

Video Title: Mazer Lesbian Archives True Life Lesbian Oral History Project:Carolyn & Brenda Weathers

Interviewee: Carolyn Weathers

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[caption: The June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives True Life Lesbian Oral History Project]

[caption: Carolyn Weathers talks about herself and her sister Brenda Weathers]

Weathers: My sister, Brenda Weathers.

[shows a photo with the caption: Carolyn and Brenda 1956]

Weathers: The late Brenda Weathers—I always say, “She’s my hero.” When people talk about people and Gay Liberation Front, or anything in any kind of movement who’s their hero, I always say, “It’s my sister,” and here’s why. A lot of women say Morris Kight, and I don’t blame them. I like Morris too but it was me, it was my sister. In 1957, it was October 1957, when I was 17 I was starting my junior year in high school. And when Brenda was 20, and I have the date pinpointed that it was before October 26th, 1957 because on October 26th, 1957 my sister Brenda turned 21. And you’ll see by the story that she wasn’t quite 21 and that’s how some of these things ensued, how her parents—our parents and I found out she was a lesbian. She was at Texas Woman’s University. First, she had gone to Baylor University. That’s a whole other story about me and Texas Baptist preachers. And she hated Baylor and transferred when she could to Texas Woman’s University in Denton. And, she wasn’t there that long but to her, it was lesbian heaven, and she fell in love with this woman that she called—I have forgotten the woman’s real name—but in a story or a memoir my sister wrote just a few short years before she died, she named the woman Beth. So I’ll call her Beth. She and Beth—Beth was a student there at TWU—they lived in the same dorm. They fell madly in love. And I don’t know how it came to be, but they had written each other some love letters. They must have been separated at one time, or hell, maybe they were sending them from one bed to the other in the dorm room, I don’t know, but they had written each other some love notes.

[shows photo]

Weathers: And Beth’s father intercepted one of these. Obviously there’s more to the logistics of this than I know. The point was that Beth’s father found out about these love notes and read them. And Beth was from Houston and she was in—the next time she went to Houston—anyway

her father put her under house arrest in her own house. Oh, there they go again, talking with my hands.

[laughs]

See, he put her—he wouldn't let her escape. He beat her somewhat with a rubber hose. Beth got in touch with my sister—again this was before cell phones, before email, anything but maybe she got another letter out anyway—asking Brenda to help. And then this Romeo and Juliet situation, my sister left the dorm in Denton. I'm not sure when Beth was in Houston instead of the dorm. Anyway, Brenda went to Houston to rescue Beth and as soon as she walked in the house, Beth's father started beating Brenda with the rubber hose, just severely beating her. Brenda somehow still managed to rescue Beth and she and Beth escaped Beth's parents' house, drove back to Denton, stayed off-campus at a friend's apartment in Denton. So they weren't in the dorm and at the dorm check—and that's back when women got checked in the dorms, you know you had to be in at a certain time; actually I kind of liked it when I was in college when I was locked up and all the women and I were locked up together but that's another story. And that's even before I came out, see? [laughs] How more emotional ever. I get off track again, all right.

Interviewer: So they went back to—

Weathers: So they went back to Denton and because of the all-dorm check and it was a big to-do—not in the dorm—that started this whatever it was in motion. Brenda and Beth ended up handcuffed down in the Denton police station, where the police talked very nastily to them, trying to get them to disavow their lesbianism. And then if they would do that, they could go back to college. Brenda refused to repudiate her lesbianism or homosexuality as what it had said and got kicked out of college. The official transcript said “moral turpitude,” that's how they labeled it. Excuse me, and so—

[drinks water]

Weathers: She wasn't 21. Remember, I said, “She wasn't quite 21,” so this had to have happened before October 26th. That's when she turned 21. Because she wasn't 21 yet, she had to tell her family—well she had to tell her parents, but there weren't any laws that she had to tell her little sister—but she had to tell her parents. And I wasn't there when she told them. I don't know how, what actually transpired but I do know that my mother and father's reaction was not stereotypical in what you'd expect of a Texas Baptist preacher and his wife.

[shows photo]

It's not like they jumped up and down with glee, “Oh boy, oh boy, our daughter's gay.” Excuse me, I'm just—buttons—and I wanted to look nice for the filming. Oh well. Anyway.

Interviewer: And so they didn't jump up and down happily—

Weathers: They didn't jump up and down saying "Oh boy, oh boy, Brenda's gay, hooray." However, they were both very kind-hearted people who truly, truly believed in "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And they knew now that their daughter Brenda was going to have social ostracism piled upon her and that broke their hearts. And they went beyond that, knowing that they didn't want anybody else's son or daughter to suffer social ostracism either. So certainly they weren't going to let them suffer social ostracism at their hands. So from that day forward, my parents—the preacher, the preacher's wife—welcomed Brenda's gay and lesbian friends and her lesbian lovers into their home.

[shows a photo with the caption: Brenda and Carolyn 1964]

[caption: Very special thanks to Carolyn Weathers]

[caption: To Support the June L. Mazer True Life Lesbian Oral History Project make a tax-deductible donation today www.mazerlesbianarchives.org]

[caption: The June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives West Hollywood, California "Where Lesbians Live Forever"]

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