

SUSAN PILDES INTERVIEWS LUCINA

The following interview, transcribed from videotape, is the first meeting of Lucinda, a writer and journalist who lives in Mexico, and Susan Pildes, a client—centered therapist of 22 years. It was recorded in Chicago in October, 1993. The setting was Dr. Marjorie Witty's Advanced Client-Centered Therapy class at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology. The tape was produced by Carl Aniel and transcribed by Tim Tribiano and Barbara Bogosian. Requests for copies may be made to Susan Pildes, 2519 W. Hutchinson, Chicago, Illinois, 60618; or by e-mail at: spildes@wwa.com.

T: Lucina, you want to just start in with something that you've been thinking about?

Cl: Yes, I do. When Marge first talked about this, I thought at the time, that I had no problems and that was true in the sense that right now is not my hardest time. When I'm up here in Chicago, I have relatively few . . . it feels like vacation, I'm kind of camping out. And now as the time approaches when I'm supposed to go back to my life, then I have various kinds of . . . feelings of kind of . . . impending . . . well, doom is too much, it's certainly anxiety. (T: Um hum.) But in some way I just want to stay forever and do nothing whatsoever, it makes me, at *this* point even, less productive. Most of what I was supposed to do last week I didn't do, and this is unusual for me and I just put it forward on my agenda for this week . . .

Tl: You mean because you are starting to get anxious . . .

C2: Yes I'm starting to get anxious, that's exactly what's going on, I'm starting to worry. There are certain things I focus on. . . Now I know that when I go back . . . I mean that this is a cycle that is very very common when I . . . then when I go back I do see things that I love but a lot of the time I can only remember the feelings of responsibility . . . the water company, Leonor has been receiving water bills that are greatly in excess of what you could be possibly be using. I've been in there 50 times. I promised her when I come back in November that I would go talk to the water company again, and we will again get nowhere, and you know other things of this type. Leonor has been . . . This Leonor is like my surrogate mother—in law, she is the grandmother of my 6 kids that are still in Mexico. She has had pneumonia while we were away. This is another part of the cycle. As soon as we leave she gets a heart attack or pneumonia or something.

T2: So she's there—just get this part straight—she's there with all the children, (Yes.) and you're here by yourself . . .

C3: No I'm nor here by myself, I'm here with two children . . .

T3: So you have two children [gestures two fingers].

C4: . . . who have no problems—for me it's nothing.

T4: So you have two children here and six back there (C: six back there) . . . okay and the things that will come up once you walk in the door in Mexico.

C5: Right and it happens all at once. The initial impact is . . . there's no way to . . . as far as I know now maybe some wise person could suggest a way to get it . . . have it be a little bit less . . . it happens all at once, everything hits at the same time and it's not even the kids being thoughtless (T: Um hum.) . . . it just is that way and that's true for maybe three days and then it will kind of normalize. (T: Um hum.) . . . But it feels . . . well . . . I guess I brought it on myself, but in any case it feels like that. (T: Um hum.) . . . Tends to mess up even my vacation, the apprehension . . .

T5: Because towards the end you're worried about it. And you're saying two things, so far, about it Lucina. One is the *minute* you walk in the door it hits you and the other thing is that there are problems there that you work on, and work on, and work on, and you don't get any place.

C6: Absolutely. Yeah, that's it, (T: That's it) two things. I don't know which one is . . . well they're different kinds, I mean the initial impact will go away in three days.

T6: Yes. The initial impact of—what is it?—of walking into a house with six kids and all of the problems . . .

C7: And certain things I'm apprehensive about. It seems as though we may have lost the battle with the authorities over Lorena and she may have lost a year in school . . . And the things that are unsaid are worse than the things that are said . . . (T: Um hum.) . . . So why is Toño not on the phone? . . . Well it's not really known. He . . . someone thinks he's flunked English . . . (T:Um hum.) . . . There's a lot of like dots . . .and . . .

T7: You mean you don't hear from the kids . . .

C8: Yeah, many dots . . .

T8: Then you don't know what's going on.

C9: Well I do, I kinda do, I mean I can kinda guess what it is, I mean Liliana has failed Geography, Toño has failed . . . if we're fortunate he's failed English only. (T: Um hum.) When I', not there they flunk and it's not because a motivated person could not adjust to my not being there . . . umm . . . see I didn't inherit six pre-selected worthies, I inherited six random averages [laughs] and that's what I got.

T9: You mean, you've inherited these children . . .

C10: I inherited these children and these children are absolutely your regular children (T:Um hum.) and sometimes I love that very much about them. I think in the long range, I'd even choose them exactly as they are.

T10: Really . . . in the long run . . .

C11: Um hum . . . ha. It's such a painful thing because part of me says—now look, why aren't these kids like I was? Well, they're not—forget it, they're not. I mean sometimes it also seems even like some kind of a cosmic joke on me that . . . especially the way the girls are because the girls are *absolutely* convinced of their inferiority . . . nothing will shake them. [laughs] They are . . . they scale down their expectations at the least . . . I mean they're absolute believers . . . not . . . this is not the youngest ones . . . but the older ones are just . . . (T: believers that they can't do anything.) don't fit me. And none of them, their ways don't fit me. They're people who will not say specifically, you know, they just won't say what's going on so I've always got to . . . as I say I'm having to read in the dots . . .

T11: Um hum . . . you mean they don't tell you how they're feeling, they don't tell you what's going on . . .

C12: They don't tell me what they flunk. They don't tell me what book they need. They don't tell me what shoes they haven't got. They don't inform me—*anything*, now that's . . . I mean . . .

T12: So things come always as a surprise? Is that what you're saying?

C13: There have been some inroads in this all over problem. I mean there are certain people who have heard and these tend to be a little more on the ball anyway and they will come and say—I need to inform you that there are no shoes—and occasionally someone tells on someone else and says—I need to tell you that Toño has not had any shoes for four days and has not told you—you know? So there's a certain amount of that but basically the kind of situation that I would like where you actually hear what's going on . . . infringes various unwritten laws . . .

T13: What does that mean—what you just said?

C14: Unwritten laws. Speaking is betraying . . . Now this is an unwritten law that you might never have heard of and I wish to hell it had never been, you know, thought of by anybody, but this is . . . Speaking is betraying, speaking will get you in trouble and other such things and it comes from a whole history of stuff. I mean, my helper in the house that isn't from this family but is from the same socio-economic situation since her father explicitly told her that if she said she needed something for school he would take her out of school and therefore it was to her advantage to deny that she ever needed anything. (T:Um hum.) Well that's not how I feel but you know I have to kind of go against that whole thing . . .

T14: Um hum. So they feel that they should keep it to themselves so they can keep the status quo going.

C15: Right, they have various superstitions that they are . . .

T15: They are *superstitions*?

C16: Oh I would think it has to be at this point, it's five years that they've had the money available to them. (T: Mmm.) I mean, this is not . . .

T16: You mean they know the money's there Lucina?

C 17: They don't know. . . I mean that's the thing (T: They don't know?) . . . what can I say to you . . . I don't know, maybe they don't know but they should know . . .

T17: That they can get a pair of shoes, they can get a book, they can get what they need when they need it . . .

C18: You know the thing is that any of it is that I could just weep over it because it's always the possibility the dopes don't know!! (T: Oh.) But it's not that they haven't seen it with their own eyes. I don't know why, if they don't.

T18: You mean, as we're discussing this, it's not totally clear to you that they have taken in the information that that stuff (C: Right.) is there for them.

C19: Right. Shocking as that may seem is in five years the evidence of every single day of their life may still not be strong enough to counteract some . . . you know . . . feeling that antecedes my . . . certainly nobody got that feeling from me.

T19: Yes. But they behave as if the money is not there and if they ask for these things they're rocking the boat and it must be kept a secret. (C: Um hum.) Particularly from you.

C20: Um hum . . . and then you have this scurrying around in this humiliating fashion as though the person certainly committed a murder and it's about a pencil!!

T20: You mean if somebody's lost something?

C21: Well they didn't have a pencil . . . lost or it was stolen . . .

T21: But if they don't have a pencil to go to school with (C: Um hum.) on a particular day (C:Um hum.) that is hidden from you and there's a lot of things going on . . .

C22: And then the person who most is furious with someone finally comes and spits it out—X has no pencil! (T: Um hum.) You know, I love them just in that very craziness, but the fact is, trying to provide the pencils is just an awful, I don't know . . .

T22: Trying to provide them when you're not asked? . . .

C23: There's all kinds of stuff I don't know, and there's no way in the world for me to know and I don't care not to know either. I don't like the kind of parent that is off someplace (T: Yes) that kind of stuff . . . I see that . . . I go to these many parent meetings, many, constant, and it is shocking. I mean, the majority of the parents know . . . If they know 20% what we know about their kids it's amazing. And the stories of the kids' cousins and things that they've done . . . Lorena says to me—you know Yolanda—who's a first cousin—has been taking money to go to computer school week after week after week and going, getting on the bus with me and getting off, and going to this other rancho and doing this, that, and the other—and now it's coming to light she's flunked 92 things and so forth, but there are plenty of these things happening all around us, now nobody's ever said any of ours have done this.

T23: Um hum. . . But things are happening where the parents believe that the kids are doing one thing (C: plenty of kids) and the kids are appearing to be doing that but they're not. (C: They're not.) They're doing something completely different.

C24: Right. So you have to . . . the possibility of deception is continual. (T: Um hum.) I don't actually think it's happening in our house. (T: Um hum.). . . and many people think this is just wonderful and I should be counting my blessings because. . . this about the pencils of course is less grave.

T24: Yes. What people are saying to you is your children are telling you the general truth (C: generally speaking) . . . about what's going on (C: generally speaking) . . . but they hide certain things from you that they think are going to cause trouble.

C25: When we find any kind of deception we generally haul them through the street screaming and crying at the top of our lungs and have a gigantic fit and then it doesn't happen much for a while.

T25: There's a scene.

C26: Yes, definitely there's a scene in every case of deception that's discovered. (T: Um hum.) But what are the other people doing? I mean the other people are not happy to have . . . I don't know, but I hear what they say about their kids in these meetings and I think, you know, this is *far* from the truth.

T26: You mean they think their kids are completely fine, and nothing's going on? Is that what youmean, Lucina?

C27: Oh, as often they think their kids are terrible and it's not going on, I mean they're just way out . . . I see that they don't know what their kids are doing, cause I even know the kid and this is not right or I know what's been said and it's not right, or if that's not even the expectation, that's not what the teacher said and that's not what project they're working on . . .

T27: Um hum, you mean there's a terrible fit between the children's world and the world of the parents.

C28: Very terrible and maybe that's true everywhere but that's what I know about. (T: Um Hum.) And I don't feel that with Dani and Nico because these are just teeny—weeny ones and they've

always been with us and they're just as likely to look at things my way as any other. That'd be as normal for them . . . But my other kids are straddling something or other, with some success or some failure the same as me . . .

T28: Straddling what?

C29: Two different conceptual structures and two different sets of expectations and at least two different worlds. And they are . . . well I've got the trump card cause I've got the money . . . I mean everyone would be happy to tell them that . . . (T: Yes.) . . . but, well then, why hasn't it turned perfect? [laughs] Supposedly I got it all, I know. [laughs]

T29: You mean, if you . . . There's some way in which you laugh and you say—I've got the money and I adore these children and I would give them what they need at a drop of a hat, (C: Right.) why isn't this working? (C: Right, right, right.) And it seems like what you're saying Lucina—and I'm checking this with you—you're saying it's not working because there are so many things that the children have brought with them that makes their world view so different.

C30: I don't think it's strictly "*have* brought," they *are* bringing them daily also

T30: I see. You mean because it's *always* there, it's not just *past*, it's always there

C31: Oh yeah, if it was *past* I think it would have (T: Oh!) subsided by now.

T31: But they live in a culture where it's constantly reinforced.

C32: Right, I mean they've got four grandparents living—no wait, they've got . . . they may have eight great grandparents, I haven't counted up—in any case, they have 10 aunts and uncles, you know, and any number of . . . dim-witted misbehaving cousins. (T: Mmm) And I don't always know about even who is representing the majority of the influence. Leonor . . . I don't feel at all bad about Leonor. . . . I mean Leonor just has all these troubles, but their Grandmother that they live with, Leonor, I do count as mine, you know. (T: Um hum.) . . . She's essentially . . . I don't . . . she's pulling the same way we're pulling. (T: Um hum.) Some of the other ones, I mean, some of the stuff from the past, years ago but when Maru was still alive and Maru's relatives fought with her, saying . . .

T32: Who's Maru?

C33: Their mother who died.

T33: I see.

C34: They fought with her saying that she was nuts to keep sending her daughters to school because they would just get in trouble and get pregnant (T: Um hum.) and they should be put to work immediately because many of them were over ten years old. . . . Well anyway, that's in the past, but it's just to point out how absolutely asinine their counsel is likely to be. . . . That's about where it is. . . .

T34: Which would be to pull . . . That the other direction that you're dealing with is (C: Oh definitely) says such things as, pull the little girls out of school by the age of ten.

C35: Take the girls out of school. Pay a lot of bribes for things. Don't consider doing it in any other way, (T: Um hum.) you know anything . . . several stupid things. (T: Um hum.) I really don't want anything to do with it. (T: Mmm.) Well neither did Maru—their mother was in the same boat as we are, it's no different, (T: Mmm.) it's exactly the same. We're more able. . . .

T35: You mean, more able to get the kids to do what you want (C: Yes) even though it's not . . .

C36: Because of the economic factor. (T: Mmm.) Because everybody says—now this has nothing to do with the wisdom of the point of view or whether education is a good idea or anything like that . . . we just say we fund this, we don't fund that. (T: Um hum.) And we might

as well not even bother to discuss the rationale. . . (T: Um hum. We fund your going to school. . .)
We are god and we say this . . . so that's that! [laughs] It's terrible!

T36: [simultaneously with previous sentence] It's clean [laughs].

C37: It should be! You know it should be, except for the fact that it isn't because their hearts are free, because we're not that oppressive and they do . . . waiver around (T: Um hum.) and we see the evidence of it and it gives me a . . .

T37: You mean you listen to their side . . .

C38: I wanted to listen to their side, and I want to listen to their side *more*, (T: Um hum.) and I already listen to it too much to be completely naive.

T38: What do you mean?

C39: . . . well I mean I can't really look at it, as—we pay the bills, we win . . . you do it, et cetera.

T39: Yeah, that doesn't work [laughs].

C40: [laughs] It isn't where I'm coming from [laughs]. I mean, I'm tempted [laughs].

T40: [Ironically] It might work for someone.

C41: If someone can really give me a practical way of doing that or anything else, (T: Um hum.) I might do it because it's such a headache what I have got.

T41: Lucina, is what you're saying here that it's interesting because if you were willing you could just say—I've got the money, I'm the boss, that's it, get complete compliance, [smiling] or something that looked like that.

C42: Could I? You know, that's the thing. Could I?

T42: You're not even sure about that [laughs].

C43: But the fact is when you say it, I think—now who ever has done this, you know, what about the slave owners? Did they really ever get away with this? Not truly,

T43: Um hum. So that *doesn't* work.

C44: I don't know . . .

T44: And then it particularly doesn't work for you because it doesn't fit your nature. (C: Yeah.) So that the ways that you would have to have a more easy control, or at least have the illusion of a more easy control, in a sense they're not open to you because of your nature.

C45: [laughs] I don't think they're open to anybody, though. I mean, I think they're just . . . it's a closed lot.

T45: You think that nobody can do that anymore?

C46: [Pause] Yes, that's what I think. I think that when push comes to shove when have some kind of emergency and they have to open their heart, they show that they don't trust their sisters, they don't trust *anybody*. (T: Um hum.) That's the truth of it. (T: Um hum.) I can suspect and think, oh it's some aunt or something, but I don't think it's that.

T46: That the children—each individual child—Aoes not really trust anyone.

C47: Right.

T47: Even their siblings.

C48: Right. Right. Usually in emergencies when somebody dies or something extreme happens, they *have* to speak and usually that's what comes out. (T: [simultaneously with next sentence] What comes out is they lack the trust . . .) That they have never told the truth to anybody. And

it doesn't make any difference if it's their closest sibling. So it's, you know, I'm not super sure that I'm at a disadvantage. [Pause] And the baby . . .

T48: [simultaneously with last sentence] You mean because there's not someone else that *is* hearing the truth. No one is. . .

C49: No . . . and the baby is coming up exactly the same as the big ones. (T: Um hum.) Now that is just dumbfounding to me, (T: Um hum.) this child *I nursed* and she will not talk!

T49: She doesn't talk to you even?

C50: She talks to Dani my baby . . . they're like twins. She does talk to him more than to the others. But she is a quiet one. (T: Um hum.) *Callado*.

T50: What does that mean?

C51: A *callado*: shut up one.

T51: Shut up one.

C52: It's a whole culture is full of those, but periodically there are mutations or something, you get one like their mother who wasn't. (T: Um hum.) All I can say is if you don't talk nobody understands you (T: Yes.) and I don't even love talking. If I do it for a long time I go hoarse—not my favorite thing. (T: Um hum.) But I really recommend it. So I don't know what I'm supposed to do, you know, every time I think about it, it goes through another circle, and I think . . . What a headache.

T52: What kind of circle Lucina? I'm not sure what you're saying.

C53: Why am I not . . . ? Why don't I feel eager to get home? . . . And then . . . if I go through everything there are certain elements . . . if I could get rid of the rest of it, you know, I'd be eager, but at this point I can't really say I'm eager.

T53: And is the rest of it . . . ? Does that refer to the secretiveness?

C54: Not necessarily, the secretiveness is only part of the whole thing. Secretiveness has nothing to do with these things like the water company. (T: Yes.) [laughs] I mean, plus, I couldn't say Leonor is secretive about it. She bothers me about it every day.

T54: She doesn't keep it to herself [smiling].

C55: *No* indeed not! That type of complaint is full—out. No it's a mixed deal, the kids are more the problem. . . No, that's not the only problem. It's just that the whole complex pushes on me at once and that's one of the elements, I mean, I couldn't extricate one thing from another. If I could, I would do it.

T55: But they're all interlocked . . . (C: Um hum . . . yeah.) . . . and it's the problems, the practical physical problems like with the water company, and then the problems of the children keeping things inside themselves, and then the problems that *come* from that (C: Um hum.), and your own frustration about not being able to get the truth. (C: Um hum.) I guess that's what you're saying, Lucina.

C56: Um hum, and I feel like I'm in a bad mood. I am rotten. I am not a loving parent. I would be but I am not, because of course, nobody could ever think about criticizing me for this because everybody thinks—well isn't this great, nobody is *dying!* You know their expectations are so . . . The issue of whether I'm okay, or whether I'm cheerful and all that is . . .

T56: This is not a standard you'd be held up to by anyone.

C57: Nobody but me could ever even, can know, (T: Only you.) nobody's thinking about that. They are all just thinking well . . .

T57: . . . you took all the children, they're all being fed, (C: Right.) they're not dying of illness . . .

C58: Right, right, since nobody is dead or dying, then how could there be an issue? So it's just my private issue that I go around feeling—however I feel—I mean I don't even know . . . you know at first they used to be all scared that I wouldn't come back.

T58: You mean when you would come to Chicago?

C59: Um hum, and I know exactly what the risk is there because you know there's this feeling like wouldn't it be just nice to . . . [gesture of taking flight]

T59: Yes . . . to get free of these problems . . .

C60: . . . it would never happen.

T60: . . . it would never happen.

C61: They don't even fear it anymore.

T61: They know that you'll always come back.

C62: I'm very proud of that . . . [begins crying]

T62: That they do know that?

C63: Very proud . . .

T63: That's been an accomplishment.

C64: Yes, nobody doubts any of it. [crying] They can say . . . They can hear any number of people say—I know thus and so gringos, they always say they'll stay here forever, the first time they get any kind of health problem they go home because they say there's no health [care]—and this does nothing at all to them, they don't hear any of it, they say—she'll be back on the first of . . .

T64: They know.

C65: Um hum. Yeah, I pay whatever price I pay and I try to conceal it, [crying] because I don't want to threaten them.

T65: Oh I see! You mean you can't really complain to them because it's taken . . .

C66: No! How can I say to them look, do I ever wish that I could just get right out of this . . .

T66: . . . Because they would experience it merely as a threat (C: [simultaneously with next] Of course, they've already lost everything.) and it would undermine everything you've done . . .

C67: [crying] They've already lost—I mean, they're used to people dying if nothing else. [laughs] You know they just get out any way they can! Ship out! But when Maru died my best friend down there said to me—well it might be the only way out of a dog's life. . . Well that's true.

T67: And that might be true.

C68: I mean I don't think there was any factor of will in the whole thing (T: Um hum.) I don't . . .

T68: She just got sick and she died.

C69: No, she died in child birth, she died of heart failure. (T: Oh.) She . . . no, she didn't get sick . . . (T: She died in child birth.) . . . no, she didn't . . . she expected to be with me in a couple of hours. [long pause] No, that's the pressure, the pressure is all about life and death. That's really the only way I could *be* put in this kind of position I think, where I . . . It's not even. . .

sometimes it's really not healthy to just endure and endure, but it's better than it was the first year anyway so.

T69: Lucina, what are you saying here? I'm not clear.

C70: [Pause] I don't think. . . well I don't know . . . Well no wonder it's not clear, it's not clear to me either. It's definitely . . . the whole . . . all the issues about life and death that make me act as I act. I mean I try to act as though I am absolutely solid whether or not I am (T: Yes.) because I think there's been enough toppling over.

T70: Um hum. In the lives of these children?

C71: Yeah, yeah, I think I can't say anymore than that about it. I don't really know, except that it seems that I should . . . there should be a way to have a little bit easier . . . life, but I don't know how. (T: Um hum.) And so, I worry about it . . .

T71: Um hum. You're saying first of all, there is no chance that you're gonna walk away from it, (C: No.) this is it, you're in it, that's it.

C72: That's right, if that has to be the shape of my life, then so be it.

T72: That's the way it is. And the second part is, as far as the children are concerned, you're *not* going to complain about it, (C: Right.) you're not going to do anything (C: Right.) that would undermine (C: Right.) their new found sense that you're not going to leave them.

C73: Right, right. But I'm willing to tell you [looks at audience and smiles] . . . (T: [Looks at audience and smiles] or anyone else here.) that it's a pain and I feel apprehensive a lot of the time and I can't even relax when I have the right to.

T73: I see. That it intrudes even at the moments when you say okay, I am leaving, I have to for my own sake, I'm gonna be gone for some length of time (C: Um hum.) to Chicago and I'll get my strength back together to go back. . . (C: Right.) . . . but even when you're here it drains you

C74: Absolutely it does. It's better when I first come, (T: Um hum.) and it's better when I have a longer time—you know all the things that you would think would make it better, make it better. But, it's right there.

T74: Um hum. It's right there all the time.

C75: Yeah . . . especially now anyway, now it's gotten closer.

T75: Now that it's closer to the time you're returning, you're starting to feel the anxiety again .

C76: Kinda brace myself, you know it's . . . How can, you know, good kids [crying] It isn't right.

T76: It isn't right that it should be this hard?

C77: It isn't right that I should experience good kids [the same way] as going to the dentist, you know and why? [crying] I don't like that at all.

T77: These really *are* good kids.

C78: They are!

T78: And to you it is at times an unbearable burden that you continue to bear.

C79: Right. Right. I bet there are squillions of people in the same position but this is the first I've known it, and seen this in 5 years. [crying] Where good kids are just . . .

T79: Are so hard.

C80: Ahh! And you know if someone says, well do you miss them? Well I really can't say yes, I mean—yes their personalities, if I could extricate them from the whole thing, I would miss. (T: Um hum.) No, I don't have the freedom to miss them.

T80: Um hum. You never have the freedom to enjoy them at that level . . . (C: No, I don't.) . . . because there are always problems in your face.

C81: Right. It's always too much colored with something very difficult and . . . I really would so much rather dominate it and succeed. It's not only that I'm committed to, I really would like to [crying].

T81: Dominate? . . .

C82: Just somehow get a hold of the whole situation. (T: I see.) Just make it as a family.

T82: You mean, Lucina, you're absolutely committed to being there. You wish you could do it more successfully and more effectively.

C83: Exactly, that's it. (crying) It gets me very upset. It's chronic, it isn't even as though anything has happened, (T: Yes.) it's always like this.

T83: You're always upset and burdened.

C84: I've been like this since Maru died [crying].

T84: Because of having the children since that point? Or the loss of her in having the children?

C85: You see I've never been able to extricate those two things either, (T: Um hum.) because I'll never look at these kids as . . . you know, how can I really . . . I only *have* them because she's dead. . . . Well that's not really true, I had them to quite a degree before but, in terms of the feeling of responsibility that's entirely related to her dying, so it's really hard to . . . I just don't know how you separate the two.

T85: The loss of her (C: Yeah.) and the taking on of all the children . . .

C86: I don't hold it against Maru individually, my father says he doesn't want to pick her up because he just sees her as the cause of Maru's death and I don't feel like that . . .

T86: You don't hold it against who?

C87: The teeny baby. (T: The baby, I see.) . . . well she's not a teeny baby, she's 5 years old, (T: [smiling] she's a baby) . . . but anyway she's my baby. I don't do that (T: No.) but . . . you know, so it's not . . . at that level—I don't know how you would describe the level at which it is that I see them all as death, but I do.

T87: Death to you?

C88: No, Maru's death and what that has done to me. I think it colors their . . . attractiveness as good kids. Well it's not only, I mean it's not only some kind of a strange perception of mine . . . people . . . I have to fight to make sure they're not called the orphans. They wanted to put their picture in the paper as wretches, and see, I mean it was . . .

T88: They were the orphans?

C89: Oh we managed to kill that article at the very last second—some well intentioned person wanted a picture of them splattered a] I over the paper as wretches, you know because their mother had died, and what a dreadful thing, I said no, this is not going to be good for a child, you know I, yes I am apparently a victim of that thing too—looking at them as death, because you know here are the children who survived both parents dying . . . (T: Um hum) and . . . but they look very much like any other child [laughs]. I have to say they look and act like *any* other child that ever has been, (T: Um hum.) but um, and they're not any more or less happy or, ah . . .

T89: Are you talking?—I'm not understanding it Lucina—Are you talking about pity here? Looking at the children with pity? When people look at them?

C90: Many people may see it as pity, for me it is more likely to be something that makes me angrier than that because I actually suffered because their mother died. Most of people—it's simply pity that. . . .

T90: That they're pitiful children.

C91: Yeah, most people it would probably be different from me. . . . I . . . It's not the same for me, it's ah . . . you know I can see them as ones that Maru was supposed to help me with and um, or that I was supposed to help Maru with . . .

T91: . . . that you two were gonna raise these children together. . . .

C92: [Nods yes] Um hum . . . [crying] It's more that feeling of loss, personal loss for me, I know they're not . . . How can they be pitiful? They're mine! That's ridiculous as far as I'm concerned.

T92: They're not pitiful to you?

C93: No, and people who know them well don't think they're pitiful either (T: Um hum.) but it's not exactly the same feeling as that but there is something that colors my perception of them (T: Um hum.) because of the fact that I feel I'm not supposed to *have* them, it is just an indictment of the whole universe that I have them in the first place.

T93: You mean that their mother died?

C94: Yes, because there are just so many injustices involved there. You don't know the whole story, [T: Nods no.] she was a victim of rape. She was a widow, she had to go to work, she had 5 children. Her husband died for no reason at all at 27 because of terrible . . . people die from the most stupid things because of horrible medical behavior and by horrible doctors. He died, essentially was killed off, and he was 27 and there was 5 kids. Six years later, we knew for a long time that this guy, the cousin of the boss was chasing her. She eventually got pregnant by the cousin of the boss and died in childbirth. So Maru is not the daughter of doña Leonor's son, she's the daughter of this lawyer who's the cousin of this very very unscrupulous sweat shop owner and . . . my, what a rage! . . . It's not that my children are not enraging but the whole thing . . . you know I can't . . . when I just I don't know exactly, it's not a conscious thing, (T: Yes.) there's a color in the whole thing that . . .

T94: Um hum. It's like a film over it, that has to do with all the injustices that ended up with you raising them alone without their mother . . .

C95: Right, exactly. I didn't choose this, I never would have chosen it, had the world been anything like it should have been even in one of your more negative moods, but it was just a nightmare way *beyond* what anyone would ever suspect, and unfortunately that appears to be the case! And, I mean, well, maybe there's something wrong with my world view in the first place, but there's something wrong with a great many people's world views in that case, (T: Um hum.) because it's not an unusual story.

T95: Um hum, yes. But the injustice of it . . .

C96: Yes it does, it colors me and it pisses me off. And then particularly whenever I have to . . . well I don't care about that, in any case, most of life is just an everyday situation where I have to cope with kids the same as anybody copes with kids. But I wouldn't have had eight kids [laughs].

T96: You would have had two [holds up two fingers smiling].

C97: Yes, [laughs] I believe that they have this advertising campaign—the small family lives better—and I agree entirely. I think if I could ever accomplish it we'd live better [laughs], but what am I gonna do with them? You know, I've had it with everybody dying, we're not dying anymore, we're gonna have a big family. I still think that compared to some people's problems it's not much. You know, I kinda vary between thinking that and thinking that it's just got me . . . completely apprehensive and stuck. (T: All the time.) I don't know which is more . . .

T97: You're anxious all the time and you're worn.

C98: . . . Yeah, that's true . . . I blame it for things. If I suffer any sort of health thing, which I don't really very much, but if I do, then I think it's that situation is taking its toll.

T98: Um hum, yes. And then you feel bad for assigning it? Or you just say that's the truth?

C99: [Pause] I don't quite know what you're saying . . .

T99: I'm sorry, I wasn't clear Lucina, it's a sort of mix of what you just said, I wasn't sure if this is what you were saying—it was a question. That when something does go wrong and you do get sick and then you say to yourself—it's the situation, (C: *it is* the situation) it's so stressful. (C: Um hum.) And then I went a step further and said—then do you feel guilty just because you say it's the situation . . .

C100: No.

T100: No, this is it.

C101: No, I really think there are *plenty* of bad guys worse than I am in the situation, PLENTY, and I really . . . I would easily, given any situation do bad things against many bad people that I know about that have caused this. (T: who have caused this.) Oh there are many extreme bad guys in this situation. I'm sittin' there with the few good guys—doña Leonor and a few others. No, definitely I've gathered the best of the lot. . .

T101: You have the children and the good guys. . .

C102: Yeah, I just don't have Maru who was the best of all. (T: Um hum.) [long pause, crying] I never was like this before she died, never. Death had never hit me in any way like this. I mean, I had just lost a regular number of relatives . . . old ones, and the injustice . . . and it's not like I hadn't . . . I've been a friend of one of these guys that got murdered in the Pinochet takeover in Chile. I have known of people who have died unjustly but it hadn't come *right* into my life in the same way. (T: Yes.) And now, it's, well, it's definitive.

T102: It's an unjust death of someone you loved absolutely . . .

C103: But it's changed my life is what I'm saying—there's no way I could go back, there's no way I could change it, there's no way I'm gonna be anymore distant from. . . Well maybe there is something—I'm looking for it but it just seems as though I'm gonna be one inch from looking at death forever.

T103: I see. That as long as you're in this situation, which as far as you can tell will last longer than your life . . .

C104: Right, longer than my life.

T104: . . . you'll be up against (C: Um hum.) the death of their mother and the terrible injustice that surrounds the children.

C105: Um hum. It's the truth. I mean there's no point in even . . . that is just absolutely the fact. Maybe I . . . you know I wish I would . . . maybe I'm getting better at it but I don't know, maybe not [laughs].

T105: Maybe you're getting better to . . . getting some detachment, but then again maybe you're not any better [smiling].

C106: Right, that's the truth of it [laughs] . . . maybe I'm no better at all. Seems like it's awfully close. Awfully easily. . .

T106: . . . Do you feel ready to stop (C: Oh sure.) at this point?

C107: Sure.

T107: Okay.

C108: This is nothing . . . since it's forever . . .

T108: You have a lot of time at least to talk about it, since it's forever . . .

C 109: [laughs] Yeah right, that's the truth, except that my own life is limited (T: Yes.) but . . .

T109: . . . Thank you Lucina.

C110: Well, thank you. It's really a luxury to be able to talk about my situation.

AFTERWORD

Generally I have more confidence that I do really understand the situation, and a few of the children now actually give me the necessary information as well. Every year they have more and more trappings of the not-starving. I still agree with myself that I would rather have the ones I have than ideal ones. But that is the sticky wicket when I have a sticky wicket, to be sure. The loss of Maru was permanent. That has not been filled and will not be filled. The loss of Charlie [Lucina's husband who died of cancer on January 31, 1996] adds to the permanent traumas. Those are my traumas. I should imagine the children have versions as well, but they are not as acute as mine, I betcha.

Lucina, July 1997