

NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

JOANN R. P. CARR
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS – 2 JULY 2019

ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is July 2nd, 2019. This interview with JoAnn Carr is being conducted in League City for the JSC Oral History Project. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal, assisted by Sandra Johnson. Thanks again for taking some time to meet with us this morning. We appreciate it.

CARR: You're welcome.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask if we could [talk about] your childhood and your education before you met your ex-husband Jerry [Gerald P.] Carr.

CARR: We went to the same high school, that's where I met him. We dated all through college, and then we were married after we both graduated from college. He went to University of Southern California [Los Angeles] and I went to Cal State at Long Beach. That began the adventure of moving all over the country, which we did.

I was born in Pomona, California, and grew up in southern California in Riverside and Santa Ana. What about my childhood? I skipped the fifth grade. That was a big trauma.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's unusual.

CARR: Yes. They don't do that anymore, I don't think. It wasn't a good idea, because I felt like I missed the whole year. I was younger than everybody else in my class. I was 16 when I graduated from high school, and I was 20 when I graduated from college. It wasn't because I took extra courses, it was just that skipping a grade that put me up there.

I don't know how much you want about my family. I have one sister, and she was horse-crazy, so she had a horse, and my dad had a horse, and they got me a horse. I didn't like it. It was too big and too unpredictable. I never got into the horsy thing. Gee, I don't know what to say about my childhood.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's okay. You mentioned that you and Jerry met in high school and you dated all through college. You knew he was going to join the military?

CARR: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did you think of the idea of becoming a military spouse?

CARR: I didn't think anything about it really. The spouse part was more important than the military part to me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What do you mean by that, the spouse part was more important to you?

CARR: I didn't care if he was a plumber. I didn't care what he was going to do, just that I could be there too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You traveled all around the world, you mentioned.

CARR: We didn't travel around the world. As a Marine pilot, they didn't get to take their families with them overseas. They went for like 11 or 13 months, and the wives and kids stayed back here, so we moved around the United States a lot but we didn't move to any foreign countries. We lived in New Bern, North Carolina, Buford, South Carolina, Pensacola, Florida, Cherry Point, North Carolina. Mostly in the South. We never did get to El Toro, [California] which was in our hometown. That was the Marine base outside Santa Ana. We never got stationed there. We just roamed the country until he came here. That was obviously a permanent move.

ROSS-NAZZAL: While you were moving around, you had quite the pack of kids. You ended up having two sets of twins, six kids in total.

CARR: Yes, two sets of twins and two singles. I think I had two sets of three really. I had a single and twins, and then I had a little respite, and then I had a single and twins again. When [we] came out here, Jerry came out first. We were stationed in Tustin, California, and he came out early, because he had to report, and school wasn't out yet, so I stayed until school was out and we could get moved.

That was quite a wild trip, because I had six kids in a station wagon that didn't have air-conditioning. It had air-conditioning in the front, but it wasn't like cars today that have air-

conditioning all around. It was hot, and it was pretty terrible. Our next-door neighbor had a daughter that just graduated from high school, so she came with me. She helped me.

That was a wild and woolly trip. I came through—is it Columbus?

ROSS-NAZZAL: In New Mexico?

CARR: No. Just outside of—on the way to Austin. Columbia?

JOHNSON: No, it's Columbus.

CARR: Columbus. We got there and I saw that there were rain clouds, big rain clouds, over Houston. I thought well, I know which direction the Space Center is, so I took off on the farm road, because we had our luggage on top of the car. I didn't want to go through a rainstorm. I went—as the crow flies—in the general direction of NASA, and it was in the country. There was a little farmer's marketplace on the corner, and I stopped and asked, "How do you get to NASA from here?" They said, "You can't get there from here." I thought, "This is Texas. This is what I'm going to live in for the next few years."

We managed to find our way to NASA and stay out of the rain. Then we had to stay in a motel for a few days because our house wasn't ready yet. Being in the military, we lived in all sorts of housing, and some of it wasn't too great. One was called Splinterville, if that gives you a flavor of what the place was like.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that a name given it by the enlisted guys?

CARR: By the Marines, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you following the space program at all when you were in the military?

CARR: I was. I guess he was too. A friend of ours had applied for the third group of astronauts. He didn't make it. We didn't know anybody else, because there weren't very many Marines. There was John [H.] Glenn and there was C.C. [Clifton C.] Williams, who was killed later in a plane crash. Those were the only two Marines here when we got here. There were 19 in our group. It was a big group. Let me think.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Let me ask you a couple of things.

CARR: Yes. Ask me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask you about the interview before Jerry came out. It's my understanding that the spouses also had to be interviewed before they would make an offer. Do you remember that interview?

CARR: Oh yes. I was so gung ho, it was just ridiculous. I wanted to come here as bad as he did. When they came to talk to me, I was going to be the perfect little military wife. When the last twins were born, he left for a 13-month tour in Japan, and I had the second set of twins 2 months

later. I had these babies and four other kids and I was by myself, except my sister lived nearby. That was quite an experience. I never want to do that again.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I can imagine.

CARR: He got home when they were 11 months old. We had fairly large house, and so my bedroom was—my bedroom, that's telling, isn't it? My bedroom was large. I put the two cribs in there, because he was gone and it was just me. I told him when he came home, I said, "Don't feel bad if they cry when they see you, because they don't like strangers. They like their brothers and sisters and people in the family, but they don't care for strangers."

When he came home, he came into the bedroom, and they both jumped up and bounced and smiled and everything. I thought, "Oh, you little traitors. Oh God." Anyway, he missed out on all that fun.

It was about two years before we came to NASA. We were in our hometown. We were living in Santa Ana, our hometown where we went to high school. In fact my kids went to the same elementary school that he went to, which was kind of nice. We were there for a couple years, and then they put out a notice that they were going to do another astronaut group.

He applied for that, and we were not in a military community. We were out in the open, so we were kind the odd man in the neighborhood, because we were military and there wasn't any other military people there. They came and interviewed some of my neighbors too. I was the only one on the street with that many kids, so I kind of stuck out like a sore thumb.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of things did they ask you when they came?

CARR: I remember the questions that I thought were kind of stupid, like, “How will you feel if your husband goes to Mars?” I thought, “What do you think we’re applying for? We’re not applying for a trip to Hawaii.” I said I would be very happy if he got a trip to Mars. That was the line of questioning, about how I was going to respond to things. Like I told you, I was pretty gung ho, so I was right there with Jerry, whatever he wants to do, I’ll be there with him.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did they ask any really personal questions of the spouses?

CARR: No, they didn’t ask personal questions there, but there was a questionnaire that he had to fill out that asked, “How many times did you have sex in a week?” Which I thought was a little intrusive. We pondered over that one, because we didn’t want to give a number that looked like too much and we didn’t want to give a number that looked like too little. We had a hard time with that question.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Just kind of picked the middle?

CARR: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That’s an odd question to ask.

CARR: It was an odd question to ask. I can't even think to this day why they asked that. It's a mystery. I thought I did really well on the interview. I guess I must have done okay, because we made it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I understand that he came home and told you on April Fools' Day.

CARR: I don't remember that. I don't remember that, if it was April Fools' Day or not. I remember he came home. I remember I was stirring a pot of spaghetti sauce, and he came up and said, "Guess who called me today." I said, "I don't know, who called you today?" He said, "Alan [B.] Shepard." He said, "They accepted me."

We were just ecstatic, and we wanted to tell the kids, but we weren't supposed to say anything for a few days. I don't know why. I guess they wanted to announce it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did you think about the idea of moving to Texas, being a California girl?

CARR: We had lived in Kingsville, Texas, when he was in flight training, so I had a speaking acquaintance with Texas. I was less than thrilled over the topography here. There's no mountains; there's no hills, unless you get a little over farther toward Kerrville. I wasn't used to that. In California you got mountains all around, almost everywhere you go.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did Jerry send you any pictures when he got here of what you might expect of the area?

CARR: No, he didn't. I expected something more like a Marine base in the sense that people stuck together and you hung with the people in your squadron, so you had a ready-made group. It wasn't like that here at all. In fact, I thought it was not very hospitable.

We didn't get greeted by the ranking officer or anything like that. I'm sure he did, but the wives didn't. We were kind of excess baggage, and they didn't want much to do with us, just wanted us to keep quiet and mind our business at home. That's the feeling I got, anyway. They didn't have any kind of welcome aboard meeting. I thought surely in a high-profile job like this they would have a group meeting and tell us some of the things we could expect to have happen, but they just totally ignored us. We just had to learn the hard way everything that we needed to know. The other wives finally had a coffee for us, a welcome aboard coffee. It was several months after we got here.

You got to know the people that lived in your little neighborhood. If you lived in El Lago you knew the people that lived there, and if you lived in Nassau Bay you knew the people that lived there. We lived in El Lago, and there weren't that many people there. There was the Armstrongs and the Whites and the Staffords and the Bormans and the Eiseles. I think that was about it. Oh, the Coopers too.

Individually, the women would invite you over for coffee. I got invited for coffee by Annie Glenn because they went to the same church we did. I was absolutely moonstruck by the fact that he was home when I went over there. He opened the door and I just about swooned, because he was my big hero. Rene Carpenter lived right next door to her, so she came over for a while.

Let's see. Who else invited? Pat White invited me for coffee and Jeannie Bassett. Other than that there was no welcome aboard. That was so unmilitary. In the military you went into a

ready-made group pretty much, and they hung together. But they didn't do that here. We were just kind of adrift. We didn't know what we were supposed to do. We kind of made our own group. We called ourselves the Original 19 because everything that went on there always set apart the Original 7. They were in a class beyond anything that we were.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of things did you talk about with Annie Glenn and some of the other wives who invited you for coffee? Did you have questions about how things operated? Or was it just getting to know each other?

CARR: It was both. Annie Glenn told me, "He'll never be yours alone again, because he's going to belong to everybody. He's not going to be just yours." I had no idea what she meant until later. She talked about the area, because there weren't any stores around really, and there wasn't a mall or anything like that. There was just the Piggly Wiggly and that was about it. She told me where she got her hair cut, and she told me where to go for grocery shopping, because we didn't have a commissary yet.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No commissary up at Ellington [Air Force Base]?

CARR: The commissary was at Ellington when we finally got one. Her daughter was the same age as the next-door neighbor girl that drove out here with me, and she stayed for the summer, Becky did. Annie got Lyn, her daughter, together with Becky and showed her around a little bit, because they were the same age. That was just really nice of her to do that for a girl that she didn't even know. Becky was here for the summer, so she and Lyn got to know each other fairly

well. But that was a Marine welcome. The rest of them didn't seem to hang together like that. I don't know the reason for that, but it seemed like the Marines stuck together.

Beth Williams, C.C.'s wife, also invited me for coffee. That wasn't easy to do because I had six kids at home. As long as Becky was there I could get out a little bit.

ROSS-NAZZAL: In the next few months did you get a chance to go over to NASA and tour and maybe take the kids over there?

CARR: They took us on a tour and took our picture.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think I've seen one of those photos of you.

CARR: Yes, you probably have. Took our picture, and then that was it. Nobody talked to us about what we could expect in terms of their work and their schedules. Nobody told us anything actually. We didn't hear anything from NASA. I always thought that was really strange, because from the outside it looked like such a high-profile job that you would have thought somebody was driving the ship. It didn't appear that anybody was, except when we finally had our first wives' coffee at the Lakewood Yacht Club. That was several months after we got here when we had that.

A little bit of the military background rubbed off on them. There weren't very many civilian astronauts. I think Neil [A.] Armstrong, and I can't remember who else was a civilian astronaut. We had the first coffee at the Lakewood Yacht Club. Marge Slayton decided that there were too many of us to have at each other's house, to have a coffee in your home, so we

were going to have it at the Lakewood Yacht Club from then on. That's what we did. That was pretty much the extent of the welcome aboard that we got.

It was pretty much limited to where you got to know people in the program and nobody else. You also were pretty much singled out in your neighborhood. Everybody knew where the astronauts lived. In fact you're still doing that. You want to talk to [my daughter] Jennifer because the Aldrins and the Lovells lived in her house.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

CARR: Oh, that wasn't you?

ROSS-NAZZAL: No.

CARR: Oh, that must have been the lady from KPRC.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was going to say that I know the—was it the *Chronicle*? Somebody had done a story. Does she live in Timber Cove?

JOHNSON: I just read one. It came out in the *Galveston Daily News*. It's the *Coastal* magazine. They had pictures of you and your family, and they mentioned you.

CARR: Jennifer bought a house up in the front of El Lago, and she found out after she bought it that the Aldrins had lived there when they first came when they were waiting for their house to be built.

JOHNSON: I think that was the story I read. I didn't read the whole thing but it sounds familiar.

JOHNSON: It was *Coastal* magazine, which comes in our newspaper once a month. I'm not sure exactly how they're related. I also see it in Galveston County sometimes. You go in restaurants, and it'll be in there. It's a separate magazine. It's like a little thick magazine.

CARR: I'll be darned.

JOHNSON: I wish I'd brought it with me, I should have brought it.

CARR: Yes, I'd like to see it.

JOHNSON: If we come back I'll bring it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: If we come back, yes.

CARR: The Aldrins lived there while their house was being built, and the Lovells lived there while their house was being built. When we have anything in El Lago that has to do with the astronauts, they put a sign in their yard that says, "Buzz Aldrin and Jim Lovell lived here," or

something like that. They weren't there when we were there. They were there before we were there, and they were already living in their new houses when we got there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell us about that first coffee. What did you want to know? What did you ask? What [information] did Marge Slayton and some of the other wives offer?

CARR: I don't know that we asked much of anything. We were pretty well snowed by the fact that we were meeting these women that we'd seen only on TV. There was somebody in our group that asked me who they were. I thought, "You're a pilot's wife, and you don't know who the astronaut wives are? Come on, how lame."

We didn't ask many questions. We might have individually but not in a group. We didn't ask any questions that I can recall. We talked about how we were going to get together. They had had the last two Gemini flights, and the last flight while we were there [in Houston]. We had just arrived. They had the last Gemini flight, so we got to go to the splashdown party and some things like that. We were included. It's not like we were excluded from anything, but they just weren't doing anything.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about the *Life* contract? How did you find out about that? Or was that something that Jerry handled?

CARR: Oh, he handled it, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a sense of what the expectations were for you and your family?

CARR: No. It didn't take you long to figure out who they really wanted to talk to. They really wanted to talk to and take pictures of the Original Seven and some of the others. But they weren't interested in the Original 19.

We were kind of on our own. I think we diluted the amount of money that we were getting for that by 19 more people. We diluted that contract almost by 50 percent. It didn't really affect us, because nobody wanted to talk to us anyway. That was just kind of a nice freebie.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was thinking about El Lago, and a lot of people have told us how unique these neighborhoods were. How there were a lot of different traditions that people established during the '60s. They would have block parties and really know their neighbors. Can you talk about that?

CARR: El Lago, I thought, was more of a family-oriented area. We thought of Nassau Bay as the party people. That was the only two neighborhoods that we had. The Williamses lived in Dickinson and the Shepards lived in Houston and the Slaytons lived in Friendswood. They were the only outlying people. The rest of us pretty much lived in these two areas.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned people knew where the astronauts lived. Were there a lot of tour buses coming by trying to figure out who lived where?

CARR: There might have been in the earlier days, and I think there were. But we didn't experience that really. You have to realize that we doubled the size of the group really. A lot of things that were true for the first three groups were not true for us. We didn't experience it the same way.

ROSS-NAZZAL: On your street you mentioned getting to know everybody. Were there people from outside of NASA who were your neighbors, or were you primarily with engineers and scientists, other folks who came?

CARR: Yes, there were a lot of NASA people there. On our particular street there wasn't anybody in the immediate surrounding houses. The Evanses lived around the corner from us and the Anderses lived right in back of them, and the Dukes lived next to the Anderses, so we had that little enclave of people. Then farther on down the Eiseles, the Bormans, and the Staffords lived sort of together in a little area. Neil Armstrong and Ed White lived next to each other.

My oldest son Jeff was pretty aware of things that were going on, for a kid, and he still remembers that stuff. He remembers stuff I don't remember. He's very articulate, so he's a really good one to talk to. He's still dealing with the astronauts in the job that he and Gwen [Griffin] do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What street did you guys live on in El Lago?

CARR: Tallowood.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tallowood.

CARR: We lived right close to the lake, Taylor Lake. We lived two or three houses from it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you take full advantage of the water in the area? Did you do any boating or water-skiing, anything like that?

CARR: At first the kids went crabbing a lot. You could see the boat ramp from my front yard. When they'd go down there, I told the kids, I said, "If somebody falls in, don't come running home to get help. Find a stick or something that you can put out there and they can hold on to." They came back one day, and somebody had fallen in and was all wet. I said, "What did you do? What did they do?" Jamee said, "Run in circles, scream and shout." I thought oh good, there goes my—.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So much for your training.

CARR: I had another thing similar to that happen. The upstairs was set back. It didn't cover the whole downstairs, it was set back, so you could climb out of every bedroom and get on the roof. Our master bedroom was downstairs, and I thought, "If we have a fire they're going to all have to come down the stairs, and maybe they won't be able to." So I showed them how to climb out the window and get on a tree and climb down. We called it the fire escape tree. I learned later that they used it for all sorts of other purposes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Especially as they got older?

CARR: Yes. That was the extent of my survival training for the kids. Run in circles, scream and shout. Climb down the tree and go.

They'd get in the storm sewers. That's just where the runoff comes. It's not sewers, but it's where the runoff comes. They're big big pipes. The kids used to go down there from the lake when the tide was out. They'd go all through El Lago. I had the water district call me one day several years ago, several years after the kids were grown up and gone.

They said, "We know that your kids used to play in those drainpipes, and we don't have records on such and such by the Coopers' house, so we want to know what the kids remember about it." They painted stuff on the walls down there. It was the Anders' kids and the Evans' kids and our kids. The Dukes' kids were too little. We had a real army of kids in that one little neighborhood. The people across the street had five. The people next to us had five.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You had big families.

CARR: Yes. Then the other people had four or three, but we had an army of kids in that neighborhood. They used to play war all the time. They used to dig caves. They'd dig tunnels underground. I sound like a terrible mother, because I didn't realize what they were doing. Some friends of ours built a house on the one vacant lot that they used to dig tunnels in all the time, and they had a terrible time with their foundation. I didn't say anything to them about that. It was the whole neighborhood. About two, three blocks away there were no houses. It was forest, kind of jungly forest, on the lake. The kids used to go back there and camp out, the big

kids, anyway. They used to go back there and camp out and take their dinner and cook their dinner.

We had a sailboat. We had a little Sunfish sailboat and we had a bigger sailboat that we bought, so they took the little boat out. I thought it was a good place to raise kids because they had all this wildlife around. It was close, and it was safe. I could let them go and spend the night in the woods without a thought. It was much easier then than it is now.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Someone told me that they didn't lock their doors, they don't remember ever locking their doors here in the area. They just kept things open.

CARR: Yes. I don't remember if I did or not, but I don't think I locked them when I left the house. We had a guy come around. He knew where all the astronauts lived, so he went to those houses first. Timber Cove was another area I didn't mention, but that was heavily populated with astronauts too. This guy came to the house, and he said he was selling magazines for the veterans' hospital in Houston. Right away I thought, "There's something wrong with this guy; this is not right."

I was out in the front yard when he came up, and he said something about Gerald. Jerry never ever went by Gerald, so I knew something was up when he said that. He told me all this business about I'd be helping the veterans if I would take these magazines. I told him, I said, "Well, I've been housing a veteran in my house." My dad lived with us. He had both legs amputated, and he lived with us for about three or four years until he died. So I used him for an excuse, that I was already supporting the veterans.

After he left, I called a couple of the other wives, I don't remember who, and asked them, and they said yes, they'd been there to their house. Marilyn Lovell said yes, he'd been there, and he was going to come back, because she was going to buy some magazines from him. It turned out that he was a scam artist and he was just coming to the astronaut family places, and all the wives he'd been to so far had bought magazines from him but me. The police were going to set up a sting operation. When he came back to Marilyn Lovell's house they were going to get him. He never came back. I think I scared him away.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It sounds like it.

CARR: I remember Tom [Thomas P.] Stafford saying to Jerry, "How did a jarhead get such a smart wife?"

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned this army of kids, this pack of kids in your neighborhood. This is one of the things that I'm thinking about. I think that's kind of important. All these young people were coming here to the Clear Lake area with their families, with their kids. How did that help to create this very unique community in the '60s? How did it help to create a community? How did it help to bring people together? Because I imagine it may have helped unite people.

CARR: Oh yes. Those of us who had the kids that were in the army got to know each other pretty well, because there were sometimes disagreements among the troops, and they used to play tricks on each other. They took one of the Anders kids' bicycles and threw it over the light pole, those lights that hang out like that. [Demonstrates] They hauled his bike up there on a

pulley and left it. They were always doing something to each other. That's I guess how they played war. They had two gangs. That's how the parents got to know each other really. We had one block party that was a neighborhood party.

The Original 19, we used to have a lot of parties, because we were almost all military, and we were used to having get-togethers. We had an oyster roast at our house. We had parties at other people's houses, just the 19 of us. Because the rest of the troops didn't seem to be doing much of anything, we started our own social group.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you close with any of the group of the 19? Anyone stand out?

CARR: Gratia [Lousma] did, but with six kids I didn't get out very much anyway. I didn't get to know some of the other wives in that respect, because the only thing the wives had was the monthly coffee with the whole group. But we used to have really fun parties with the Original 19. We stuck together pretty well.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I know we had a chance to talk a couple months ago, because you're a member of the Webster Presbyterian Church. I wanted to capture some of that here, because I think it's important for the community aspect, and that's you and your husband decided to join that church. Why did you make the decision to join that [church]?

CARR: Because we'd always been Presbyterian, and that was the only Presbyterian church around. It was that simple. There was no choices to be made, because we knew we were going to the Presbyterian church, but we didn't know that was the only one.

The first day that we went, the Glenns came and sat in front of us. I just about swallowed my tongue. I was so thrilled to see my hero sitting in front of me, I could count the freckles on his head, and I was just amazed. When church was over and we were leaving, Jerry introduced himself, because he hadn't met John yet, and he was a Marine.

Annie took me on a tour of the church and the Sunday school rooms, and that's when she invited me over for coffee. I called Beth Williams and said, "Annie Glenn invited me over for coffee. Do you think that was a real invitation, or was that just her being nice?" Beth said, "No, she invited you over for coffee, so go."

I did, but I was very nervous about going to her house. She was very gracious and very down-to-earth. She was what I was used to as a military wife. Welcome you aboard and try to get you situated with stores.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm curious about the church that you decided to go to. It's known as the church of the astronauts, and I know that's a big issue with you. How did the church support or reflect the space program beyond obviously Lunar Communion, which we can chat about a little bit? Were sermons tailored, or were there prayers about missions and key events happening?

CARR: I don't recall any of that. This thing about the astronauts' church is a fallacy. It was never called the astronauts' church until recently.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, okay.

CARR: Because it wasn't the astronauts' church. The Methodist church was the astronauts' church. That's where most of them went, to the Methodist in Seabrook, which isn't there anymore. It certainly wasn't our church. We just had John Glenn and Jerry and Buzz [Aldrin]. We had Charlie [Charles A.] Bassett for a little while. Somehow or other the presbytery got this, it's the astronauts' church fallacy, and it just ticks me off, because it wasn't. People who didn't know were the ones who started that rumor.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I guess it's because of the Lunar Communion and Apollo 11, I suppose.

CARR: Yes, the presbytery is making a big deal about it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh yes. That was a big push. When we talked to Jan Evans, she mentioned that she got to see more of Ron [Ronald E. Evans] than she ever did when he was in the military. She said she felt like she was having Friday night affairs is what she called them. Did you have a chance to see more of your husband, you think, than you did when he was [in the Marines].

CARR: No, I don't feel like I saw more of him. I don't. I feel like I saw less of him. He was traveling, it seemed like every week. Jan is a very optimistic person, very positive. I don't recall Friday night being anything other than Friday night.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You seemed pretty busy as you pointed out, with six kids, and then you had your father living with you. How did you juggle all of those things—the household, the kids, cooking, cleaning? I imagine you were doing the lawn care, all of those things.

CARR: I don't know how I did it. You just do whatever has to be done. You don't question how am I going to do this, because you need every breath and every second to figure out how to address the issues in your home.

We had built a room on the back for my dad, so he could get around the downstairs okay. We built a ramp outside the back door so he could get outside onto the patio. He used to wheel his chair over to the neighbors for coffee some mornings. He made friends in the neighborhood too. But it was a busy time, that's for sure.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How much did you know about what Jerry was doing? How much did he share with you? Or you just kind of knew well, he's working toward a Moon landing?

CARR: It was pretty general. Jerry wasn't a big talker. I knew generally what he was doing but not specifically, until he got farther on down the line, and he finally got an assignment, a flight. Then I knew where he was going and what he was doing pretty much.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did your kids have a sense of what he was working on at the time? Or they just knew he was working at NASA?

CARR: No, he took me out there a couple times. One time he took me out, and I got in the simulators. I docked with the command module. He kept me in the loop that way. I wanted to know as much as I could know, so I was pretty inquisitive about what was going on and who was doing what, and I tried to spy for him. I was real good at parties at standing in one group and

listening to another one, because you got to hear things that you might not be able to hear otherwise.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you explain what sort of things you were spying on him for? Do you remember anything in particular that he wanted to know that you passed along to him?

CARR: No. I think I just told him everything I knew, or thought I knew.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned Beth Williams several times. C.C. Williams ended up dying, and I understand that your family was fairly close. I wondered if you would talk about that and the support you provided each other.

CARR: When somebody was killed, when we were in the squadrons, everybody gathered at their house. We did that with Beth. We all gathered down at her house. She was a new military wife, so she hadn't had the experience of people dying in plane crashes. She had a baby, a little toddler, and she was pregnant again.

I stood back and let all the other people who were coming to see her and supporting her, because I thought, "They won't last and they'll go away at some point and I'll be there." That was my thought.

We took her places with us. The military always appointed somebody from the squadron to be the go-between between the widow and the squadron. Jerry was that person for Beth, and that's part of the reason why I got closer to Beth, because Jerry was helping her with things. She and I were friends for a long time. We didn't really have that much in common, because she had

two kids and I had six, but that was one place I could go down to and take all my six kids and not be worried about not being welcome.

Another place like that was Joan Roosa's house. I could take my six and go to Joan Roosa's house any day of the week, and she would just be the charming Southern hostess. She'd give all the kids Popsicles, and she made daiquiris for us.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How many kids did she have?

CARR: She had four. We had 10 kids running around there eating Popsicles and climbing trees and going out in the woods. They lived backed up to some woods too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I also wanted to ask about the Apollo fire. You mentioned you were kind of left hanging. You weren't really sure what you were supposed to be doing. Was that a point though where someone asked the wives to do something?

CARR: We did what we knew to do from the military, and that was we paid a call on each of the widows even though we didn't know the Grissoms. But we went to their house because he was the senior officer, and that's what we did.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask about the medical care that you received from NASA. All the astronauts and their families were covered by NASA. Was that anything unique from the military? A little different?

CARR: No, we always had a medical section in the military, so it was just a continuation basically.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you close with Dee [Delores B.] O'Hara?

CARR: Everybody was, but Dee walked a very fine line. She knew more about everything than anybody else did, and she never talked. She never talked to anybody about it. She took care of my dad. They took care of my dad too, because he was a veteran. I was having to take him to the veterans' hospital in Houston. That was hard for me because I had the six kids. They started taking care of him at the NASA dispensary, which was really an amazing help to me, because I couldn't be running into the veterans' hospital that often.

That was pretty much the same. It was better than the military really, because the military dispensary took care of the whole base. They just took care of us.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned several times how you had this pack of children, that you always had to worry about where could you take them, where could you not. I wonder if you would talk about childcare in that day and age. Did you ever have anybody come over and help you besides [Becky] who came out with you?

CARR: I had a cleaning lady that came once a week. When my dad was with me, she came twice a week. That was really about all the help I had. There weren't a lot of babysitters around, because all the kids were pretty much the same age. We didn't have a bunch of high school kids to babysit. We didn't probably even have any high school kids for a while. There were

nurseries, day care centers. There was one in Nassau Bay. One day I got over there with my young twins, and they locked me out of the car. I couldn't get them out. They didn't want to go.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Clearly.

CARR: But I finally got them to unlock the door. In fact, my Jennifer was one of the first babysitters around there because she was the oldest, and she was babysitting age. She'd been babysitting her brothers and sisters, so she was pretty knowledgeable.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet, very trained.

CARR: I don't know what we did. I can't remember if Jennifer was old enough to leave with the rest of the kids. I think if we were going someplace in El Lago we had her be the mom, and she's still being the mom. I overdid it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did the wives ever babysit for each other? Was that something you would ever do?

CARR: No, nobody ever wanted to trade with me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Too many kids, huh?

CARR: Too many kids. Joan Roosa was the only place I could go. She was remarkable because you could go in her house. I don't know if you do this or have ever done this, but you start picking things up when someone comes to visit you. You straighten the magazines, or you pick up the newspaper. You do something. She did nothing. She just went and got you a daiquiri, and that was it. You felt welcome there anytime.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's funny. I guess she felt like that daiquiri would loosen you up.

CARR: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Some of the folks I talked to talked about how Clear Lake was such a rural community in the '60s and how they remember wild animals running around the area. Do you remember that?

CARR: We saw deer, and we saw lots of possums and raccoons and little wildlife like that. But I wasn't aware of any other. We lived close to the woods, so we got a lot of possums and raccoons.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were insects a big deal, moving from California to Houston?

CARR: The roaches were a big surprise. We don't have those in California. We have silverfish, which are little bitty things. Yes. The roaches were an unwelcome guest in the house. The bugs, I don't know, it just went with the territory I guess.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, living in a Southern climate. I wanted to ask you about the schools. Your kids had started going to school in California, and you moved out here. Would you talk about the schools out here? What were they like? Maybe the student body?

CARR: They were okay. They weren't any different, I didn't think, than the ones in California. Of course the ones in California we only had two kids that were going to kindergarten and Jennifer, who was in the third grade. We didn't have a lot of school experience from California. We lived just a few blocks from Ed White School, so they rode their bikes or walked. It was nice that we lived so close to the school, because a lot of people had to bus.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you volunteer at the school, or were you again so busy with the kids that you didn't?

CARR: No, I did stuff at the church. I helped teach Sunday school. Later on when the kids were older I ran the senior high fellowship group and Jerry helped me. That was a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun with those high school kids.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were there other things you did, like maybe coaching or Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, things like that?

CARR: I did, not the Girl Scouts.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Camp Fire?

CARR: Camp Fire Girls. Yes. I did that. Jamee's group, I ran that for a while. I was busy. That's for sure. I try to think back about what I was doing, and I can't remember.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I imagine some of it is kind of mundane, probably cooking, cleaning, looking after the kids.

CARR: Yes. We had chores that had to be assigned to people. I had a chart on the back porch that had the names and the jobs for that week. They had to be responsible. At some point, I don't remember how old they were, but I know that when I started law school after Jerry flew, they all had to cook dinner one night a week, because I didn't get home till six o'clock every night. They did their own laundry. I still had a cleaning lady once a week, so we got the bed linens changed.

I'm not very talkative today. I don't know.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No, you've given some good details. Did NASA provide any sort of family activities that you went to?

CARR: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Like time at AstroWorld?

CARR: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No picnics?

CARR: Nothing. We never even had a picnic together. I thought it was pretty lame. I tried to do things with our group but I didn't try to do anything with the whole group, because it wasn't that cohesive. I don't understand these wives who talk about how close we were. I didn't think we were, not anything like the military anyway. The military, you had a built-in support group. Your squadron was your support group. You just kind of had to make your own support group here. Find some people.

Joan Aldrin was another one that I used to like to visit with. She was interesting.

ROSS-NAZZAL: In what way?

CARR: She had a very different life than I did. I pretty much went from daddy to husband. She had had a life of her own. She was an actress, and she was just an interesting person. She talked about something other than kids and households.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of things would she talk to you about?

CARR: We talked a lot about NASA, and I don't know if I'm going to remember this right or not. She had been asked to do a radio show. I think it was a radio show, and NASA didn't want her to do that, so they put the kibosh on that and she didn't get to do it.

We missed the spotlight. We missed that era, which was welcome. We didn't have the same experience as the earlier wives did. Now when we have our reunions, it's more like we're all one. The reunions brought us closer together than anything else. During the flights, there was so much competition. So much competition for the flights that you didn't necessarily [hang out with the others]. When you got assigned to a flight, you hung with those people, usually anyway. That kind of made you a little ready-made group.

He didn't get selected for a flight until the Apollo Program was over. He had an Apollo assignment, but it was canceled. That was not a happy time, because we had already put in about six years here, and then they canceled those last three flights. It was pretty heartbreaking. He got the Skylab flight, and that seemed to energize him. But he was the last Skylab flight. By the time he flew, so many people had left the program to go on to other jobs that we didn't have a whole lot of people left when he flew. A lot of them had already gone. So my experience of the flight was a little bit different, I think, than many of the others. It was longer too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have any responsibilities when Jerry was on support crew for [Apollo] 8 and 12? Did you have to host any parties or assist the spouses of those missions?

CARR: No, I didn't. He was never backup for anything, so he was always a support crew, which was the third generation.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What are your memories of Apollo 8?

CARR: Susan Borman invited me over to be with her when they went into lunar orbit, and so I spent that time with her. I was reluctant to just go to somebody's house uninvited, so I didn't do that. But she invited me over. Actually I was the only one there. That was odd. I don't know why.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Why do you think she invited you over?

CARR: I don't know. Maybe because Jerry was going to be CapCom [Capsule Communicator] when they went into lunar orbit. I think it was something like that. She invited me over.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was there any emotion associated with that that you recall?

CARR: She was pretty tense. She was pretty uptight and out of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: She must have been relieved though at that moment.

CARR: She was. I think she definitely was. There were people outside her house so she went out and talked to them. They were reporters. She went out and talked to them after they'd done their lunar insertion and come back on the other side. It was a pretty tense time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have any fears yourself, or were you pretty confident?

CARR: No. I was really confident. I probably didn't know enough to be worried.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about Apollo 11? Where were you?

CARR: I was in Joan Aldrin's house sitting on the floor next to her in front of the TV when they landed.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that a relief for you as an astronaut spouse?

CARR: Yes. That was a big relief. When they landed it wasn't a big hoopla, big celebration, because—I said this at church—they still had to get off the Moon. They still had to rendezvous with the command module. They still had a lot of critical burns and critical other things that they had to do before they could get home. It wasn't like splashdown where everybody celebrates. It really wasn't like that. The lunar landing was more of a let out your breath that you'd been holding.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you bring your kids with you to Susan's and Joan's?

CARR: No, I didn't, they weren't invited. They wouldn't have known what was going on anyway, I don't think.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You don't think they had a sense of what was happening in the NASA program?

CARR: They say now that they don't remember very much about it. We didn't take them to the houses of the crew wives.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You weren't talking much about what was happening at NASA over the dinner table, or were you more concerned with other issues?

CARR: Oh yes, I think we were. It was not something memorable, because I don't remember very much, but obviously to me anyway we talked about what was going on, not in any detail though. I didn't explain to the kids all the things that had to happen for them to out of lunar orbit and back home.

ROSS-NAZZAL: A lot of the guys we've talked to talk about how they kind of missed what was happening in the '60s because their heads were buried so deep in Apollo. Do you kind of feel like it was the same way for the wives? Did you have a sense of what was happening in Vietnam, civil rights, and everything else?

CARR: I had a sense of it, because friends of ours in the Marine Corps were going to Vietnam and we were going to the Indy 500. I didn't talk to those people very much because I didn't know what to say to them. Their husbands were getting shot down in Vietnam, coming home in wheelchairs, and I was going to the Indy 500 as a guest of some rich people. I didn't stay in touch with them very good. I felt guilty, I think, that we were living such an interesting life, and that we didn't have to go to Vietnam. I was so glad of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did that cross your mind when Jerry came and told you, when you were making that spaghetti sauce, of that relief? Did that wash over you?

CARR: No, I was just excited. I was real excited that we were going to come and be part of this.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We've talked about 11. What about 13? Anything stand out for that flight?

CARR: We all ended up—I say we all—a lot of us ended up at Mary Haise's house. Jerry, I don't know if he was assigned to Mary or not. He might have been assigned to Mary to be with her during that time. I seem to recall that he had something to do with that. We were all sitting around Mary's house waiting to hear what was going to happen next.

I remember when they came home. We lived just down the street from the Haises, so we went down there when he came home. He climbed up a tree in his front yard so he could see everybody, because all the neighbors were crowded around. That was pretty scary.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet. I have heard that some of the neighbors, when the guys would come back from flights, would greet them with American flags. They would line the streets. Was that something that you saw in El Lago?

CARR: No, our little neighborhood had a great big flag. It was made out of plywood, and it seemed like it was as big as that whole section of books. [Points] It was really big. Did it have lights on it? Anyway, that went from yard to yard as our husbands flew. That got put up in our yard. We had lights on the stars. Gee, that's funny, I can't remember that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It's been a while.

CARR: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It really has. Were there other traditions that your neighborhood developed while you were there for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter? Timber Cove, for the anniversary of Apollo 8, they put out the luminaries. You mentioned the flag in your neighborhood. Were there other things that got started?

CARR: I don't think so. We did the luminaries at Christmastime, but that wasn't anything to do with the space program.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I know a lot of people didn't have family down here, so they started their own traditions to bring people together and create a family network.

CARR: Right. I think we learned that in the military. That was a carryover from the military, as far as I can tell, because the military was much tighter socially than we were here. I don't know. Maybe it was just because I had so many kids, but I just don't remember it being one big happy family.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting, because someone we interviewed at your church mentioned that. He thought that everyone was a family, that everyone was united behind Apollo, but you didn't get that sense?

CARR: Maybe they were. I don't know. I was too far in the middle of it to really stand back and look at it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: One thing we didn't talk about that I wanted to ask you about, and that was your church had the Lunar Communion. What are your memories of that event? Were you at church that day?

CARR: Yes. I don't have any memories of it. I'm sure I was because I was always at church. I don't know. I guess it was like a family, but I don't remember anything specific. I'm sure some of the other people at the church felt that, but I didn't. I wasn't really aware of who was doing what out there. For instance, [Jack A.] Kinzler is getting a lot of press now, but during the flight he didn't at all, so we didn't know what he did until later.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask about how you think Apollo affected your family and the other families living here, and whether or not you think you had to make any sacrifices for the Moon landing.

CARR: I don't think we saw it, or I didn't see it, as a sacrifice. It was what their job was. It was what they all wanted. That's what we were all here for. So I don't recall that there was that

much attention on those flights. I think I was too close in to the inner circle to really get a perspective on what the rest of the world was doing in regard to the space program. I was plugged in to what the rest of the country was doing in terms of changing roles, changing roles in the family. I kind of got caught up in the women's movement, and that led me to law school. I identified a lot with Joanie Caucus. Do you know who that is?

ROSS-NAZZAL: That name doesn't sound familiar.

CARR: "Doonesbury."

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, okay.

CARR: "Doonesbury."

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned women, and that's one of the things I'm curious about your thoughts on. I think that the women helped to build this community. As you mentioned, you didn't see your husband very much.

CARR: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What role do you think that women played in helping to create the Clear Lake community? The churches, the schools, all of those things.

CARR: I think we were definitely seen as leaders in some respect. We were kind of looked up to, I think. I don't know that that was warranted, but I think that we were kind of set apart. I don't know if you have any other questions.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I want to come back and talk about Skylab, but I wanted to ask Sandra if she had any questions for you.

JOHNSON: Not right now.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think this might be a good place to stop, because I want to give some more full attention to the Skylab mission and your involvement, because I think that that deserves some attention. Like you pointed out, it was the last mission. It didn't get a lot of attention.

CARR: No, it didn't, which was okay, but I didn't get a lot of support either. I was very involved in the mission. I had the squawk boxes in the living room and my bedroom to listen to all the air-to-ground. I had the transcripts of the air-to-ground and mission control delivered to my house every morning. I listened to Jerry on the phone. We got to talk every third day; we got to talk on the phone.

I was not very pleased with the way the media was painting that crew. They were painting them as rookies because they were slow, but they were slow for a reason. It wasn't because of anything they did. I'm getting into deep water here. I don't think I want to go there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How about this? How about you give it some thought, and then we come back and talk about Skylab? Would you like that?

CARR: We could do that, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You want to make some notes for yourself?

CARR: Yes. I got so involved in the flight and in the press that was available to us that by the time that Jerry and the crew said, "Enough, we're not doing it your way anymore. We're doing it our way," I quit listening to the squawk box then, because I felt like it was over. I mean the tension part of it was over.

I guess I was thought of as difficult because I really called the people out at NASA when I was upset about the way they were being handled in the press. They had an air-to-ground press conference that they didn't even tell the guys about until a couple days before it happened. I knew that the crew was going to know by the questions that were asked, that they were getting bad press.

I tried to tell Jerry that on our telephone conversations, but he wasn't getting it. I was telling him, "Tell it like it is. Don't try to sugarcoat it." He didn't get what I was talking about until after the press conference was over, and then they all thought, "What are they saying about us down there?"

That was when I called Deke [Donald K.] Slayton and had him come out to the house to tell him, because he was training for his [Apollo]-Soyuz mission, and he wasn't really on board too much with what was happening on Skylab. So I called him and had him come to my house

because I didn't want to be seen going to his office. I told him what had been happening. He took it upon himself to go into mission control the next day and tell them they were doing a great job. They had broken this record and that record and gave them a pep talk. They really responded well to that.

I was beside myself because I could see what was going on on the ground, and I could see what was going on up there because of our telephone conversations, and it wasn't meshing very well. I told him when he came back, "Please don't whitewash this. They need to know. If they're going to put people up there for long periods of time, they need to know how to work with each other." It seemed like mission control was always on their back about something. It was a difficult time for me. The first 40 days I guess were really difficult. After they finally said, "We're going to do this on our own time," then things got easier. Things got less tense.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That'll be good for us to talk about next time.

CARR: Okay.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Thank you very much, JoAnn. We appreciate it. Hope I didn't tire you out too much.

[End of interview]