

**Oral History Interview of
Cathy Jung**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
March 11, 2014
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Crossroads of Music Archive***

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The Crossroads Artists Project encompasses interviews conducted by the Crossroads of Music Archive Staff members. They hope to document the creative process of artists and songwriters from all across the Southwestern United States.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Cathy Jung, Public Relations/Marketing Director at Texas Tech University. Cathy discusses her early life in Crosbyton, Texas and how she got started in Public Relations. She recounts moving to Los Angeles where she worked as a personal assistant for actor and comedian Steve Martin, and eventually how she developed her own career as a writer for television.

Length of Interview: 01:47:19

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Andy Wilkinson (AW):

I'm going to start by saying this is the eleventh, isn't it?

Cathy Jung (CJ):

Yes.

AW:

Of March, 2014 which sounds like something out of a Buck Rogers [film]. This is Andy Wilkinson with Cathy Jung, right?

CJ:

Correct.

AW:

And you don't say—

CJ:

We don't say "young." Just pronounce it with a J.

AW:

—In her lovely home being remodeled right now here in Lubbock. And it's in the afternoon, a great West Texas day, a little wind and sand. So let's just get a little basic information, like I need to know your date of birth—

CJ:

Okay, oh great. Thanks Andy, I don't tell this to everybody.

AW:

Well, only the cataloguers. That's all who will know about this.

CJ:

Okay, 3-3-53.

AW:

Oh, so you just had a birthday. Cool.

CJ:

I did.

AW:

And where?

CJ:

I was born in Sapporo, Hokkaido, Japan.

AW:

Oh, okay. S-a-p—

CJ:

I think it's S-a-p-p-o-r-r-o.

AW:

R-r-o.

CJ:

I don't spell it that often. And Hokkaido, H-o-k-k-a-i-d-o, yeah.

AW:

So your father was in the military?

CJ:

He was in the army and my mom for some reason got to come over and live with him for two years and I was born during that time.

AW:

Where were your parents from?

CJ:

My dad was from Albany, Texas and he was born in a little oil town, or a little oil community called Cook Field, and my mom was born in Denver, but raised in Spur, Texas.

AW:

And what was your maiden name?

CJ:

My maiden name—I've always had Jung.

AW:

Oh, that's—okay.

CJ:

That's my dad's name, I always kept Jung.

AW:

And your mom's?

CJ:

McNeill.

AW:

McNeill, because you were talking about your—

CJ:

There's a McNeill ranch that—it used to be the largest intact ranch in Texas or something. There's so many—McNeills still work it, but it's not even owned by McNeills, I don't think at this point. But yeah. Lots of—

AW:

And what was her name, your mom's name?

CJ:

Virginia McNeill—Virginia Francis McNeill.

AW:

And your father?

CJ:

Harry Harper Jung, Jr.

AW:

Now, that sounds like a name out of a novel. Harry Harper, I love it.

CJ:

Well, and it was his father, found out when he was about seventy, he was adopted. He was an orphan on the orphan trains.

AW:

Really?

CJ:

Yes, and he—

AW:

That is such a powerful story.

CJ:

Absolutely. Absolutely. He was trying to get a passport and his parents had kept it from him and his siblings. They had a little jacket that had a little blue tag with a number on it, and Harry Harper or Harbor, and water had gotten on it or something so he couldn't read it. So it could've been that his name was Harry Harbor or Harry Harper. Now we have the fourth generation—my nephew's named Harry Harper Jung IV. But yeah.

AW:

Wow. And so he was adopted where? Because those trains kind of went through the Midwest.

CJ:

I think it was—that's a great question and I'm not sure.

AW:

I'm just wondering if you knew.

CJ:

Yeah, I've heard this story and I cannot remember to tell you the truth. Would they have gone through Oklahoma?

AW:

I don't know. Most of the history that I know about was when they came through Nebraska and Colorado and Missouri—Kansas.

CJ:

I really don't know. I could find out from my dad but I really don't know. That's horrible I don't know that.

AW:

It's just really interesting. So you were born in Japan. How long were they there after you were born?

CJ:

Just a few months. They were there long enough to get a picture of me in a kimono.

AW:

(laughs) A very small one, right?

CJ:

Yeah, a very little one.

AW:

And so did you come back to where?

CJ:

They came back to Spur, where my mom's parents were, just for a little while and then my dad went back to UT to UT law school and became an attorney. The way we got back to West Texas was he kind of searched around little towns that needed an attorney and Crosbyton needed an attorney, so we moved to Crosbyton.

AW:

And that's how you got to know Jaston.

CJ:

That's exactly right. He was Jimmy back then.

AW:

Jimmy?

CJ:

Yes. I still get to call him Jimmy.

AW:

You know, I think—and I probably will jinx it by saying it on tape, but I think we're going to get his collection.

CJ:

That's awesome.

AW:

It is awesome.

CJ:

That's awesome. Because that's interesting. That will be an interesting collection.

AW:

All their scripts—handwritten. Did you know that?

CJ:

Oh, wow. That sounds like him.

AW:

I can't wait for it.

CJ:

He doesn't do texting. New-fangled stuff drives him crazy, so that doesn't surprise me at all.

AW:

In Spur, did you know the MacArthurs like Eve MacArthur—Everetta, we called her?

CJ:

I didn't, but I can promise you my dad—my dad has a memory ten times better than I do. And he knows everybody in Spur—all those little towns—McAdoo. My mom would've known them too because she had a good memory, too. Yeah, my grandfather, her dad, was the mayor of Spur for a long time, Reese McNeill. And again, they knew everybody. I used to go summers there. My memory stinks. I'm a horrible person to ask questions like that about. I have to ask my dad now.

AW:

I'm just at the age where I'm trying to remember how to look up the stuff I can't remember.

CJ:

I'm great at looking up. That's what I have to rely on. I just have a bad memory, for some reason.

AW:

So you were little when you got back to Crosbyton?

CJ:

Very little. I have friends from Crosbyton that I've known since three years old.

AW:

Oh, cool. Did you have brothers and sisters?

CJ:

Two brothers. One is two years younger than I am, he's a physician in Georgetown, lives in

Georgetown, Texas, then I have a younger brother eleven years younger who went to law school at Tech. Actually, my brother went to med school at Tech, too. So we've got lots of Tech connections.

AW:

What was Crosbyton like?

CJ:

Crosbyton was like the fifties, exactly what you would think. Great stories about the whole town would turn out and have some kind of celebration on the square. You've got to learn to drive really young. My dad tells a story about me driving a car in an old back farm road and seeing my boyfriend on a tractor and nearly running us off into the ditch. Wearing big rollers, nobody cared if you're in downtown Crosbyton. Town-wide talent shows that everybody participated in. Jaston came later. We have all sorts of—we were Methodists—

AW:

He because he was in Earth or Olton.

CJ:

I think it was Olton.

AW:

I think it was Olton too, yeah.

CJ:

He doesn't speak highly of Olton. (laughs)

AW:

No.

CJ:

He loved Crosbyton.

AW:

He did.

CJ:

And we were Methodist. They were Church of Christ. I remember as a girl scout, a brownie, we'd go to the church and visit different churches. And the Church of Christ were very welcoming, but they wanted you to know that we wouldn't be joining them in heaven. The

Baptists didn't dance. They were the biggest church. Methodist, you know, whatever.

AW:

Yeah, I grew up Methodist also.

CJ:

Okay well then you know. We were the ones that had the dances, we were the ones that had fun.

AW:

My friends called us religion-light.

CJ:

(laughs) Yeah, that's exactly right. And Jaston, at the time, Jimmy was always wanting to put on plays. I do remember this: one play he had, we had another friend named John Mark Buck. I don't know if you know Joe Buck from Crosbyton.

AW:

I do.

CJ:

That's his brother. He died.

AW:

So is he as crazy as Joe?

CJ:

John Mark died of early-onset Parkinson's about four years ago.

AW:

Oh, how sad.

CJ:

They were both like so handsome, and captain of the football team, class president. Mark and I were favorites—class favorites. We had a little memorial for Mark in Crosbyton and each woman would get up and say, "Mark—" and he was Mark, there was no John, "Mark Buck was my first boyfriend." And the next one would come up. "Mark Buck was my first boyfriend." He was kind of, you know—best-looking, nicest—just a really neat guy. He's passed away but Joe is his older brother. Mark and Jaston and I used to want to do these plays. The last one I remember us wanting to do was *Denny and the Witches*, which I thought was a weird choice for a church, but—

AW:

Yeah, yeah. So that must have been very interesting because in a town that size, you did get to participate in a lot of things, right?

CJ:

Oh, a lot of things. Everything. Yeah. And we moved away. We moved to Lubbock. My dad continued to work in Crosbyton for twenty years, but we moved after my freshman year in high school, and the reason we moved is because Crosbyton had some amazing teachers, but also had some teachers that were horrendous. And we had a math teacher for algebra that got to page twenty-six. I got the math award for the highest average. That meant nothing, because we only got to page twenty-six. And my dad was worried we wouldn't have a good enough education to go to college. So he brought us here and he commuted to Crosbyton. He kind of did a backwards commute.

AW:

So where did you graduate in high school then?

CJ:

Monterey.

AW:

Monterey.

CJ:

Monterey. Now, I still had my best buds in Crosbyton and I kind of didn't speak to my parents for a while. I thought my life had ended. I loved Crosbyton.

AW:

So what year did you graduate from Monterey?

CJ:

Seventy-one.

AW:

Seventy-one?

CJ:

Yeah.

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AW:
Sixty-six.

CJ:
At Monterey?

AW:
Um-hm.

CJ:
Oh, I feel I didn't get the true Monterey—I do have some good friends here, but—

AW:
Oh, I don't know what it was like in '71, but in '66, Lubbock was so big. We had to go to school in shifts the first year I went there.

CJ:
Oh, my.

AW:
They had an early shift and a late shift.

CJ:
They didn't have Coronado, I guess.

AW:
No, Coronado hadn't quite opened yet, it didn't open until the next year. It was not like Crosbyton, I'm quite sure.

CJ:
Yeah, Crosbyton was awesome. When we left, the town threw us a party at Silver Falls. But I mean, they'd do that for anybody. It was just—there might be a lot of gossip going on—there was a lot of gossip going on and everybody knew everybody's business, but everybody cared about each other. My first car date, we were at Murrell's Drive-In—I got to go see a movie with this guy, he was a year older and dad said, "You have to come home right after the movie," and we went—this guy said—Mike—said, "Let's stop and get a Coke at Murrell's." And I went, "Okay," not knowing how to say, no, I have to get home. My dad knew exactly when I went where, had a search party out for me. You didn't get away with anything in Crosbyton.

AW:

Yeah, I'll bet that's right. Well, Crosbyton was and kind of still is an indeterminate size. It's big enough to have some things, but not others.

CJ:

It's gotten a lot smaller.

AW:

Yeah, but it wasn't so small that you couldn't do things there, right?

CJ:

Right. And once you got in high school, people would come to the big city, come to Lubbock for dates. Yeah, they were different.

AW:

We would drive to Silver Falls.

CJ:

Oh, yeah. Silver Falls was cool. It was—

AW:

Remind me and I'll tell you a poem about Silver Falls later. Yeah, it was great to drive out there. Well, growing up with Jaston would be enough to get you interested in show biz, but what drove you to be interested in writing?

CJ:

I don't know—maybe from my mom. My mom was a beautiful lady. As a young girl, there was a picture of her in braids that looked just like Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz*. Oh, she was so—except my mom was prettier. In another day and time, my mom—she taught English. She was really, really smart and in another day and time, she would've been out in Hollywood. She was in Spur, she did the one-act plays and everything. And I don't know. I was just really fascinated with old movies. And growing up, Katharine Hepburn was like, a goddess to me. I loved Katherine Hepburn. And I just liked old movies and I just always thought about—I remember going to MYF, Methodist Youth Fellowship. You dared not say something like, I want to be an actress, but if you were really good friends and the question was asked, you said yeah, I want to do that. We'd do little skits. One year my friends and I, for the town talent show, we dressed up. We had a little group called the Squeatles and sang a Beatles song. (AW laughs) And so it was funny. When I moved to Monterey that kind of stopped. I didn't do theater or anything like that, but in Crosbyton, I did little things like that. Everybody took dance class, everybody played the piano.

AW:

So you came by it very naturally.

CJ:

I guess so.

AW:

I mean with your mother and then having friends like Jaston, or Jimmy.

CJ:

Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. I guess—because in a little town, you kind of make your fun. There is kind of freedom to do whatever you want. There's not much competition. If you want to be in a play, you can create your own play. So yeah. Some people are interested in different things. I just loved movies. Loved movies.

AW:

But you had thought—but your love was to be in them, not to write them, right?

CJ:

You know, maybe. That's kind of the only thing I identified with. I don't think I knew people actually wrote them or directed them or anything. I just thought Hollywood was the most fascinating place in the world. But you know, I didn't have the nerve to say, Oh, after school, I'm going to go to Hollywood.

AW:

And once in Lubbock, those opportunities weren't the same.

CJ:

I think because Monterey was so big, I did—and I wasn't—the kids there had grown up from elementary all the way through. My confidence and security was back in Crosbyton. So I had some good friends. I was real active, but I didn't do acting or music or anything like that. (phone rings) Excuse me.

AW:

Yeah, take it if you need it.

CJ:

No, it's all right.

AW:

Well, earlier before we turned the machine on, when you were talking, you said that you'd gone to college at UT.

CJ:

Went to the University of Texas.

AW:

And what did you study?

CJ:

Well, they made me declare a major after my second year.

AW:

Yeah that's a mistake, isn't it?

CJ:

I know, I don't know why they made me do that. In high school, I was a goody two-shoes and was ranked like sixth in a class of six hundred and something. I was really smart and conscientious in studying. And then I went to UT and learned how to party and go crazy. And so right before my junior year, I was rushing off somewhere, to a party I'm sure, and they said I had declare a major, so I went to the career library and looked and I thought, oh, journalism sounds kind of fun, and PR. Public relations really sound kind of fun. And so that's what I did.

AW:

And so that's what you had your degree in?

CJ:

That's what I got. I got one of the first BJs, Bachelor of Journalism. People would say, is that a real degree? Not BA or BS? No, I got a BJ. And they'd question me. Now, it's pretty common.

AW:

So did you go straight out to Hollywood?

CJ:

No, I didn't. I immediately—with a friend who didn't need a job, because her family's pretty rich from Longview, Rene Payton. We went to Atlanta because I read an article that there was a good singles scene. And so I went there. I was supposed to have some interviews and nothing came through. I sent my resume or called. I didn't get one interview. They all were busy. And we kept downgrading our hotel situation until we got so bad we had to come home. So then I moved

to Dallas and I got a job working for a guy who bought advertising for *Dallas Magazine*, and it was the most boring job in the entire universe. I had just gotten a new job with the Dallas Fairgrounds, and we were going to get free Cowboys tickets. My parents were so excited. But I wanted to go back to Austin. At the same time, I applied for a job at the United Way and I got the—got an actual job in my major. I got to be the PR director for the Capitol Area United Way in Austin. And it was a great job, because I got to do—

AW:

What year would this have been?

CJ:

That was probably—I graduated in '75, so probably I got back in '76. Probably just a year later.

AW:

Pretty quickly.

CJ:

Yeah, real quickly. I hated Dallas. I did not like Dallas. Dallas at the time was what car you drove and what clothes you wore and what disco you went to. That wasn't for me. But I'll tell you—

AW:

Yeah and plus, at that particular time in Austin, it was really getting its sea legs.

CJ:

Absolutely. And I knew Dallas wasn't for me when I went to an interview—I got a few names from my PR professor at UT. And I had a job interview at Dr Pepper. He told me, "You're not going to get the job. It's an older gentleman that's had this PR job, but he might can give you some names or some suggestions." So for some reason my friend Rene said, "I'll go with you." Okay. So she sat in the lobby while I went and interviewed with this man, and sure enough, he said, "There's no PR job here, but we have media buyer. Would you be interested in that?" And I was a purist, I wanted to work in my major. I said, "No, no, no." He said, "Well, would your friend out in the lobby be interested?" I said, "I don't know." She got a job. She found her husband and she's the one who got me to Los Angeles.

AW:

(laughs) That's great.

CJ:

Yeah. Some things are meant to be. She called me after I worked—

AW:

Would you spell her name?

CJ:

R-e-n-e.

AW:

But not *re-nay*.

CJ:

It's Rene. Yeah. She pronounced it ree-nee. Payton: P-a-y-t-o-n, from Longview, Texas.

AW:

I know that'll come up as an issue of how to spell it. I sure wouldn't have done it that way. But then you get this good job at—

CJ:

Got a great job in Austin. Loved it, got to work with—at the time the Austin Aqua Festival was going on, a two week celebration. And I'd had an internship with the chamber that I got to work with them. I got to do great things, because with a non-profit, I got to write special sections for the *Austin American-Statesman*, which now they'd never let you do. Take photographs for the *Austin American-Statesman*, do annual reports, do brochures, just magazines, a little bit of everything. I just got a great education. And the man that hired me retired. He was wonderful. And then the man that came in was not as nice, and I got a call about a year and a half into the job from Rene, saying, "Byron and I—" her boss that became her husband, "are going to Los Angeles to film Dr Pepper commercials. You want to go? It'd be a free trip. All you have to pay for is your flight." And I went, "Yes!"

So we flew to Los Angeles, we stayed at the Beverly Hills Hotel, which I thought, I wonder if this is a nice hotel. It's pink on the outside and has palm trees painted on the inside. Until I started seeing people like Alfred Hitchcock walking through, and I thought, yeah, this is nice. And we got to live it up—because the advertising agency was in LA and they were trying to impress the client, Dr Pepper. And it was when Dr Pepper was doing all the musical commercials. We got to watch that, we got to go to the premiere of a movie, we got to eat at the best restaurants, we went to the Magic Castle. Do you know the Magic Castle?

AW:

Yeah.

CJ:

Just everything. It was just amazing. And when we got back, my boss, who was kind of a jerk, said, "Well, so are you going to move to California?" And I went, "Yes." And it just came out of my mouth before I realized what I was saying. That was me giving notice.

AW:

(laughs) So what did you have in mind in California?

CJ:

I had no clue. I had no clue. I didn't know anybody in California. I started asking people, asking around. Do you know anybody? Do you know anybody? And a friend of mine—

AW:

And you're still single?

CJ:

Still single. Friend of mine in Crosbyton had a cousin that was from Hereford that lived there, name Jeanie—oh, I'm going to forget her maiden name. Jeanie Logan. And she said she works in the fashion industry. She's a PR person, and I went, okay. Get me the name. I got a U-Haul, sold as much stuff as I could, threw a few things in the U-Haul trailer and drove to LA. My brother drove out with me. That's not true, I did know one person. I had a cousin that wasn't very close to our family, and she let me stay at her house for like, three days. And her husband said, She's got to go. So Jeanie helped me find an apartment in Beverly Hills adjacent. My front door was on Doheny, which was in West LA, and the back of the apartment was actually in Beverly Hills, so I had a West LA address. Didn't have a refrigerator, but there was a grocery store across the street, so I would get an ice chest and get ice if I needed to keep something cool for a little while. I loved it.

And it was all fun and games until the rain started and the apartment leaked like there was no roof on it. The guy wouldn't fix it. I'd spent most of my money on deposits, security deposit, first and last month of rent, and I wasn't sure what I was going to do, and started looking in the newspaper for apartments, which nobody does. Not a safe thing to do. And I found a garden apartment in Beverly Hills for two hundred and fifty dollars a month. And I thought, "This is not even true." And called them and this little lady said, "Oh, honey, we already rented that. We had about fifty calls." And for some reason, I said, "Well, will you just take my name down, just in case something falls through?" And she took it down and I got a call a few days later that said, "Is this Judy?" And I went, "No, it's Cathy." And she said, "Oh, well you sound really nice. You can have the apartment on Arnaz." North Arnaz Drive, as in Desi Arnaz. I was like, "Okay, can I come see it?" "Oh, sure." And it was this little Russian couple. He had been in Bonanzas and she was a ballet dancer and they were older and she was starting to lose it a little bit. It was a fourplex. It was a house that'd been changed, altered into a fourplex. They not only let me rent it

for two hundred and fifty, they took no deposits. They just let me move. It was an amazing apartment, or fourplex. It had hardwood floors and the thing in Beverly Hills—so much safer there—but the thing that was as expensive as apartments was parking. And it included a parking garage. And I lived there for sixteen years.

AW:

Sixteen years?

CJ:

Couldn't afford to move. It was under rent control because it was such a low rent. When I left in '94, the rent was six hundred and fifty dollars a month. And I'm sure it rents for three or four thousand now. They were so happy to see me leave.

AW:

That's just amazing.

CJ:

Because it was new owners and everything. It was awesome. It was right off of Wilshire. Which Wilshire—all roads lead to Wilshire. You go downtown, go to the beach, it's not that far to get to the Valley. It was the best place in the world.

AW:

How cool.

CJ:

It was very cool. I was just a go-getter. I knew I needed to make money pretty fast, so I signed up with a temp agency. They had actual entertainment temp agencies, so they would put you in entertainment jobs, not good ones. I worked at a place at night called the Preview House, and they would preview sitcoms, clips for movies, commercials, and they had little buttons on the chairs that the audience would react to. And then afterwards, they would shop in the little shop and they would see which product they would pick, you know. Nothing computerized or anything. And so I would usher and work in the little shop and everything. Did that at night, which was really fun. And in the day, I would get little secretary gigs to make ends meet. I worked at CBS Television City for several jobs. At lunch, I would get to go watch the Carol Burnett Show being taped—or watch them rehearse. I don't think they were taping, I think they were rehearsing. And the Mary Tyler Moore Show. And the warm-up comic and part of the ensemble group was David Letterman at the time. He wasn't that great. He was great at warm-up, he wasn't that great in the ensemble stuff. But those were—and you know, I just idolized Carol Burnett and Mary Tyler Moore. Oh, my gosh.

AW:

Who doesn't? Brilliant and funny and—

CJ:

Oh, yeah. I would miss parties, dates, anything to watch the Mary Tyler Moore show. I think it was on Friday nights. And I would stay at home—maybe Saturday. I would stay at home to watch it because I couldn't miss it and we weren't taping stuff that much. But I did little odds and ends jobs for a long time. I kept a little red book that I would—every contact that I made, I would put their name down and say, "Well, I'm going to call you back in a couple of months." And if it was January, I would put it in March and I kept in touch. After meeting about maybe a hundred people, I got a job as the PR—or the publicist for a play called *Zen Boogie*. And actually, before I did that, I even had a job in a PR agency. That was the Satchel Paige connection. And I got to write for movie releases, whatever they had. US Ski Team, they represented them and I did some writing for that. A Satchel Paige movie—just little things like that. The lady was going to give me a full-time job with insurance, but when the day came, she went, "No, I don't think that's going to work out, but I'll keep you on as a freelancer." So that's when I left that. The *Zen Boogie* was the first big break because it was a good—it was a temporary job, but I was actually with show biz people. And it was produced in the Beverly Hills—I think it was called the Beverly Hills Playhouse, a theater in Beverly Hills. I met—this is really funny—the production manager and I would go out and have a beer or something after work and kind of commiserate about—this play wasn't as good as their first one, *Beatlemania*. The producer was kind of wacky, he was from New York and he was kind of abrasive. So we would talk because this guy's wife was in New York, and he had originally wanted to be an actor, but he was now starting to go into production. And guess who he turned out to be? Leslie Moonves, who has run CBS for years and years and years. And he's not married to the first wife. He got married to the Asian woman—oh, I can't think of her name. She's the host of *Big Brother*.

AW:

Wow.

CJ:

Yeah. He did very, very well. The way he made that segue, which was producing TV movies.

AW:

Really?

CJ:

Yeah.

AW:

Instead of going to feature films?

CJ:

Now, he might have done features too, but his TV movies were so huge then. Little miniseries and stuff. And I can't remember. There was something—I can't remember who he got hooked up with, but yeah, he just shot through the top. And he's been at CBS for probably twenty years now. But Leslie Moonves and I used to—(laughs) and I met a woman, Jo Grossman who was going to work on the next Steve Martin movie. Well, not the next Steve Martin movie. It was going to be the first, the very first Steve Martin movie, *The Jerk*. And she said, "Do you want me to see if they have anything for you?" And I went, "Yeah, I want to be the publicist." And I went to talk to them and they were like, pfft. Yeah, that's funny. They said, "You can be a production assistant." And I went, "Well, okay." And production assistant equals go-fer. And I was on the bottom rung of go-fer-ism. If there was a weather call and they might have to move from location to studio, I'd be there at four in the morning to call not the stars, to call the limo drivers.

AW:

Yeah. So you were the first—

CJ:

First one there, last one to leave. Any dirty job there was, Cathy got to do it. And the other production assistants were wanting to move into producing or writing or whatever, and they were kind of jaded and did as little as possible, Cathy'll do it. *The Jerk* was so much fun, because there was a lot of improv going on with Steve and Carl. Hilarious.

AW:

And being in that role, that job, you still got a chance to watch—

CJ:

Oh, yeah.

AW:

The filming and—

CJ:

Oh, absolutely. It really was a cool job, because somebody inevitably would want you to run an errand or whatever. Yeah, there was an office and I was there part of the time, but I was on the set a lot. One of the most fun places was the mansion that they used, it was Sheikh Mohammed al Fassi's. It was on Sunset Boulevard and it was—his house was very controversial at the time because he had painted pubic hair on all the outdoor statues, that you could see from the street.

People were just appalled. And he wasn't even in the country, but he rented out the house. And the house was something you couldn't describe. There was one room that was huge. It looked like a sofa warehouse. I found my sofa—my cheapo sofa was even in there. It was just sofa after sofa after sofa. (AW laughs) I guess it was his sitting room. There was an actual gas pump in the entryway. They filmed—and I don't think they set decorated it, I think it was a round bed that actually revolved that was in the movie *The Jerk*. And it was really fun. And we got to have the wrap party—yeah, we did have the wrap party there. And you know, it was so much fun. And little things happened that—Steve and Carl were very friendly. My wallet got stolen out of the production office and I was just kind of a naïve Texan, my accent sounded like it does now. Sweet Carl, the next day after he heard, someone told him it got stolen and he heard about it and he bought me a new wallet the next day.

AW:

Oh, that's really nice.

CJ:

Sweetest man in the world. And Steve was kind of slowing down the standup, but he was still doing Vegas all the time. I got kind of—someone came in and said, "Steve's going to ask you at the end of the movie to be his assistant." And I was like, "No, he's not." And sure enough, he did. And the other PAs were pissed off. They were not happy. Because that was a good job. And actually—

AW:

Describe for the recording what is an assistant to a person versus an assistant to an event or a film.

CJ:

It's so funny. When I was doing an assistant to a star or an actor or director, basically there is no job description because it's all-encompassing. Here's some of the things I did. Once he was in Vegas performing and accidentally, he'd forgotten to lock his sliding door that went out to the balcony, so he had two cats that ended up using his bed as a bathroom. And when he discovered it, I got to take the cats and clean them up and to the vet and take the bedspread. I mean, that was some of the glamorous stuff.

AW:

It is glamorous.

CJ:

Yeah, it really was glamorous. But I also got to—he was going to, right after the movie, he was going to Vegas to perform and my parents were coming to visit me. And he said, "Well, bring

your parents to Vegas.” So he got us front-row seats and we got to see Steve Martin in Vegas and I started working for him right after that. Things like—he was doing TV specials at the time. He had his TV special deal, so one of them was all commercials. And he wrote it and he had guest stars come in. It was little vignettes about commercials. So I got to work on that. And work on that—there’s not really a job description because you did a little bit of everything. I saw a call sheet—I think I contacted the writers at some point because I had their phone numbers and stuff. Whatever Steve wanted me to do, I did. And again, it could include things like going to the vet, it could include taking his car to get repaired.

One of my most horrifying stories was his first Mercedes. He was working on—it was a couple years after I started working for him—and we were really good friends at the time, and he asked me to take his Mercedes to get repaired. No, he asked me to pick it up. I said, “Please don’t make me do it, please don’t make me do it.” He went, “Oh no, no. It’s okay.” He was doing *The Man with Two Brains*. And I went and got it and I was taking back roads to his house to get to his house and a teenager broadsided me.

AW:

Oh, my gosh.

CJ:

I jumped out of his car, grabbed the keys out of the other car, I was so freaked out, and I had to go back and tell him. He was doing a hospital scene. He was so incredibly nice about it. I told him, “I told you I didn’t want to do that!” I just had a premonition.

AW:

But at least—you didn’t get hurt?

CJ:

Oh, no, no no. It was the car. I mean, that’s more important than me. I was just his lowly assistant. But he bought a house on top of the hill in Montecito, an all-concrete house. When he did it, he didn’t want people to know he was buying it, so I went and opened the gas account and electric account under my name. I got to arrange everything. That’s kind of a strange thing. He let me use his house anytime I wanted. I took friends up there. I have pictures of my parents in his pool. So lots of perks. Lots of perks. He would do the *Tonight Show*. Of course Johnny Carson was the host then. And I’d go with him to the green room in case he needed something, stay in the green room in case he needed something, which was very, very cool. When he finally bought a house, he got out of the apartment high-rise where he was when I first met him. He bought a house in Beverly Hills and there was a little office in the front and there was an entrance to the side of the house and so that was my office for a long time. So I was in his house and he’d come in, he’d leave me little tape recordings of what he needed me to do, who he needed me to call. Might be something to do with the house, he had a housekeeper. Lita Baru

from Haiti. Or it might be something, you know running an errand. Just anything you can imagine that somebody might—a celebrity. Celebrities, at some point don't remember how to take their dry cleaning or pick up something at the hardware store.

AW:

What I would imagine is that they couldn't do it anyway. I have a friend who's not nearly that celebrity, but he's celebrity enough that when you go out to have lunch, there are fifty people line up and want to talk to him. How could you even go to the laundry?

CJ:

But they do. In Los Angeles, it's kind of like so commonplace.

AW:

Well I guess that's right. LA would be different.

CJ:

Tourists will bug them. But for the most part, there's somebody always more famous and somebody that's always less famous, especially in the Beverly Hills area. So he went out. They just don't have time to do the mundane things that you and I do.

AW:

So without prying, do jobs like that pay well enough that you can live?

CJ:

Here's what's funny. I was going to tell you this. I did it for five and a half years. I think—and of course, this was in the—I think I started in '80, 1980. He paid me—I think it was three hundred dollars a week, which no, that's not very much.

AW:

Especially in LA.

CJ:

Yeah. But I had that rent-controlled apartment. But at some point, I had to say, "Steve, I really need to make more money." It was flabbergasting to me. "Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't even think of that." Because he had his business manager, and he had his agent and everything, his publicist. And he gave me a substantial raise. At one point, I went backpacking with friends: Rene Payton's little sister Sandra and friends from college. When I was twenty-nine, I went backpacking for the first time. I spent six weeks in Europe, and he paid me for the six weeks and he gave me a thousand dollars to enjoy my trip. So, there were lots of good perks.

AW:

Well, that's cool.

CJ:

Lots of good perks. He'd have a party and I'd get the flowers for it at the house and I'd be invited to it. It was just—it was a very, very fun time. And he would be gone to New York or gone to Europe part of the time and he'd call me and have me do what he wanted. Otherwise, if there was nothing I needed to do—on my own. He opened the Aspen Film Society, which was not too far from his house and I got to hire people like the PAs and things like that. Kind of—not really manage, but yeah, kind of manage. Make sure—the mundane stuff, but still kind of in the loop and everything. One of the first things that was kind of funny that happened is the year Reagan got shot. Reagan got shot. Was it '81, I believe.

AW:

I think so.

CJ:

He got shot the day the Academy Awards were supposed to happen.

AW:

I'd forgotten that.

CJ:

And Steve was presenting and so was his girlfriend at the time, Bernadette Peters, and she was presenting, too. And tickets were really hard to come by. And he had two and she had two. So he said, "Cathy, do you want two tickets to the Academy Awards?" I was like, "Sure, yeah, sounds good to me!" So the good thing was that I got to experience the Academy Awards. That year Willie Nelson sang "On the Road Again." He was nominated for his song and Dolly Parton was nominated for "Nine to Five." She got to sing. And just amazing people, but here was the downside. It was back in the olden days when I drove my Buick Skylark, my gold Buick Skylark, ugliest car you've ever seen, up to be parked and then everybody walked on the red carpet, not just the celebs. And the red carpet wasn't as big of a deal. There weren't all the pre-shows and the audience and all this. That was a little embarrassing. I took a girlfriend, because I didn't know any guys and we sat where the presenters sat. So you know, Diana Ross was right by me. That was embarrassing because people were going, who is that? And then afterwards, everyone goes to the Governor's Ball, and the Governor's Ball is kind of a press event, too. They used to, at least then, half of the people at a table would be celebrities, and half would be press. And the press at our table was really upset when my friend Judy and I sat at their table. "Where's Steve Martin and Bernadette Peters?" And now they give goodie bags that are worth thousands upon thousands of dollars. I got a little bottle of champagne and a couple of little things. It just

was very different but so much fun and something I wouldn't have missed for the world. But I kind of said, hmm, don't need to do that again unless I'm being honored. But it was very, really, really neat.

AW:

Did you get a chance in working—on the one hand, I can imagine that you wouldn't have time to meet anybody else in Hollywood if you were so busy with these kinds of things, but on the other hand, Steve Martin would know everybody.

CJ:

Yeah. Okay, I'll tell you some people I knew.

AW:

I mean, was it a chance for you to meet people that later on would be—

CJ:

Beneficial to me?

AW:

Yeah in work.

CJ:

Not a hundred percent. Every once in a while, somebody—okay, I can remember being in a hot tub in Steve's house with Steve and Martin Mull. Do you remember Martin Mull?

AW:

I love Martin Mull.

CJ:

Yeah I do too. And they were all laughing about the fact that me and somebody else had gotten a college degree and they'd dropped out. Obviously, you know where that story goes. The dropouts did much better. Of course, Carl Reiner who I told you we just saw a year and a half ago. Nicest man in the world. Ninety-one years old now. His wife Estelle raised three kids, Rob Reiner being one of them. Then when she was—she was ten years older than Carl. And when she got older and her kids were raised, she started singing. And she didn't have a very good voice. In fact, I used to do an impersonation. And the impersonation was of "Santa Baby." She had the most personality you've ever seen. She was so sweet. She was like a little Jewish lady, had the best backup band. People like Carol Channing, Lucille Ball would come to her shows. And of course, we would all go, as the assistants, we would go, too. She has albums out. You can hear on the internet.

AW:

What is her first name?

CJ:

Estelle.

AW:

Estelle.

CJ:

She passed away a few years ago. Very nice woman. Carl just was the first (claps hands)—Mel Brooks would always be there and he'd be at the (claps hands) applauding. Mel Brooks was actually at Carl's house when the Dean [Carol Edwards] and I were there. And Carl, they were about to go to the polo lounge to have lunch. Rob Reiner was picking them up. And he said, "Mel, do you want to come meet these ladies?" And Mel goes, "No." So we didn't get to meet him. (AW laughs) I mean I had met him but we didn't get to see him. Both their wives had died. You know he was married to Anne Bancroft. So they'd hang out together all the time. He was shaving in Carl Reiner's bathroom. But yeah, I got to meet really interesting people. Monty Python performed at the Hollywood Bowl one time and so they had a party for him [them]. Carrie Fisher—Oh uh—Laverne and Shirley—whose brother was a producer? I can't think of her name. Penny Marshall and Garry Marshall. Tons of people I can name. Lorne Michaels. I actually went to Europe with Steve once and Lorne Michaels and his wife at the time and Paul Simon, that was kind of fun.

AW:

So is Lorne Michaels brilliant?

CJ:

I was seeing him on a vacation. But yeah, I think, he's very prolific, obviously. He's still doing—every time somebody has a sitcom or a movie now, he's producing if they've been on Saturday Night Live. Real dry sense of humor, but that's Steve, too. So yeah, I got to meet people. The only job I can think of—Steve's best friend at the time was an art dealer named Terry DeLapp—

AW:

How do you spell that?

CJ:

T-e-r-r-y D-e-L-a-p-p. And he had an art gallery for the longest time. Steve was really interested in art. During the time he was touring with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, of course he'd work at

night, in the day he'd go to the library and research art. And he really was self-taught. And when I was working for him, he kind of wanted me to learn about art because he had a fabulous art collection and he thought maybe that was another aspect of his—

AW:

Just out of curiosity, did he have particular interests?

CJ:

Modern. Contemporary. When I worked for him, he had a Picasso, he had a Georgia O'Keefe, he had a Jim Dine that was—my dad used to laugh at this because he'd invite them over when they were there. The Jim Dine was called "A Heart, A Rope, A Stick," or something like that. It was a big painting, and there was a big rock out front. It was an installation, and there was a stick hanging up against it and something else and twine or whatever and my dad was like, "Really?" But Steve did it—he was a collector that sold—I mean, he made—at some point, I was told he made more money as an art collector. That may not be right, now. When he sold the Georgia O'Keefe, I nearly cried. He owned that painting right there. That's a poster of it. He had that framed for me. I had a couple more, but that one is the only one that I have out now. If there was a poster, he'd get me a poster framed of it so I could have art in my apartment. Not original. And sculpture. He did, and he had it for a while, I don't know if he still does, but he made a big contribution to the LA—what is it? The modern art museum that's at the tar pits? And he had a room named after him, the Steve Martin Room. I don't know if you have to—he probably still has it. But he was extraordinarily knowledgeable and made lots of money. He knew his business. He sent me to UCLA to take a night class to learn about art, which was really interesting. I went with Terry's wife, Gus. When Steve was starting as a stand-up comedian, he lived on their couch part of the time. When he wasn't touring he'd come stay with them. And we would do stuff with them all the time. And they live across the street from Andy Williams. (AW laughs) That was very interesting. So we hung out with Andy Williams.

AW:

So what was he like? You get this idea that he would be kind of stuffy.

CJ:

No.

AW:

Not at all?

CJ:

You might turn it off for a second.

AW:

All right. I'll be glad to. I can't wait to hear this. Sorry, for all of those who are listening and don't get to—

So we're back and it wasn't that great, I'll just tell you.

CJ:

(laughs) I didn't want to say anything bad about anybody. He was a really nice man, he was very generous. Had lots of dinners with him.

AW:

One of the things you mentioned when we had the tape paused was about how you were a weird high school kid who listened to him, but as I recall, in my years in Monterey, we all listened to him.

CJ:

You did? My dad thought I was so strange.

AW:

Well, for one thing, he had lots of hits.

CJ:

He really did. And "Moon River," my gosh.

AW:

You couldn't turn on the radio or watch the television without him being on it.

CJ:

Absolutely.

AW:

Plus, he never looked different the entire time.

CJ:

He never aged.

AW:

He didn't age. He was like Dick Clark.

CJ:

Exactly.

AW:

But it was also a time when we would listen to the Rolling Stones and Andy Williams. You didn't think anything about it.

CJ:

That's absolutely true. I did the cool stuff, too. One of the neatest things I got to go to, and I went with Steve and I had to have a formal attire, so I got to shop at Neiman Marcus. I don't remember how much the dress—it was a Norma Kamali dress he bought. And the shoes, I don't remember where they are. I still have them. Highest heels I ever wore. The shoes were eight hundred dollars.

AW:

Oh, my goodness.

CJ:

I was like dumbfounded. And it was the fifty-year in show business celebration of Andy Williams. And that was cool because I knew him, too. And that was very, very cool. And he lived to celebrate seventy-five years before he died. But he was a very nice man. So those are the kind of people I met. The only job I think I got—after five and a half years, I was always going to be Steve's assistant. You kind of lost your identity a little bit. And now jobs like that are paid a lot more. When I left, magazines—a couple of magazines called to interview me to get the real scoop. I didn't talk to them or anything. But now, assistants are like celebrities in their own right. They are well-paid jobs, they have retirement, they get nice—it wasn't like that then. I did just fine, worked for a very generous man and got to travel to Europe and New York—

AW:

It all sounds like it was a lifestyle. It was sort of a thing to do for someone at your age and place to—

CJ:

It was perfect for my age. I had so much—I didn't even utilize the freedom. If I'd been writing, I would have discovered a writing career much earlier. But no, I just had fun. Where can you take a six-week European vacation and still get paid? It was a great job. I got to meet so many neat people. Afterwards, I went to work for the American—and I took a pay cut—half a salary cut because I wanted to come and start doing my own thing. It was—

AW:

How did you come to that decision, though? Wouldn't it be hard to think, gosh, no more paid vacations to Europe?

CJ:

Yeah, a number of things. But mainly—you know, at some point, it's a little demoralizing to keep taking the cat to the vet. I don't know. We were very, very, very good friends. I kind of let him know I wanted to do a little bit more and it wasn't really happening. Because he was very secure. One reason he'd tell me he liked me for the position and hired me is because he was born in Waco, Texas. And I was honest as can be. I was just a true Texas girl. Kind of naïve—I don't know what this is—sweet, honest, and he could trust me. Because I had keys to all the houses, all the cars and knew a lot of stuff that he probably wouldn't tell everybody, and he could trust me. To find somebody like that is probably difficult and challenging. By the time I left, he was really big. I worked with him on several TV specials. I worked with him in about seven films and got credits on five of them. I guess he wasn't really willing to help my career and I wanted a career. I didn't want to be an assistant.

AW:

Well, if he helps your career, he loses you.

CJ:

Yeah, exactly. And so he—I think he ended up hiring somebody real good, because the Texas Film Commission—is that who does the awards? They gave one to Jaston, the distinguished Texans or whatever—they wanted to honor Steve.

AW:

Yeah, well there are a couple of Texas something in the arts and they do it every other year.

CJ:

That was probably it. Somehow, they got my name and said, "Can you contact him?" Well no, I didn't have his number anymore. I contacted the assistant, which I can promise you he never got the message or he would have called me. So in other words, she was a good assistant. She protected him and he didn't get—but yeah, it turned out to be. It was a great job for then. I did a lot of freelance stuff after that. I worked for American Film Institute, which was another non-profit that helped young filmmakers and got to work on a TV show where they had discovered four writers and they got to do fifteen-minute shows and I got to help cast it. And because AFI had some prestige and because it was going to be on NBC, I got to help find a host, which was Dick van Dyke, and got to help cast it. It was going to be all celebrities making cameos. So that was really interesting, but I made nothing. I did research for Terry DeLapp the artist, he sent me to Chicago and I'd find art in underground Atlanta and stuff. And then the only job that took me

toward writing was Ed. Weinberger. Do you know who that is?

AW:
Yeah.

CJ:
Created *Taxi* and he always had to have a period after his name. People were like, I think he made a mistake, he put a period after Ed and I was like, “No, you don’t put a period and your head will roll.” Ed. Weinberger was very successful in sitcoms. I had met him because he did a—he produced a show called—a film of Steve’s—maybe he wrote it. He either produced or wrote it, called *The Lonely Guy*. Wasn’t a real big hit or anything. A lot of it was filmed in New York. That’s how I met him. So after I left working for Steve, I started calling all these people trying to find jobs and he said, “Well, I’ve got some research to do. I’m going to be doing a sitcom about a black church. Sherman Hemsley is going to star in it, called *Amen*. I don’t really want to do the research, I want you to go to black churches and write reports up.” And I did, it was so much fun.

AW:
Oh I bet it was.

CJ:
Great fun. And I’m doing another show—these were FOX. FOX was—sure, thank you. FOX was getting into sitcoms, because sitcoms are so lucrative when you get to the syndication cut-off point.

AW:
Because you’ve already got your production paid for and now you’re getting paid again to show the—

CJ:
Exactly. Exactly. And because they live on forever.

AW:
Oh, yeah.

CJ:
The shows I wrote for—

AW:
In our house, we don’t watch anything much out of the sixties.

CJ:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

That's not exactly true.

CJ:

It's even gotten better because of all the networks that do nostalgic TV. But the shows I wrote for were not considered the most prestigious. *Murphy Brown* would have been the most prestigious. But my shows that I wrote for were family shows and I still get residual checks all these years later.

AW:

Really?

CJ:

Yeah.

AW:

I was just about to ask that. Because I know at one time, on sitcoms and situation dramas and that sort of thing a lot of positions connected with production got paid once and didn't get residuals.

CJ:

Right. Most.

AW:

When did that change?

CJ:

Well, writers always got residuals. And in TV, the writer is the king, especially sitcoms. The national progression is for you to start out as a freelancer and then join a staff and then work your way up to producing and writing. And the most successful are the ones that create their own sitcoms. And they are king of television. And the writer is revered. Film is exactly the opposite. The writer is kind of like pushed out of the picture and the director is the king in that medium. I think the WGA, the Writer's Guild is a very strong union. The Director's Guild is a very strong union. They get—and of course, the Screen Actors Guild. So they all get residuals and always have that I know of. I don't know the other people.

AW:

So your residuals came from writing?

CJ:

Writing, yeah. Writer's guild. Oh, yeah. Anything I worked on with Steve. My credit always read, "Assistant to Steve Martin: Cathy Jung." And he had weird stalker people that would send him mail. One of them kept sending mail and analyzing why I was working for him. And there was a Carl Jung association in his mind. Nutty as can be. Anyway.

No, no residuals for anything like that. And probably not—I don't think for—I think it's mainly acting, writing and directing—and producing. But Ed. Weinberger, I had known him so I did this research. The other show he was working out was *Mr. President* and George C. Scott starred in that. So I did research about weird stories, weird things that have happened in White Houses. Because it was a sitcom. The reason he was getting into this, is he'd be really successful with Johnny Carson who at that point, his company was producing the *Tonight Show*, he wanted to get into sitcoms because they were so lucrative. So he started—well, he already had Carson Productions, but he actually started a branch that he was going to produce TV and films. And I did this research for Ed. Weinberger and I did a really good job on it because I'm very good at research and he paid me very little by the hour. When I started this job, he was going to be the head of—he was going to be the person in charge of Johnny Carson's production company. And he said, I guess as the president, "As soon as I get rolling, would you like a job there?" "Yeah." "Well, what would you like to do?" Well, I didn't know. "Development?" He said, "Okay." And he did a really weird thing which probably ended my development career but helped me start writing.

AW:

What does development mean in that business?

CJ:

Development means finding talent—basically, find talent. There was a film person and a TV person. I was the TV person. So agents contacted me with their writers and I would read tons of scripts and I would read books—just any kind of manuscript, but I would also go to comedy clubs and look for stand-ups, because that was another thing. They would get stand-ups to write and do these shows around. So it was a cool job except that Ed. Weinberger was a raging maniac, basically. He had a—

AW:

Ah.

CJ:

Big-time. He did something weird. Gave me a really low salary but announced that I was the

vice-president of development which made it to the front pages of the trade magazines, the *Hollywood Reporter*. Well that's not a good thing because you need to work your way up those ranks and there was this Cathy Jung, who the hell is that?

AW:

Everybody was saying you're an upstart.

CJ:

Yeah, not a good thing at all. So I get that in the *Hollywood Reporter* and I get a crummy salary, and I've already gotten kind of messed up, and I learned this from the film development person. But I did stay there long enough to make good relationships with agents. Because getting an agent is the hardest thing in the world, just to get them to read your material. And while I was doing it, I thought, Good grief, these sitcom writers, some of them are horrible, even the ones that were working. I could do this. So I got fired from that job. I got fired in a really unique way, because Ed. Weinberger couldn't say "you're fired." He made it something. He just couldn't. Because I would have argued with him. But he made it something. He was really good because I was miserable in that job, because he really had issues. He was a rage-aholic for reasons. So I started writing right after that. I knew all the agents. So I had the easiest time in the world. I called these people that had been sending me scripts and I had been reading them for them and writing synopses. I first started writing with a friend from Azle, Texas that I'd met, his name is David Perkins. And we wrote a *Designing Women* spec. Because I'd met the set decorator, Audrey Blaisel Goddard from *Designing Women*. She said I'll get it to him. Because it was Harry and Linda Thomason, and they ran the whole show. So we wrote a *Designing Women*, David and I did, and Audrey gave it to the creators and they bought it.

AW:

Wow.

CJ:

Yeah. No agent, no nothing. They bought it. It never got made, but it got me into the Writer's Guild, got me insurance for a year. I think they bought one more script from me and David. Didn't produce it, again. Getting a little frustrating. And David lived really far away. He lived in the Valley. He'd been in video editing and he was married and he had another life. This was my life. And he would talk about different writing. We were writing on a typewriter, Andy. It was like, please, let's get this joke right, I don't want to have to retype this whole thing. (AW laughs) Lots of cutting, actual cutting and pasting. You know how writing is. You have to move stuff around all the time.

AW:

The word processor is—I used to write on a typewriter. I can't imagine. I don't know how that

happened.

CJ:

More tape—I have scripts still, rough drafts of stuff where the tape is yellowed because we would cut and paste—horrible-looking. And finally David just wasn't able to commit enough time, and so I wrote a script by myself. And *Designing Women* bought that one. And it was my first solo script. And then I wrote—I wrote a spec script, a *Roseanne* spec script, which was the best thing I've ever written. It was just—I got the comedy, I got a great story. I couldn't even tell you what it's about now. I can find it somewhere. But it got me everything. All my jobs. It got me a great agent.

AW:

Really? So did it get produced?

CJ:

No. I never even got to pitch to them. And the *Roseanne* show was notorious for writers wanting to hang themselves after it. She was stark raving crazy and hiring Tom Arnold and fighting and throwing stuff and making him a producer and a star and all this. Frustrating, very frustrating place to work. It's seriously the best thing I ever wrote, though. It got me writing workshop things that studios would sponsor and it got this real prestigious one in Warner Brothers, it got me into that. I don't even remember what we'd do. I think we wrote a script and we would rework it and have all these writers to work with and everything and Warner Brothers would have the option of buying it. Although I don't think they did buy anything. I ended up working for all Warner Brothers shows, though. I worked with two gay guys who were in the workshop and their dream was to work for *Golden Girls* and they ended up doing it. Had a pretty good career and then it dried up. And so one of them just kept writing—had to go back and live with his mother. Kept writing, kept writing, wrote something that he took all over town and finally sold it. And it was Mark Cherry. It was *Desperate Housewives*.

AW:

Wow.

CJ:

And the poor partner—

AW:

Gone.

CJ:

Gone. Forgotten. But that was really interesting. And the Warner Brothers thing was very

beneficial. And I also got a deal with Disney. Because of that script I got in to pitch and they were doing this young writers' thing, program, and I pitched a show about a set of grandparents raising their grandkids. And the thing that we could never resolve—wrote the script and everything, got paid another year of health insurance. It didn't get produced because the biggest thing to get over was they wanted me to show why they were raising the grandkids and the parents had to die in a sitcom or disappear. It just—that part of it wouldn't work. Anyway, it was still—

AW:

Although we watched Andy of Mayberry for a long time and no one knows what happened to Opie's mom. (laughs)

CJ:

That's true. That's exactly true. I would have liked it like that. Just leave it, not explain it and the woman I was working with, no, she wanted it explained. Probably half the stuff I wrote didn't get produced. And that's really good odds. Really good odds.

AW:

You mean it's good that you got half produced?

CJ:

Because a lot of people—

AW:

But you can make some kind of living even if they don't get produced.

CJ:

That's right. You had to have spec scripts in your arsenal. Another spec script that I thought was really good—do you remember the show—oh, shoot, what was it? It was like a detective and it was Dabney Coleman—Maxwell something. We wrote one of those, David and I did, and it was really funny because he and his assistant would do these—they were offbeat. He would tell a line, she would answer the question before so it was all out of sync but it was still funny. And I inadvertently did malapropisms all the time with sayings, so it would come naturally. They would go, "Think of one Cathy!" It was a really good script, but I gave it to a friend that had produced *Happy Days*, Nancy Steen who was very successful, and she went, "This is not in order." And she was doing arrows. "Yes it is, you haven't seen the show, obviously."

AW:

That was a show that was a little ahead of its time in terms of the—

CJ:

Oh, very much so. And it was film too, I think.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

It was around the time of *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd*, which is another show I think we wrote a spec script for.

AW:

Really? I'd forgotten all about that show.

CJ:

Yeah. There were some really—and I think both those were film. Really good shows. But... I started getting jobs. After the Warner Brothers workshop, I got a job with that—*Just the Ten of Us*— they were going to buy a script. Or they did buy a script. They bought a script, I wrote the script, they were cancelled. And then the next one was *Head of the Class*. They bought a script, I wrote the script, and as a freelance writer, what you do is several things can happen. You can get a pitch meeting and go in and pitch several ideas. Nothing can happen or they can buy one of your ideas and have one of their writers write it. Then you get a much smaller amount of money. Or they can buy the idea and the script, but they take the script away from you and their writing staff reworks it. So my mom flew in to watch my first *Head of the Class*. They said, come by and get a script. You mom will want one. Written by Cathy Jung. It was about a dance marathon. And I started flipping through it and I was like, this isn't my script. And I said, Oh wait, there's one of my lines! It had maybe like ten lines in there. And as we were watching it being filmed, my ten lines, I swear there was a designated person that would run out between takes and they'd talk and then my line was gone. And I was like, I hate this business, it's horrible! People were sending me flowers from Texas and everything. They didn't know, they just saw my name on the thing. They didn't know I didn't write it. It was so frustrating. And I was like, I'm not going to ever do this again. Until my agent said, "Cathy, they called and they liked it so much they want you to write another one." I was like, Why would they want me to write another one? They didn't use the one I wrote! That helped make my mind up. In fact, when it reran on network for the first time, you get paid the exact amount. The exact amount.

AW:

Oh, it doesn't go down?

CJ:

Not the first time. In the old days, back then, TV season, almost all would be first-runs and then

they had a rerun in primetime. Now they don't do that because they have kind of summer shows, fall shows—they keep trying new shows so they don't use as many reruns right off the bat. So I totally threw my—

AW:

So, explain maybe for someone listening how a company, a production company would buy your script, completely rewrite it and say that was so great, we want to do it again. Is it—does it start something that—

CJ:

I guess it starts something. I really think that the thing that they value the most is coming in with an idea that they can envision writing. And you do kind of the first draft—this is what I just think. You do the first draft and then TV is—

AW:

They're going to make it theirs.

CJ:

Yeah. And TV has been accused of being crappy and it's because too many hands are on there. Because everybody can do it a little bit better. And when you're not on staff, you can't fight for your lines.

AW:

Right. Yeah, if you were sitting at the table—

CJ:

Yeah. You can fight for it. And that's what happened with *Growing Pains*. I did two—so I had to have three shows and two of them got produced. I don't even know if the second—yeah, I think the second *Full House*, I mean *Head of the Class* did. That might have got cancelled, too. I might have been a death wish for shows and didn't know it. (both laugh) But then *Growing Pains* was having kind of an issue. The creators had all left, which happens. They get bored with it and you really do run out of ideas. Oh, I know what I was going to say about the writing. It's so funny. Once characters are established, you'll read a script that the writers want to do and you'll go, This isn't right at all. But they have worked with the actors long enough to envision exactly how they will give this line, how they will act this line. It's funny. They know exactly what works. And it might not look funny on the page, but when they actors—they know their bit, and when it gets acted out, it's funny. They know what works. So I got a job on *Growing Pains*, and it was my first staff job. First and only staff job. I was really old for this kind of work.

AW:

How old were you?

CJ:

I was thirty-four or five, probably.

AW:

And you were over the hill for this?

CJ:

Oh, way over the hill. And thank God I looked young. I looked really, really young. So we just didn't—nobody asked, nobody mentioned. *Growing Pains*—no, maybe I was a little older than that. I was more like thirty-seven. 'Way over the hill. The guy who produced—they brought in a new executive producer, Dan Wilcox who had worked on *MASH*, was a really good writer and that was the most horrible boss to work for ever. But the staff was all united. All the producers and associate producers and writers and stuff were all united against this poor man. This poor man had digestive problems. He was a very large man. When they would serve hot dogs before shows, because they'd cater, I'd go, please don't eat fifteen because we know what we're going to have to sit around. There was everybody sound you can imagine coming out of that man. Not good odors, either.

AW:

That should have made the sitcom. (laughs)

CJ:

Oh, God. We would be in a room and he'd be sitting in a desk and pretend like it didn't happen. For us to not laugh was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. It was so much fun.

AW:

Especially in a room full of comedy writers. (laughs)

CJ:

Oh, yeah. We were all looking at each other like, we heard that, and we know he heard that because it came out of him. But it was so much fun. The producers were awesome, awesome, awesome. I just loved working there. It just happened to be the last year of *Growing Pains*. They brought Leonardo DiCaprio on to save the show. But they gave the most unbelievable story line you can imagine. He was a student that Mike Seaver—Mike Seaver was Kirk Cameron. And Kirk Cameron had found—well, Kirk Cameron had always been religious, but he'd been the skirt-chaser, trouble-maker kid and he didn't want to do that anymore. He wanted to be—he wanted to show religion and the woman he ended up marrying was his girlfriend on the show.

Well, actually he had another girlfriend, but they found out in real life she posed for *Playboy*, so he got rid of her. And he ended up marrying the pure—now you know he does all religious movies and stuff and he's very devout.

So they brought Leonardo on to take over his teeny bopper mantle. Because he had been on *Tiger Beat*, all the teenager girl magazines for a while and he was too old. And Leonardo was on there, but he was a homeless kid that was living in the back-room of a school that Mike takes in, because Mike becomes a substitute teacher or something. Mike takes him home. I mean, all this sounds very illegal. He stayed there until he got a movie and left to go film the movie and that's when the show died. *Entertainment Tonight* used to do close-ups of shows and they came and did one on *Growing Pains*. And we were at the writing table writing and as we're doing all this and they're showing us, they go, The last year of *Growing Pains* was what put the knife in his heart because of the writing. And I was like, Okay. That's not good. And it wasn't just the writing. Everybody was tired and the concept was pretty corny at that point. It was another show—they don't say this, but it was really a show that followed *The Cosby Show*. And family sitcoms had been reborn and they were so successful after *Cosby*. They said it was kind of the same time, and it might have been.

But it was really successful in its heyday. So much fun. But the nights of taping, they'd bring in live audiences of course and they would introduce the writers. We'd come out and wave and do this and they'd applaud. We had our director's chairs and we'd have to last-minute rewrite a joke and everything. It was just fun. It was one of those jobs that you work, you got there at ten in the morning, and sometimes you'd have all night, if it was a rewrite night. Even the earliest you'd go home was ten at night. And then you'd be off several months because you'd be on hiatus. But it was a great single-person job. Well I got pregnant with my son during this show, *Growing Pains*, kind of funny.

AW:

(laughs) Yeah, that is kind of funny.

CJ:

He heard a lot of laughter because when I was pregnant, we laughed all the time. But after that, the show ended and my agent was trying to get me into another show and I did do two freelance *Full Houses*. But again, had to turn it over to them and again, the first one got changed a lot but they liked it so much they bought a second one. Then that's when, after those, after two years, that's when I came back to Texas.

AW:

And your son was born in—

CJ:

He was born in LA. The only—He was born in Cedars-Sinai hospital and the only other person

having a baby at the time was Magic Johnson and his wife. So we had the best rooms.

AW:

(laughs) I bet you did.

CJ:

Yeah. Lots of great attention.

AW:

What year was this?

CJ:

My son was born in '92 and we moved back in '94. We moved back right after the Northridge earthquake. I was in LA for the riots, for the Rodney King Riots when we had curfew and couldn't get out. We were surrounded by rioting but Beverly Hills is so safe because they have their own police department and everything. I was pregnant during the riots. But I had a clear shot—I could have walked to Cedars-Sinai, it was so close. Because we were under curfew.

When Austin was like one and a half or two or something around there, that's when that earthquake happened. It was so horrible. The freeways, the Santa Monica Freeway that was ten minutes from my house actually caved in, broke, cars were falling through. That was another scary time. That's my Hollywood career.

AW:

What was it like to be in an earthquake? I've been in tornadoes, I've been in typhoons. I've never been in an earthquake.

CJ:

You know, it got to be where you got really used to it. Because they happen all the time, small ones. The big one was horrifying. Because the first thing that happened was—he was sleeping in the bed with me at that time, because he was one and a half, I guess. It started and I don't know what possessed me—because it was before cell phones. But I immediately did two things: I got his little tykes battery-operated radio and I—because electricity I knew was going to go, and I got on the phone. If I'd gotten on the phone one minute later, the circuits would have been busy for days. And I got my parents. I didn't have any news and it was dark. The sun hadn't risen yet. But I said, turn on CNN. And I sat on the phone with my parents for hours. And they were telling me what was going on. My water heater in a little porch by the back door fell and blocked the back door. I was packing to move back, and I had bought all this wonderful olive oil for some reason I was going to take back to Texas. It all spilled on the kitchen floor. Everything was coming off the cabinets—

AW:

That must have been tough to walk on.

CJ:

Oh, it was horrible. I would have had more things broken except I had packed a bunch of stuff. I had a really good friend across the street whose husband did commercials and he was out of town. Annie—her name was Annie—and her son Zane—Zane was born a day before Austin, my son. And they played together. They came and the four of us stayed in bed for like, hours. The kids would play together but we had my little battery-operated radio. But we had to go get water supplies, all the groceries were gone. We didn't have electricity for four days. She got it back first, so she invited the neighborhood over to stay in her house. We were sleeping on the floor in her apartment. It's scary because not only do you have all the infrastructure falling apart and people going crazy in stores and grabbing everything up, but you've got looting and you've got crimes going on because you're so vulnerable. And you don't have your connection to television or anything because there's no electricity.

AW:

Yeah, so you don't know what's going on, right.

CJ:

No, except for the radio. We would venture out in the day, because we knew there was a curfew. They'd tell everybody to be in their houses at a certain time. We'd get what water we could get and what food we could get and we'd stay close to home base. But I had a cousin that actually was in Northridge where the earthquake—the center of it. She moved immediately. She had two little kids and they moved immediately back.

AW:

It's interesting. I've done a lot of oral history interviews with Michael Martin Murphey and Bob Livingston and all of the first bunch of the Cosmic Cowboys—Gary P. Nunn. There's a whole group of them who are all out in LA for the big earthquake in '70 or something—

CJ:

Oh, really?

AW:

They all left and came back.

CJ:

It's scary.

AW:

Part of Austin's genesis in '72 was the earthquake in California.

CJ:

Well I mean, there was a joke about how LA was going to fall off in the ocean, but not that funny. And everything that happened in LA was like a disaster. There would be earthquake season when they were more prevalent, then there would be rain season. It barely ever rained, but when it did, everything flooded and they weren't prepared for it and they would wash away all the growth.

AW:

Then you have fire season.

CJ:

Then you had fire season. Fire season was horrible. Just horrible, smoke and people's homes just—houses were always falling off into the ocean. You wonder why people ever lived on the ocean, but they always rebuilt.

AW:

Yeah, especially on the edge of a cliff. Well so how did you decide to come back to Texas and what did you want to come back to?

CJ:

My son's father and I had broken up while I was pregnant.

AW:

Oh, my goodness.

CJ:

I really had—I was thirty-nine when I had him. I really was so excited and wanted to spend every waking moment—and for two years, I made as much as I did the last year of writing on *Growing Pains* because of residuals. So I was able to stay there in a nice salary and not do—well, I did a couple of freelance scripts, but this house was open because my brother went to law school, one went to med school living here.

AW:

The house we're sitting in now.

CJ:

The house we're in now. One of my cousins went to engineering school at Tech. Everybody was

moved out of the house and my parents said, “Why don’t you come?” And my apartment—the new owners really wanted me out of there. And they were trying everything they could possibly—because of the rent, the rent was so low. And at that time even, the other people were paying 2500, I was paying 650. They were doing things to kind of—and I would look around and it was crazy expensive. I didn’t even realize what a good deal I had. So I thought, Well, I’ll just come here for a while and then a while turned out to be my child growing up, because my family was here, I had help. It was so much easier. I mean, LA, if I’d continued to write—and I went back to LA for meetings for a while. But if I’d stayed there, my off-times would be when he was in school, and the summer when he would be off from school would be the busiest times because that’s when shows were starting back up.

AW:

Yeah. So you would have missed—

CJ:

I would have had to be wealthy enough to get him a great nanny and I would never have seen him. And I just—and I was—it wasn’t the world longest career. I was vested and I wrote for seven years. I may have left some stuff out, I can’t remember. So I’m vested, I have retirement in the Writer’s Guild. It’s small, but I still have it. It just seemed like a good time.

AW:

Well so what have you done since?

CJ:

When I came back, I didn’t work for a while, which I should have. I think the first thing I did, I taught creative writing at Shake Hands with Your Future, a summer thing at Tech.

AW:

Was that when Deborah Milosevich was—

CJ:

Yeah, boy she’s something else.

AW:

I think that may have been how I met you the first time.

CJ:

Oh, maybe so.

AW:

I think so.

CJ:

Maybe so. I just did it one time, and it was really fun, I liked it.

AW:

Well, I think I met you maybe through Deborah, though.

CJ:

Yeah, probably so. You might have met me—were you on the board of the Arts Alliance a long, long time ago?

AW:

Yeah, I was.

CJ:

I interviewed for that job when she got it.

AW:

I wasn't there to hire her. I was on the board to hire the next one.

CJ:

Okay. That really was—I was so excited about that job, but when I found out who got it, I was like, pfft, okay they did great. But I worked on David Langston's reelection for mayor and then I worked for his senate campaign, I did fundraising. And then I, for five years, when Austin was in elementary school, I worked—or maybe it was four years—I worked for Lubbock United Neighborhood Association. I met you then, because you used to play for concerts in the park and I would see you then.

AW:

I remember that, but I think—but I also was—I really love David [Langston] and I was an active member of—you know you used to get this monthly meeting of all the homeless artists in town when he was mayor. And he had his committee on the Llano Entertainment in the Arts in the Llano Estacado.

CJ:

Okay, yeah.

AW:

So I remember we did a lot of that.

CJ:

Well David and I were in the same class in high school.

AW:

Oh, okay.

CJ:

And so when I came back, I should have called him immediately.

AW:

And his older brother was my counselor at MYF—Ellis.

CJ:

Oh, how funny. And Ellis helped start—

AW:

Lubbock Neighborhood

CJ:

LUNA, yeah. And so I worked with Ellis for a while. I was the second executive director, but I really—that first one was great, but she left right away and I really helped grow it. And we had youth programs. I loved it.

AW:

It was really active.

CJ:

Very active. We had a spring break against crime camp that we did over spring break in East Lubbock to get kids friendly with police officers and firemen, police dogs so they wouldn't be intimidated so they wouldn't be seen as the enemy. And then we had another camp called Camp ECHO, every child helps out which was an environmental camp. I loved it, but the pay was—I was in debt from working there. And after that I got a PR job at UMC. And then I got the Tech job. And the Tech job really, of all the jobs I've had is the best because it incorporates the arts and I get to write and I get to do PR and I get to do a lot of photography.

AW:

Cool. We've been at it for almost two hours, so I'm going to—if you don't mind, we'll stop for

today, but I'm sure I'm going to have some other questions. Did I not ask you about something that we should go over today?

CJ:

Let me think. I mean, that sounds really fast for how many years, so there's probably something I forgot about.

AW:

Well we're not done.

CJ:

I'll think what we didn't cover.

AW:

You might just jot a note down or something, because we want to talk again about all the great stuff that you showed me when I got here and what you want to do with that and how you'd go about it. We'll have more to do.

CJ:

That sounds great.

AW:

Thank you very much.

CJ:

Thank you. It was fun.

AW:

It was fun.

CJ:

I guess people love to talk about themselves.

AW:

Thank goodness. I'd be out of a job.

CJ:

How long have you done this?

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AW:

I've done this for almost ten years.

CJ:

Really? How many have you done?

AW:

Oh, I have no idea.

CJ:

How long did you talk to Jaston? That must have taken forever.

AW:

Well no, we're going to start in April on his.

CJ:

Oh, when he comes back. Yeah.

AW:

Yeah. I've offered to go down there, but I think he's—he's a little—

CJ:

He's going to come back in April and in June.

AW:

And we're going to carve out time to do—

CJ:

Good, good. I kept up with him. It was funny—you know how you lose track of so many people. In LA I really lost track of people in Texas.

AW:

Yeah, for one thing, you were busy.

CJ:

I was busy. But I would go—even when I was in Austin, with United Way I went and saw him in *Marat-Sade*, which was very—funny story about that, it was in Theatre in the Round, and at the intermission, the actors stayed in the mentally insane asylum and were in character. “Jimmy! Jimmy!” And he was doing his crazy thing, you know. (AW laughs) That was right before *Tuna* started. And then I went to New York with Steve—you asked about Lorne Michaels—I went to

New York—the only time that I stayed away from my family in Christmas was once when I went with Steve to New York. He said, “Hey, there’s a play called *Greater Tuna* off Broadway and we’ve heard a lot about it and Lorne Michaels wants to go to it.” And I said, “Well, I know the guy who did it.” And he went, “Yeah, right.” It’s like he didn’t believe me, almost. We went to the play and it was so funny. I found myself not laughing as much as everybody else because I was like, I know these people, and they really are this nuts. And then I sent a note back to Jimmy at the intermission, can we’d come back and say hi? And so the whole second act I was thinking, I’m going to go in there, he’s going to knock me over trying to get Steve Martin and Lorne Michaels and I’m going to look like a big dumb-butt. And so we went back—it’s like he didn’t even see the celebs. “Cathy!” And I was so vindicated. It was so sweet. I tell him that all the time. And then he would come to perform. If it was an hour by LA, I’d go see him. And we’d kind of catch up about his son—

AW:

What did Steve and Lorne think about the show?

CJ:

Oh, they loved it. They loved it. They really loved it. It kind of upped my stock. What I don’t really want to put on there—because I didn’t talk about for years and years and years—

AW:

Well do you want me to stop this?

CJ:

Is it still going?

AW:

Yeah.

CJ:

Oh, yeah, stop that.

AW:

But that was really good. Okay, we will stop it now. Thanks.

[resumed]

Yeah, I’m going to say this is the second part, we’re going to talk a little bit about process, because sure enough, there was good stuff that was about to happen, so we’re starting up again. Same date, time and place. So talk about—you said that you learned to meditate, that helped

your writing.

CJ:

I always joked about—when I went to LA, I joked about the fact when I crossed the state line, I immediately went and got my aura read, I got my palm read, I got my astrology done, I did all these things that maybe weren't as commonplace or accepted in Crosbyton and Lubbock, Texas. I started seeing—I started going to a woman named Marianne Williamson who taught a course in miracles. You've possibly heard the name—

AW:

Yes, I have.

CJ:

—from Houston. She's a Jewish woman from Houston who studied religion in school and she started lecturing on this book called *A Course in Miracles*. And she had a huge audience in Los Angeles, a lot of gay people, a lot of kind of ostracized people.

AW:

Yeah well I mean, if you're a gay person in our part of the woods here, and you're a religious gay person.

CJ:

It doesn't fit.

AW:

It's tough.

CJ:

It is; it is.

AW:

How do you fit in?

CJ:

It's so much better than when I was here growing up. We were talking about religion in Crosbyton, religion was your social life, your spiritual life, your family life, it was everything. And when I came to Lubbock—and again, we were church light, Methodist—your term—but I found the people to be kind of snooty, kind of judgmental, kind of cliquish, and I kind of got off of religion. And so in LA, I did a lot of exploration. And part of it was listening to Marianne Williamson because she incorporated everything: Judaism, Catholicism, Buddhism, everything

you can imagine. And basically saying, just because somebody was born in India, really, they're not going to get an afterlife because they weren't in the States, in the Protestant Church or whatever—or Catholic? Just everything she'd do was interesting. Well, the way you might know her is that Oprah Winfrey picked one of her books for Oprah's Book Club, and she skyrocketed. She's now running for Congress in California.

And so when I started kind of doing these kind of things, going to her, it was spiritual. Although *A Course in Miracles* does talk about—I don't know if it was—I don't remember where *A Course in Miracles* is, to tell you the truth. But there was a part of it that dealt with meditation and visualization, or I got that from her, or got that from somewhere else. And I started doing that. I started meditating, I started visualizing, I started doing things now that they have on talk shows. But back then, it was a little novel. It was the "me" generation, too. The eighties where everybody was me, me, me. Going to self-improvement weekends—

AW:

Portlandia.

CJ:

Yeah, exactly, exactly. But I found it really, very helpful. I would do—I think they call them dream boards now, where you kind of put what you want so you visualize it and actually make it—and I mean, it's amazing what things came to pass. I started really late in writing, and when I speak to writing classes, I always say, Don't psych yourself out. If you want to do something—because really, I think that's probably where my niche was, comedy writing. I think that's probably the thing I did better than most. Not better than most people, but better than most things I did. But started so late and I tell them, Just go for it now.

AW:

Sure.

CJ:

That's—I did it late, but when I started doing the meditation and the visualization, I mean every meeting—I try to get my son to do it. My son is a golfer, and when he was little, we'd go to golf tournaments, little junior golf tournaments. Even when he was eight. And we'd be driving, we'd get up in the middle of the night to drive to Abilene or something and I'd write little visualization cards. "I putt straight," or "I make my putts," whatever. "I focus." And I'd make him do them. And I'm not kidding, I think you train your mind to—

AW:

Caddyshack. He did the same thing.

CJ:

Absolutely. There's jokes about it, there's series about it, but it's really—

AW:

But the reason there's jokes—no humor is funny if it's not serious.

CJ:

If it's not based in reality, yeah, that's true. That's true.

AW:

It's got to be tragic, or it's not funny.

CJ:

Yeah. But I kind of got away from that. Now, I'm starting to go to meditation classes at Yoga Bean and the Buddhist center. I'm not going to be Buddhist but meditation's awesome. And it really just calms your mind. And I think now that I've done that, maybe I'll start writing again in some form because when you clear your mind, ideas start coming to you.

AW:

Yeah. What do you think you'll be writing in?

CJ:

I have no idea. I have no idea. I have a big file cabinet full of screenplays started, barely started. Ideas, I used to keep a pad in my car, write stuff down. I don't recommend that, lots of wrecks happen that way.

AW:

Yeah I finally switched to a—

CJ:

Tape recorder?

AW:

Tape recorder. Yeah, because I got stopped at ten in the morning by highway patrol thinking I was intoxicated.

CJ:

Because you had a good idea.

AW:

I said, No, no, I'm writing. And they said, Well, that's not a whole lot better. (laughs)

CJ:

That's not an excuse. Yeah, it's like putting make-up on in the car or eating. But I really think there are things that can free your mind up so that you can accept the universe, God, whatever you want to say, kind of what you should be doing and what you should be writing about.

AW:

Well, as writers, as artists, we are acceptors, I mean that's really what—I know you've had this experience. Something comes out of your pencil and you think, where did that come from?

CJ:

Absolutely. Or somebody tells you a story or something. You run into it all the time, all the people you talk to and you think, hmm, nobody's written that. Or, boy, that'd be a good idea. It's just funny how life puts people in your path that you should meet at the time you're ready to meet them. Raising a child as a single mom, I kind of—I was a really good soccer mom and did all that stuff, but I kind of got away from everything. So, yeah, I'm going to start kind of freeing it and kind of looking for opportunities. I don't know. There's so much out there now. I look at people that—back when I was writing, you wanted a network show. Well now, you don't necessarily want a network show. They have low-gear shit—the best shows—and I've kind of switched from comedy to drama. I love all these quirky things. Are you watching *True Detective*?

AW:

No, I was a cop.

CJ:

I don't care. You might like it. Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson.

AW:

I watch—

CJ:

You lived it?

AW:

I lived it; so I don't watch those. But what I do like are the off-beat things. My wife and I watch *Psych*. While it was on, we watched *Pushing Up Daisies*. [*Pushing Daisies*]

CJ:

Loved *Pushing Daisies*.

AW:

And we watched those kinds of things.

CJ:

Quirky.

AW:

Yeah, quirky.

CJ:

Totally agree.

AW:

I just enjoy those a lot.

CJ:

Absolutely. And I've always joked that when I'm eighty, I'm going to be a stand-up comedian, because I met a woman that did it. And I wanted to write her life story. That was going to be my TV movie and she gave me the rights and everything, but she had no conflict and she wouldn't let me make it up. Everybody supported her, she performed at the Playboy Club—you can't write a TV movie with no conflict. Somebody's got to be (claps) you know, preventing her from living her dream.

AW:

Yeah, yeah. I think you need to write the sitcom about being the sitcom writers around the big fat guy with a hot dog. (laughs)

CJ:

Oh my God. Only years later can that be funny. The trauma of it all.

AW:

Well, but in talking about process, did you ever develop a—and I don't want to say routine, I don't mean a routine. We know we don't have a routine. In fact, routines kill us. But did you develop a particular perspective in how you attacked a writing issue?

CJ:

I didn't, and I think I would have been much more successful if I did because I was one of those

horrible procrastinators, a horrible procrastinator. And I know everything I ever wrote, if there was a deadline involved. I think that's why my spec scripts were so good, because there was no deadline. And there was freedom, there was nobody to answer to. And I wrote—I really did write some spec scripts I'm really proud of.

AW:

And they were better than your own—

CJ:

Of course there's more rules to the one that someone's paid you for and you're having to please someone else. But still, the deadline always loomed huge for me. And I worked under pressure best. I pulled all-nighters right around the time, but I know it wasn't my best work, either. So I do think there's a good way to—I love reading about writers that even if they don't do anything—Eckhart Tolle—I'm listening to the tapes about *A New Earth* right now and he said, even if he didn't write, he'd sit from like—I don't remember the times—but eight to noon.

AW:

Oh yeah. John Kenneth Galbraith said that. He had a time to write and if at the end of that time, there were just piles of papers on the floor and nothing in the typewriter and someone asked him, he said, "If they ask me in the afternoon what did I do this morning, I always said, I wrote."

CJ:

Yeah. And even saying that, it kind of feeds your mind. It's like if you're going to be a writer, say I'm a writer. Don't put it in another—I want to be a writer. Just say it. The brain is a mysterious thing—

AW:

It works in waves.

CJ:

Power of suggestion really means a lot. And if I'm funny, I can write, all these little suggestions, all these affirmations, positive thoughts, I think they have an impact. There are enough people that have written about it that have been successful that I think there's merit to that. So I'm going to get back into doing that and I hope I get a routine in writing, because I do think that's important.

AW:

The routine is important because that eight hours that you spent that nothing happens is just as important as the eight you—

CJ:

Absolutely.

AW:

Because you wouldn't do the eight that's filled with stuff if you hadn't done the other.

CJ:

Exactly. And also it's important to go out and meet people and to do research, because like you were saying, the more research you do, your novel kind of takes a different path—

AW:

It's following its own path...

CJ:

Or something solved. Because I mean, you're creating. And I do say this when I speak to classes, too is that people [say], Well, I'm not really a writer. And I'm like, Well, if you want to be, you are, because you're the only person that has your perspective and your—and if you copy somebody, you don't, which is a real big trend in Los Angeles.

AW:

Well, it's a big trend everywhere.

CJ:

Yeah. If you find something successful, I'll do it like it. I'll do it like that, just a little different. Unh-uh, can't do that. You have to be—

AW:

No. Well, for one thing, you just talked about in the conversation earlier about the writer who did *Housewives*, [*Desperate Housewives*] how long—

CJ:

—it took him to get there.

AW:

So, someone imitating that is imitating something that's ten years old already.

CJ:

Yeah, exactly. That's exactly right.

AW:

So it's the same in Nashville. People say, Well let's do a song like so-and-so, it turns out that song had been in that writer's portfolio for five years.

CJ:

And who wants to do a song that's already been done? I'll tell you what did happen when I worked on staff, or even when I was doing freelance writing. This was really weird. There would be—we would do a show about a soapbox—a kid being in a soapbox derby. This isn't a good example, but... And all of a sudden, other shows were coming on, and it was like, Oh my gosh there's a spy in our midst. It's that shared consciousness going on. And trying to protect your work. Once you had a great idea, you'd take it to the Writer's Guild and register it, which is a joke. Because the second *Designing Women* I wrote was almost used verbatim. I asked my agent, What can I do? Because they bought it from me, but they didn't credit me with it. She said, You can't do anything. I mean, because probably she read it, put it aside and then she thinks she's having an original idea, you know. So it was funny how themes or topics you'd see—even now, today, you see that and just laugh. They'll all do a story about something and it will be so similar.

AW:

Yeah, it's floating around out there for everybody.

CJ:

Yeah, it really is floating around. I'll tell you the process I did like. I really loved writing with a group.

AW:

Did you really?

CJ:

Oh, I really did.

AW:

I'm not sure I would like that.

CJ:

Well, for a novel it wouldn't work. Have you ever written with a partner?

AW:

I've done a few songs, co-writes as they're called in the song business. Some of them were delightful and they were delightful when they let me do what I wanted to. (laughs) But I've never

done enough of it to really say that I have a good sense of how you would do that. Except I am convinced you need to be working with someone who brings to the table something different than what you—

CJ:

Exactly. And you need to—for comedy writing, I loved working with my partner. It was just that he was not available and I wanted to get this show on the road. We were already over—

AW:

You know that seems to me to make a lot more sense to me because I know when I'm sitting and talking to someone about something funny—

CJ:

Working off each other.

AW:

Oh, yeah.

CJ:

It's kind of the same thing in a room, believe it or not. How they do it, you go off, you pitch ideas to the big group. Head guy's going to be the last decision, but you know, the producers also talk about it. And then whatever idea—maybe you pitch five ideas. They go, Well, we like the one where Mike Seaver has to parent Leonardo DiCaprio because his parents are gone and Leonardo takes advantage of him and does all this stuff. There's a fantasy going on in it. Well, then you go off and write it and then you bring it back, the first draft, and that's when they start tearing it to shreds. I mean, I'm talking about it doesn't even look the same. And it may be something they told you they kind of charted out, but then when they hear it, Oh, I think this would work better. That's not fun. But what is fun is bouncing lines off, like you were saying, feeding off each other, the comedy and everything and fighting for a line. Leonardo DiCaprio's dad—it was some famous southern actor, but he was coming in and I wrote some country line, like some saying, and I'd heard it, I thought it was funny, and none of them had heard it and they went, That's not going to work, that's not funny. I went, No, no, no, please, I'm begging you. I don't know why I fought so hard for that line. They said the line, they let me do it and it got roars. It got so much laughter. I just knew it was going to work because it was funny. But you get to fight for stuff like that when you're on staff. It is frustrating because there's a hierarchy. If you're at the bottom of that, you're not going to get to win as many battles.

AW:

Yeah, well, I think the one thing that I would miss—not just on this big project I'm doing now, but the last book I did, and even songs—short pieces. I don't know what it's going to look like in

the end, but I try to think about planting seeds that are going to grow later on. And so, to interrupt one of those, interrupts a lot of things for me. And so it's not so much a—I feel badly about that happening — as it is it seems very impractical.

CJ:

The rhythm gets thrown off. Yeah.

AW:

Yeah, to lose.

CJ:

And that's true. That's true. You're depending on that other person. On the other hand, we had jobs and we'd come write, so we'd set a time and it makes you accountable to somebody. You can't—

AW:

But you probably develop something with the people you wrote with. An understanding of what they would do and what they would add.

CJ:

Right. Partner, especially. In a group it kind of changes the dynamic, the dynamics change depending on whose script it is, who's kind of taking the lead on it. But with a partnership, absolutely. Absolutely. You have your little specialties and you know where you fit them in and stuff. I think it's nice for comedy to have a male and a female because you've got an authentic voice for a male character and a female character.

AW:

Yeah, and even if the joke is the same, they're going to phrase it differently.

CJ:

Right.

AW:

They're going to put it differently.

CJ:

Right. Absolutely. And you got to make sure that the way you see it and the character you're writing for—because TV is so different. When you're creating your own characters, the most important thing to me is that you find characteristics for that character and you stick to them. You don't go veering and all of a sudden this character is doing something completely they

wouldn't do.

AW:

Yeah if they change, they have to change because of something and it has to be over time and you have to—

CJ:

Show it.

AW:

Right, yeah.

CJ:

But in a sitcom, it's kind of lazy writing in a way because you know what their character is, and if you veer from that, you're going to make producers really unhappy.

AW:

Well, and audiences. Audiences don't want to see Norm different.

CJ:

Oh, audiences don't. That's exactly right.

AW:

They want to see Norm the same every time.

CJ:

It's comforting. In fact, I joke sometimes that television's my relaxer after a bad day at work, you know. Forget booze and drugs, I just can get immersed in a dumb program.

AW:

Yeah. Cool. Interesting. Well, I'm interested to see where it all goes.

CJ:

We'll see. Something speaks to me.

AW:

All right. Thanks again.

CJ:

Thanks, Andy.

End of interview.



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