

Carol Lin Interview

Karen Wyatt: [00:00:00] Today I'm very happy to welcome my special guest to the podcast, Carol Lin. Carol is best known for being the first national anchor to report the first 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, was a longtime anchor and correspondent for CNN and ABC News. During her career, she covered the war in the Middle East, the aftermath of the Kosovo War, the 2002 Winter Olympics, and every imaginable natural disaster, from hurricanes, tornadoes, historic wildfires, and floods.

Carol received an Emmy, a Peabody, the Alfred I. DuPont Award, and the Greater Los Angeles Press Club Awards for Excellence in both investigative reporting and her coverage of the Los [00:02:00] Angeles riots. She currently lives in Hawaii, and she has written a memoir titled *When News Breaks: A Memoir of Love and War*, and we'll be talking about that today because it covers Carol's time reporting on 9/11, that very tragic day.

And you can follow Carol on Instagram at CarolLinNow and learn more at her website CarolLinNow.com, and there'll be links in the show notes for both of those. So Carol, welcome, and thank you so much for joining me here.

Carol Lin: Thank you, Karen, and what a kind introduction. Thank you so much.

Karen Wyatt: I, was really excited at the opportunity to talk to you, particularly 'cause I was looking for something to do around 9/11 for the 25th anniversary this year, and when I discovered I could actually talk to the CNN anchor who was the first to deliver the news of that day, it just felt so profound to me.

And partly for [00:03:00] one thing, I feel like I just wanna thank you, and other people in the news who, that- That day, of course, was just life-altering for all of us. But for weeks afterwards, we really turned to you and your coverage on the news, I think, for a sense of calmness, a sense of steadiness that we're all still here, we're figuring this out, it, will be okay.

And you had a huge impact on so many lives that day. Maybe you've heard all of that, maybe you know that for sure, but I just wanted to thank you.

Carol Lin: Aw. Karen, it's a team sport, covering a story of that magnitude, certainly any story actually. And in my acknowledgments in *When News*

Breaks, I make a point of listing, any number of people, crews, producers, writers, editors, executives.

behind any one correspondent or anchor, there are at least 30 people making everything that you see on the screen happen. [00:04:00] And, I know we're gonna get into it, but that story in particular, you're absolutely right. If you could imagine not only on that day, but days and weeks and months to follow, what you the audience don't see are the constant 24/7 feeds of satellite video coming in from whether it's ground zero or the border of Afghanistan.

But every aspect of that story, the entire newsroom is living it every minute of every day because of the live video feeds that are constantly coming in, and, the death and destruction that the, the news team is exposed to even in a newsroom, even at the global headquarters.

Karen Wyatt: And you're the first to receive the news, but even in the moment, you're on air, and you're trying to filter it, you're trying to decipher, what should be reported.

Is this validated? Is this real? at least for me, I just... I had... I remember that I turned the television off a couple of times and back [00:05:00] on as if this was a dream somehow- and maybe it would reset. I'll turn it back on, and this news will go away. I just can't imagine what it was like to be receiving all this information and then having to maintain your demeanor and calmly talk about it.

Carol Lin: I think it's like a lot of the topics that you talk about, on your show, and that is the, in the immediate moment, you're laser focused in on what little information you have, and you're trying to make sense of it. Your brain is trying to make sense of it. And I think the distinction between the professional, Carol, on the air, the professional journalists who are covering the story, is that- We're actually trained, through a body of work and experience and numerous thousands of live shots by the time we get to that, that seminal story.

CNN is built for breaking news. It's in its DNA, and you just go into the zone. we didn't know, of course. Now we have the benefit of [00:06:00] hindsight, right? So we know what the magnitude of that story is. We know the death toll. We know, the motives. We know how history changed for all of us. But in that moment, it is breaking news like any other story.

We are trying to, sort out all those facts.

Karen Wyatt: Yes, and, you talk about being trained for that, and I guess as a physician, I can relate somewhat to being the person who has to deliver bad news to someone else, news that we know will change their lives forever, and having to remain calm and not express personal emotion about it- or, allow it to affect us personally. But you have to do it for hours at a time on the air with millions of people watching you, which, to me it sounds overwhelming that, you're able to just maintain composure for such a long time, and I'm just wondering if you ever fall apart afterwards when you get off the camera.

Carol Lin: I think the, I think the- [00:07:00] The falling apart piece of it, and that's an interesting choice of words because no doctor I imagine, no journalist wants to admit that they're vulnerable to the news that they're giving, whether it's to the patient or, to the audience. And I think, certainly for me what happens is something that happens over time, And I think it's something where I had to, I should have been, more aware of the symptoms, to use your medical metaphor. in the moment you are focused on delivering the information. And like you the physician, you're not gonna deliver everything you think you know, because you don't know what you don't know.

You don't know until the test results come in on your end. And on my end, we don't know until something is verified. And maybe people have an opinion of news today that doesn't align with that standard, but I will say in 2001, CNN's standard for verification was three sources. That's not [00:08:00] gonna happen in a breaking news situation like that.

And so I think therein lies the candor that you have to have with the audience with the filter that's happening in behind the scenes. So maybe it's like what you tell your patients. It's what you tell them and what you don't tell them. So what we didn't tell you, because there is a constant stream of information that's coming in my headset from the control room, the producers in the control room are feeding the information.

So I'm hearing that Rudy Giuliani, the mayor of New York at the time, was sending 10,000 body bags to Ground Zero. I'm hearing that there's- Wow ... a possibility of a car bomb exploding outside the State Department. I'm hearing that in that early stage that they were already evacuating the White House.

But that wasn't... It would be true later, but it wasn't true in that moment. So imagine this just in were, was the phrase that I used that I think made that, that video clip iconic. but all these things that are coming into my ear, I'm not [00:09:00] telling you because we don't know that for a fact. So there's this duality that's happening in live television.

There's me communicating with you, the audience, telling you what I know and what I don't know. One of the rare occasions that we say, that I say unconfirmed of, reports of a plane into the World Trade Center, that much we owe you because that full-screen live shot of a giant burning hole in a, landmark building had to be, validated.

It had to be acknowledged. but I had to tell you what we didn't know, and that we're waiting for information to come in. And the first front line of information for CNN in live coverage like that are eyewitnesses. And so w- I know and trust that the network behind me is scrambling to get eyewitness testimony of what it is that they saw, and that's initially how we got the first confirmation that it wasn't a small plane, as most people assumed, but that it was a passenger jet.

It was an executive in New [00:10:00] York, up high in the Turner Building with a, a line of sight from a conference room out big glass windows. They were having a meeting, and it was Sean Murtagh, the executive, Turner Broadcasting executive, who confirmed that it was a passenger jet that hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center.

Karen Wyatt: Oh my gosh, I just, I can't imagine what it was like to be receiving all of these reports at the same time. As you said, the 10,000 body bags, and recognizing this is, a massive, huge tragedy that has happened. But how much are you able to say, or what, do you say in that moment?

Carol Lin: Yeah. Yeah. As, as accurately as possible, and to some degree as little as possible until you can get those eyewitnesses.

And why is that important? Because, when CNN back in the day said it was the most trusted name in news, it really carried that, responsibility, and sometimes a [00:11:00] burden, and took it very seriously. when there, were different n- there still are different networks. There's CNN US, and then there's CNN International.

And arguably CNN International is even more influential than CNN domestic, because when you're broadcasting, simulcasting around the world, and when you go as a correspondent to, work for CNN International on an international story, you feel the impact and influence of a network like CNN. there isn't the competition in other countries.

They have very few reliable resources for, validated information, so the standard of journalism had to be high because of our ability, to simulcast. And you talk about hours on end. any given shift, if you will, in a breaking news

story like that is six to eight hours. Many of the New Yorks, when programming switched to New York, they were sitting in the chair for 12 hours.

Wow. So it, that's not unheard of, and it takes a certain amount of dedication and [00:12:00] stamina and teamwork, to make that happen for the audience.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, and as you were saying, there's an entire crew of people probably receiving the information, trying to vet it in real time, getting reports from people, trying to make sense of it all and piece it together for you as well in the background.

Carol Lin: Yeah.

Karen Wyatt: there's the smallest detail that you shared in the memoir about that day that, it, was somewhat an ordinary day, except it sounds like you were, You were being observed, for the- Judged. Judged. And, I remember that you wrote, you were wondering, questioning, "Why did I wear this olive brown suit to work today?

Why did I choose that color?" And then that's the suit that y- that's what you were wearing, when you delivered this news to the entire world. But it was interesting that you remembered that, questioning your judgment early on. And, You know-

Carol Lin: Yeah. [00:13:00] and I wonder if you have this experience too, when it comes to, personal breaking news of your own.

I'm really fascinated with this idea of memory and that split second before, the moment before. generationally, maybe our parents were recounting, when JFK was shot. the next generation, it's gonna be where were you on 9/11, in those moments before. What were you thinking about?

What was important to you at the time? And how did that change, immediately after and over time? And I'm actually collecting stories for a Substack called When News Breaks. they're small vignettes. I'm asking people to submit their stories, not only of where they were and what was happening, how they heard the news of 9/11, but also, how did that experience change them and shape them over time.

And it's really interesting when we and people reflect back on that moment and what happened in the 25 years now [00:14:00] after. what was the biggest impact? And- One of the stories was the most popular story, and I'm surprised

because there are more dramatic stories or maybe more newsworthy stories, but it's, the most popular story so far has been of a mother talking about, the overprotectiveness of her children after those attacks.

Now, she wasn't, she wasn't directly affected by the attacks. She witnessed them just like many of us did on the television. But she became so overly protective of her daughters that it started this conversation with her husband about what are acceptable risks that we can, ourselves as parents accept for our children so that they can navigate this very unpredictable world.

And so when you talk about how we think about the before, how they even viewed the safety and security of their children fundamentally changed, where they had to completely accept [00:15:00] that their children needed to be exposed to acceptable risks because that's the world that we're living in now. So-

really super interesting.

Karen Wyatt: Very interesting. And, I can relate to that so well because it was as if we had lived in this bubble of feeling safe and secure all the time. Things happened other places, but not, in our country, not in our communities. And, that was suddenly burst, and we've never had that same feeling of safety and security since then.

Carol Lin: Yeah, Or what we perceive our life to be. and for some people it's what we feel we're entitled to. "Hey, I worked so hard to get to this point, to have these things, to marry this partner." and then you face your own breaking news. And I think for people who've experienced loss, I remember, in writing the memoir and the scenes after my husband Will died, and feeling this, [00:16:00] separation.

I f- I felt as if there was this pane of glass between me and the rest of the world. And it's interesting because there is a piece of glass between me and the rest of the world when I'm anchoring. So on 9/11, just as I'm wearing, earphones now, I have an earpiece, and the audio of our conversation right now is all-encompassing to me.

I feel like I'm right there in the room with you because I have this sensorial experience. But when, I was walking out in the world, vulnerable because I was... My identification as a CNN anchor had nothing to do with my new identification as a widow and a, single mother, trying to raise a baby with a career that was constantly pulling me away from the people I love.

And that, that metaphor of how, we, separate ourselves, from the before and the after is part of writing [00:17:00] memoir, I think. When you think about how, life so fundamentally changes and how we suddenly become so different from the world we always wanted to be a part of.

Karen Wyatt: Oh, that's, such a good, a point and a good illustration, 'cause I think each one of us may have those moments in life where everything changes.

I relate. My, father died, by suicide when I was a mother with young children. I had a two-year-old and a four-month-old at that time, and it was a very similar experience of feeling like I'm set apart from the rest of the world. There's no one who can relate to me or really understand what is happening for me now, but my life is on this different trajectory than it was before- and has been ever since then.

Carol Lin: Yes. And you know what? You raise a really interesting point because we- part of when news breaks has to do with identity. so how our adult identity is shaped by our dreams and [00:18:00] ambitions, our, the, demands of our, or the, desires of our parents, as my traditional Chinese parents and all the things that they wanted from me.

And then you achieve that identity, and then it shifts. And suddenly, or sometimes you, end up in a place that already differentiates yourself in a way that can be a little disorienting or confusing. when I became, a network anchor, when I was on Good Morning America or I, I was on CNN, I, found myself moving through life almost as a consumer product.

where people- wanted to come up to me, and they wanted to ask about my lip color, or where I got my hair cut, or my outfit, or how tall I was, or how short I was, or whether I looked better on camera. All of a sudden, I became this, public commodity. But then when that changes, when something, as personal as your dad's suicide, and as a mom, people try to sort us, I think.

I think we as women already know this, right? We just [00:19:00] walk through the world, and people are trying to categorize us anyway. But then, you know- You as a young mom dealing with, a tragedy that most of us wanna believe is rare, but is probably more common than we think. I don't know if you experienced that.

people don't know what to say to you because you've now fallen out of your bucket. you're this unicorn, this social unicorn. And for me it was, okay, she was on television. I was grappling with that. Now she's got a baby, and, and, my

husband's alive. All the dads at the sandbox are present, but now she's telling me that Chloe, who's just a baby, has lost her dad.

I'm out of sequence.

and I don't belong, so there's that when do we have that real conversation? When ... how is it that people can get to know me as a person? And, as a mother, you need that support anyway when you have kids. [00:20:00] you need the carpool. You need the break. You need the, the kids that you want your kids to be friends with. you need all that on a good day. On a

Karen Wyatt: good day. Yes.

Carol Lin: Yeah. But when a bad day happens or when, something as monumental or as catastrophic as a death in the family, and a death that people have a hard time getting their head around, oh, you were six months pregnant when Will was diagnosed.

people don't know what to do, and then ... And what they do is initially they, backpedal, right? they don't wanna have that conversation because it's out of sync with how they think our lives should be. that's, I think where grief really is a great teacher, because it's gonna come for us sooner or later.

And, I don't know, did that happen for you?

Karen Wyatt: Yes, definitely. There were so many people who even later came back and said to me, "I [00:21:00] wished I could be there for you when you were going through this, but I had no idea how to do that. I didn't know what to say." Yeah. "I didn't know what to do, and I just stayed away," which was painful for me in the moment that people were staying away.

But at, the same time, I think I, I almost understood that. I had some compassion for it because I didn't know how to tell them what I needed or what to do- for me either. I didn't know how to ask for that.

Carol Lin: I ... There's a, a particular scene in When News Breaks that was really hard for me to write, because it was an admission of my own vulnerability and- but a mom that I really thought I wa- I thought, "Gosh, I could be friends with this woman.

I think I'm ready to build new friendships." And when she asked about Will, and we were in a swimming, a public swimming pool with our babies, and she said,

"So who's your mister?" And I realized, I had I c- I had gotten in a habit of [00:22:00] lying to parents I didn't know because I just didn't wanna deal with the question or the answer.

but with her I wanted to be honest. And when I was, when I told her that Will was, Will had died from cancer when Chloe was 10 weeks old, she, burst out laughing. She was so uncomfortable with that information, That she just burst out laughing. And the impact that it had on me was, it was a catastrophic moment for me because I think it validated how, to me, at, in that moment, at that time, how I had no place in the world.

I didn't fit. My career vulnerable. I had just come back from maternity leave. I had decisions to make about what kinds of assignments I was gonna take as a single, widowed mom. I wanted desperately to make new friends and make a new life, but I couldn't do it with the story that I had.

it was like an anvil that was hanging [00:23:00] around my neck of, you know, doesn't belong or don't talk to me or don't ask. I felt like there was this sign, invisible sign that I was carrying around with me. But I wanted that so badly with her because I felt like we, on, on just a, a initial level, we had so much in common.

and it was a real moment in, reflecting back on that. It's not to be critical of her. I completely understand why she had that reaction now. In the moment, it was incredibly painful.

Karen Wyatt: Oh, I, can imagine. it's as if, for you in particular, as a news anchor, but also as a physician, there's a certain facade that we wear in our work to be professional.

And I, remember in the midst of grief, I don't wanna ha- I didn't wanna have the facade. I wanted to find people where I could just be real and experience those emotions, and that I think was, it was very disheartening to find out that [00:24:00] people honestly don't want you to be real. They're, they ... People are comfortable with the facade, and it's- Yeah

as hard as it is to break the facade down and show your real self, other people may have a hard time receiving it too.

Carol Lin: Yeah. Yeah. I totally agree. And I think that's where, that's where life really begins to, become your best editor because the people who show up are that much more precious, and they do, and they will.

And I had to learn to a- to accept help. there was a time where, immediately after Will died and we had moved into, a new house, and I had nothing. And a community of people came together, and they, g- bought the vacuum and the cleaning supplies and brought in the food and stocked the shelves and unpacked the plates and did all of that s- sort of more tedious things for me so that I could...

they were literally building my home, the space where I would [00:25:00] eventually raise my child. I couldn't completely appreciate it or know it at the time because I was so overwhelmed. I was numb. I was, all I could do just to step out of, to get up and feed the baby in the middle of the night.

but- People show up, and, it's like p- grief is a little like parenting in that sometimes we have to be, we have to be the ones to step up and, be the ones to step up first and out of our own feelings about something, and be the example or be the teacher. And I think when people come back to you later and admit that they just didn't have the words, I think that says a lot about you, Karen, because you remained open, and they felt that they could come to you, and it was their way of asking you for grace.

If, maybe it felt that way, "I just want to acknowledge a moment, a weird moment that we had together back in the day, and here's why it went down for me like that." And it, [00:26:00] can create that connection later in life.

Karen Wyatt: It's so true. And then as you're talking about grief is such a teacher, that our grief is a, teacher for someone else's future grief.

Their experience of being on the outside and wondering how to support us, they will learn something, and they themselves will one day be the one grieving and be-

Carol Lin: Yeah ...

Karen Wyatt: be going through that as well.

Carol Lin: Yeah. Yeah. In, in, so in, in writing When News Breaks, I had to You pick a point where the book ends, right?

And I didn't want it to be, a full arc hallmark moment, not that there's anything wrong with that. Because I don't think these lived experiences, when people are facing catastrophic breaking news, the, the metaphor that runs through the book of a journalist, that it wasn't about finding the man or the happy ending.

It was really about seeing yourself, with grace, [00:27:00] and seeing that all that you bring to any given moment is the collection of your lived experience. So what I didn't know at the time was that when Will was diagnosed, so these private moments. So I'm living this public life on the air at CNN as a morning anchor, and privately we're pregnant and, sitting in chemo, after I get off the set.

what I didn't know at the time is that the- So many people's stories that I had covered previously in my career come into play because I remember people's resilience. And I had the privilege sometimes of going back into people's lives, weeks, months, or years later to do a follow-up story. And at least I had a view of a, a bigger landscape maybe of what happens to people.

How do they recover? Is there resilience to be found? And so many times, there, there are. I remember [00:28:00] even, a- it was after Will died, but if you remember the South Asia tsunami that was so catastrophic. Yeah. That Christmas Day tsunami where a hundred-foot wall of water in South Asia would, drown these islands, and thousands of people died.

And there was a story that CNN covered of a man who sat by a drain pipe in his village that had been wiped out, and he sat there day and night and day and night because his whole family had been swept away by that water, and he was waiting for any evidence, so that he could honor them with a, a proper burial.

And I thought to myself, not that, we need to compare our grief with someone else's or be comforted that someone may be suffering yet more, but I saw... I saw a man who had the courage and the patience and the fortitude to think that, "I can do this. I can not sit in [00:29:00] denial. I can embrace or, grasp the truth of my situation, and I can wait.

I can want something, and I can wait for it, as, as horrific and as tragic as it may sound." Imagine... I, remember thinking to myself, "Imagine the courage and the love and the composure that it takes-

to be that man." And, that story gave me hope, in such a hopeless situation.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, it does take me back to 9/11 stories in a way as well, because I do remember hearing personal accounts of people who lost someone or people- families who had to wait for days and days to get any news or information about a loved one who was, on a plane or inside those buildings.

Yeah. And I do remember witnessing that and, thinking what strength it took, even for all of New York City, to be going through this [00:30:00] tragedy in their community, and ashes and smoke- Yes ... in the air.

Carol Lin: Yes.

Karen Wyatt: And, I, think we all went through it in a sense with them. We were there with them. But definitely it, it shaped, I think, my own grief experiences in the future as well.

I... And I also remember, as a doctor, I remember every day that I was in the office seeing patients, we talked about 9/11, and everyone had a story. Yeah. Everyone had some sort of connection to 9/11. They knew someone. They had, a friend whose uncle was in the build- e- everyone. And I realized a tragedy of that magnitude affects a huge, number of people.

it radiates- Yeah ... out.

Carol Lin: Yes.

Karen Wyatt: The ripple effect is massive.

Carol Lin: And it creates, community. So when we have this shared memory, which is something that, you know, in the divisive times that we have today, [00:31:00] I think is so valuable. So it is- and it is usually the thing that we wish on no one, right? we would never wish for this day to, to experience this moment of community and cohesion and, some people called it patriotism.

some people- it was not a patriotic day for a lot of people. there were Muslim Americans who were being targeted. Everybody had a different experience, but it is the same... I call it a campfire, It's the same campfire that we gather around. And we can not only share those, critical memories, but we can also raise questions about whether it's our political leaders' response or how history has changed or all the things that have changed.

But it's a worthy conversation in a democracy. So for a country of 300 Plus million people to have a common conversation, in a way that's a gift. whether we agree or disagree, but we have the ability to have that conversation.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah, so very true. I've [00:32:00] often thought if we could just focus our conversation on the experience of grief, which all of us either have experienced or will, it's such a common denominator in a way for all of us.

If we simply talk about the pain of grief and what we've experienced and been through, it cuts across all of the divisions between us because we're all just humans who are going through this life trying to navigate the losses and the pain that happens in life. And it seems like we would have so much more compassion for one another if we started with our grief and shared that with each other.

Carol Lin: And clearly people are interested in this conversation. So when you first started this project, I think it was just gonna be five episodes, is that right? But there was such a, there was such an interest in having this conversation around grief and even death. it's the where, do you have these conversations?

And usually when you're having them, you're in the midst of, [00:33:00] your own breaking news, right? So you've lost someone, or you yourself are on the brink of something catastrophic. and so I, it, I find it very interesting that you've been able to create this space where people can listen and, or have the conversation and feel that it's normal.

that you've normalized something. And, not only that, but that we're able to not, be completely defined by our trauma, but to really talk about resilience. talk about what that moment feels like. Because there's, there is that after, and the after is a blessing, It's a blessing that we have the ability to, begin to explore, okay, what happened and what am I gonna do with this?

am I gonna be defined by it? And that was one of the decisions I had made, after Will died. I remember somebody advising me, you really have to sit in your grief and your sorrow and work through it, Carol, [00:34:00] and, really feel it. And for better or worse, I thought about that, but I thought, you know what?

I, can't do that. I have got to make a decision to pick myself up. I've got to make a conscious decision every day that I'm not gonna sit in it. I, because I can't afford to, because I've got to get up for this baby. I gotta get back to work. I have to, I've, we're down to one paycheck. I've got to support myself.

and I think it was only late... I could, I give myself permission that I'm gonna live in sort of this parallel universe of denial for a while just to give myself some relief, but then I can, explore it. and I think that's okay too. I think everybody has a different way that- In it and through it, and that's okay

Karen Wyatt: And I think that's such an important point, and I, was at, I was in a such a similar place as we talked about with young children and a medical

practice, and feeling like I, cannot take [00:35:00] weeks or months out of my life to work through this grief.

I just have to keep going. I have to keep functioning. And grief became a small part, something that when I have the luxury of time, I will work on this and process it. And o- over time, I, had more and more opportunities to look at the grief and go into the pain, but you're right, sometimes you just have to do what it takes to survive in the moment.

And,

Carol Lin: Yeah ...

Karen Wyatt: so grief may get, postponed a little bit un- until you're ready for it.

Carol Lin: Do you remember after your father's death, the first day of going back to work and what that was like for you? Yes. because you talked about how you're uncomfortable with that facade. so what did you do? How did you manage that moment?

Karen Wyatt: in, in some ways, like the, the day is set for you 'cause you arrive with a whole schedule full of patients in the office to see. And, [00:36:00] I tried to just, "Okay, I'm just gonna go through these, each patient, focus on them, listen." I did lots of listening to what they needed and their stories, and tried to keep my story out of it.

And occasionally, patients asked me, 'cause they had heard that I was- out of the office for a while, and I couldn't talk about it. I just didn't want to... I, didn't want to talk to them because I wasn't sure if I fell apart and broke down or cried or something, I wasn't sure I could get it back together again to finish the rest of the day.

So I just maintained the facade that I have. About three years later though, I ended up realizing I need something different. I, and that's when I got the idea to start volunteering in hospice. Oh. Because I needed a place where it was okay to be grieving and it was okay to talk about it, and okay- Yeah

to really sit with death and loss. And so I ended up volunteering for hospice, which helped me change everything.

Carol Lin: [00:37:00] Wow. That's interesting, because when, my solution when I was, after Will died, so I was on maternity leave when he passed, and there was this decision to go back to work, and CNN was kind enough to ask what, did I want to go back to.

And, I had this idea, there was an opening in the Jerusalem Bureau, and I thought, "I want to go to the Middle East because-" And nobody understood that. And I still think about it to this day, 'cause it sounds like such a crazy idea because their point was, "Are you sure you can handle it? Are you sure you wanna be in a place where people are losing loved ones?"

They've lost children, and husbands, and sons, and wives, and, there's a war going on, Carol." And for, there was some pull that I had to be in a place where people would understand, the critical nature of what I was feeling. that conversation was gonna be normalized because it was an everyday concern.

so [00:38:00] but also, I thought of it differently until you and I just had this conversation, and I realized, wow, to ... Maybe that was a big par- a bigger part of it than I realized, that I could be with people. I could be in a, place. And it, this is not political, so whether it's, Palestinian or Is- it's, it, that is not the point.

The point is to be in a place where people have, where there is pain and suffering and conversation around how to care for loved ones, how to survive in a critical incident. and that, there wasn't the facade, right? That you could grieve openly, that people, would expect you to, and that it would be okay.

Karen Wyatt: Oh, that's so very true, and that, that really fits, doesn't it? We both talked about that feeling of not belonging in our usual world anymore and not knowing where to belong, but suddenly being [00:39:00] with people who are grieving and dealing with loss, that's where we belonged after- Yeah ... going through this, this time of grief.

Carol Lin: But I didn't wanna join a, support group. So I could be in a bigger, broader community, but I didn't wanna be in a group of 10 people, because ... And I didn't find, comfort in, people had introduced me to other young widows. and I, and for some reason that didn't sit right with me either because I felt like their husband was so unique, right?

Their circumstance was so unique. So even though we both lost our husbands, it doesn't mean that it's the same. And I realized that my feelings are gonna be different than her feelings. And it was, helpful to a point, I think I, think, we

wanted to... The pairings that were made and the introductions were so lovely, but I don't think [00:40:00] that was what I needed.

because, our persons were, our people were different.

Our, our love story was different. not better or worse, just different, so how could- How could there, how could we have anything in common except, that we miss our partner, right? Yeah, That we, need our partner, that we would give anything to turn back the clock

Karen Wyatt: Did you feel that your profession at all was, a bit of a hindrance in being part of a group?

For me, it was as a doctor because when I'm a part of any group or even go to a cocktail party and people say- Yeah ... "Oh, no, there's a doctor here, so now we can't just eat and drink whatever we want." It's like, "No, I'm not judging. I'm not doing that." You're not the

Carol Lin: police.

Karen Wyatt: Or else, or you, "Oh, no, she's gonna report on what we said," or wh- I don't know.

Carol Lin: Yeah.

Karen Wyatt: It's...

Carol Lin: I think it's more the expectation that, [00:41:00] it's the othering that you're somehow different or stronger or better or you're gonna get over this way faster because you just know more. there's, some of that. it's interesting that some other journalists, journalist friends, and I know they meant well, but they approached it almost journalistically.

I remember I was getting ready, I was on the set with Sanjay Gupta and we were gonna do one of his medical segments. So we were chit-chatting, in the commercial break and, oh, I think it was a segment on, postpartum depression. So he asked me, do, did I think that I experienced postpartum depression.

And my response was, "How would I know?" I was in such a state of grief. I had just lost my husband. I wasn't... And of course, we know more about postpartum depression, too, now. But, and I also remember, talking with Larry King, again, over, it was, he was [00:42:00] in LA and I was in Atlanta, so it

was over satellite, and we were just chatting right in the commercial break before he and I were gonna appear live on the screen together.

And he said, "I'm sorry to hear about your husband," and I said, "Thank you very much, Larry." And then he said, "So what kind of cancer was it?" And mind you, when we're talking, the, everybody can hear us. the c- the, all the, the whole control room can hear us. the executives, if they tune into the studio audio, can hear us.

I just thought that was such a strange moment because maybe we, he's so used to having these very intimate conversations in front of the microphone, but I was just like, "Oh, it was a very rare cancer. Happy to talk to you about it after our segment," or something like that because I just thought, "Oh, there's, dozens of people listening to us right now."

Karen Wyatt: And a, real, a violation of your privacy a- and but then he probably does that with a lot of people- Yeah, that's what- ... that he talks to, actually.

Carol Lin: Exactly. "Boxers or briefs?" [00:43:00] "What kind of cancer did he die from, Carol?" So and, that's where I, that's where I've come to believe people really genuinely are well-intended, but our culture, our Western culture is simply not accustomed to having these kinds of conversations.

And it was an estate attorney, so somebody who plans wills and estates. She told me about a training seminar that, she had her team go through. And it was, it was somebody who, maybe was like a grief specialist, some kind of grief counselor. And because of course they, are dealing with partners passing all the time because they have to settle the estate.

And the number one piece of advice that came through in that workshop was ask your client about their loved one.

ask w- "What were they like?" And, "What were their favorite things?" And, "What are the things you're always gonna remember?" All these questions that people think you don't want to be asked, [00:44:00] but people want to be asked because they want to believe, they wanna feel that their person didn't just disappear.

And so I would- Now make a point of asking people, "What was his name? What was her name?" Or, "How do you want to remember? When, was the birthday? I'm gonna keep that in mind so that..." a mom who lost her, son said

that he was born on the 4th of May, and then she winked and said, may the fourth be with you."

because his, favorite movie was Star Wars or something. So I- it stuck in my head, so I remember on the 4th of May to tell her, "I just want to wish you and your family, a remembrance and a happy birthday." and it just means the world to people, and I know it means the world to me when our friends, say Will's name in front of my daughter, who's now 23.

But he's always been an open book for conversation, and I tell [00:45:00] people that all the time. Talk about stories, say his name, show his picture. Whatever you want, it's an open book. That it's an open story in our family. he's a part of us.

Karen Wyatt: That's such a, a really beautiful story that you tell because imagine that how much less awkward everyone would feel with grief if they just remembered that one piece of advice.

you don't need to ask for details about the death or what's your grief like, or how are, you feeling? Just ask for a story because all of us, we want our loved one to be remembered for the reasons that we love them. Yeah. And, that's, those are the things that we really want to share with people.

And that really is a perfect piece of advice. Because as you say, our whole society, we are very awkward with grief, and we all need some grief 101 training in a way, i- in order to show up for each other and be supportive.

Carol Lin: Yeah. Which is [00:46:00] why on 9/11, when they read the names out loud, and it takes, considerable amount of time to read, almost 3,000 names.

but I find that to be so poignant, and this year being the 25th anniversary, first of all, most people when I say, "Did you know it's the 25th anniversary this year?" are shocked. because it sounds so much time has passed, but, and yet it feels like yesterday because people remember it like yesterday.

And I, think about the power of people standing up at that microphone and, standing on that stage or watching television and hearing the name. It's just like the beautiful scenes at the Vietnam War Memorial where people etch, make etchings of their loved one's name in remembrance.

it's so much part of the human experience. it's, really, it's a, for [00:47:00] 9/11 it, it almost feels like a, a communion of sorts, right? Where we can just take a

moment in this crazy busy life of ours and hear that name. and, because of the nature of news, the 25th anniversary i- is a very big moment simply because it's gonna be that much more time before the 50th anniversary.

And while every anniversary is important to each of those families, to any of us who were impacted, there is something about the news cycle where the 25th kinda puts a pin on it until the 50th, right? and so we're not gonna have this kind of attention, to 9/11 because for all this time in a news cycle we've, built up to this, this year, the 25th anniversary.

And then unless something really major happens, and I don't know what that could be, but there's gonna be a pause, and it's gonna be more quiet for the next 25 years. And so I think [00:48:00] I'm so honored to be part of your remembrance of that day, and being your guest, and being able to talk about this.

Karen Wyatt: And, how will you spend that day?

Do you have any special plans for 9/11 this year?

Carol Lin: so much of it has been about the book. And, so on Ni- I will have been in New York for, several days at different events. I'm gonna be at the Bedford Playhouse, with- at an off- author talk, and then I'm gonna be in Santa Monica at a bookshop, Zibby's Bookshop.

She lost a, a very dear friend on 9/11, and, Josh Mankiewicz from NBC Dateline, who was a longtime friend, a journalist, he's gonna be hosting a Q&A with me at Zibby's Bookshop. and, I think they're the, the media appearances. I'll, have an interview on CNN. But, but I am-- throughout that [00:49:00] last leg of the book tour leading up to 9/11, I am forever grateful to have the honor and the persistence to write when news breaks.

Because when I write those pages, when I write about that day on 9/11, when I write about seeing the, and hearing about the mothers grieving, at what is known as Ground Zero. When I remember the conversation that my husband Will and I, who's a journalist, he and I had after 9/11 about now's the time.

Let's see if, let's see if we can create life. Let's see if, let's see if we can have a child. and my daughter being born out of that decision, and in so many ways we could not predict that Will would be diagnosed with a rare cancer six months into our pregnancy, that Chloe would become- This incredible [00:50:00] gift in my life that she teaches me every day, even in her young adulthood.

And I wrote this for her so that she would know her whole story. And when you write this kind of story, you get your people back. So for, the seasons that I wrote When News Breaks, I, got to have Will back, and I got to have my mother back, and, Joanna, breakout character in the book and my dad, and, the memories and, to honor the people of all these breaking news stories that I was able to mention, in When News Breaks.

And so you ask about what I'm doing on 9/11. Yeah, there's the media piece of it, but privately, I am just sitting in gratitude that I have this book, for whatever its future may be, and I was able to honor people in the acknowledgments that I'm so appreciative of, that I shared this incredible career, with, and that we all pray for [00:51:00] journalism, that the Fourth Estate remains alive and well, and, that people like you also get to grow your platforms and have these important conversations.

Karen Wyatt: But, and yes, I can attest, I think we all remember back to that day 25 years ago, and how very important th- the Fourth Estate, the news media was for all of us during that time. And, same here, sending out all my hopes that we will preserve the valuable, resource that we have in our news media.

but I would... I wanted to mention, your memoir is j- it's fascinating on the one hand for us to have a look behind the scenes of what's happening when you're reporting on the news, either as an investigative journalist or an anchor. but it's so beautifully written, and you write about the vulnerability of your life, so that, as much as, in some ways, we, put our, [00:52:00] news media people on a pedestal in a way and admire you, you're such a real person, and it comes through so beautifully in your memoir.

So I want to encourage everyone to read it. it's really a wonderful book, and thank you for writing it.

Carol Lin: thank you, Karen. I think, I didn't write it as a journalist. I, think I wrote it as a mother.

Karen Wyatt: Yes.

Carol Lin: And, and I appreciate your words because there f- there are more current female journalists writing, gonzo war stories.

and that was not my intent with When News Breaks, that, people pretty quickly see that it's a metaphor for what happens in a life behind the camera, that is very similar to so many people who see themselves in the pages. their love story,

their mothers, their decision whether to have a child or not have a child, the career that, demands everything of you, and how you piece your life back together, and the things that are important to you in the end.

that's what the [00:53:00] news teaches us. That's what grief teaches us. And so much of what we see in the news is grief, but we don't get to hear the story from behind the scenes. So what happened, and why? and I think that's where things really get interesting.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. Very much Very much it's been wonderful to have a chance to talk with you- Oh, you too, Karen

and I am so appreciative that you were able to join me to share this. And if you'll be in Santa Monica, I live in Los Angeles now, so- Oh, come ... I hope to come to, the bookstore. Yes. I would love that. I'd love a chance-

Carol Lin: Yeah. Zibby's Bookshop

Karen Wyatt: Zibby's Bookshop. Okay. I

Carol Lin: will-

Zibby's Bookshop-

Karen Wyatt: I'll look

Carol Lin: that up

on Mon- on Montana Avenue. I'll send you the link. And, but yeah, come. Please come. And, there's some great people who are gonna be present, and I'd love to see you in person. That would be so awesome.

Karen Wyatt: Yeah. That, would be fantastic. I'll be, recommending your book, and, writing reviews, and letting people know how wonderful it is.

And [00:54:00] I, appreciate you so very much. And, my thoughts with you and all of us on 9/11, each one of us with our memories and, what it has meant to us, the change that happened in our lives, and how we have grown as a result afterwards of that tragedy.

Carol Lin: Well put. Thank you.

Karen Wyatt: All right. Thank you so much.