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Carrie Noble Kline

Corky

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Interviewer: Michael Kline

MK: Do you have a pseudonym that you use?

#1: Not really, just--. You can pick something [laughs].

MK: You can pick one, what's a name you like?

#1: What's a name I like? You can use Corky. That was a nickname that I had when I was a kid. I've thought about going back to that at times.

MK: Date of birth?

#1: March 14th 1956. Born in

MK: Can you tell me a little bit about your people and the community that you grew up in?

#1: Umm. Oh Gosh, my people--. I felt--. Well, my family was very entrenched in the Mormon Church. The Mormon religion. My parents had both moved from My father grew up His grandfather, in fact was a polygamist there. Had three wives His father was basically a businessman, he had owned a number of different businesses in . . . , an ice-packing company, even a silver mine at one point that he owned there that never really turned out anything for him, but--.

My mother grew up in . . . a small town My father was a chemist--. Well he had started out as a glass blower for many years but he went back to school and finished a PHD in Chemistry at He had gone to--. I think he started out at . . . College in . . . then . . . University and finished up at the University of. . . . He met my mother while he was at . . . University. He then took a job with . . . Company out in . . . as a Research Chemist.

Most of the relatives were still back in We felt, I guess at the time, I felt kind of like an outsider in many ways in . . . as kind of the token Mormon [laughs]. At the schools often but--. Was raised as Mormon, kind of followed along that route for years and years just assuming that, that was what I had to do. I really didn't know anything else. It was--. It's a very tight social group, in the Mormon Church. Everything was pretty much planned out from the time that I was a kid. You go through certain ages, as a young boy, especially--. Went through the Mormon Priesthood where you go through the steps of Deacon, Teacher, and Priest these different levels in the male priesthood, at certain ages, 12, 14, 16, everything's kind of planned out for you.

There are a lot of events and activities within the local church that kind--. It keeps you tied into that. It wasn't until I really got out on my own, probably in my mid-twenties, [laughs] that I really started to consider that there were other options that I didn't necessarily didn't have to follow that belief system. But I went through the process of going through the Mormon Church, basically trying to please, please them. Went on a mission with a Mormon missionary in . . . when I was 19 after attending . . . University for one year. It was kind of the family tradition of going to . . . University.

Came back from . . . and was married about a year and a half later. I think, I was 22 at the time, late 22, when we were married. We were married for ten years, we had four kids--. Through all of this, of course, my own gender issues kind of--. That had kind of been in the background. I had--. I was always trying to keep them in the background. Having been raised as a boy, but from a very early age being very uncomfortable with the male gender role.

As a result, it was something that I hid from my family, my wife at the time. Even through the ten years that we were married, I would never admit to her that I basically wanted to be a woman. I had a real strong feeling that I was very uncomfortable with the male gender role. I would cross dress in secret, try to keep it hidden from her, the rest of my family, from others that I felt would judge me negatively for it.

We were divorced, I can't remember the exact year, it would have been, it was about 13 years ago. I'm guessing that it must have been around '87 that we were divorced. I went through a number of battles trying to have time with my kids. The--. I guess, you know in many ways, I think the gender issue has played a role in the divorce. She had accused me of being gay at that time, which really wasn't the case. I wasn't interested in men as sexual partners, or I wasn't--. My own gender issues weren't really around the issue of who I was attracted to.

She could tell I was different, you know, and a lot of my family, I think, noticed, knew I was effeminate as a guy. It led to, I think it was a factor in the divorce although she didn't understand, or didn't know the depth of it. When we were divorced, she was remarried within a few months, and to a guy who was very, very masculine, very abusive I felt in many ways. I would hear stories from the kids that led me to believe he was physically abusive to them. But, it was a very helpless feeling in that, I'm sure as many non-custodial learn after divorce, to find yourself as outside the children's lives, outside their day to day lives--. Even though I was still their father, I didn't have the regular interaction with them. I would--. I agreed basically when we divorced, I didn't even get my own attorney at the time, which it was a big mistake, now that I look back at it. I wanted it to be amiable and wanted it to be --. Basically at the time we talked about just

kind of agreeing on everything, you know, we would co-operate on visitation--. I was paying support before we had an order for it, while we were separated, very generous support at the time.

I found later on, especially when she remarried, that I was kind of shut out. I think a lot of it had to do with her desire to kind of fit the Mormon image of the nuclear family with her new husband. You know, to act as if they were the family, her current husband and my kids. It became harder and harder each time to have even regular visitation with the kids. They would plan events for the kids at times when I was suppose to see them, which, at the time was every other weekend.

So, it was very difficult for me to go and, you know, as a visitor, as non-custodial fathers are ... treated as having "visitation rights," a term that irks me, first of all as compared to parental rights. It's often considered visitation rights in that you have the right to visit your children. But--.

MK: So visitation, the concept of visitation you found irksome?

#1: Yes, as a--. With visitation rights, I basically became a visitor to my kids, every other weekend and it felt that way. It was very traumatic, I felt at many times because she was--. My ex was very uncooperative. We had gone through a number of court battles, when I was trying to get my visitation time with them. Many times, she just said, "Well, they can't come see you this weekend," and it would go on like that at times when I would go to pick them up and she would come to the door and say they're gone at a baseball game or whatever and can't stay with me that weekend.

So there were periods of a month or two that I would miss the visitation time completely. Finally, I went back to court trying to enforce the visitation. Twice that

happened and basically she was charged with being in contempt of the order, but it really didn't create any change. The only thing that did, finally, unfortunately, is that I took the attitude that I was going to have to go through that process everytime that happened, every time that she kept me from seeing the kids. And so I'd go back through filing papers, and I think she realized I was serious about it and backed down.

There were probably, I guess two to three years that I was able to have the regular visitation with them, every other weekend and felt good about it. I would even spend the holidays with them. I loved the times when I would get them for a Christmas holiday for a week, or something like that was a special time for me. But, it was very stressful too, in that I felt like I was fighting an emotional battle to kind of prove to them each time that I wasn't a threat. On the weekends, it would typically take about a day before they kind of settled down, settled into the routine, because I could tell they were being told a lot of things about me.

She had, as I mentioned, made accusations that I was gay. She had--. Basically anything, whether it was intentional or not, to kind of emotionally push them away from me, to reinforce the idea for her that she and her current husband were their family, their nuclear family. She ended up having another child. She had a stepdaughter who was her husband's and then the two of them had another child, so they had six kids living in their house most of the time.

It--. Like I say, every other weekend, I would go through that turmoil of spending the first 24 hours or so just trying to let them get comfortable with me. And then by the time I felt things were really flowing well they'd have to go back to their other house. All this while, I was still dealing with all of my own gender issues. It got to the point where I

actually tried to commit suicide at one point because I--. The internalized stress of gender issues was becoming so strong.

MK: What do you mean? Can you talk about the source of your anguish over it?

#1: It's funny. Even though I study it now in Graduate School, it's still hard sometimes to identify what the exact sources are. You know, it's referred to as Gender Dysphoria, just an intense discomfort with the gender role, the gender identity that you're given at birth. For me, having been born as male, I had this intense feeling that I should have been born as female. I can't say exactly why and even now it's kind of hard, because now I've actually gone through a sex change and have been living as a woman for many years. I don't feel that anymore.

All I know is that I'm much more at peace with myself now than I was at that time. It's--. I imagine it's very similar to how many other people, looking from the outside, would try to understand gender dysphoria in that no longer feeling it, it's sometimes I wonder why was this all necessary. I mean, but it was necessary. The fact is for whatever reason, my gender, internalized gender identity was that of a woman basically. I felt like I was a woman, or should have been a woman, yet was trying to play the male role.

I knew what I had to do to play the male role but it was extremely uncomfortable for me, and it became more uncomfortable as time went on as I realized that it wasn't going to go away. I think in many ways I had hoped that different phases of my life would cure me of that feeling, that getting married would help me somehow, make me feel like a real

man. Like having kids would make me feel like a real man. I think it was, as I aged--. You know, as I got into my 30's, the late 20's and 30's and I started to realize the feelings weren't going to go away.

Playing the male role, doing everything I felt like I should have done, wasn't getting me any closer to actually feeling like a man inside. Really feeling more desperate that I couldn't live the rest of my life that way. So, after a number of years, after we were divorced, I had gone to therapy, and had seen a number of different therapists, had studied the issue on my own. I tried to read everything I could find, and at the time, I didn't even know what it was called. Early books, accounts would talk about sexual inversions often mixing issues of homosexuality and transgender, transexualism. Later on there were certain accounts