

Interview Transcript

EVENT: On MY Honor Day Camp – Lesbian Experiences with Girl Scouting

Details

- Name of Interviewee(s): This panel presentation features the editor (Nancy Manahan) and four contributors (Carol Seajay, Henri Bensussen, Jorjet Harper, and Rachel Wetherill) to the re-released book, *On My Honor: Lesbians Reflect on Their Scouting Experience*. They talk about their experiences, read from their chapters, and discuss the importance of this publication.
- Date & How Recorded: Recorded March 22, 2025 via Zoom at Camp Hoffman, West Kingston, RI during the event On My Honor Day Camp: Lesbian Experiences with Girl Scouting, Co-sponsored by Wanderground Lesbian Archive/Library and Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England.
- Interviewer: Mev Miller
- Transcript edited by: Otter.ai edited by Jamie Potter
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Full Video on YouTube - <https://youtu.be/H1aCOBonyyg>

Mev Miller [MM]: We're going to hear from Nancy first, and then, shall I say, Nancy, and then Henri, and then Rachel, and then Carol, and then Jorjet. So I will actually not spend a lot of time interviewing, and I'll let you introduce yourselves.

Nancy Manahan [NM]: Mev, before we begin, could you just briefly tell us where you all are located, to help me orient myself to the East Coast of the United States?

[MM]: Sure, we are on the East Coast in Rhode Island, in a little town called West Kingston, which is near University of Rhode Island. And we are at the camp Hoffman, which is the Girl Scout camp for this region here. And there's 15 of us here. We've had some drop offs today due to health concerns and so on. But so everybody here is girl scouts from around the region. Might be a few who were just hanging out, but mostly we're all Girl Scouts.

[NM]: Well, I would like to start out by thanking you for inviting me and the contributors to *On My Honor: Lesbians Reflect on Their Scouting Experience* to participate in the first hour of today. And before we actually say something about the book, I would like to take just a moment to recognize the five contributors out of the 31 total contributors to *On My Honor* who have died since its publication (originally in 1997 and the second edition in 2022 or 21) and those are:

From Part One: Empowerment, Martha McPheeters, Chapter Two, which she entitled Camp or Bust. Martha died last fall after staying at Our Chalet with some Girl Scout friends and hiking in the Swiss Alps. How appropriate that the end of her life came after spending time at Our Chalet. Second Jeanne Córdova, Chapter Three, her essay is entitled Camp Fires. Jeanne was a founder and publisher of *The Lesbian Tide*, author of several books and a contributor to my first anthology, *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*. Third is my brilliant and beautiful co-editor of *Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence*, Rosemary Keefe Curb, and I especially miss her on a day like today, when she would have been such a bright light on this panel.

Part Two: Fulfillment. Susan Rothbaum, Chapter 16, Twist Me and Turn Me. All of you probably are very familiar with that song from the Brownie Scout Fly Up ceremony.

Part Three: Disillusionment. These are the saddest stories in the collection, discrimination, things that just awful things that happen to some of these women and the lessons they learn from it. And in fact, her Chapter 23 is titled Lessons in Green and Brown about the subtle and overt racism that she encountered in Girl Scouting.

And Part Four: Acceptance and Integration, all six contributors to section four are still living, and I think that may have something to do with the fact that they were a little later in Girl Scouting, when some of those awful in the closet policies had a bigger impact and a more damaging and profound and wounding impact on these women. Those early traumas, I think, do affect our health as we get older, in my opinion.

05:15

So how did this book come about? That was the question you asked me, and I would like to read the first few paragraphs from my introduction. And by the way, I am reading from the second edition, which looks like this. 56 was my troop in Madelia, Minnesota. And these are badges that were drawn by my artist friend Lynne Tuft, who did a badge for each contributor, redid it, and a big badge for each section of the book, each of the four sections.

So I start out by saying, “In 1994 in an Indian restaurant one evening, my partner, now my wife, Becky Bohan, said, Nancy, you look so happy when you talk about Girl Scouting. I've been telling Becky about troop meetings, day camp, trips to Minnesota State Parks, and the magical week at camp Tukawah each August. I loved everything about Girl Scouts, the uniform, the badge sash, the sturdy green handbook full of practical knot tying and lashing techniques, the sense of community as we constructed a Kaper Chart or a sit-upon, or as we sang around the campfire, the ideals of international peace and friendship. I was flooded by memories of the two Girl Scout roundups I attended with 1000s of tents sheltering girls from all over the world, and once again, I felt the draw to Our Chalet.

My imagination was stirred by the dream of meeting girls and women who said the promise in other languages and in their differently colored uniforms, tried to live by the same scouting laws I did. An hour later— yes, I talked about all of this for at least an hour— I sang softly, “make new friends, but keep the old / one is silver and the other gold.”

Becky watched me wipe tears from my eyes. “You know”, she said, “I've noticed that Lesbians tend to get very emotional about scouting. What is it about Girl Scouts that affects so many Lesbians?”

This book is an attempt to answer my wife's question. Back to you, Mev.

[MM]: Thank you, Nancy. So next we're going to hear from Henri Bensussen, who I know from OLOC.

08:22

Henri Bensussen [HB]: Yeah, I'm in California, and I was in LA during the time I was a Girl Scout. I went to Camp Osito as a counselor in training when I was 17. It was a two-year program for the summer, summer scouting groups, and I just developed this great crush on a girl that was one year ahead of me. She was like my mentor, and I just followed her everywhere, tried to do everything she did. But on the second year, things had changed, and I was 18, and I'm going to read you what it was like for me in the two poems that I've written about it. The first one is Summer Nights:

“At a camp for girls, I'm learning what most counselors in training already know: how to iron a shirt without a scorch, to sharpen a jackknife and not cut myself, and how to clean the johns with Pine Sol . Pre-teens sparking with unnamed need scream and crowd into me when I first appear, the slim, shy one with a short haircut, hardly a rock star, but to them, I have it: a holy liquor they're drunk with want for. Batting them off like mosquitoes, I make it to our off-limits tent after taps and lights out, campers asleep, we CITs gorge on chocolate bars, practice the latest dance steps and whisper about the camp director, how she makes out with her girlfriend in the counselor's cabin in front of everyone. As for me, I'm entranced with an older girl. We never touch. Hardly talk. Gratefully, I accept her jacket for late-night campfires when she sees I'm shivering. Her haircut is shorter than mine. She's like my own distant star who never forgets I'm orbiting in the far outer arm of her galaxy.”

This second year Director we had, she was one of what I called a diesel dyke. I mean, she was big, and she had brought her girlfriend with her, and there was a lot of, you know, talk, but the counselors, there were quite a few Lesbians, I'm sure, in this group of counselors. And there

were riotous parties going on in the counselor's cabin, and we CITs in the second year were allowed in that counselor's cabin, but I was afraid to go in. It was a long time ago.

So the second one is about Kippy. I had this crush on Kippy in the second year, and this is the last day of camp. It's a five-week program that I've been in, and it's my turn to go home:

“Memory of her rushing down the aisle, last hugs, the bus leaving from camp. Everyone tearful. I'm reaching out for her, but too far back, the bus is moving, and Kippy turns, jumps off, waves to us as we're taken away. She could be so public with affection, never the rare times we were alone. Once I followed her solitary walk through pine trees after the news came of her friend's death, I was afraid Kippy might leap to death herself. When we met at the cabin, she was always in a rush to pick up a jacket, iron or shirt, no time to talk. I couldn't follow her everywhere or home. So that split when summer cleaves away and fall is all that's left. Melancholy, teenage girl returns to family alone. And there it was, school, the final year, the final weeks, finally, and then the boy, by accident, by chance, I didn't know it meant summer block from ever coming together again. Kippy, we never said the word “goodbye” as the best left those many years ago.”

So it was a really defining time for me to be in that camp, because I'd been so under my mother's thumb, and we knew nothing about Lesbianism. So it took me after 27 years of marriage, to finally figure this out and come out. I have tried many times to track Kippy down with their real name, but to no avail. But anyway, that's my contribution.

[MM]: Thank you. So now we are going to hear from Rachel.

13:47

Rachel Wetherill [RW]: Well, thank you for inviting me, and I wanted to say to Henri, maybe you were my camp counselor, I was at Camp Osito Rancho, and it would have been like 1963. It was a great camp, but I always had my idea on getting to Camp White's landing, of course, 26 miles across the sea and Catalina. I had to diligently practice my swimming in order to get accepted into Catalina, and finally, I got to go there for two or three years. But the camps in the Los Angeles area were wonderful.

Our family moved to California from the East Coast when I was in fourth grade, and it was really pretty hard on me, because this was a neighborhood on the fringe of Beverly Hills, and I was ridiculed because my clothing was homemade and my I didn't know how to play handball or tetherball. We just were used to playing any any game we made up in a dirt field. So I was really not very accepted.

But then this woman said, “I wonder if you would like to join the Girl Scouts”. And I said, “Oh no, I used to be a blue bird. I couldn't do that.” She said, “Well, just come to a meeting.” So I came to a meeting. I didn't know that this was already planned out, that they were going to have a uniform for me, and they informed me that we were flying up to intermediate scouts the next week, and I had to learn the promise and the laws if I wanted to fly up and join them and become an intermediate scout.

And this changed my life. I was so proud to wear the uniform, and the troop leader explained to me – this was during the Cuban Missile Crisis– the Troop Leader explained to me that the Girl Scouts could be called on to help evacuate the school if there was a national emergency. And I thought, wow, I am finally somebody. And every week, our Thursday meetings would be cut short because we all had to rush home to listen to what President Kennedy had to say, and I made a promise to spend my life working for world peace. My first goal was going to be to get to Our Chalet, but I haven't made it yet.

I stayed in Girl Scouts. I loved my Girl Scout experience. I got so excited, I won an award for selling the most Girl Scout cookies in Los Angeles, and I got my picture on the Style section cover for selling 409 boxes in person, knocking on doors and standing in front of Truman's restaurant in West Los Angeles. And I started out as a shy person that could hardly speak to strangers, and then I came out with my spiel about how “you might like a box of Trefoils, it's a wonderful shortbread cookie that's very good with infants and the elderly”. I can still sell cookies, but now I buy several hundred dollars' worth.

But things got... I mean, up till, I don't know, I was about 14, Girl Scouts were wonderful. And then all the girls started dropping out, and it became like, if you were a Girl Scout, the boys were not going to talk to you, and that was fine with me, but the other girls asked me not to have lunch with them, and the troops started folding, and by the time I was, you know, it's 16, there were no more Girl Scouts. But I did go with a friend, a former Girl Scout, to see the movie, *The Killing of Sister George*. It's one of the first Lesbian movies, and it was really pretty awful. But this friend and I went and during the showing, or after the showing, this other girl came up to her and talked to her, and I thought was friendly, and said, “Let's have lunch together or something.”

Well, when we got to the car, I got quite a lecture from my friend for not being supportive. I hadn't supported her because that girl that had invited her to lunch was a Lesbian. And I was like, “What do I say? What can I say?” I didn't want to come out as a Lesbian, I didn't even really understand that at the time, but I just felt so betrayed, and I walked away. No Girl Scouts. The Lesbian stuff, of course, soon as I got to college, that changed.

19:23

But Yvette, I met my wife in a commune in DC, and we moved to Virginia– this was '72 – and we had been living in a small town in Northern Virginia, and the leader of the local troop, came and asked me if I would co-lead the trip with her, because she wanted to move on to become the leader of the cadet troop. And I said, “Sure, sure, I'll do it.” And I had a great time until we were going off on the girls' first camping trip, Camp Potomac Woods. I had practiced, I had taken the girls off to hike and to gather wood for the fire. And when I came back, something seemed weird. I noticed that the other leader and one of the scouts, I called her Daisy, was missing, but things went on. I mean, it just seemed odd. And then we gathered for supper, and the girls said, “We want to dedicate this song to Rachel.” And everybody stood and sang Our Chalet, my favorite song, and I really felt this was a great thing happening.

But later on in the tent, the other leader and I were sharing a separate tent, and she said, I need to talk to you, Rachel. And I got butterflies in my stomach, and she said she had gone off with one of the girls who was upset because the girl's mother had told her that I was paying her to have sex with her. So this poor little girl, her mother– I knew her mother, her mother did work as a prostitute – the girl was 13 and in the fifth grade, she shared the house with her mother, her mother's boyfriend, her mother's husband, seven siblings, their spouses, numerous nieces and nephews and some unrelated farm workers. So I said, I am a Lesbian, but I certainly do not pay Daisy's mother. This is ludicrous. This is absurd, and it made me very angry, and it made me very upset, and I was told that there would be a discussion. They would bring this matter up at the council with the council chair.

A couple months went by, nothing was heard. I was invited to a party and the Girl Scout leader who had presented these charges was there, which I found weird. And then she invited me to come upstairs. She said, I want to talk to you. So we went upstairs at this house, and there was no place to sit except in the bedroom. So I sat on the bed, and she sat on the bed, and eventually, you know, we were both laying on the bed, which was totally weird. And she said, “I talked to the council chair, and she heard the whole story.” She said, “There are two kinds of Lesbians in the world, the kind that attack children and the kind that don't attack children, as far as she can tell, you are the kind that doesn't attack, but you just can never be too sure. The council can't take the chance on having you as a leader.”

So I had no choice but to walk away and leave Girl Scouting behind me. And I mean, that was it. I know at the Michigan Women's Music Festival, it was always fun because we would gather together and we'd have a Girl Scout campfire, and always sing songs, and we would march around and salute each other. I'm still very sad about the experience. I did get an outreach from the Girl Scouts of the Nation's Capital to participate in a forum regarding their new program,

which emphasizes, once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout. And I was really surprised that the meeting started, that we were to go around the room and introduce ourselves and give our pronouns, and that was just like, the attitude had definitely changed. So I still, one day my dream is to get to Our Chalet.

25:02

[MM]: Thank you, Rachel. So next we're going to hear from my friend from many, many years, Carol Seajay.

Carol Seajay [CS]: Good morning, scouts! I have so looked forward to being able to say that. Girl Scout camp was really important to me. I had been a Brownie for a year, and I came home with, apparently a Girl Scout camp flyer in my jacket pocket, and my mother found it. And in my neighborhood, everybody went off to the Van Buren County Youth Camp, which is a free camp for inner city kids. And she didn't want me to go there, because, you know, the boys stole the girls' underwear and ran it up in the flagpoles and like that. She really wanted me to go to this Girl Scout camp, but I didn't want to go, so she tricked me into it. She said that I had agreed to it one night before I went to sleep, and she had mailed the deposit off before I even woke up in the morning.

I will give her credit, I think she wanted a different life for me than what she had, which was going through World War II, the boys came home, she got pregnant, she got married, and there weren't any choices after that. So thanks mom.

So I wasn't in scouts after that year, but I always went to Girl Scout camp, and I would save my lunch money, a quarter a day, to have the money to pay for the fee. And I did that for many years. Some of the things I took away from mostly Girl Scout camp was service, the idea of working together to achieve goals, a vision, a different vision for what girls and women could be than I was learning at junior high school, and the skills of imagining something we wanted to have happen, and then learning how to make it happen, you had to, you know, create a plan. There were steps. There was a progression to learning, and I found those to be the skills that shaped my life. And I also want to say that for me, and I think for many, many other girls, Girl Scout camp was a safe place. So for two weeks every year, there was a kind of freedom and safety that I didn't know how to articulate until later, but in hindsight, I can say that for two weeks every year, I had a space where I was totally free from being sexually abused from any threat of that it was just I was just me, and I could be. And that, I think, has also shaped my life. That freedom got me through, and I am eternally grateful to Girl Scouts for that.

I don't know if I said my camp was Girl Scout camp Merrie Woode in Michigan. So I want to read a couple very brief things. My piece is called Becoming a Canada Tripper. It's about the trip to Canada, the canoe trip that we lobbied for. But before that, this is when I was much younger.

“Maybe the rest of the girls were at crafts. I don't know where I was supposed to be, but I wasn't intended to be walking up this path alone. I heard the sharp crack first, then looked up to see my counselor. She picked up another piece of wood, set it on the stump, and swung the ax high and brought it down. The wood split neatly, flying away from the ax as the clean crack filled my ears.

I'd never seen anything like it. I'd never seen anything like this tall, lean woman, stretching her body, lifting her arms, swinging an ax and splitting wood. I stood there on the path watching as she split the rest of the wood and stacked it away and left. And I still stood there staring into that clearing as if I could see in the pattern of the trees or in the light or in the air how the future had just changed for me.”

30:54

So I grew up to become a woman who could split wood and be powerful in that way. And I want to run through this very briefly, because this will explain to you that everything I learned about organizing, I learned at Girl Scouts and Girl Scout camp.

“After a few more years, we had a regular gang of girls who went to the same session year after year. After our first canoe trip, we had heard that another camp had run a canoe trip to Canada. We decided we wanted that to happen again for us. Most of the girls in the gang went to the Catholic girls' school in town, conveniently located kitty corner from the Girl Scout office, so we went in. We pitched our idea about a Canadian canoe trip. “You aren't even scouts,” they said at the office. We promptly found troops and joined. “It'll cost too much,” they said. We agreed to pay a higher fee. “We have no way to know if the troops will fill”. We called everyone we knew who had ever gone on a canoe trip and guaranteed eight of those 12 spaces. We bore them down with our sheer persistence. They couldn't find enough staff with whitewater skills. But finally, they came up with the Boundary Waters Canoe Area on the border of Canada and Minnesota, where we could do an eight-day lake trip in a real wilderness. We wanted a river trip. Boundary Waters was their final offer. We agreed jubilantly. We would start in Minnesota. We would drive to Minnesota and start in Minnesota and canoe across the border into Canada.”

33:21

[MM]: Thank you, Carol. So now I would like to introduce Jorjet Harper.

Jorjet Harper [JH]: Hi everyone. I was a Brownie Scout, and I loved being a scout. And the older I got, by the time I was a senior, I was no longer interested in the Girl Scouts, but I stayed in the troop because I could go to summer camp. Camp was like the highlight of my year, and I, too, fell in love with one of my counselors one year. And it was a doomed relationship, I was 14, she was 18. But it was my first crush, so very important in my life, you know? And I was an atheist street kid from New York, and she was a convert to Mormonism, and we'd sit around the campfire and talk about religion and politics and all these, you know, important matters.

Anyway, I wrote at the time, this is now like 1989, something like that. I was working as the arts and entertainment editor at Outlines, which is now called Windy City Times, in Chicago. And I also wrote many articles and we were always looking for new things to write about. It was a very exciting time in LGBT journalism. So first, I wrote a series of humor columns, called Lesbomania, and I started thinking about my Girl Scout experience, and my crush on my my Mormon counselor. By the way, she always wore her chalet hat with all these charms on it that she collected while she was there; it was very charming, actually. So anyway.

That started me thinking about this experience of mine, and I thought, well, what about Lesbians and the Girl Scouts? You know, there must have been others, there must have been troop leaders and so forth, that were Lesbians. And I know nothing about this. So I pitched this story idea to OutWeek magazine, which I also wrote for. It was the the weekly New York gay and Lesbian magazine at the time, and they loved the idea. So I started to work on this article. Of enormous help to me— I don't think I could have written it without her help— was Alix Dobkin, who, in her travels all around the country, met lots of Lesbians who had been in the scouts or were still in the scouts in some capacity, and she very kindly gave me their contact information. And I had to say, you know, Alix Dobkin is the one who told me to talk to you. Otherwise, they wouldn't talk at all, you know, they would have brushed me off. But since Alix had given them the contact, they trusted me that when I said I would not use their name if they did not want me to, that I would not use their name.

So the article appeared in the November 26 issue, 1989, of OutWeek, and it ended up being the cover story. I'm going to show you the picture. One of the staff photographers, she might have been the only female, her name is Patsy Lynch, and there was a controversy once the article actually was written and they had looked at it and decided they wanted it to be a cover story. They had a legal issue, because the lawyers have advised them that if they used a model or something like that for the cover that they could be sued by the Girl Scouts. And the lawyer went over the article very carefully too, because the Girl Scouts were not happy about this article. I'll tell you about that in a second, but Patsy devised this cover of herself. That is Patsy Lynch, the photographer. She took a selfie of herself in her own Girl Scout uniform. So

apparently, that satisfied the lawyers that they really couldn't sue if this was a true thing on the cover, you know.

39:43

So here's what I learned from writing the story and talking to, oh, maybe 50 women who had something to tell me about their relationship to Girl Scouting. I learned number one from a number of women, I asked them the same question, because the first person who said this really like made me think about this, a number of women agreed that probably the the percentage of professional women and counsel at Girl Scout, you know, troop leaders, counselors and so forth, was about one in three. That was the number that everybody seemed to believe was correct. And I learned that what they thought was that there was a pretty much a hierarchy that the higher up you got in the organization – so in other words, the troop leaders were not professionals, they were volunteers – the higher up you got in the organization of the Girl Scouts, the more Lesbians there were. And a lot of the women had said, you know, this is a profession where you can be with other women, where you can rise very high in an organization, because there aren't a lot of men who are trying to, you know, take the jobs. So, that was one of the reasons that they were attracted to it, and also because they felt it really instilled in girls a a feeling of independence, that they could do things independently, and they felt that way themselves, and they that's one of the reasons that they were involved. Also, I noticed that everyone who was a former Girl Scout, was willing to give me [permission to] publish their real names, and everyone who was still involved in scouting, asked me to use a pseudonym.

So it was very clear that you had to be closeted, they felt, to be in the scouts. So anyway, I as part of the article, I had to, you know, find out what the girl scouts had to say about this. So I called up the National Headquarters in New York and spoke with their publicity director, and she just stonewalled me the whole time. I said, you know, a lot of women I've talked to have said that they think that the proportion of women is one in three in the organization. “Oh, well, we wouldn't know about that. We wouldn't know anything about that, you know.” Everything was just like, we don't keep numbers on it. We don't ask anybody about that, which makes sense, I mean, it's good for the organization in a homophobic world not to ask their employees if they're Lesbians or not. But still, I mean, they were very paranoid about it, because they were afraid for their funding. They're very sensitive to the fact that they were being funded by many conservative organizations, so that was also a consideration. So anyway, the article came out, and it turns out, it seems to be holding up, that this is the first article ever written about Lesbians and the Girl Scouts in the history of the world. Okay. Anyway, so a number of years later, Nancy Manahan contacted me and said we'd like to reprint this article in *On My Honor*. And I said, absolutely, sure, wonderful. So I edited just a little bit, and basically that's what

appeared in the book. So I'm very proud to have that article in the book. Thank you so much, Nancy for giving me that opportunity.

[MM]: Thank you. Nancy, if you want to offer a last summary, and then we'll open it up if anyone here has any questions they'd like to ask.

[NM]: Oh, thank you. Mev, you asked me earlier about the difference between the first and the second edition, and I wanted to say a couple of things about that. The first edition was published by Madwoman Press, a Lesbian owned and operated press in Massachusetts. But after this book was published, they subsequently went out of business, just not profitable. Carol Seajay, and anyone who's been involved in the Women in Print movement can attest to the fact that it is a labor of love. And yeah, Jorjet, you know that too, of course. So the publisher, Diane Denison, went back to her corporate job in order to put food on the table.

45:18

And so subsequently, the book went out of print. One time I thought, you know, I should get a used copy of this. So I went on Amazon. This was years later, and there was a copy available for \$750. Yes, I was flabbergasted that this out-of-print book had become so valuable that someone, some bookseller somewhere, thought they might be able to get \$750 for one copy, and it was the only copy that was available. Well after that I guess other people must have seen that too, and they had copies somewhere, and they put it on. The price kept coming down, and I think when it reached \$20 I started buying up every copy that I could. And it finally occurred to me after I had put *Lesbian Nuns Breaking Silence* back in print thanks to Tracy Baim, editor/publisher of Windy City Times, who said, "This is shocking." This is when Rosemary, my coeditor, died. She said, "This is shocking that this path-breaking, landmark, international best-selling book, has been allowed to go out of print," because Naiad press, the original publisher, sold their stock to Bella Books, and even though they had a handful of copies, it wasn't really in print. And so thanks to Tracy Baim, who spearheaded this effort. She said, "I know how to get a book back in print. I'll help you. Nancy." I realized that it wasn't impossible, it wasn't that difficult, that you could, in fact, self-publish a book. That new edition of *Lesbian Nuns Breaking Silence* is now available from Bella Books and in ebook and paperback, and it's also available from other distributors. So I thought, I'll get this book back in print. Why am I paying \$20 a copy for out-of-print books when it could be back in print? So I did, and had a new cover designed, and just on a whim, I asked various people if they would like to write a little endorsement for the book, and so I put 15 women's endorsements in the front pages of the book. Some of them were scouts, some of them were wannabe scouts. And I would like to read you the endorsement from Jill Cruse, who is currently and has been for many years, Vice President of Olivia travel, actually, since 1989 to the present. I will probably see Jill Cruse next week, on the

35th anniversary of Olivia travel cruise, the biggest cruise Olivia travel has ever done, leaving from Fort Lauderdale.

I live in the women's community of about 500 Lesbian women, almost all Lesbians in North Fort, Myers called Carefree community, and about 30 of us from Carefree are going on this cruise. So great anyway, what Jill Cruse, oddly enough, the cruise director, wrote, is "These stories of strong, independent women revealed nuggets of the history of how Girl Scouts shape Lesbian lives and how Lesbians shaped Girl Scouts. We were the closeted executive directors of councils, national staff leaders, camp directors, counselors and campers. GS-USA was far ahead of its time in the early 1980s personnel policies stated that Girl Scouts would not discriminate based on sexual orientation. That is a direct quote from the blue book a quiet Don't Ask, Don't Tell Policy. Of course, it was not carried out, but that was in writing, if volunteers or employees told or were outed, as in Jill's case, the volunteers local councils and National Council often were supported." The national director came to Los Angeles and personally helped Jill Cruse make it through the accusations that she was a Lesbian and therefore should be removed from her position and she retained it.

50:08

"Girl Scouting prepared me for my jobs." Carol, this reminds me of what you said, that everything you learned about organizing, you learned in the Girl Scouts, and it just baffles you, I remember from your piece, saying that you look at people trying to do something, and they don't know how to organize. They don't how to know how to divvy up the chores and organize a logical approach to how to get things done; those principles have guided you well all of your life. So this prepared her for her jobs by "giving me a sense of self and the confidence to dream big." And I think that is true for many, many girls in Girl Scouting and women. Confidence to dream big, self-confidence, empowerment and values that are embodied in all these songs. The song that's been going through my head this past week is, "when e'er you make a promise / consider well its importance / and when made engrave it upon your heart." another girl scout ideal that has guided me my entire life.

Okay, back to how this book is different. Two other things is that the Pulitzer Prize nominated journalist Victoria Brownworth here, her name is right on the cover, wrote a fabulous forward to this book, which is both her personal experience and, sort of like Jorget, a historical overview of Girl Scouting. I just love this forward by a Prize-winning journalist Victoria, who now lives in Philadelphia. And the other thing is that I wrote a letter postscript that I wish the Girl Scouts of the USA would write. They have not done so, but basically I'm giving them the wording that would be kind of like Truth and Reconciliation attempt in which they would admit all of the damage, the terrible damage that had been done, not exactly through their fault, because those

were the times, women did have to be in the closet. But I would like them to acknowledge the one in three Jorjet mentioned at the, as you said, as you go up in the in the ladder, in professional Girl Scouting, the percentage gets much higher. And I think maybe you mentioned 70% at the national office. All of that Lesbian energy being poured from the national level to the regional and the Girl Scout Council level, down to the local level, Girl Scouting, since it was begun, has been fueled by Lesbian energy. And I would really like the National Council to acknowledge that publicly and to thank Girl Scout, Lesbian Girl Scouts, for their contributions and to apologize for homophobic damage that has been done to people like Rachel, asked to leave this troop because of some wild accusation, just so heartbreaking.

So those are some of the differences, also, the original book is 260 pages, and the new book, even though it's also about 260 pages, the print is a lot bigger, because so many of us are older and we can't read the tiny print. Madwoman Press was trying to get the book as small as possible to cut down the cost of printing. So the stories are all the same, and it's just a lot easier to read, and then there's Victoria's fabulous forward. So that's all I would like to say. And, Mev, I think you have a few copies of this new edition at the event today. Is that correct? Oh, look at them!

[MM]: Yes, and they've all been passed out, enough for everybody.

[NM]: Oh, I'm delighted!

[MM]: And I also want to say that we have a copy of the original version from Madwoman books in the Wanderground Lesbian archive. So we do have a copy of it there as well the original.

[NM]: Wonderful.

[MM]: So, does anyone have any questions that they'd like to ask at this point?

55:44

??: Hi, this is ____, camp name _____. I'm here at Hoffman in Rhode Island. And was it you, Rachel that said something about going to Our Chalet? You'd love to go to Our Chalet?

[RW]: Yes, I would.

[??: Rachel, let's do a field trip.

[RW]: That would be wonderful.

[MM]: Any other questions while we have them here?

[NM]: I also have a dream of going to Our Chalet. And Martha McPheeters, as I mentioned earlier, she died last year, invited me to go on this trip to Our Chalet with her and her Girl Scout friends. And I'm just checking myself now for saying, Oh, I don't think I can do that, Martha, I'm kind of busy.

[RW]: Nancy?

[NM]: Yes?

56:42

[RW]: I remember a couple of years ago, there was a reading from your book, I think it was online, and there was a mention of at Carefree, a Girl Scout troop. Was there a Girl Scout troop? At Carefree? I never could find information.

[NM]: There isn't a Girl Scout troop, but we have an annual Girl Scout campfire and sing along. It just happened the week before last again this year. The first year, there were maybe 15 women who attended. I think this year there were close to 30.

[RW]: Wow. And can we find out about it ahead of time to visit?

[NM]: No, it's only in person, and it's only for the 500 women who live at Carefree, anybody who was a Girl Scout or a Girl Scout wannabe, I am so sorry.

[RW]: Well, I have several friends at Carefree that I could go visit.

[NM]: Oh, do it, okay, I will let you know the next time then, Rachel!

[RW]: Okay, very good.

[MM]: Any other questions from the folks here?

Dana Borrelli-Murray [DB]: This is Dana. I'm the CEO here at Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England, and I was saying earlier, it's incredibly important to me to make sure that we right our wrongs from the past, and that we are building a very inclusive Girl Scout community here in our area. What suggestions would you have for someone like me and the council leadership to

ensure inclusion and making sure girls have the opportunity to learn about themselves holistically through the Girl Scout Program?

[NM]: Dana, wonderful program of inclusivity and education you're describing, I am so grateful that you're doing that in your Girl Scout Council! And the question of what suggestions I would have probably would just be to consult with Mev Miller, who knows everything about about inclusion and education on these issues, and to do whatever she recommends you do.

[CS]: Well, well, I'll second that motion. And also, as soon as you said that, Dana, it sprang into my mind of an image. I don't think girls scouts do badges in quite the same way, so you have to modernize this concept, but I was thinking of a badge, exploring life opportunities. You know, when I was a kid and got some Catholicism, we were told that there was the religious life and second best to that was married life, and then there was a third option of being single, and that was clearly down low. But I'm imagining something that talks about options of different kinds of work, different kinds of careers, but different structures for emotional lives. Some women, some girls want to grow up to be parents. Some girls don't. And you know, some are in relationships with men, some are in relationships with women. Some are single. Some have serial relationships, both straight and Lesbian. Some people actually manage 50-year relationships, but just kind of a modeling of different formats that women's lives take, as opposed to the grow up, get married, have children, which I think we're going to hear a lot more of that in the coming few years. So something that opens up and just says, there are so many options, and they're all good. That's my response.

[JH]: I want to say now this is probably something that you've already thought of, but for me, one of the most valuable things about going to camp was I lived in Queens growing up, and, you know, there might be one or two trees on the block, but that was it. Going to camp really exposed me to nature in a way that I never got in the city, even in the parks in the city. So I think that there may be many ways that you can develop programs or something that relates to the climate situation and sort of honors nature in a way that girls can learn more about both of those things. So that would be my suggestion, based on my experience as a child.

[MM]: I think that we may have come to an end here. Thank you so, so much for being here with us this morning.

[NM]: Rachel, the campfire, the campfire is always on March 12 international Girl Scout Day.

1:03:14

[MM]: I wanted to sing this before you all leave, because I think you'll get a kick out of it. So I mentioned this earlier to my friend M'lyn. I was a Girl Scout in Baltimore, Maryland, or Balmer, as we say. And I don't know if this was a regional song, because every time I've mentioned it to somebody here, they're clueless as to what I'm talking about. And so I think the song was probably made up as a moral thing that we were all supposed to learn from as an adult Lesbian, I have taken a completely different view of it. So this is the song: "Just a boy and a girl in a little canoe with the moon shining all around / They paddled their paddle, so that you couldn't even hear a sound / and they talked and they talked till the moon grew dim, he said, You better kiss me, you'll get out and swim / So what you gonna do in a little canoe, with the moon shining all around / get out and swim."

Thank you everyone. Appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you. Mev, thank you Jorjet, thank you. Henri, thank you. Rachel, thank you. Carol Seajay. Thanks.