

**NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

JOANN R. P. CARR  
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL  
LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS – 20 AUGUST 2019

ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This interview with JoAnn Carr is being conducted in League City, Texas, for the JSC Oral History Project. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal, assisted by Sandra Johnson. Thanks again for making time for us today.

CARR: That's perfectly fine, I'm glad to do it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was looking through the transcript from last time. One of the things we hadn't talked about was the fact that you were being selected to be an astronaut wife, but you were from a military family, and I know the military doesn't pay very well, and you had a large family. I wonder if that was a concern for you, or an issue for you, being selected as an astronaut wife. I think you mentioned to us you had to go to the Indy 500. Maybe you were invited to a lot of events. Were you concerned at all or worried about—

CARR: About money? Is that what you're talking about?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Sure. Or dress. Yes. But people don't like to talk about money. It's a sore subject for some people.

CARR: It is what it is.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that a concern?

CARR: What I'm hearing is was the fact that we were going to continue to live on military pay a concern. We weren't getting anything extra from NASA.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Right. Was it a concern? Some of the wives, for instance, went to the White House. Some of them went to these big galas, these events. Were you expecting the same thing? Were you concerned that you would have to buy these type of outfits, and where were you going to find the funds?

CARR: No, I made them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, you made them, okay.

CARR: I made my own things. I made a lot of the girls' clothes too when they were little. But I was delighted, actually, because I'd get a chance to dress up, and wear the things.

What I would do is I would go to the *Vogue Pattern Book* and get the most simple pattern I could find, simple and elegant, and then I'd buy a really elegant fabric and make my own dresses. I really got a lot of compliments on them. So that didn't bother me. We did share a little bit in the Time-Life World Book contract, the last couple of years. We got a little share of that. So no, it never occurred to me that money was going to be a problem, and it really wasn't.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned you got to go to the Indy 500. Were there other events that really stood out in your mind that you got to go to?

CARR: Let's see. The dinner party that was given at the Cape for Apollo 8 was really wonderful. It was given by a couple in Colorado who had tons of money, and they flew us down there on their plane. It was a big one, like a 747. That was really fancy. They had the tables all decorated. Everything was in silver. There were silver balloons overhead. It was very elegant and really fun.

Another time, we were invited to go to Las Brisas. There was a gentleman down there that owned a resort right on the water, and he invited us down there to spend the week at no charge. We got a lot of what we called freebies that way.

I remember going down the Banana River, I don't know which one it is that goes down the coast of Florida, in a real big yacht. Pat White and I were talking about the benefits of being an astronaut wife, being invited to things like this, and she said something about the freebies. There was a civilian listening in to our conversation, and she said, "What's a freebie?" We really felt like we were put on the spot. We had to be careful what we said.

There were a lot of benefits. For instance the cars, they gave us a car. Ford Motor Company gave us a car to use for a year, and then the next year they renewed the \$1 lease. Chevrolet gave us a car, so we each had a car. We didn't have any car payments, so that was nice.

Gosh, there were so many fabulous things. I think I put a lot of them in my book. As far as being able to afford to do things, that wasn't an issue. It really wasn't, because we were

invited as guests to everything, and since I made my own clothes that wasn't an issue. Let's see if I can remember any other galas.

We went to spend a week at Las Brisas. We went there for a film festival, and we went to a really nice restaurant one night that was an out under the stars restaurant, and the 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension came in singing their *Age of Aquarius* song with sparklers. It was unbelievable. They played it for, I don't know, seemed like 10 or 15 minutes. They played that and sang that, and we all got up and danced with them. That was a really fun thing I remember doing, dancing with the 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension to their song *The Age of Aquarius*, in my homemade dress.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I imagine that a lot of other women were in your shoes, a lot of those military wives, as well.

CARR: I don't know. I don't know anybody who sewed much, but I sure did. I had one wife tell me recently that she couldn't wait to see what I was going to wear to the next party. Anyway, that's an answer to your question, it really wasn't a concern. We had a big house here and we lived in government quarters before that, which were not very large or very nice. In fact, one was called Splinterville, which was an apt description of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What kind of car did you lease?

CARR: A station wagon, what else?

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was thinking you've got to have big car for as many kids as you had. You didn't lease the Corvette.

CARR: No, I didn't. He leased a Ford Cobra, and I got to drive that once in a while. He had a neat little '53 MG TD that he'd restored, and I liked to drive that too. That was fun. It didn't hold any kids, but that was fun.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's probably why you enjoyed it so much.

CARR: Could be.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did you do with the kids when you would go to some of these galas? Was Jennifer old enough to watch the pack?

CARR: Not at first, no, she wasn't at first. Some of the secretaries from the Astronaut Office would volunteer to babysit for us, and we got by with that quite a lot. There weren't really any neighbor kids that were that age. They were all our kids' age; they were all young. Jennifer didn't start babysitting until she was about 14, I think, and then she was a good babysitter.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet she was quite popular.

CARR: Yes, she was.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to talk about your husband's mission. We talked a little bit about it last time. I wondered what you thought when Jerry [Gerald P. Carr] came home and told you he'd been selected to command the final Skylab flight.

CARR: It was a real charge, because we'd been told his flight was canceled, and it was. He had an Apollo flight he was assigned to. I don't know whether it was 18 or 19, but he was assigned to one of those, and then the last three were canceled. So all we knew for quite a while was that here we'd been slaving away for six years, and there wasn't going to be anything for him. That was a bitter pill to swallow. When he came home with this, we were thrilled that he was finally going to get a flight.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did his hours change at all when he was named to command?

CARR: No, it seemed like they were pretty steady from the time we got here until the time we left. They were busy. They were very busy. It wasn't much different from when he was just supporting other flights.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I've actually read that you had to stand in for him quite a bit at Jeff's track meets.

CARR: Jeff's track meet, yes. I said, "I don't know how to do this," to the guy that was standing next to me, so he told me. He said, "You just press this. When they come across the line, you press this." I didn't do a whole lot of that, but he didn't do a whole lot of it either.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When we talked with Gratia [Lousma], we went up to Kerrville in the middle of July and had a chance to talk to her.

CARR: Oh, good.

ROSS-NAZZAL: She was telling us about a support group that she helped form with Terry McGuire, but I wasn't sure on the dates for that. Was that something that was established when you were still in the Office?

CARR: We went to Terry McGuire for a little while on our own. But to tell you the truth, Terry McGuire is a career military man. What do you think the job of a career military doctor is? To keep the men in the air and to keep the wives quiet. So I didn't care for his counseling. I didn't go very much after our first few times, because it seemed to me like I was all excited over going to law school and he made me feel like I should be staying home with the kids.

I thought, "I'm not coming back to you anymore. You want me to be Doris Day, find somebody else." Gratia loved him, and she still does. He had a group of women that went to him as a group, and they all seemed to really get something out of it and enjoy it. So it was just my attitude I guess that soured the relationship with Terry.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You were in a different place. Gratia was staying at home with the kids, and you wanted to move on and not be a homemaker anymore.

CARR: That's right. That's my opinion of Terry McGuire as a psychiatrist. I don't even know if he was a psychologist or a psychiatrist. I figured that he got paid by the military, and so he worked for the military. As far as I was concerned, he was not my friend.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That makes sense. I think when we were at the church you talked about briefly how NASA and the wives were doing a disservice to the children of Apollo because they didn't bring up issues that their children were having or concerns that you were facing because they were so concerned about the flight, the mission.

CARR: No, the fathers did not get briefed on what their children were doing necessarily, and I remember one time especially that illustrates this point very well. That is that one of my friends, an astronaut wife, called me one night to see if I could come over and stay with her baby while she went to the police station to get her older child.

When I got over there, she said, "If my husband calls, don't tell him where I am. Just tell him I went to the store or something." I thought, "Wow. We all do this." The kid has been arrested for something. It wasn't anything real significant, but it was a prank type thing that he got arrested for. He was at the police station, and we didn't want his dad to know that.

What does that say to the kid? You can get arrested, and you're not even important enough to tell your dad about it. That was my feeling. I thought about that, and I thought about the way I hid things from Jerry, little things. I thought, "That's not really right to do that." We thought we were protecting them and keeping them safe in the air and all of that good stuff. In the long run I think it was not the right thing to do.



ROSS-NAZZAL: Where do you think that came from?

CARR: I don't know, because NASA certainly never told us anything that we were expected to do unless we did something that we weren't supposed to do. I don't know really where it came from. We definitely had the idea that we were supposed to be the perfect little family, and we were supposed to be the perfect little wives. In the end, I don't think anybody really cared.

I don't think NASA really cared, and I don't think the rest of the world really cared either. I guess we looked at the first seven wives, and what their lives seemed to be like, and we thought we'd go down that same path.

We all thought at the time that the guys had to be *Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy*, and his family had to be the all-American family. I don't think we were right about that either. Obviously we weren't right about the guys, because they acted out everywhere they went. NASA did nothing about it.

When the first guy got divorced, we thought, "Oh my gosh, he's really in trouble now because he's ruined the image." He didn't suffer any consequences at all except he lost his family. We had a big meeting, the wives did, a monthly coffee, to decide whether or not we had to invite his new wife. His previous wife was still here living in the neighborhood with us with their kids. She was still part of the group as far as we were concerned. Here was this newcomer that we had to invite to the coffees, and we didn't like that. Some people said they were never coming back again if we invited her.

I spoke up for the principle that this was the astronaut wives' group. We were married to an astronaut. Therefore, we were an astronaut wife. Therefore, we were a part of the astronaut wife group. I didn't see any way around that.

So we decided yes, we had to invite her, but we didn't have to like it. Nature took its own course there; she never came. I guess we invited her but she never came.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that Eisele's wife? Whose wife was that?

CARR: Eisele.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's what I thought. Where do you think that this image came from? Do you think you all were reading *Life* magazine and had seen the spreads and therefore made that assumption about the families?

CARR: Oh yes. The fact that most of them were military was for me, and I think—I don't know if all military wives, I can't speak for that broad of a group. I think we looked at that and we thought, "Wow, they're finally going to get to do something really wonderful with what they've learned and what they've done and what we've put up with. We're going to benefit from that too."

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was just curious if you came up with that idea of the families and the wives based on *Life*.

CARR: Yes, I think it was based on *Life* and what we were seeing in the media, because we didn't have any other information. At least some of us didn't. I think some of them already knew some of the guys that were already here, and so they probably talked to them. I thought it

was going to be a great adventure all the way round, to go to the Moon or to Mars for that matter. I thought we would maybe be going to Mars by the time he was kicked off his flight. I thought we would be on our way to Mars. I hope I live long enough to see that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: If [President Donald J.] Trump has his way, he's pushing.

CARR: We'll see.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Or Elon Musk, some of those other guys. I noticed that there was a photograph that NASA has of your family. I assume it was taken around the time that your ex-husband was selected to command Skylab. Was that normal? It's a photo of you two in front of your fireplace, and all your children, and I think a cat and a dog.

CARR: A cat and a dog, yes. No, that wasn't when we were selected. That was after we'd been here for a good while, because Jennifer was 16 or something, when that was taken.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Her hair looks pretty long.

CARR: I think it must have been taken before his flight. I really do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that pretty normal just to advertise these family men, they'd draw up these releases?

CARR: I never questioned it. I never thought about it really, what they were for. They just wanted to come and take pictures so they came and took pictures.

[Break in interview]

ROSS-NAZZAL: We were talking about that photograph that NASA had that was taken probably before Jerry flew.

CARR: Before he flew.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Which I thought was interesting, with the animals.

CARR: Yes, that's a neat picture. I love that picture.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's a great photo of all the kids.

CARR: It was in a magazine that I think the Galveston newspaper puts out once a month. [Link: [https://www.coastmonthly.com/eedition/2019/07/index\\_50.html#page=1](https://www.coastmonthly.com/eedition/2019/07/index_50.html#page=1)] They put out a glossy magazine. That picture was in there last month.

JOHNSON: I was going to bring it. I forgot.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I forgot it. You gave it to me, and I forgot it. It is on my desk. I'll have to bring it to you.

CARR: Yes. Then there's another one of us in there on the next page that's taken at splashdown. We're all sitting all around and my kids all have a glass of champagne.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Hey, it was his flight.

CARR: Whatever.

ROSS-NAZZAL: There's worse things in the world. How did you make sure that your kids understood what was happening with Skylab, what your husband would be doing? They were much older now, so they had the capability of understanding.

CARR: I asked him if he'd do a briefing with the kids, so he brought a tracking map that tracked all the orbits. He brought a tracking map, and I forget what else he brought. We had a talk with the kids about what he was going to be doing.

They had tours of NASA. I don't remember if they had a mock-up of the Skylab in place over there or not, but we would have taken them to that if they had it. I don't remember. They went and watched him in that weightless tank, the big water tank. They went and watched him do that.

I had made a promise to myself that my kids were not going to be left out of anything, that they were going to be able to go to everything reasonable that I went to. I had them there for

interviews. They would have been sitting around here while I was being interviewed. They were the first kids to be able to go up to the spaceship while it was on the gantry, and they were the first kids that were ever allowed to do that.

I just tried to include them in everything I did. Of course we had the squawk box in the living room and the bedroom. We had a SCAMA phone that was a phone that scrambled our conversations with our husbands. We talked to them once every three days on the telephone. It was just as clear as a bell. It was just like talking over the telephone.

They were part of all that. They didn't get to be part of the whole thing because it got too hairy for me, and I didn't want to bring them in on what I was concerned about. I think they understood pretty well, the older ones did. The younger ones didn't. The younger ones still say they just don't remember very much about it at all.

ROSS-NAZZAL: One of the things I had read is one of your younger sons remembers security detail being with him at school. Was that something that you recall happening?

CARR: No. Who said that?

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think it was John that I had read that about. I was curious why that was the case.

CARR: There was a children's docudrama on Saturday mornings on NBC, and they did all sorts of different things. It was a children's program, and one of the things they did was they followed John around. They went to school with him. The half-hour show was basically more about

John, while his dad was flying. If a security person went to school with him because of that, I'm not aware of it. I don't know what he's talking about.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It just stood out when I read that. I thought that's very unusual, that there would be a security detail for a child.

CARR: Yes, I don't know what he's talking about. I have to ask him.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think it's really interesting how you mentioned you wanted to include your kids. So you had seen what the other wives had gone through for Apollo, and you noticed that the kids were just left out?

CARR: It seemed to me like the kids were kind of pushed to the back a little bit. That was just observing what was going on during the flights. I don't remember anything specific. It was just a general feeling that I had, that the kids really didn't get included in very much. I included mine.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did NASA think about that? Did you tell them that this was your plan?

CARR: I didn't care. I didn't tell them. I didn't really care what they thought. They did get after me one time during the flight. They had said that they were going to give us every third day to talk on the phone to our husbands, and the length of the conversation was dependent on what

land they were over, what their radio capabilities were. Some of them were pretty long, and some were pretty short.

This *Go! Show*, that was the name of it, that they were filming at our house while he was gone, the producer was there one night when we were talking on the phone to Jerry, and he thought that was so neat that that should be part of his show. I told Jerry about it on one of our telephone conversations. I told him that this guy was going to film the telephone conversations, because a lot of times the kids were home when he called. Sometimes they weren't home, but when they were home, they all got a turn to talk. I told Jerry about it, and he thought it was real neat. About two days later I got a call from some high mucky-muck at NASA Headquarters [Washington, DC] telling me that I couldn't film that conversation. I thought, "Who's listening to these conversations?" We were told they were going to be private. Who's eavesdropping. Obviously they had to find that out from the conversation I had with Jerry. That ticked me off.

He told me I couldn't do that. I couldn't use government property for a personal use like that. I said, "You can't tell me what I can and can't do in my own house. I don't work for you. You can't fire me. You can't do anything to him because he's already up there."

He called Deke [Donald K. Slayton] and told on me. Deke called me up and I said, "I'm not going to do anything." It just made me really mad that that guy called me and was so high-and-mighty about it. He was just so unctuous about it that it ticked me off. I thought, "Somebody's listening to our conversations," and that really got me going too.

I told Deke. Deke was just laughing about it. I said, "I told him I'd do it, I wanted to, but I'm not really going to do it," so we didn't tape the conversation after all.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So NASA, I guess, they got what they wanted in the end.



CARR: Yes. After it was all over, I thought that they thought that I was doing it for money. I'm pretty sure they thought I was getting paid to do it, and we weren't. It was something that NASA asked us to do, actually. PAO [Public Affairs Office] asked us if we would talk to this producer and if we would let him film our family.

Because of the Time-Life contract, nobody else but Time-Life could ever film us or write about us or be in our homes. The contract was now gone, and we didn't have anything saying that we couldn't have other media people in there. I really think that he thought we were getting paid for it, and he didn't want to use the NASA equipment for a commercial purpose, which I'm glad I didn't think of at the time, because that would have made me even madder, I think. That was one of the little things about Skylab that was a problem.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What was your role as the wife of the mission commander? Do you feel like there was a specific role that you had to play?

CARR: No, and that surprises me, because it was kind of like being in a squadron, and you got the CO's [commanding officer's] wife and all of that. The military are pretty good about keeping you aware of your serial number and rank. I thought I would be like the mother hen and I would keep them informed about what was happening, but I didn't. I didn't do that. I was totally the Lone Ranger. I didn't call Julie [Gibson], and I didn't call Helen [Pogue]. We didn't see each other very much during that time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting. I thought perhaps you would have. I've seen a picture of the Skylab II crew with the [antique] car, they seem to be a close group.

CARR: They were. We weren't. I don't know why exactly except I guess I didn't take the first steps. I didn't make the first gesture. I was generally so upset about the way things were going for the crew that I don't think I wanted to talk to Julie and Helen that much.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you close with any of the other Skylab wives?

CARR: It was odd because by the time Jerry flew a lot of the astronauts had left the program. They were all starting to scatter, because his was the last flight except for Apollo-Soyuz [Test Project], and we didn't know how long it would be before anybody would fly again. People were jumping ship like crazy. Joan Roosa had a luncheon for me, and we didn't do much else. It was a long flight, and it was over Thanksgiving and Christmas and almost Valentine's Day. No, we didn't form a little group, w. We pretty much kept to ourselves.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Even though guys were leaving, were you still doing the wives' club meetings or had that dissipated as well?

CARR: That had pretty much gone by the wayside, yes, by that time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When Apollo 17 wrapped up, was that sort of the end of things?

CARR: That was pretty much the end of it. I don't know that Gratia had anything going on at her house or that Jane Conrad had anything going on at her house for their husbands' flights. It just all changed after Apollo 11, and people started bailing out. A lot of the ways we used to do things we weren't doing anymore. It was a very different flight.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Sounds like things were pretty quiet around here. You mentioned that his flight included major holidays between Thanksgiving and almost Valentine's Day. What did you think when you heard he was going to be up in space for that long? Or did it really matter to you? You'd been a military wife. He'd been gone for such a long time.

CARR: No. He'd been in Japan for 13 months. He was in Japan when the last twins were born and they were 11 months old when he got home. That was not any problem for me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No impact on the family?

CARR: No. We had our own little group, and we kept up our Christmas rituals. It was just the way things were. We didn't make a big deal out of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: All the astronauts have to go into quarantine before a mission. Did you have the opportunity to spend time with him and see him as well as your children?

CARR: The children didn't get to see him. They could see him from afar, but they couldn't go in and visit with him or talk to him or hug him. The wives could go. We had a big button that said,

“I’m a primary contact.” That was the wives. We could go in and see them in their little quarters, but the kids couldn’t. That was for a month, I think. A month before he went up.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, a month. That’s tough.

CARR: Yes, it was long. It was a three-month flight and one month of quarantine.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I had read when he came back he was also under some restrictions.

CARR: He was under quarantine. He was under house arrest, because the kids couldn’t be there, just the dog could be there. I never understood that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was wondering what the reasoning was behind that.

CARR: I don’t know. The dog could be there, but the kids had to leave. They all stayed with friends. It was just for a week.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I guess he had to acclimate back to gravity. Talk to us about traveling to the Cape [Canaveral, Florida] to see the launch of the mission. Did NASA provide you transportation? Or was that something you had to arrange yourselves?

CARR: Rockwell provided the transportation. I think. Maybe I'm wrong about that. I'll have to check on that and let you know later. I don't think that plane we went on was a NASA plane. I'll have to check on that because I don't want to be unfair about it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did the government also provide you transportation when you were around the Cape?

CARR: Somebody did, but I don't think it was the government. I think it was people who owned car dealerships. They were going to supply me with a limousine to go wherever I needed to go and ride around. I told them I wasn't going to ride around in that limousine, so they wanted to know what I wanted. I said, "You can get me a convertible. Get me a red convertible," so they did.

I managed to squeeze all the kids in there. We went to the store, and we went wherever we wanted to go. I didn't want to be hauled around in a limousine. That was not the government that did that though. That was just the civilians that lived in the area.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Another one of those freebies or perks that you mentioned?

CARR: Yes, another freebie. Yes, they were really nice to us. They were very good to us.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Where would you stay when you were at the Cape waiting for launch?

CARR: We were staying at the Holiday Inn. That's where everybody stayed; we all stayed at the Holiday Inn. They didn't charge us. I recall that they didn't charge us for that. They were kind of astronaut central there because the Rockwell people had a big hospitality suite that seemed to be open at all hours of the day and night. So people congregated there, because the astronauts pretty much all stayed there with their families.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you get any other support from NASA? Maybe a public affairs person? Or anyone assigned to you? A public affairs person perhaps?

CARR: They assigned somebody to me. I sound like a real bitch here, I'm sorry. I did not like the guy that they assigned to me. I had met him several times at dinner parties and different things. He never ever remembered my name, he drank a lot, and I didn't want him to be my caretaker during the flight. So I told NASA, I said, "You can assign him to me if you want, but I'm never going to call him. I'm never going to invite him into my house." They said, "Well, who do you want?" I said, "I want Bill [William] Der Bing."

He was just a sweetheart, and he went with the Aldrins on their world tour. She told me what a wonderful man he was. He was so thoughtful and kind and he did his job, which was to kind of protect us in a way from whatever was bothering us. He was one of the best, because some of the other PAO guys used us as currency. They would take us anywhere because we'd go anywhere with them, we were just like cattle, so they'd use it for their own purposes. He never did, and he was always on the astronaut's side and the family's side. I dedicated my book partly to him too because he was such a wonderful man.

He was the kind of person that would disappear if everything was going well and you didn't need him for anything. If you needed him he was there, and he was doing something about it. He was very pleasant and kind about it. I'd say, "I really wish these people would go home." We were at a tour of our hometown after the flight, and Bill was with us. We had had a really hard day. We'd gotten up really early and gone to a breakfast with all the kids. Then we'd gone to a parade and then we'd gone to some other thing where we had to stand up and give a little speech. We were just busy all day long. We ended the day with a big dinner that everybody came to.

Then people came and piled back into our room when it was over, and we were exhausted, we were so tired, and so I told Bill. He said, "Well, I'll get rid of them." I said, "Well, what can you do?" He said, "Don't worry about it, I'm used to wearing a black hat." He cleared the room out for us so we could go to bed. He was a remarkable man, and I'm really very pleased that he was part of our life during that time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did he work here at MSC [Manned Spacecraft Center], or was he out of Headquarters?

CARR: He worked here at JSC, and he's passed on now. He worked for PAO.

ROSS-NAZZAL: One of the traditions while you're down at the Cape of course is to have a party before liftoff, sort of a bon voyage to the crew, but the crew isn't there. You and the family are there. I wondered if you would talk about that launch party and who you invited, who ended up coming.

CARR: It was small. We invited college friends and we invited church friends and we invited Marine Corps friends, and that was about it. I didn't take an entourage of stars with me, which Beth Williams got after me saying, "You're supposed to come down here with an entourage and you come down with an on-tour-age." It was a really fun party. It was the most fun party of the evening. I invited relatives that I hadn't seen for a long time. We just had close friends and relatives there. It was a really nice party.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What are your memories of launch day and getting ready to go out to the Cape and finally see your husband go into space?

CARR: It's kind of a blur. We went out to see the rocket at night when it was all lit up with the lights. We all went out there and looked at that, and that was kind of overwhelming. Then we had to get up early in the morning to go on the bus to the viewing site. I had a lot of the same people that had been at the party on the bus with me. Annie and John [H.] Glenn were with us.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's kind of an entourage, if you included them at your party. [He's] kind of a big name.

CARR: Yes. He was my one celebrity. It was really nice having them there, because I had fallen in love with John Glenn from the very beginning of his flight. He was a Marine. I identified with them a lot, with Annie as a Marine wife.



We were talking about the bus. They took us out to a site that was not with everybody else, it was off by itself. I felt like I was going to go up with them. I just felt like the ground was rumbling and shaking, and I felt like I was rumbling and shaking. I really wanted to see it happen again, it was too fast the first time, the only time. It was too fast, and I wanted them to do it again.

That day everybody started going home after the flight was gone, and I stayed overnight. I can't remember why I did that. I stayed overnight. My kids went home with my sister and her kids, and her husband went home. I was just there by myself after having had all these people around me for so many days. We stayed there for quite a while, because the rocket got some cracks in it and they had to slide it off a few days. We had to slide the launch off about three days, I think, so we were there a long time.

When that night after the launch came, I had probably only had about three hours of sleep. I couldn't come down. I was so hyper, I just couldn't come down and go to bed. A friend of ours who was a doctor gave me some sleep medication and practically put me to bed and stayed there in the room with me until I fell asleep, because I was wired. I was so talkative and so tense that I just couldn't come down.

The next day I came back home. By that time I think in a 48-hour period I'd probably only had about 8 hours of sleep those two nights. I was really exhausted. Jennifer told me that the squawk box wasn't working right, so I called NASA to see if they couldn't get it fixed. They sent somebody out to the house at about ten o'clock to fix the thing, and I didn't know they were going to do that, but I let him in. Everybody else in the whole house was in bed but me. I was just beside myself with fatigue.

The squawk box that they were fixing was right next to my bed, so I couldn't go in there and go to bed, but I did anyway. I went in and laid on top of the covers and said, "I hope you guys don't mind, but I haven't had any sleep for two days and I've got to get to sleep. So you just do what you have to do, and I'll mind my own business here." The last thing I remember hearing was, "But this lady needs to get some sleep." They fixed it, and it worked the next morning. That was pretty much the whole launch thing. A real emotional high for me, and it really wore me out.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Sounds like it. I've seen a picture of the three wives. It looks like you had a wives' press conference.

CARR: We had a press conference, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Would you talk about that and your memories? Anything stand out?

CARR: There isn't much to talk about that. What I'd like to talk about really is the way that the ground controllers overworked the crew, because that was a big thing with me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Okay. Absolutely.

CARR: That's why I wrote this whole script. I had Jerry's diary that he kept for me, and I had our recorded telephone conversations. I had those and I had transcribed them, so I had a hard

copy of them. I had the flight plan delivered to the door every day. I had the air-to-ground communications delivered every day.

About day four of the flight, I thought Jerry, he doesn't sound right. He sounds like his back is to the wall, and he sounds really tense. I was really concerned about that and I knew that he had told me that they had overscheduled them, because they were the last flight. They didn't know when they were ever going to get back to do any more experiments.

I thought I need to tell somebody, but who am I going to call? I'm just a wife, and I don't have any authority. People will just think I'm being nervous. But I knew Kenny [Kenneth S.] Kleinknecht. I knew the Kleinknechts socially. Kenny, I don't know what his official title was, but he was somebody high up in the Skylab Program. I knew he knew me, and he knew I wasn't a scatterbrain.

I called him, and I told him, "I don't like the way Jerry sounds. I think they're overworked." He laughed and he said, "Oh yes, they're overscheduled, all right." I thought he meant yes, we know that now, so now we're going to do something about it. They didn't do anything about it, and when I went over Jerry's diary, he was complaining from the second day that they were overscheduled and they were overworked and they couldn't meet the schedule. That went on for 30 days. Nobody at NASA did anything about it. When I read Jerry's diary when he got home, I was glad I couldn't read it while he was gone, because he was still complaining on day 32 that they were overworked and they were overscheduled. They were angry at the ground, and they were angry at the flight controllers.

They were getting what I consider to be bad press for being rookies and being so far behind schedule. They were making it sound like, "They're rookies, they're just dumb rookies.

They don't know what they're doing up there." All the newspaper articles it seemed like said something about the rookies were behind.

I didn't tell Jerry because I knew that we were getting listened to. I tried to tell him in a roundabout way, "Quit taking the blame for everything. Put the blame where it lays." I thought that was with the flight controllers, and I think I was right. I decided that I couldn't do anything about it, so I just had to suck it up.

I was sitting on the floor one day wrapping Christmas presents and listening to the squawk box, and one of the medics, one of the doctors, was doing a press conference with the media. I just couldn't believe my ears. The guy obviously didn't know how to give an interview or hadn't been briefed or anything because they asked him—you know the classic "Have you stopped beating your wife" question? The answer is, "I don't beat my wife." It is not yes and it is not no. They asked him, "Is the reason this crew is so far behind because they're rookies?" He said, "No, it's not because they're rookies." He just said, "They screw up."

I was just livid. I thought what a lamebrain, what is he giving a press conference for? I didn't know who to call but I called PAO first because I thought well, they're the ones that set up the interviews. That wasn't the right person to call. It didn't help me. It still makes me tense and nervous to even think about that time. What happened was they decided exactly what I thought they would decide, that I was just a nervous person, and I was complaining over nothing.

Their answer to that was a doctor took me out to lunch the next few days. I said, "I'm fine and the other wives are fine." I think I had threatened him with the only thing I thought they understood, and that was, "You're going to have three very nervous wives on your hands if you don't control these press conferences better." Then they decided I was having a nervous

breakdown or something. He took me out to lunch. I told him, I said, "I was just pissed off because the guy gave such a lame interview." He admitted that they were screwing up.

I was just so mad. Anyway, that kind of blew over, and they took us out to lunch. That's one reason why I didn't call Helen and Julie very much, because I didn't know if they knew what was happening the way I did. I didn't want to upset them, so I just kept it to myself.

We settled down a little bit and then right after Christmas, right around New Year's sometime, they had an air-to-ground press conference. Three days before they had it, I had my contact with Jerry. He didn't even know they were going to have a press conference with the ground. It was totally impromptu. They didn't tell them, and they didn't warn them. I thought the questions they're going to ask are going to be the questions about why did you get off to such a slow start and what's keeping you from catching up now. They were going to know what was being said about them on the ground.

I tried in my conversation with Jerry again. He didn't know they were having a press conference. I told him they were having a press conference. The ground hadn't even told them they were going to have one.

He had a conversation with me that night after he had had the press conference. The first thing he said to me was, "How did that press conference go? They ate us like alligators." I told him it went fine, I thought they did a really good job, and all that bullshit I told him, and tried to make him feel better. He said the guys were all really mad, and they definitely got the message from the media that they were screw-ups. I told him they were fine, it was a good interview, they sounded good, and blah blah blah. They felt better.

Then I finally got smart, and I called Deke Slayton. I should have done that in the first place, because he took care of his boys. He was known for that. I just didn't think to call him.

He was training for his [Apollo]-Soyuz flight, and he wasn't around very much. So I think he didn't know what was happening. I called him and asked him if I could talk to him. He said, "Yes, come on over." I said, "No, I'm not coming over because I don't want people seeing me go in your office. You come over here."

He came to my house, and I told him. I wish I had called him on day four when I called Kenny Kleinknecht, because he listened to me. He sat like this [demonstrates] and listened to me. He listened to everything I had to say, and he didn't question me or call me down on anything. He got the message that the guys were pretty upset. I don't think that's a good thing for a long term flight, to have that kind of tension between the air and the ground.

I was hoping that when Jerry got back he would say that in his debriefings. I don't know if they ever faced that issue head-on or not, I was just glad to have him home. After I talked to Deke, Deke went into mission control the next day. He said, "Just wanted to tell you guys you're doing a great job. You've broken all these other records." He just told them all sorts of nice things about them, so they felt better.

They also stopped overscheduling them. From then on the flight got more normalized, and I felt like I didn't have to listen to the squawk box all day long and be the watchdog. I was really disappointed in the way they treated Jerry. He's a really good guy, and he's a perfectionist. He hates making mistakes. I knew he did. They were making little mistakes all along the way, so I knew he was feeling bad. I tried to do what I knew how to do to make things better. Like I said, I should have called Deke in the first place because he was the one that had the balls to do something about it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: But you did as well because you took matters into your own hands and figured out how to get the issue resolved.

CARR: Yes. Then I told Jerry. I said, "Look, I can't do 84 days. I'm going to turn the squawk box off. I'm going to not read the air-to-ground communications anymore, and I may not even listen to the squawk box." That was about day 52. I finally divorced myself from the flight and just played tennis and did what I liked to do. The rest of the flight was very good. We didn't really talk about it when he got back. I don't know, it's just kind of like it never happened. We didn't talk about it. I wonder to this day if when they debriefed they hit that issue.

You can't load people up with stuff to do that's not even on their flight plan. That's what they had done. They put the study of the Comet Kohoutek on Jerry's flight. Didn't they know that a comet was coming, and they couldn't have given it to the first or second crews to do? They had to save it and add it on to Jerry's flight. So that's what they did with a bunch of stuff, they just loaded it onto Jerry's flight, because this was the last. I didn't think he got a fair shot, so I've been angry about that since [1973].

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about that strike in space? People are always asking about that.

CARR: The mutiny in space.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes. What is your take on that?

CARR: It's not my take, it's what Jerry wrote. I can't really find it. Gratia told me that they had a day where they turned off the radios and they were not in touch with the ground, because they were sick and tired of the ground. He didn't address that in his diary, but he goes through a day in his diary where he says, "We had a talk with the people in mission control today. We got things straightened out, and they agreed not to schedule us so hard."

There's a lot of entries in here where he says, "Today was supposed to be our day off but we only had two hours off." That's how loaded up they were. I don't know if they debriefed that well when they got home. NASA—their favorite thing is to say it was a textbook flight; everything was a textbook flight. This was not a textbook flight, and I thought it should be documented. It should be documented that for 32 days they were under extreme pressure. They were not happy with the ground. I really think Jerry should have dropped a hammer on them sooner.

But he's such a nice guy. He didn't do that, so they had to suffer with that for all that period of time before the ground finally got real and cut back on their overscheduling. It wasn't just that they couldn't keep up with their schedule. They didn't have their original schedule. They had a new schedule that was added at the very last minute. It added a lot of things that everybody said, "Oh, well, I want my thing to get done, or I want my experiment to get done." Jerry said, "Put them all on. We'll try to do them as best we can," and they couldn't. I hope somebody benefited from that flight, because it was a very disappointing flight for me. I'm sure it was for Jerry too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned that you had Jerry keep a diary. Why did you ask him to keep a diary of what was happening?



CARR: Because I knew he wouldn't say anything when he got home, and I wanted to know what was going on. He kept it every day, and I still have it. I think I might just give it to him. He wanted it, and I said, "No, you can't have it, because it's mine. I asked you to keep it." I'm keeping it. I think he deserves to see it after all these years, so I'm going to give it back to him.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you keep a diary of events that were going on while he was in space?

CARR: No, I didn't, I just kept it in my head, and then I wrote it all down on here. I had all the pertinent things in my head, and then I had his diary as a guide. I had the air-to-ground conversations that I could listen to, and that made me remember what I was doing on the ground while he was getting overloaded up there. This was very cathartic for me. Thank you.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Of course. How did you celebrate Christmas? My understanding is you got to send up a package for the crew during the holidays.

CARR: I got to send up a little tie tack, a little ichthus fish tie tack. That's all the Christmas that they had. They made themselves a Christmas tree out of tin cans. It was a very nice quiet Christmas as I remember it. I had started the turkey. He had an EVA [extravehicular activity] that day. It was a really long one. I had stuffed the turkey, put the turkey in the oven. We were finishing dinner and doing the dishes when he came in from his EVA, so he was out a really long time. We listened to that while we ate dinner.

I just remember it as being a very pleasant day. Some of our close friends came over that night, and we drank eggnog and sang songs. It was very pleasant. At that point, I thought our troubles were over. We hadn't come up to the press conference yet. That was around New Year's Day. I wasn't worked up about anything at that time, but we had a nice Christmas.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How did you find out about the press conference that your husband, who was commanding this mission, didn't know about?

CARR: I have no idea. Maybe Bill Der Bing told me. He was the only one I talked to most of the time. He probably told me about it, "There's going to be a press conference in three days." I thought, "What?" Then when I told Jerry on the phone he didn't even know about it.

They did a lot of disservices to Jerry on that flight. I really think he didn't deserve the badmouthing that he got from the press and from the Astronaut Office. I think he was getting bad press from the astronauts too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: My understanding is that the landing and recovery of that mission wasn't broadcast either, and he assumed that it would be.

CARR: No. We just let him think it was broadcast until he got home, and it didn't matter anymore. My son Jeff, he's the oldest one. He's the one that's in media relations. He was very put out that it wasn't going to be broadcast, so he wanted to write a letter to all the networks. I got Phil, our friend from the *Go! Show*, I got him to get me the names and addresses of the heads

of all three networks. Jeff wrote a letter to them asking why they weren't going to put his dad's splashdown on TV, because everybody else got theirs put on TV.

They all answered him, which was to their credit. They all answered him, and they all said pretty much the same thing. What your dad is doing is important. He's doing all these great things, but it's not newsworthy anymore. We just listened to the splashdown.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Not quite the same effect, is it?

CARR: Not quite the same. I wasn't going to relax. I was going to be militant until the time he stepped on the carrier, because too many things had happened other times. [Virgil I. "Gus"] Grissom's capsule sank, and they had people coming in off target.

His was a really good rescue, so I was disappointed we couldn't see it, but we listened to it. Rusty [Russell L.] Schweickart was sitting next to me and keeping me up-to-date on what they were doing by what we could hear on the squawk box. He said, "They're on the carrier now," and so I thought oh, now we can have the champagne, so we did.

We had quite a few people over there for his splashdown. It was great fun, and it was really almost kind of a letdown when it was all over. When everybody went home and the leftovers were all put in the refrigerator and the interviews were all given, I was just sitting there with all the flowers and the telegrams and stuff by myself. The kids were out playing in the front yard, which they hadn't necessarily been able to do for the last few days because of the splashdown. I just felt so let down. I was finally down where I belonged, on the ground, and my heart wasn't up in the air somewhere.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Why do you feel like you were let down?

CARR: Because I was hyper the whole time, that kind of down.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I get you.

CARR: I was very militant about what they were doing to my husband. It was a relief to have him back on the ground.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you surprised when you saw that beard? Were you expecting to see him clean-shaven?

CARR: No, he told me he was growing one. Of course I couldn't see it. Yes, I did too see it, because they did a couple of TV casts from Skylab, so I had seen it. I liked it. I thought it was cool, I thought he should have kept it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You have said that this experience with NASA changed you. I wanted to see if you could elaborate on that, just the experience of working with the Agency.

CARR: Changed me? No, it didn't change me. I think it just brought out more of who I really am.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How is that?

CARR: I very much felt like I was part of the whole process, I mean from the beginning, from the word go, from when we started dating, and how I supported him through college, not financially but emotionally. I wanted to be part of it, and I thought I was part of it. But NASA didn't think I was part of it, and that really got me. I'll take that back as far as Deke goes. He made me feel part of it, because he listened. Nobody else listened to me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you think that was the case for all the wives?

CARR: I don't think anybody made as much trouble as I did. They were shorter flights, so there wasn't much that could go wrong. There were a lot of things that could go wrong, but there wasn't anything that could develop that was a relational sort of thing. I don't know. Say that again.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was just curious about—like you ended up going to law school. Was that because of your experience working with NASA?

CARR: No, I think I had wanted to do something for a long time, and I didn't know what. I certainly didn't think I could be a lawyer. I had an interesting thing happen to me. We went on a PR [public relations] tour for NASA around the United States, and we started off in Washington, DC. I went with Annie to watch John in the Senate and got to eat lunch in the Senate dining room. I was very taken with that scene, and I thought it was so interesting to be part of something bigger like that.

Then we went from there to upper New York State where he was going to speak at a college where his old skipper taught there. We went up there and stayed with them for a day, and she said to me, “Why don’t you go to law school?” I thought, “Well, I don’t know.”

Then we went to Utah where he spent the day with the congressman from Utah, and I spent the day with his secretary. Only she wasn’t his secretary, she was his aide. She had a law degree. I said to her, finally I got my courage up, and I said, “What do you think somebody like me could do in a law office? What kind of job could I do?” She said, “You could do any damn thing you want to do.” I thought oh, okay.

Then the president of the National Organization for Women came to speak at University of [Houston]-Clear Lake, and I went to hear her, and I thought she was speaking directly to me. She was saying, “Don’t put yourself down because don’t say, ‘All I’ve ever done is be a housewife, all I’ve ever done is be a mother, all I’ve ever done is cook the meals and do this, that, and the other.’ You have managed a whole household. You have managed your children. You know how to manage things.” She just really spoke to me. She really spoke to me, and I got a lot from her. I read her book.

That was another thing. There were several things along the way that got me pointed in the right direction. I started thinking, “Well, I don’t even know what you have to do to go to law school. I have to find that out.” I started doing the research for that.

I went to talk to the director of admissions at the law school at U of H. I had this big speech ready that I was going to make about why I would be a good law student. I got a little bit of it out, and he said, “Yes, I think you’re right. You should. You should go take the LSAT [Law School Admission Test].” I thought, “Well, what’s the LSAT, I don’t know what that is.”

I found out, and I did real well on the LSAT, so it just all started falling into place. I didn't really decide I was going to law school until after he came back and we were well out of flight mode. We had so many trips to go on, it seemed like we were continuing with the flight. It didn't really jell until after he came back. There was something brewing before he left, but I didn't have any idea yet what it was.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did he have any idea that you didn't want to continue being a housewife when he left?

CARR: I don't know. I think I did a pretty damn good job being a housewife. I did a lot of things. I was a great cook. I told you I made my own clothes, and they weren't homemade-looking, they were very professional-looking. I had taken a class in tailoring and a class in hat making. I was good at cooking, and I was pretty good at everything a housewife does. I knew that the kids were going to grow up and leave me and then I was going to be alone.

I think he was scared, I really do. I think he was scared that I was going to law school. I guess I was pretty out of control sometimes when I talked back to people, and talked back to the people at NASA, and all those things that he thought I shouldn't do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It benefited him in the end, right?

CARR: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I want to ask Sandra if she has any questions for you because I'm looking at my time.

CARR: What time do you have?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Two forty-three, so we have a few minutes.

CARR: Oh, good, you can make it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes. I think the only thing that I thought, since we just have a few minutes, is if you want to tell us, just so we'll have it on the recording, why you decided to write your book [Keeper of the Flame].

CARR: I've always been interested in writing, even in school, but I thought I'd write like a memoir sort of thing. I did that, and it was really boring. I thought but my life has not been boring, so there's something wrong with the way I'm writing it.

I took a bunch of classes at junior [college], and I took some extension courses from UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] about how to write. It just came to me one night when I was watching a play my son was in. I thought, "I'll write a novel, and I'll make it just true to life, but it'll be a novel, so I can pretty much say whatever I want to say."

That's how I wrote the novel. I took a lot of classes, I took a lot of notes, I worked on it for years and years. Then I got a freelance editor who urged me to rewrite some of it, and so I rewrote it. I like to say it only took me 20 years to write that book, off and on. That's how I



came to write it. It was very cathartic too, to write that. Laugh at the funny things and cry at the sad things.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I enjoyed reading your book.

CARR: Oh. Thank you.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, it was-well written.

CARR: That means a lot to me. I have a new publisher, and I have a publicist.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, great.

CARR: I'm hoping that something comes of that, because I'm forgetting things.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It happens to all of us.

CARR: Really fast. I have to sign this [release].

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, yes, please. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you wanted to chat about as we close out today?

CARR: No, I think Skylab was the biggest thing I wanted to get off my shoulders. What's today?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is the 20<sup>th</sup>. Thank you so much. We appreciate it.

CARR: You're welcome. Thank you so much.

[End of interview]