breadwinner. I never expected to be the breadwinner in my family, which I was for a certain period of years. Now he’s doing some wonderful things that he loves. Money was not just the issue. It required some lifestyle changes and adjustments, that’s not the question, which I didn’t resent in any way. I guess I resented more the fact that I...especially in the beginning when he was networking and trying to look to buy a business, I would come home dying every day and he
would look like...here he was all dressed up. He was going out. He earned it, all the years that he worked, but he was burned out. And, I think, because he was in a firm that was mainly non-Jewish. When he left being corporate counsel for a firm in Philadelphia, and was stolen away—they wanted him in private practice perhaps...these were wonderful people but they didn’t have the same dynamism that some of our Jewish friends had. Maybe he would have felt differently about that. But it was a trying time for everybody.

My kids were very upset and they made jokes about it at his party. They really found it...they just couldn’t believe it. His parents were too stable...to walk out of a law firm as a partner for no reason? They thought he was really sort of odd. I think he was going through a midlife crisis and that’s how it came out. Some men do it with other women. I’m glad to say he didn’t. But I think that’s what it was. That was probably a challenge for me as a woman, to really be able to not fill myself up with resentment and angry, hostile feelings, and to try to check them. And there were some trying times and there were some times when I just really didn’t want to deal with him or talk to him, that I just didn’t like the direction he was going and I didn’t feel he was listening to me. He never had really professional help. I thought maybe perhaps...I mean his brother, his sister, were comforting to me, and one or two dear friends who he listened to who told him not to go into business. That was a difficult period, challenging period for me.

**INT:** How did you get past it?

**CAROLE:** I’m a strong person. I dealt with it, and sometimes I could hear myself speaking to him in a way that I was not proud of myself for, and my mother, I remember, used to say, “He’s such a wonderful person. So he made one mistake. Just hang in there. Hang in there.”

**INT:** That brings me to my next question. What special talents or qualities—you have talked about this, but I just thought it was something to think about—have you brought to your work and your family in the Jewish community?

**CAROLE:** I just think it’s who I am and what I represent, and that I could be a good role model for people, and that I love people. It doesn’t matter to me...the cleaning lady that comes in at night—I’m just as friendly and chat with this lady as with the president of the Federation. It doesn’t matter to me because I just value people. That’s probably my biggest strength. And I care. I think I’m a caring person.

**INT:** What do you think it means to be Jewish and female in the twentieth century and then going into the twenty-first century?

**CAROLE:** I think there are wonderful opportunities for women. I think in general, you cannot have it all as a woman though, and I think it’s still something that’s hard for the younger generation to capture. There is still something different about being a mother, about bearing children and feeling a responsibility for them, about keeping the family together, about making peace in the family, about having holidays and doing all these things. And there’s going to be an
expense of something. I do not believe you can have it all and I think that women need to accept that.

INT: As women's roles have evolved and continue to change, be identified, what is your hope for the future of women's involvement in the Jewish community?

CAROLE: I think that women are an underutilized resource. I think part of it is the way some women conduct themselves though, and I remember somebody, some leadership women in Federation, coming to see me when I first came here and said, “You’ve achieved so much as a woman. You this, you that. Help us. We want to get better positions in the organization.” They didn’t like some of my answers, which were you have to conduct yourself and present yourself as a serious person. When you chew gum, when you sit and munch at meetings, you’re not going to be recognized as a credible person. I think women need to be educated in dealing with financial matters, in dealing with the things that I don’t want to call a man’s world, but I think in the big world you need to deal with and know. I think they need skill training in money management, understanding...and I think that they are recognized for giving too...the money issue and the giving issue, which has always marked communal leadership everywhere...I don’t think that women deserve to be someplace just because they’re women. I think they have to be good at what they do and bring something to the table. I think they need male mentors to help them do that. I think they will continue to do that. As much as we think there is equality, there is not. We’re making less than men. In anything you look out...they’re on fewer corporate boards. So the woman who is a star, who brings everything to...like a Betsy Cohen, will get recognized in a lot of places, but there’s a whole bunch of other women that will get lost by the wayside and I think that’s unfortunate. I think that a lot of it descends to our religious traditions as a patriarchal religious society, which is...times have changed. And I think the old boy’s clubs and networks are very strong in the Jewish community just the way they are in the greater world. It’s getting in, and once you’re in, caring about bringing other women in with you, not just being in for yourself.

INT: Where do you see yourself in the picture?

CAROLE: I see myself taking more time personally for myself, which I’ve never been able to do in my life. I hope I can do that. I never put me first. It’s time. I’m sixty. I see too many of my friends getting around me and not being able to enjoy their later years. I also truly would like to be a consultant. It’s something I’ve always dreamed of, being somebody else’s expert. As I said at my party the other night, instead of just quoting prophets, I’d like to be one, my field, that’s being a consultant. In other words, I don’t want to go back and just have friends and good times-I mean more of that, and I also want to try a new rewarding professional association.

INT: Any advice or warning that you’d offer to your children or successors if they become involved in the Jewish community?

CAROLE: My advice to people is always do the best that you can in whatever you are doing, and you will be recognized for that. I never worried about titles or positions. I always just wanted
to be valued for who I was and what I presented and could bring to the table. The rest of it comes. It comes. I saw that at this party. People came, some of the biggest, most important...people that never walked into Federation. They may be on the boards or something tangentially, so they were invited, but they don’t ever come to anything, from some very wealthy people, from secretaries, from new young staff. I feel if I’ve touched people’s lives I’ve been successful, and I hope to be able to continue to touch people in my family, more touching of my family, but also I’m never going to stop being a volunteer. I am besieged now with volunteer opportunities. I’m going to pick and choose what I want to do and probably going to accept a board in one of the Jewish agencies in Philadelphia, probably Jewish Family and Children’s Service, because I care most about their mission. I care about families.

INT: Is there any message that you want to end with or anything that we haven’t talked about that you want to say at this point, so we can wrap it up?

CAROLE: One piece that we got into earlier in terms of a difficult professional challenge that I had. I had spoke a little about my boss and a trusting situation. I will also tell you that he has been wonderful to me. He allowed my husband to participate in a mission in a very significant way that is not normal. He praises me. He’s been kind to me. I think once we got over our rough spot, our relationship even became more respectful one with the other. It’s been nice to be his partner and I think it’s okay to be a partner and not always the top person, but the person that you feel good that you’re helping someone else succeed. He and I talked recently about why other staff members aren’t as comfortable in doing that for him, bringing him information, helping him write a letter, doing those kinds of things. I think it’s because my development background too, that you make other people look good and it’s not always yourself that you’re promoting all the time. I’ve gotten extraordinary recognition and kovod the past few weeks when it was announced that I was leaving. That, in itself, to know that I’ve touched lives in that kind of way was...I think it’s wonderful and I think people should learn to have that kind of gratification. It’s great to be involved and we have a caring community. It’s been pleasurable to me to look back and see that I’ve had some influence in being a mentor for future generations and that the younger generations taking leadership roles in the synagogue now still call me for advice, and that I’m on the search committee for the rabbi so that I will help craft the future of the synagogue into the next generation. That’s all been very positive. There are a few negatives, and there have been, and there have been difficult times. I think that I’ve been able to overcome and go further.

INT: Any message? Just one statement.

CAROLE: Be who you are and know who you are, and don’t try to be who you’re not. Just sell your own strengths in whatever you’re trying to do. Being a promoter of yourself is okay if you have something to be proud of promoting. And choose the right husband.

INT: Thank you very much. (End of analysis)