

Interview with Paulina McCullough
Conducted by Andrea Schara
May 20, 2009
Interviewed at Western Pennsylvania Family Center, Pittsburgh, PA

For the Murray Bowen Archives Project of Leaders for Tomorrow at History of Science
Division of the National Library of Medicine

Andrea: So this is May 20th... (5/20/2009)

Paulina: How much time do you want because...

Andrea: It is up to you. You think an hour is enough?

Paulina: Yes, definitely.

Andrea: Ok, let's do an hour. So, it's May 20th and it's about eighteen after twelve.

Paulina: Very good. So start where you may. Some people have heard already, many times, how I met Bowen and have heard many times my take on it and have heard many times how, with years, I've put it in some kind of perspective because long after I met him I read, and I don't know which one of the family therapists said it, that how you start a relationship is the way that the relationship continues. And I think it's very, very true in terms of Bowen and my recollection of how that went.

I was hired at Georgetown to be a social worker. I was the second social worker. The other one was Lida Beth Cavanaugh. They gave me a choice between orthopedics and psychiatry (Laughs) and I said I think I'll choose psychiatry.

It was the vogue in those days, psychiatrists would go and drink coffee in a tiny little room that was a little cubby hole. And Bowen would go and drink coffee. I was at Columbia University for one year, and they gave me a fellowship. I spent half of my time at Columbia and half of my time with a social agency in Connecticut, at Yale.

I had already pretty much figured out by the time I got to the USA that working with alcoholics, which was what I was doing missed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the story by concentrating on the alcoholic himself.

It was easy in Chile to see the family repercussions and tentacles with an alcoholic. In Chile, we went and interviewed the alcoholic at home. We always saw wives and children. I already had a pretty good idea that family was very important.

When I went to Columbia, I tried to learn everything I could and the only thing I could get a hold of were Ackerman's papers, which were his first papers. I was so thrilled that there was somebody writing about family, which is what I thought needed to be done with alcoholics and then by miracle, because it was just totally providential, to find this

job, you know, not knowing anything about anything. Then to find this man in the coffee place (Laughs). You know, he was no different with anybody I know. Bowen was born and if you like it, good, and if you didn't, better, because he really loved to see people's reactions to him.

Anyway, I later learned, that one of the people that would have coffee with him was an ex patient of his. And I don't remember how he died, but he didn't die very well. He was an alcoholic...this other person. Anyway, so they would be there chatting and a social worker, that this guy worked with families and I couldn't believe it. I said, "What! Yes!" And he's teaching the residents.

This was the first year of Bowen at Georgetown U(niversity). Fogarty was there. Guerin came late. Guerin was in the ward I think -Fogarty and Andres, Sebastini...

Andrea: I don't know him. How do you spell that?

Paulina: S-E-B-A-S-T-I-N-I. They told me at the last minute as usual, somebody said, why don't you say a few words. And I said, who remembers the days when Sebastini still had his I? Because then he changed it, he was called Sebastian. Anyway, this was the group, about eight. Andres and Fogarty kept studying with Bowen and were very impressed with him.

Bowen was seeing a husband and a wife in front of the residents, in a little room. But they called it a conference room but it was pretty small. Anyway, I introduced myself and I explained that I had to learn this thing that was called family because I was going back to Chile and I had to get people to know it there.

"Why do you want to know?" I don't know what I said. In those days, I could have cared less what anyone thought and I just said what was on my mind. I would have one thing on my mind that I wanted to get into that room and watch that family. And I said, "so, Dr. Bowen, now that I've told you all this story, would you please let me go into that room and see that family?" "Well" he said, "this is for residents"

"Well what do you mean," I said.

"This is a seminar for residents".

"So why can't I go and see it?"

"Because it is a seminar for residents"

"Well, who decides?" and he says, "I do" and he said, "Well, I have to think about"

"What do you have to think about Dr. Bowen?"

"I have to think about it". Period. Two weeks later the coffee shop again, "Dr. Bowen, have you thought about it?"

"I'm thinking about it"

"Dr. Bowen...(Laughs)". Well, I guess he has his way to figure out how serious people were about the things they wanted. And he was going to put me through the test. I didn't know anything, I didn't know him, I didn't know anything. I mean he, as far as I'm concerned, he was a total stranger, but he had something that I wanted (Laughs). It was that simple so it had to be more than a month.

Andrea: Wow that was a long test.

Paulina: And he finally said, "Ok".

Andrea: You kept meeting at the coffee...

Paulina: I would come and listen politely and at some point I would say, "Dr. Bowen, have you thought about this?"

Andrea: That is beautiful.

Paulina: And so I took one look at what this man was doing and I just flipped.

Andrea: Yeah.

Paulina: It was like magic. You know with his little, "Mmmm hmmm, uumm hmmm" (inaudible). Up until about five years ago I remember the name of the lady, "Ms. (inaudible slurring of name) what makes you say that? And Mr. so and so, where did that reaction come from?" And they were so good, they were a young couple. He said the way she looks at me. "What about the way she looks at you?" It's the way in which she looks at me that makes me jump. I thought, how does he know to ask these questions? And look at what he gets when he asks these questions. Oh miracle! Miracle!

Well next step, "Dr. Bowen, I want you to do coaching with me." That must have been six months later, I suppose. I don't remember when. It's the same damn story, "I have never learned family therapy with one person. Not with a single person.?" "Well, Dr. Bowen I don't understand. Your theory says..." and I quoted him in theory, that there was no reason why, just because I was single that I couldn't, and I know now that he was thinking about transference...

Andrea: He was thinking about what?

Paulina: Transference. I think. I think, Punkin. I can't...

Andrea: That's a good assumption.

Paulina: You know, I think it's a good guess. (Conversation with man unrelated to interview).

Andrea: So it could have been another test that you didn't really know about, but it could have also been that he was still thinking transference. Bowen did say the only part of Freud's theory that probably will hold water over time will be the transference, counter transference, whatever happens in a relationship is pretty predicable.

Paulina: ...that one of the things he said to me that this would be kind of sticky and that the first wind that he would get that people knew that he was my coach that would be it. And I said, "So unless you talk about it..."

Andrea: What do you think went into that? What made him set that limit? Is that a Freudian...?

Paulina: Sticky wicket, my dear, sticky wicket.

Andrea: Sticky wicket. But suppose he had been totally open and just said, I don't care. You know, so you tell everyone. So what happens?

Paulina: Nothing would have happened. But he was adamant about the fact that his privacy is sacrosanct and not so much privacy but the fact that there are things you can talk to people about and things you cannot talk to people about.

You have decided, pretty early in the game, what you can talk about, I mean, what is kosher and what isn't. I guess, you know, the transference was there. It was. So you have to live with it....

Andrea: It's kind of the ones in which transference becomes more intense, and it was very Freudian. So just you and I are going to talk about this and you don't go home and talk to other people about it.

I remember Bowen wondering about whether this intensity with the analyst could, in and of itself, lead people to become more emotionally cut off from their own families and spouses? And then...

Paulina: Not in my case, from the beginning I said, "You want family; I'll bring them to you. You won't be able to talk to them because they speak Spanish and you don't. But you can have them." And they came a couple of times.

Andrea. Awesome...

Paulina: And what he wanted was for them to know. They never understood a word of what was going on, but it didn't matter. He had to be on record that it wasn't a secret for them.

Andrea: Right. So in that way he was different from Freud. Well, Freud saw his daughter and I don't know what the rules of that transference events were but she saw him for many, many years and then he interfered with her relationship life too, as an adult. People after Freud went away from seeing anybody who was related to them or anyone who worked with them. And those were the rules of the game and this was one of the rules that Bowen began to break more and more.

I can remember when I was at the Family Center and he said, "I'm not going to see people here at the Family Center because too many people talk to them here in the waiting room." So then, he just took his people over to his house, and then was in the '80s. So, from you, this must have been at least reasonable successful in his mind because he did it with more and more and more people.

Paulina: Totally successful. In terms of the privacy part. Of which I was sure, I didn't have to say a word about it. I wasn't doing it for anybody; I was doing it for myself. So that is the beginning of both learning about family and getting my own coaching. The reason for me getting my own coaching was that forever I had known that my own family was...what do you call it...when I asked my mother how would you define family, she said like an octopus. No sooner do you get one of the legs of the octopus off you and there's another leg catching you. And that was pretty much what happened, my family was very, very, very stuck together. And with the death of my grandfather early on. My grandmother was thirty-five with six children and never got married again.

Andrea: This was maternal?

Paulina: Maternal. That just marked them all in ways and (inaudible) ways.

Andrea: Which one was your mom of the six?

Paulina: Number two.

Andrea: Number two. Older sister or older brother?

Paulina: She was the functional oldest. The oldest who was also a girl, all she had to do was be pretty. Nothing else was expected of her, and she was pretty so...

Andrea: She got married and that was the end of her contribution to the nuclear family (Laughs). She was spun out and your mom had to take care of the other siblings. She was like the functional mom for everybody.

Paulina: Not so much mom but my grandmother's right arm. So I knew all of the connections, I knew my two grandmothers, my grandfather, who died when I was seven, on my father's side. He was an imposing figure. He was a physician, one of the first physicians in Chile, a professor at the university. The extended family was no mystery to me, I mean these people get together every week and have tea together. My grandmother's generations, I knew them all. And so this web, I knew how complicated this web was. And how it ensnared people. And me, also, although I put up a pretty good fight. I would not accept my mother thought, given that my grandmother had gotten married only after the birth of the sixth child, that the way you looked was so important.

Andrea: This is your mom?

Paulina: My mom, yes. She worked so hard at trying to make us respectable in her eyes and respectable in her eyes was the belief, the wife doesn't only have to look good, she has to be good. No, she doesn't only have to be good, she has to look good. In other words, beyond reproach. Beyond reproach. That was...try to put that on me. Anyway, I knew that I had things to work out but I didn't want to work them out by myself. I wanted to do it in the context of my family. They were not going to be there but it was going to be in that context that I was going to do the work that needed to be done and that is what I did.

Andrea: So that was fantastic. So that was...when you first met with Bowen you were already sure of this? And the reason for it?

Paulina: Absolutely. No question.

Andrea: And yet you were so far away from where the rest of psychiatry was at the time. And Bowen was further away from where the rest of psychiatry was. I mean the only thing that I've heard, that was where the rest of psychiatry was, is being careful about the transference... everything else was wide open because ...

Paulina: But it was not only the transference, it was that he thought that if you worked at the same place, it's not a good thing.

Andrea: If you work in the same place?

Paulina: I worked with him...

Andrea: Yes, coaching...why would he wonder about that? What would be...?

Paulina: The togetherness. Yours and theirs.

Andrea: I'm trying to think what his reasoning was and how that changed. Because obviously, I mean he saw Mike and Kathy and they each made a tape with him, so a coaching consultation.

Paulina: But they were married.

Andrea: Right, they were married. But I think, and I can't remember now, I didn't watch that tape because it was personal. But it's there in the library, maybe it's gone into the archives now. And he did several people and their families...later. This would be now in the '70's.

Paulina: Yeah, but he got me in 1962.

Andrea: But this is 1962, this is what I'm saying; what did he hear from you that informed him and gave him knowledge that yes, you can see people in your work system, and yes, it actually does help them. It helped him learn too.

Paulina: You know one of the tapes he did say something, without mentioning names, he did say that he had, at first, not thought that he could have a family with one individual, a single individual, and that he had learned differently. So I did go down in history for that.

Andrea: Right, so he experimented. I remember one of the things that he said that always appealed to me, because I had seen it too, was, "When you get a good idea and you go forward with what you believe, even if everyone else is against it" the opposition rises as you move forward. Perhaps that in and of itself is natural. If you wanted to think about seeing yourself as a researcher then it makes sense. In this case, for Bowen, you're not quite sure, you've never done it before and so maybe the keeping it quiet and not talking to other people about it could also be seen as a way to preserve your objectivity. At least in terms of the research that you're doing and by not talking about it the ideas are not muddled up with too many other viewpoints and reactions. Yeah, so this would have been an assumption that he had. That he thought about for a long time.

Paulina: Oh absolutely.

Andrea: Could be he thought or even wrote down this research idea? I might be able to see one person whose nuclear family is on another continent and still make progress. And so then, you would have gone down in history as being the first person that he saw under two different conditions. The first person that he saw in a work system and the first person whose family was in another country or whose family was not involved at all.

Paulina: And I was single.

Andrea: And who was single. Three different things, three firsts. And if anybody did find out about it, what would they have said in 1962. Perhaps in 1962 if you wanted to do something that had to do with research, it was ok to try this or that. You could do a lot under the guise of research. So from '56-'60 he was at NIH and could do a lot of stuff there. He was learning, he had a beginners mind then. Bowen had ideas but he did not know what he was doing or how it would work out. He could or would change the rules as things changed.

And so maybe that was one of the amazing things about Bowen. He could accept the ways that things were and then he could make assumptions and test them out. He was always doing research with people. Then when he found that the door was open and that good things happen, then he would go forward into the opposition, with his blue, blue eyes and smiling (Laughs).

Paulina: Yes, yes.

Andrea: Did you see him meet any resistance to any of these ideas? I mean, did he?

Paulina: What do you mean?

Andrea: When he was interviewing the families and people like you would go to hear him and there were residents that were listening to him, would people say, “this is just so unorthodox. So outside the pale.” Or “no one does this” or...

Paulina: Oh, I’m sure. But they were more impressed than negative.

Andrea: Ok, so initially they were more impressed...

Paulina: That first group of true believers. That was a group of true believers. But his colleagues didn’t know very well what to make of him. They were respectful but too steeped in Freudian theory for one. And I’m sure other theories too.

Andrea: Did Bowen himself have a supervisor or did he consult with someone else, or do you know? Or as far as being in the department of psychiatry, he didn’t have a supervisor.

Paulina: No. No.

Andrea: He was on his own.

Paulina: He was on his own since he was born (Laughs), try to supervise him...

Andrea: Yeah exactly. I’m sure that would have been....

Paulina: He had an ok relationship with Whitaker from what I understand. He had to fend for himself there and I think it was only much, much later that Whitaker confessed that he had not taken Bowen seriously and that finally he knew where Bowen was coming from. But I think, at least Bowen made the effort to convert him. He was big, big, big. Now once Bowen came to Georgetown that was different. By that time he had his reputation, he had his...he was bonafide. He was a bonafide mench. I don’t think anyone would have dared try to supervise him. His relationship with Steinbach was a very interesting one. [Steinbach: head of department of psychiatry at Georgetown University.]

Andrea: How did you see that?

Paulina: He could respect but also not buying a whole lot of what Bowen was saying. And I assumed even more so when they understood that Bowen expected the people who were really interested in learning about his theory, that people had to do their own work and that they had to dive into their own family. I think that that would have been the cutting edge. That would have separated the ones that believed him from the ones that didn’t. It’s fine to do it with others but don’t bring it home to me.

Andrea: Right, so no one else in the whole history of psychiatry and certainly even, I mean, Freud saw his daughter but never really thought about working things out in your own family. It was all about loose associations for repression...

Paulina: You did work things out with your own family but within psychoanalysis and not with the family.

Andrea: Right, with the therapist, because it was about repression...

Paulina: Right, right.

Andrea: It was about the Oedipus Complex and all that these other things, all that other stuff. When word got out that you had to work on yourself in your own family, well, you see any shift in the family as progress... You could you see triangles in the work system. Could you observe what was happening with Bowen in relationship to these other people in the field?

Paulina: I always saw it the same way. I saw that there were other people and there was Bowen.

Andrea: OK

Paulina: That's what I saw.

Andrea: And you were there from '62 to....

Paulina: ... '65... '66....no '65...

Andrea: '62 to '65 and in that time did you ever think to yourself I wonder how Bowen stays here, it's amazing, he's got this... I wonder how long he will last. What were your thoughts about Bowen staying at Georgetown?

Paulina: He knew that he could do as he pleased in terms of what he was teaching and his private practice. But he was just one of many. The department was not going to go his way just because he was there. The one that tried to take Bowen and have him be chief honcho and I don't remember how come that, although Lederer wanted it to be that way, it didn't happen. I don't recall how. I don't have....

Andrea: I think what happened was, or one fact is that Henry Lederer was transferred to Virginia....

Paulina: There was there that he wanted to (inaudible)...

Andrea: He tried to take him there. And then...

Paulina: Yes! I don't remember what... I guess he could not get the department to do more than what Bowen wanted. I didn't trust him...

Andrea: You didn't trust Lederer?

Paulina: No.

Andrea: Because?

Paulina: Hunch.

Andrea: A hunch. Yeah, so I remember that I went down to Richmond to my first conference and we all had breakfast and I was in line with Dr. Lederer, and he said, "Bowen's a genius"...

Paulina: Ah, that's funny. That's what I mean.

Andrea: And it's sort of like promoting the guy as a genius. And I thought well so he's a genius, so what. (Will he change psychiatry?)

Paulina: Well exactly, your reaction is exactly mine. Exactly. Well not exactly but you know, same thing.

Andrea: And so what? It's still hard for Bowen to get a room to hold class in. They screwed up the room that you were supposed to be in. You would wander around the school (Eastern Virginia Medical School) looking for the room where you were supposed to hold your meeting. Things like that would happen and you would...it kind of reminds me, you throw a seed and it lands on the ground and sometimes the ground just doesn't have enough loose dirt for the seed to take hold and it kind of seems like that. This goes back to what Bowen saw in terms of obstacles to forward progress. I think Freud saw that he could make a movement and that he had an idea about how to do it and part of this trip to the United States was how to do it. How to publicize it, how to get more people involved in it and so forth and so on. But he could see it as movement. I'm not sure that Bowen ever saw it as a....

Paulina: I think that that was the closest. The Lederer thing.

Andrea: Lederer thing was the closest it came.

Paulina: Because I couldn't understand how being so smart he would even contemplate that thing with Lederer. And so, you know, I figured that it was because he would have wanted to have his own thing in the university. Finally had his own thing but it was out of the university.

Andrea: Right, yes, and I remember him talking about, I want to change things... He had an idea about doing interviews, family interviews, so that you could see who was going to be the best soldier in the army. Who might be the best leader and it didn't come

to much. And I remember he wanted to do community mental health things where the family would be a part of the interview and not just part of the educational model.

Community mental health would be for the whole family not just for the patient. He and Henry Lederer tried to work something out like that in the state of Virginia. They didn't get the funding for it, it didn't come to fruition. Eventually this was closed out.

Paulina: Bowen was not a diplomat and he was not somebody that would use relationships to get where he wanted to go. That was not him. You have to be...maybe the word is politician... He was not political enough. When you talk about movements, well he would have to have been a lot more political than he was.

Andrea: Did you ever talk to Bowen about these kind of things, where did you want to go with your theory?

Paulina: I must have talked to him because we talked about a lot of things but sometimes Bowen if he thought that your curiosity was a good curiosity would follow...or not follow but...would do it. But so many times he would figure that there was a rat there, or if there was a rat that he had to be who he had to be, and then forget it. And he did that all the time. All the time.

Andrea: Yeah, I saw that a lot too and part of the reason I was thinking about my next book being called, *Interrupting*, because that's a lot of what he did. Of course, I never could exactly understand, I could understand that he smells a rat but the other thing that it does is that it would force people to think for themselves.

Paulina: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Andrea: It could be as simple as...there was a guy that he had known for a long time was coming to visit and they were going out somewhere in Maryland and the guy was unsure as what the address of the house was where he was staying. And I was driving the car and Bowen was just torturing this guy (Laughs) saying, "so you think you should turn to the right, or turn to the left? Which decision do you want to make? (Laughs) And what would you remember about the way we went before and stuff like this. And I'm like, I bet he knows the way and he's not telling this guy, he's making the guy figure it out. And he would do a lot of this like a fox, laying back, forcing the other one to come out and think as to their best guess as to where to go and what to do. (and not be dependent on him).

Paulina: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Andrea: Perhaps, as you say, he smells the rat, which is a togetherness rat. Before you know it, togetherness pressures you and then we are going to agree. Then you're going to be the one in charge, or the mom. Something happens in relationships like - I can be dependent if you just tell me all the right answers. And then some of the bantering was possibly true. Bowen was saying, I don't know... but he had his own

internal thing that he was doing to stay separate from people, that's the conclusion I came to at the bottom of it.

Paulina: If it was kosher he did it, if it wasn't kosher he didn't. If there was a question he didn't know, he was all right. More of the time I think he did things to learn that way. So I expected that in him

Andrea: Would it be fair to say that perhaps some evidence is accumulating that he was more interested in defining a self and seeing how far he could go to enable this relationship to do better, or to be more challenging and less dependent, than in creating disciples... than in creating a movement

Paulina: Oh disciples, talk about somebody who really...ugh hated disciples.

Andrea: But he got a lot of disciples anyways.

Paulina: I know.

Andrea: He didn't like them so he said so but he certainly got a lot of them.

Paulina: He got them. There's no question about it. But boy, he knew better than anyone else: I know the price you pay for togetherness. I don't know that anybody got close to that. He was so, so, so clear about that.

Andrea: And how do you think he got so clear about the price of togetherness? Which I don't know if you want to define it for the tape but it would be good if you could, I mean I have my own ideas about the price of togetherness and I have my own ideas about what togetherness is, but I'm not sure...

Paulina: I think that he knew that there was only so much you could do about togetherness. That it makes the world go round. There was no question in his mind that togetherness is here to stay and that you had to see it that way and that getting upset about it wouldn't take you anywhere. So anyway he had control of that, he had that already figure out, but he also knew that if you didn't watch it, then you were going to be snarled and you were not going to do be able to do what you wanted to do, it was that simple.

Andrea: The tentacles of togetherness holding you back.

Paulina: Absolutely.

Andrea: I happen to really like the movie the Matrix. I've often seen togetherness as the software program in the family or the work system that grabs you with its tentacles. Now you're caught in the software program and when you can separate out a self, which it seemed to me he was doing all the time, then you're free of the Matrix just for a moment, just for a flash, and then when it catches you, you might be happy.

Bowen used to tease me about the kiss of togetherness, was I ready for the kiss of togetherness? I was like, "No! No! No! It sounds awful, I don't want that. Spare me."
(Laughs)

Paulina: Yeah, so I think that he was a man with a mission. He defined his mission very early, he wanted to make a difference, he wanted to extricate the human phenomenon as far as he could do it. And he knew that togetherness was difficult to see. He was very clear and he just didn't do togetherness if he could see it.

Andrea: So when you say he wanted to explicate the human phenomenon as far as he could, could you say that in different words, what does that mean?

Paulina: That he knew that his research could only take you, him, anybody, so far. And that, it would take many, many years, he never said how many years, for research to catch up with what one knew from watching families. That the details of all of that would have to wait. He took it as far as he could take it...

Andrea: So are you saying...

Paulina: He spent only fifty years trying to do that because then he died.

Andrea: So are you saying that there's no systems research, that there is no scientific method, if you will, beyond cause and effect? That is that what you are talking about?

Paulina: That's right, that he tried to copy on that. But he also knew that medicine was sold on cause and effect. And that getting away from that and broadening the lens was going to take years and it has.

Andrea: And he was perfectly content to collect his research. (Descriptions of family interactions.) This is my impression too, that he was perfectly content to collect a lot of data by being an observer of the people near and dear and the people far away his family and his friend, the work system. He was just collecting a lot of data and he was perfectly content to do that knowing that people wouldn't be able to figure this out for twenty-five or fifty years. I would see him at least fifty years ahead of whatever you want to call research or science.

At least. Because I don't know how we will get to systems thinking? We have to be able to do multi-factor analysis. Which is what he did on the fly. He did multi-factor analysis on the fly.

Paulin: Yes. Yes. Exactly.

Andrea: And then he was very good at predicting what people would do under this or that situation. .

Paulina: And he wanted to stay in medicine. That was his... he wanted to stay respectable

Andrea: Was that a vulnerable part? I mean, we're all vulnerable to different things was his trying to keep family systems theory in medicine- did that make him vulnerable?

Paulina: I saw, as I told you, that little snippet that he followed Lederer because he thought that that might take him there.

Andrea: Yes.

Paulina: In a way he was really into trying it out. But yeah I suspected that.

Andrea: On looking back, what are the things that you think have affected your life the most, in knowing Bowen and then in expanding the theory, because you've expanded the theory yourself in your own realm.

Paulina: I don't think so. No, no.

Andrea: You don't think so?

Paulina: No, but what I have expanded is the scope of where you take things. Yes, that I brought it here but I also then took it to Chile, that I have done. But no, no expand the theory, no.

Andrea: Well I was thinking about it because I'm just maybe, even in the slightest way, about communicating ideas. Your center here has a lighter or a different way of expanding theory.

There's something about how you communicate with others that's different, that has more of a Bowen-esque approach. And I'm sure that that, whether you've actually put this into words what you do. As an outsider it seems like you've gone further with this communicating ideas in a more differentiated way and created a space where ideas are received in a little friendlier way, or something like that. I don't know, that's just my impression.

Paulina: I don't know, my dear. When I had my accident, they thought that it might have something to do with the fact that Bowen had been sick. And that was the notion that people thought in terms of that. And Bowen told me immediately what people were saying and I said I don't give a shit what people are saying but it was my mother's illness that would have been responsible a whole lot more than whatever happened to you. What I have to say about that, Schara, is that I believe that I have my answer. I never lost my answer, now that I have it, I will not have to lose it. I will try to do whatever I can. But I think that I am not a scientist. I am not a researcher. I know exactly what I can and cannot do. And I stayed within my confines. There is a style that I have, and the style is as much a part of my family as is anything so that I have brought my

family in, in the way I do things. In the way I teach, and the way that I think, and that is what comes across to people, I am genuine...

Andrea: Absolutely

Paulina: ...And you can say whatever the hell you want, but that I am going to talk from what I am, and from what I know and I am going to tell you that it's very limited and take what you want, or don't take anything. It is up to you! That is what I think I bring to the table. It's my style.

Andrea: It's your style, but your style is informed by separating self. In a way, that then allows you to be more of yourself --which is your genuine self, and then your family influences can come out because you're able to be more self... I think there's something in what you've said now which is just a slight expansion on defining of self, differentiation of self, which may be, at least I can't put it really into words, it's more of a feeling thing that I have when I come here with you. When I listen to you, when I watch you with other people. There's something maybe that you've discovered or maybe it's just the years and years of working on theory.

Paulina: You want to take my favorite quote from Murray Bowen it's... the son of a bitch came to, or we brought him, to the Western Psychiatric Institute. And Carol A was afraid of him and she didn't know what to do with him and the son of a bitch is standing there with me and I don't know what I said, I just talked. And he said that I was a snake oil person. A snake oil. What is that I said? Then he explained that it's a person who will sell you ridiculous things. Because Carol was there, because he wanted to take himself a separate part from me, and he could tell Carol that if she thought I sold snake oil, (and I'm sure Carol did), then she was absolutely right and he was with her. This is one little, small example. Throw me to the dogs! That's what he did. But he also, I think, was talking about my family, that I do sell things, I am not trying to sell things but I do. That I'm a good salesperson. The only problem is what I sell. Well I am put together that way. That was interesting to me. That he told me, he said, nobody can make something grow outside of Washington. He said that. There was too much against it. Too much going against it. But then when I did it, I mean he had told me and I understood it and I heard him and I said that I did it. Then he helped, a lot.

But very interesting that he was helping us despite how much he tried to stay separate from others. There was a way, if he understood, if he thought his better judgment said, that the other person was doing it for good reasons...then he would give them a hand, he would and he did.

Andrea: So when he didn't smell a rat he would walk on the boat.

Paulina: Absolutely.

Andrea: (Laughs) and set sail for another adventure. You'd pass a lot of tests by that time...

Paulina: I think he didn't want to talk about family and masculinity but I do have to say that the mother of a center is different than the father of a center and I am a mother of the center.

Andrea: Yes, well that's true.

Paulina: And not a good mother. I don't think I was a very good mother to my children and I don't think I'm a good grandmother to my grandchildren and so on. But I am, for better or for worst, and that there's something I suppose, there's way in which we have been a center. And that I have something to do with.

Andrea: It's not benign neglect but it's... it's kind of what Bowen used to say, "You get in and mess with people a little bit, and then you get out". You don't know exactly what's going to happen, maybe you enable, maybe you're a little fertilizer. Maybe you're a little sunshine, maybe you're some rain.

Paulina: Chile was famous, the north of Chile, because we had the nitrates that were great for plants, so maybe that's what it is.

Andrea: Yeah the year of the nitrates (Laughs). Where the nitrates bloom.

Paulina: Also to me the tremendous paradox, which Jim heard from the beginning, is that there was no question that Bowen was a leader because of who he was. In my case, I was a leader because I choose to be a leader. I had no question that there were people who were a whole lot more adroit than I was. And that I had to deal with that and I had to be comfortable with that. That people that were part of the center probably would get much further along than I did. And that I would be happy about that.

Andrea: Absolutely.

Paulina: Because you feel wonderful that you can, you know that the next conference is going to be on our 25th anniversary and Jim is calling it "out of brainstorming".

Andrea: Out of brainstorming

Paulina: No, no, no, out of brainstorming he's going to call the conference something like "the flowering", the "planting the seeds", and that because that's what he thinks we've been doing. That Bowen did at first and then I've done it here and then other people have and it's been all around. So...

Andrea: It reminds me a little bit about (when) I used to talk to Bowen about this, he'd say that the first generation of a movement or any kind of thing it goes along at a certain rate of speed and then a second one seems to pick up speed a little bit and then a third one seems to even pick up more speed. That is if the movement is genuine to being themselves.

Rupert Sheldrake, a biologist and parapsychologist imagines that learning happens faster due to “morphic resonance fields.” Memory is inherent in nature. If worms learn how to go through a maze faster after a few trials of learning here in the United States, then magically the worms in Chile, go through a maze at the same rate without having to take the time to learn. The hypothesis is that somehow information gets exchanged as learning is kept in a field. I’m trying, in interviewing you, to make the information more easily accessible but maybe it’s already being made available?

Paulina: Yeah but as to Bowen I met him very early on, I followed him and I am still going with the ideas.

Andrea: And it has been paradoxically successful. The irony of it all.

Paulina: So you know...that’s it! It’s verbiage in a way but in another way, I have lived it. I met him in 1962 so how many years.

Andrea: That is coming up on 50 years, coming up on 50 years...

Paulina: And the impression that he left in me...I dream with my father sometimes, I dream with my mother sometimes, they are much more difficult for me to access in my brain. Bowen, I dream of him all the time! He is there all the time and being the naughty self that he was, because in my dreams he’s not a nice guy. No! Just the way that he way in life.

Andrea: Just always giving you a challenge. Always throwing stuff up and seeing whether or not you could deal with it.

Paulina: Always, always, always.

Andrea: Maybe that’s the stuff of real growth. You could be a charismatic leader and people wouldn’t even know why they were following you. They heard the hum of voice they feel they want to be with you and...whoosh! You can capture a whole bunch of them. What I saw Bowen do is try to throw these people off who are trying to attach themselves and see who really was worth it and you know, he was pretty good. I don’t know what kind of thing he would say. I don’t know if time will decide if I’ve gone about this the right way, but I’ve done the best I know how to do.

Paulina: Exactly

Andrea: From watching him I have some ideas about being a good, genuine person. A trickster. A genuine trickster and seeing if that helps people or not.

Paulina: Yeah, yeah and what difference does it make? Would be one of your questions. What difference does it make if you knew the guy or didn’t know the guy? I think that there is a difference but I’m not going to try to extricate it.

Andrea: Well your dreams might be different. You're going to have different dreams if you knew him rather than if you just read about him.

Paulina: Yup, you better believe it women.

Andrea: But, you know it is one thing, we're second generation, people who learned stuff from Bowen, so you grow up more in the shade of the Oak tree, so to speak. How far away from the Oak tree can you roll? I still say, and I'm not going to clarify what I think, you contributed to theory by being the kind of a self that you are, I just think that there's something that is contributed to theory by the way in which you become your own self.

Paulina: I've tried because I believed in it, tried to see that other people who might be interested, would learn. You know, and they can do whatever they want.

Andrea: They can do whatever they want. Isn't that wonderful? (Laughs)

Paulina: Oh my gosh, yes.

Andrea: You don't have to be responsible for the world; it's going to go its own direction.

Paulina: What do you think from knowing Bowen? The difference between knowing him and not knowing him?

Andrea: Well I put it to, you're going to have different dreams but it's... I think there's always advantages and disadvantages: a double-edged sword. The advantage is that you got to see him in real life and you had to figure out how to deal with him and I've never met anybody so difficult to deal with. He was just such a tricky guy. So I missed that. I take karate, he'd be like a 9th degree black belt person and everybody else I meet is like a red belt or orange belt. Your training or engaging with somebody who's that good at what they're doing. It's mystifying and paradoxical to be with like a Zen master kind of guy.

I don't know...I think you have a lot of those qualities, a sort of twistedness that Bowen had. And I think I learned a lot of those Zen master kind of tricky things, I can do a lot of those tricky things, which if I never had a relationship with him I don't know that I could learn that from reading about him or watching him on tape. I'm not sure that I could have done it.

Paulina: So you are a trickster?

Andrea: Oh I was a trickster, yeah.

Paulina: Yeah he just helps you perfect that and I think it has happened to you. Maybe it has or hasn't but to give you the freedom to know, you can be wrong, people don't

have to like you. That was freeing. Coming from a family where everyone has to like everyone else. Not to be liked, that's not even part of the equation. What has that got to do with anything? (Laughs) That has been the biggest contribution. Because up until then I thought that I had to be liked and to live without having to be liked, what a relief! (Laughs).

Andrea: I kind of knew that I could live without being liked because I was already so weird in terms of fitting in with the other girls and being... having my parents lives disrupted at an early age and living with grandparents. I already felt very different and set apart and then so I don't think I had that struggle with the liking part, I had to accept myself as different. Not easy. Although my family, like your family, measured looks and fortunately they also liked that I was an athlete and intelligent. And I didn't really have the looks thing.

Paulina: You were always striking...

Andrea: But not the looks of the southern women. I have my own looks. I have my own kind of an outdoor women look. But not a southern bell. I had these other things, and I think that what Bowen saw in me was kind of like a bulldog, a persistent person. His question to me was... he was there for an alcoholism meeting and he said, "you know these people in Virginia Beach, what do you think that I should talk to them about?" and I said "Well Dr. Bowen, I've read your papers and I don't think they're going to get what you got to talk to them about. So I just think you should talk about anything you want to talk about." (Laughs) Then I asked him the question like you did. I said I want to know everything there is to know about families because my family is over my head. I don't know enough to deal with them. So that's when he signed me up for the post-graduate program and put me with Bud Andres to get my work out and see what I was made of. He was always always always always always testing until they lowered that box into the ground. And I think maybe he's still testing in the dreams. I'm not sure (Laughs).

Paulina: But I do especially...you were special to him. Out of necessity, he also adored you but I think you, as you said, you made yourself indispensable to him.

Andrea: Yeah

Paulina: I don't think that you were trying to make yourself indispensable to him but you became indispensable anyway.

Andrea: Yeah, in the latter years but in the beginning....

Paulina: That's what I mean! That's what I mean.

Andrea: I think he was comfortable with me.

Paulina: Oh yes, oh yes!

Andrea: I was raised with my grandfather and so that kind of energy fit well with me. I trusted him. And even if he tricked me...darn it! I could get mad, I had that trust and he felt very comfortable talking to me somehow or another. I don't know exactly how that all works.

Paulina: Yup! Exactly! No question.

Andrea: But because of that trust then I became indispensable in his later years.

Paulina: Omg I know.

Andrea: So that was cool. We're only running...lets see... about 15 minutes late.

Paulina: Fifteen minutes late.

Andrea: Yeah. An hour and twelve minutes.

Paulina: Continue to talk about the test. You were put through a test. I don't think that after he became ill and all of that, that he was trying to test you. But a test it was, that you... that he could depend on you and that somehow you didn't die from it. Which I think was...that was his fear-- that dependence and attachment. That dependence and attachment were not such a good thing.

Andrea: I remember on the last plane ride we had back from Chicago. He was struggling and we were sitting in the back of the plane and he says to me, "Punkin, you know I've got an aneurism in my leg here and I went to see that guy in Texas and he told me it could just (slaps hands) do me in anytime." I said "Well Dr. Bowen, you're always telling me, 'do your worst, I'm ready for it', suppose you told that to your aneurism?" (Laughs). He looked at me like I was a pig, what's the matter with you, you pig.

Paulina: (Laughs)

Andrea: And he went back to whatever he was doing, and I just felt like, you deserve that you son of a gun. Well you're just always doing that to me and finally I got to do it to you (Laughs).

Paulina: Absolutely, absolutely. And that's another story that you can tell. At one of the meetings he called me aside and I had said something to you because you were showing my slides, and he said, don't call her pumpkin, it's PUNKIN'

Andrea: (Laughs) that is too funny.

Paulina: But that's all. I thought, that son of a bitch

Andrea: He used to call me back in his office and he'd say things like, "Look at this letter that the secretary wrote. Its got mistakes in it and I can't understand that". I'd say stuff like, "Well I know Dr. Bowen that she's doing her best. I know she's making the effort here" (Laughs) and he'd just be disgusted with me. Then he would just always be doing these triangling moves on me, "Do you want Pat Myer to be the head of the Family Center? Do you want Ted Beal to be the head of the Family Center?" and I'd be like "They're perfectly nice people...they got some good things and some not so good things". And he'd walk out of the office and slam the door. These were triangling moves and I was not going to take sides.

Paulina: Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah.

Andrea: Never ending

Paulina: Never ending, never ending. Because he knew that triangles never ended. And that this is what I have learned about triangles so many years later that they don't have to be active, that they are there.

Andrea: Yes.

Paulina: Like you, you didn't have an opinion. But you could be had.

Andrea: Yes

Paulina: And he wanted to test.

Andrea: Yes exactly. Yes. Well I might have had an opinion but I tried to be...I tried not to get into my opinion. You could feel that you might be a little prejudiced about things or I can, and then I don't want to go with that. I want to stay in the more neutral position and look at both sides. And that's the test if you can look at both sides of it and still stay in that neutral position and not get swept up with the people who you are the closest to you. They can tell me a sad story about Sally Sue and Joe and the first thing you know is I'm like, "Yeah, yeah I could take their head off for you, do you want me to take their head off for you? I'll go get X to be in the triangle with you.

Paulina: Now he was not benign, he was benign to you and he was benign to me but he was not benign to everybody.

Andrea: We all take our chances. Looks like they want to use the room.

Paulina: OK time to end for today.