Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Carole Viebrock

SUMMARY

Raised in an Orthodox household in New York, Carole Viebrock moved to Whidbey Island in recent years and describes her special few encounters with fellow Jews in a rural area. She reflects on the themes of "Fiddler On The Roof", particularly the tradition of arranged marriages.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Um, can you state your name for me, please?

Carol Viebrock: Carol Viebrock.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: And may I have your consent to record this interview? [Repeats].

Carol Viebrock: Yes.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Thank you. Um, so what's your connection to the Jewish community or to Fiddler on the Roof?

Carol Viebrock: Very little. Um, on Whidbey Island. Um, I moved here from Oregon three years ago and got connected with some of the performances at WICA, and then decided I would volunteer here. I did volunteer in Portland for theater as well and so I thought, okay, it's a likely and I love theater. I grew up in New York and I went to the theater all the time. So that's my connection. But I have no connection with the Jewish community. I'm not even sure there is one on Whidbey Island. I have met a few, and I can name it on one hand, people who I've met who are Jewish. But that's about it.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Of course. Um, the story of Fiddler brings up tradition and change. Does your family have any traditions, and how have you changed them or kept them alive over time?

Carol Viebrock: Well, my family has traditions. I grew up in a Jewish household in New York. My grandparents were Orthodox Jews, and so there were a lot of traditions. And basically what I've kept over many years is the cultural traditions. I have never really joined a synagogue. Um, I've had many Jewish friends, and mostly around the holidays, Hanukkah, Passover, um, pretty traditionally foods that are part of the Jewish culture.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Yeah. How do you live on Whidbey?

Carol Viebrock: I do, I live right nearby here.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Right. Do you invite folks to participate in your traditions?

Carol Viebrock: Well, I haven't yet because I have not been, um, connected to enough people here. However, there's one woman who arrived on my doorstep when we first moved here, and it was Christmas time, 2021. It was also Hanukkah at the time, and somehow or other, I don't even know how she knew that I was of Jewish faith. But she came over and handed me a lokshen kugel and she told me how to cook it, and I said, I know how to cook it. And, um, we've become acquaintances, not super friends. And then I reciprocated and brought her some arugula. And we've done that now for a couple of years. Um, but other than that, the only other connection I've made is through playing mahjong at the Useless Bay Country Club. And I met a few other people. Um, one woman who grew up in a Jewish household and then introduced me to her mother. And the three of us have played mahjong

together. Um, but that's about it on Whidbey. I was curious at one point to know if there was a synagogue in Oak Harbor or something, but I've not come up with anything.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Yeah. Um, I love that you mentioned you grew up in an Orthodox household.

Carol Viebrock: My household was not. But my grandparents, who lived in the same apartment complex that I did in New York, were Orthodox. So they did all the holidays. And I come from an extended, fairly large family with cousins and aunts and uncles, and we always gathered at their house on holidays.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Yeah. I'm wondering if any of the fiddler themes are resonating with that experience.

Carol Viebrock: Well, not so much. Um, I mean, I know about a lot of them. Um, but the idea of, um, you know, who picks your marital partner, you know, that was never part of my fam. My family was fairly intermarried also, but um, the one thing that I remember hearing through friends and other circles growing up was that if you married outside of your religion, um, you were considered dead. So when that happened during Fiddler, you know, that sort of raised, um, uh, an awareness sign. I said, oh, really? I remember that, um, people saying that, but, um, and that people wouldn't talk to their children for years and years and years. And I have seen Fiddler many times. I saw it with Zero Mostel in New York. I saw the movie. I've seen it in other venues and so I think they did a wonderful job with this production, I really do. I was so impressed with it the first time I thought, how are they going to do that here at this theater? I've seen many productions here already, so I was very impressed. So I came back a second and third time to see it. Um, and I'm still impressed with what they've done with it.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: I love that. Thank you so much.

Carol Viebrock: You're welcome.