

## Karen Richards - BATGAP Interview (# 89)

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{BATGAP theme music plays}

Rick: Welcome to *Buddha at the Gas Pump*. My name is Rick Archer and my guest this week is Karen Richards, and she is speaking to us from the U.K. And Karen has what I think is a very interesting story, for those who like stories, and I'll let her tell it rather than me try to summarize it, but her initial awakening was really quite unexpected, I would say, and took place under different circumstances than most people tend to report. So maybe we'll start right in with that and then take it from there.

Karen: Sure, I wasn't actually looking for anything called 'self-realization' or 'enlightenment' or 'awakening,' and I was, at that particular time in my life, going through a lot of stress. I was in a job where I was a critical care sister in the U.K.

Rick: Sister means like a nurse?

Karen: Yeah, like a senior nurse. And it was a pretty stressful job, I was carrying a cardiac arrest teacher training, and all the aspects that go with that, working full time, and understaffed as well. So that one area of my life that was particularly demanding.

I was running a home and doing all the normal things there – cooking, cleaning, mowing the lawn, all the normal things we do. I was also in a relationship at the time, which was not particularly supportive, to put it [like that] is an understatement. And it was just all these things were coming at the same time, and there were personal issues to do with family going on as well, there was also an incident with my car which needed to be dealt with, and so there were all these different aspects of life that were seemingly coming together at one particular time.

And my health started to suffer and I had several periods where I was off work, unwell, and things just seemed to get worse and worse. And I went back to work and things were really not great. The management structure in the job that I was doing weren't supporting the help that I was requiring at that time.

Rick: And you're pretty young so you must have been very young then, like early 20s or something, right?

Karen: Oh, bless you! I'm actually 37 now, so I was 33 when all this was happening – so early 30s.

Rick: I know how to compliment a lady!

Karen: Don't you! Yeah, so it was pretty tough and as I say, my health was just declining and I started getting colds and being sick and having time off work. And towards the end of the year, because

this was sort of building up I guess for a couple of years, but towards the end of the second year, I just basically ended up with a cold, a really bad flu episode, and I didn't recover. And I was diagnosed around that time with having an underactive thyroid and chronic fatigue, so I didn't respond to treatment from my thyroid condition.

And so it was like there was a complete, almost complete, mental and physical shut-down [that] brought me to a full stop. And around that time I was talking with a friend of mine who said that it didn't make sense, what I was saying, and he had something that he wanted me to listen to. And it didn't make sense in the sense that I was, you know, young, bright, outgoing, seemingly having all these things going for me, and then my life was a complete disaster in every way!

And so he said, "I've got this material that I would like you to listen to, this tape," and I had no idea what it was. And I went to spend the day with him, talking about stuff and going through things, and he'd actually forgotten about this information that he had mentioned, so I reminded him. So we sat down and he put on this recording – we just sat in a house in Bridgnorth, in Shropshire, and he just put it on and we sat drinking a cup of tea. And it was a guy that I now know to be John Wheeler, the nondual teacher from the United States.

And basically within the first 10 minutes I just looked to my friend and said, "He is saying we are awareness," and he said, "Yes." And at that moment, that pointer seemed to create an opportunity for what the word was pointing to, to be recognized, experientially. There was a recognition of myself as the emptiness in which everything is appearing and dissolving, and that they are not two. And it was a timeless moment of recognition, but seemed to then fundamentally affect how life was seen and experienced from that moment on, even though nothing had changed.

Rick: And you had no background of interest in this kind of thing, or meditation practice, or any such thing?

Karen: Um, not really. There was always, if I think about it, an active inquiry into what life is all about from a very, very young age. I remember around the age of seven or eight asking my mum a question: where was I before I was here? And I remember her looking at me all confused and saying, "Well, nowhere," and I remember it making absolutely no sense whatsoever, at that time.

And I was interested in life after death, so I was reading a lot of books and I had kind of a lot of psychic and mysterious experiences, which had kind of prompted that active investigation, I guess. And around the age - I think I must have been around 14 or 15 – I remember sitting in my bedroom in complete silence, asking the questions, "Where am I? What am I? Am I in my heart? Am I in my head?" and I was unable to locate myself.

And after the awakening experience happened, that experience at the age of 14 or 15 or whenever it was, seemed to make perfect sense. But in my later teens I guess, I was continuing to read books like *The Road Less Traveled* by Scott Peck, and topics like that – spiritual psychology books, and Khalil Gibran's poetry. So there was a loose interest, but not in the wider aspects of Advaita or anything like that.

Rick: Sounds like there was definitely a proclivity towards this kind of thing then; it's not like you were just knocking back beers every night and then all of a sudden – bingo! There was some sort of

attraction to it. You know, the Gita has this verse where Arjuna asks Krishna, “Well what happens to a person if he is on the path to enlightenment and he dies?” And Krishna said, “In the next lifetime, he just picks up where he left off,” and of course a lot of traditions say that.

And some people don’t believe in reincarnation and this and that, but I tend to feel like ... and I see a trend where people who have awakenings, very often show sort of symptoms of an affinity with this earlier in life. It makes sense to me - and I have no way of knowing whether or not it’s true - that the span of evolution is really quite vast, and we may have very well done our “spiritual homework” in previous lives or something, and then there is a kind of readiness for an awakening, which can be triggered by the slightest thing. So it’s not like it just happened for no reason whatsoever; you may have done all sorts of practice or been with teachers.

And some people have, like Adyashanti for instance, whom I interviewed about a month ago, when he had his – I guess it was his second major awakening – he was walking across the living room and all these images flashed of previous lives that he had lived, which he said are in some sense, right now, in the present, but he could sort of see into each one and realize that he had built up a tendency toward interest in spirituality and awakening, which had finally come to fruition.

Karen: Hmm.

Rick: You know it’s all very theoretical and hypothetical and whatnot to talk that way, but I just thought I’d throw it out there.

Karen: No, no, it’s interesting, definitely.

Rick: So I didn’t mean to interrupt your story, but we have plenty of time, so I just wanted to throw that in.

Karen: Sure, sure, where did I get to? You’ll probably have to keep prompting me.

Rick: Well you were talking about how much stress you had been under, and then you sat down and listened to John Wheeler and had this awakening and everything shifted. And that’s pretty much where we got off.

Karen: Yeah, so it was like waking up in hell, what I perceived to be hell in terms of my own personal experience; of course there are a lot more hellish things that go on in the world than what I was going through.

Rick: Well you already were experiencing the hell aspect with all your pressures and your health situation, but now you woken up in hell, you’re saying!

Karen: Yeah, that was kind of it!

Rick: It’s like, “How the hell did I get here?”

Karen: Yeah, and because there was such a state of physical and mental exhaustion, there was no option other than to really surrender to what had been realized. I spent practically two years in bed.

Rick: After this awakening?

Karen: Yeah.

Rick: Wow.

Karen: Yeah, it was a time when I was very, very physically incapacitated, and there are still remnants of that evident today – a lot of lack of stamina and different things, but obviously there has been vast improvement.

Rick: Did you have to quit your job and all?

Karen: I lost my job.

Rick: Yeah, because your health was so sick.

Karen: Yeah, yeah.

Rick: This is tangential and we won't discuss it now, but you might want to also check into adrenal problems, because sometimes thyroid problems are not the whole story, but anyway, let's not get into that.

Karen: I *did* bring that up actually with my consultant.

Rick: Oh good, so you've been checking, good.

Karen: Yeah.

Rick: So that's an interesting thing too, and it also – don't want to keep referring to Adyashanti – but it reminds me of his situation, where he had this awakening and then it's almost as if nature said, "Okay kid, we're going to reset your buttons here, so here, get nice and sick and stay in bed for 6 months." In fact the same thing happened to Saint Francis of Assisi - he came back from the Crusades or whatever it was, and he had this sort of spiritual experience. Actually, he got totally sick, almost died, and then woke up out of that with a spiritual realization. It's almost like if we really have to shift gears in a big way, nature knocks us flat.

Karen: Right, and it did feel a little like that, if I'm honest. Yeah, just totally resetting everything, because so much seems to have changed in a personal sense, if we can call it that, even though it isn't personal. But there was just a complete realigning, as I see it, with life as it truly is, because everything seemed to be so *out* of alignment. Of course we can never ultimately be out of alignment because everything is it, but in terms of how it was being experienced, it was just dysfunction at every possible angle.

And so when all the lenses fell away, when all the certain fundamental lenses fell away, then there was just this seeing of everything as it truly is. But the outer manifestation of life had to shift, and in order for that to happen, something pretty fundamental had to happen, I guess, to enable that.

Rick: I think that's happening to the world right now, actually, you know? We're seeing all kinds of institutions crumbling, and things that used to work not working anymore, and I suspect that that's because a lot of change has to take place for the shift in consciousness that's taking place to really happen.

Karen: Absolutely.

Rick: So you were flat on your back, more or less, for a couple of months would you say?

Karen: I was kind of going through this boom and bust. I was still pretty determined to try and do things and so a lot of times I was physically unable to, but then there was still shopping and cooking and those kind of things, and trying to have some sort of social life on some level, but it was obviously greatly reduced to what it was. So often people only used to see me when I had gotten a little bit of energy to be able to engage for a couple of hours, but then it was back to being a hermit in the house.

Rick: There's actually a book by that name – *A Hermit in the House*.

Karen: Oh is there?!

Rick: Yeah, it's a book about Maharishi Mahesh Yogi staying with some people when he first started his teaching mission and he was living in their house, and so they wrote this beautiful little book called *A Hermit in the House*.

So obviously you are much more active now – you're traveling all over the world and doing things, so obviously you came out of that phase – so, kind of elaborate.

Karen: Um, well, I guess things just started to snowball by themselves. And there is still a lot of lack of stamina, so it's not like I'm kind of running here, there, and everywhere; that's not really what's happening. But things just seem to start to take shape, I mean I was just using Facebook actually as a way of sharing insights through status updates, and from *that* place, all manner of things started to open up, and opportunities started to come in very organically, just through sharing from that platform.

And I'm just very, very open and receptive to life and whatever comes, and saying "Yes" to it now, and for a long time that wasn't the case; there was almost a sense of really just withdrawing and not saying "Yes," really almost just marinating I guess, in what's always here, just taking a complete step back. So I recognize that perhaps some aspects of that were hindering embracing life in its fullness.

Rick: Well you know, as Ecclesiastes says, there is a time to marinate and a time to say yes, or something along that - I'm paraphrasing very roughly. But I think it's appropriate that you had that withdrawal phase, you needed that, and then it is later appropriate to get more engaged.

Karen: Yeah, so that's really how everything started to unfold, from starting to say "Yes" and just responding to what comes up really, very naturally. There's this moving from *seeking* satisfaction and happiness in the world, to just *allowing* everything to be and responding from a conscious place to what is arising, in an experiential sense. So that started to snowball more and more.

Rick: Yeah. Is there a sense that you're saying "Yes" to things because there's a sort of wisdom inherent in the whatever is orchestrating the flow of events in life, and you can trust that to be in your best interest, you know - so when you flow and say "Yes" and so on, then things tend to workout in unexpected ways?

Karen: Yeah, and flow and say "No" too.

Rick: Yeah, if necessary, yes, sure.

Karen: Yeah, just really being in tune with what is going on and really listening to what is, and what feels right. It's like on a feeling intuitive level, somehow.

Rick: Yeah, it's a good point because I think sometimes people feel that just flowing with things as they unfold implies throwing your discrimination out the window, but it doesn't necessarily because that's also a useful faculty.

Karen: Yeah, it's almost like your ability to know this, where to go, becomes more finely tuned. So it isn't just saying "Yes" to everything; it's really saying "Yes" and "No" appropriately.

Rick: Right, and so you're kind of hinting at what I'm going to ask next, in a way, which is, we've talked a little bit about the changes in the eternal circumstances of your life – not being able to work and being sick for a while, then getting more active again – but how has the subjective or inner experience corresponded with that? In what way has that matured or evolved or clarified or whatever, since that initial awakening?

Karen: Oh, vastly.

Rick: Let's talk about that.

Karen: It's like the way I see awakening is like a beginningless beginning of true experiencing. And so we're in the process, paradoxically, even though we recognize ourself to be in that moment of awakening that which is awake, we are at the same time *awakening* to that which is already awake, simultaneously. And so there is always a deeper and deeper opportunity to see through what is not, in each and every moment.

And what is seen here is that there can be very, very subtle tendencies operating, and it is almost so familiar – it's like putting on a pair of glasses that you've always seen through, and everything looks fine, but it's only when you take the glasses off; it only seems to be when something falls *away* that you really notice that it was even there! Because it's just so familiar, it seems completely natural and normal; it's so familiar it's unnoticed.

Rick: Yeah, Adyashanti was saying the same thing in his interview, because I asked him a similar question. He kept saying, "Well it's like things keep falling away, and I didn't even realize they were there until they were gone."

Karen: Right, right, right! And I was just going to say that I don't actually see this as ever stopping; it hasn't so far.

Rick: Right, yeah, so that's an interesting point because in some non-dual or spiritual circles 'progress' is a dirty word. And a number of people that I speak with I say, "Do you see any sort of improvement or whatever, over time?" And they say, "No, I can't possibly see how anything could change or be any different than this." But that doesn't jive with my experience and it doesn't jive, apparently, with yours.

And in a way it's true, they're right, there is a dimension which isn't going to improve or change or anything, but that's not the entirety of it.

Karen: Right, right, there's this dichotomy almost. It's like a halfway house, I see it as a halfway house - emptiness is a perspective in that which knows emptiness. And so in realizing you're the nothing in which everything is arising and dissolving, to stay in nothing is really only a perspective. It's like a halfway house in the full journey of embracing what's always here. It's like an imaginary journey back to the point you never left.

There has to be this breaking of apparent identification, and in order to do that, the emptiness that you truly are needs to be recognized. But then if it's true recognition, it's recognized in its fullness, in an experiential sense. And so a lot of what happens in terms of the falling away, it's like all of those things that seem to happen in the early story, in the early part of the experience, gets seen through with increasing clarity.

Rick: The early part of the experience of *life*, or the early part of the experience of awakening?

Karen: The early part of the experience of the human story, of the individual.

Rick: So your first 33 years or whatever, in other words?

Karen: Yeah, yeah, particularly the first maybe ten [years] and then how those patterns get repeated later on.

Rick: Okay. So when you say things are falling away - just to dwell on this for a minute - you're talking about ingrained patterns, or impressions or tendencies or habits or whatever, that you grew up with, that now are dropping off, one by one?

Karen: Right, we could describe it like that, like skins of an onion. But ultimately everything is perfect, everything is as it is, and ultimately what is needs no purification because it is already pure. And yet in an experiential sense, there seems to be this refinement to what is already pure.

Rick: One analogy that might help with it is the sun is shining, and it has always been shining, but if there are a lot of clouds then we don't see the sun. And so maybe there is a peep in the clouds, a break, and we see the sun shining and so we say, "Oh, the sun is starting to shine," and of

course it is not starting to shine; it's always been shining. But then there could [also] be all kinds of degrees of clearing away of clouds - of course it's just an analogy and it's rough.

I think people tap into this realization that, "Oh, I've always been this awareness," or this emptiness or this fullness, or whatever you want to call it, but the question is: is it really a living reality? And how full a living reality could it become?

Karen: Yeah, I think there can be a tendency, a danger almost, to live this recognition from a memory, rather than meeting it fresh; a living realization, as you say, in each and every moment.

Rick: Yeah, to live it as a memory or to even live it as an *understanding*, perhaps based upon a previous glimpse which gave you that understanding – good point. And to me this is a wonderful aspect of the whole thing, a fascinating aspect, which is that it is exciting really, because the question arises: well, how much can be cleared away? How fully can this be lived? And as you said earlier, there seems to be no end to it, so life becomes this wonderful adventure of discovery.

Karen: Totally! It's like a magical mystery tour of pure experiencing – you don't know what's going to happen next, it's amazing! Totally amazing. Just responding to things as they present themselves, just because.

Rick: Just because what?

Karen: Just because it is so, just because it is.

Rick: Yeah, and it's not only an amazing adventure and all that in terms of the *things* that happen, as they present themselves, but also, wouldn't you say - I like to frame this more as questions instead of me making statements – but also in terms of your inner perspective of those things or events and how that grows?

Karen: Yeah, it's amazing. You know, we can find ourselves responding in a totally different way in circumstances where we would have behaved in a completely different way. Every conditioned aspect could be trying to wheel its way in to try and manipulate experiencing and try and control things, and that can be seen through. And so it is almost like conscious responding takes over even though the conditioned aspect may be trying to muscle its way in through the door. And so there is a knowing from the heart right-action, even if it seems to go completely against what would have been done before.

Rick: Mmm, nice point, yeah. And there can be, I guess, a little tug-of-war between the two, and you were just saying this, where the conditioned aspect is saying, "Let's do it my way," and the knowing from the heart is saying, "Uh-uh, we're going to do it this way."

Karen: And ultimately there's no choice.

Rick: Right. You seem very articulate with all this. I mean, since your awakening, have you read a lot of books in order to acquire the terminology, or listened to a lot of other Satsangs and whatnot, or did this start just sort of coming naturally to you?

Karen: I would say I haven't read extensively. Because of the chronic fatigue, there was an inability to digest great reams of text, and still that is problematic. And still, writing a lot is problematic as well. And so I did start collecting books of a mainly, kind of, traditional orientation I guess, but it's probably [just] a passage that I would read over a cup of tea.

I just feel it starts to bubble up, the language of the heart is its own authority, and so it starts to spill over and find its own expression. That's the beauty of it, you don't need to have read extensively, although there can be many gems of wisdom, in terms of the process of integration, that can be gleaned from reading certain aspects of text.

But I would say, because I've been inspired to do my own writing, a book has been formulating for a couple of years. I didn't want to contaminate the expression with other influences; I wanted it to be something that was spoken in ordinary language – my own language, my own words, in a way that feels right, here, that can reach a lot of people in a way.

Because I guess, I think .... I'm just trying to find the right way to put it. It's like the sub-culture can actually be quite limiting.

Rick: The sub-culture? Explain that.

Karen: The spiritual sub-culture. You know, this type of text only appeals to a small number of people. I would never have gone to Advaita, for example. I would never have picked up the Bhagavad Gita or Ramana's teachings at *that* point, and so it is finding a way to make what this is fundamentally about accessible to a wider audience, I think is so key.

Rick: How are you doing that? What sort of things are you saying in this book?

Karen: Well, the structure is there; there aren't many words on the pages yet, but it is going to be an exploration of looking at life from how it's commonly experienced - so through the eyes of suffering, through the eyes of separation - and asking the deeper questions. And then looking at awakening and what awakening is, and hopefully giving some clear pointers to that. And then looking at all the subsequent traps that can arise prior to and post awakening. And then basically looking at the journey of integration and how that shifts and evolves and what to look out for.

And [I want to] make it a live text, so that it's not just me sharing a viewpoint; it's actually something someone can take onboard themselves and inquire by asking directly and investigating directly. Because otherwise it's like reading books on cookery – you can learn it parrot-fashion, but unless you actually experientially taste what this is talking about, all the words in the world are useless.

Rick: I very strongly agree. I really think that knowledge or information you get from a book is just the icing on the cake; the main cake is experience. And however that is attained or discovered, then that's really what needs to happen.

Karen: Yeah, so it's going to be kind of an overview of conscious living, I guess, what[ever] that means.

Rick: Yeah, I wish I had been able to write fast enough - I wasn't writing at all - but to take notes on the points that you said in that book, but I'm sure you've got them in your mind. And I wouldn't mind spending the next half hour or so exploring that point by point, and maybe I can ask you some questions that will even help to stimulate your writing of the book or something.

So let's go through that again from the A to Z, as you outlined it.

Karen: Well the first aspect really is meeting people where they are, looking at the world through their eyes. And I remember seeing the world that way, I can recall it, I can recall what that felt like, what the experience of that was. And I think it's very important to never lose sight of that, even though it's dropped away, it can be recalled because it was part of the experiencing for so long.

Meeting someone where they are almost provides this platform of understanding, of mutual respect, of commonality, that is essential for anything deeper to be heard, because otherwise it just closes the communication down right from the onset.

Rick: I think that's a great place to start and I think it is something that not all exponents or teachers do very often; they just speak from their level of experience and expect people to relate to it. And what you're saying is that step one should be to tune into people where they are, otherwise what's the point in trying to communicate?

Karen: And there is no "other," ultimately.

Rick: No other person you mean?

Karen: Right, there is only life. Meeting life as it is, as appropriate to the moment, is to be in experiential true alignment with what is. And so it almost can seem totally contradictory to the message of freedom, to actually meet someone in their suffering, but it is almost like the foundation for *really* having access to a powerful message.

Rick: Yeah, no I totally agree. One way of phrasing it would be, "teach according to the level of consciousness of the listener," or the level of experience of the listener. And that applies to anything, you know, that applies to teaching grade school! You don't teach kids trigonometry in the second grade or something; you teach them arithmetic or whatever is appropriate for them, and then as time goes on they get to trigonometry. And that's not to sound demeaning or condescending or anything like that, it's just a practical way of approaching it.

Karen: Right, and it's meeting life without an agenda and seeing what opens up, and we never know.

Rick: Yeah, the image of water comes to mind. Water flows naturally in the direction of the slope, even though it may seem to be a sort of devious route, you know, going this way and that, but it's actually going by the most direct route, given the terrain that it's flowing through.

Karen: Totally, I love that, yeah.

Rick: Cool, so in writing the book, how would you meet people where they are, when you first start presenting them the material? How do you practically do that?

Karen: Well it's so different, each and every encounter is so different.

Rick: But if you're writing a book you're speaking to a more general audience.

Karen: Oh, I see what you mean now.

Rick: How do you know who's going to read the book and how can you possibly match [them]?

Karen: Well I guess I don't! All I can go with is my memory of how life was lived prior to what was seen, and so right from that place of wanting peace and happiness, which is the fundamental desire, deep desire that everyone has, if we really look for it. And looking at all the obscurations to that, the apparent obscurations, and investigating that and asking the deeper questions as a platform.

Because you know, a lot of the time people are asking these questions anyway, and they don't know how to get out of that modality, you know? It's always in things – trying to find happiness in things, or in circumstance, that's the conditioned aspect of self. So it's really putting the spotlight on that in a way that can perhaps open up a deeper investigation.

Rick: Yeah, and I don't suppose you would tell them that there's anything wrong with that; it's natural, you know, people naturally do what they do, but perhaps that tendency to try to find happiness in things is symptomatic of a deeper quest.

Karen: Definitely, and there's nothing wrong with it, but it makes a huge experiential difference to life, the experience of life, whether we're identified or not. *Ultimately* it doesn't matter, but experientially it seems to matter hugely, and it's the key to unlocking the peace that's always available.

Rick: So what is the key again, exactly?

Karen: I forgot what I just said!

Rick: Oh well, we were talking about how typically people try to find their satisfaction in things – relationships and possessions and what not – and how if you are going to meet people where they are, then you're going to have to kind of acknowledge that, and how perhaps it's not *unnatural* for people to do that; it's what everyone is doing - billions of people. But then perhaps that very tendency to seek happiness in things can be seen as a symptom of, or can actually be used in the service of finding happiness in something which actually is capable of providing it. I think that's what you were getting at.

Karen: Right, or whatever it was!

Rick: And then I was asking you, well how are you going to accommodate all the different perspectives of the people who may be reading your book, because if you want to meet them where they are, how can you do that not knowing where they are?

Karen: Okay, okay. I think one aspect that I considered doing is using an autobiographical component to illustrate *my* life experience, for them to investigate their own life experience. And then I can

also use that autobiographical component in the later chapters, so it can be used as an example to see how I created certain perceptions, certain realities for myself, based on that conditioning and those perceptions operating.

So through using my own example, it hopefully will inspire someone to ruthlessly investigate their own experience, and see how certain things are being perceived as a result of conditioned tendencies.

Rick: You can call it 'Autobiography of a Yogini.'

Karen: I think that's been done already! I think Yogananda might be onto me for copyrights.

Rick: Yeah but he just used the masculine; you can use the feminine.

Karen: Yeah, it will be interesting to see how it all takes shape.

Rick: Yeah, well I think that's a good way to start, and I think that ... it's been my observation that teachers who have really gone through it as a person before their realization, rather than just sort of waking up to it one morning without having experienced some of life's bumps and knocks, end up being more effective in a way, because they can really relate to people where they are, if they remember to do that.

Karen: Right, and I think that this is key, actually.

Rick: Yeah, so what was the next phase of the book that you outlined?

Karen: Well, really looking at what awakening is, so moving on from the deeper questions and actually exploring ... well what's this life about? And really giving some key pointers that make experientially obvious what always is the case: that which never changes amidst all change. We know we've always been ourselves, we know we exist.

Rick: So then looking at what awakening is, what is awakening?

Karen: Well I would describe awakening as an experiential recognition, a personal experiential recognition of timeless, impersonal consciousness. So it is such a paradox because it happens to a person, in the absence of a person.

Rick: And, it happens in time. I mean you might say, "Well it happened last Thursday," or something.

Karen: Yes!

Rick: It is a paradox, yes. And perhaps elaborate a bit on that recognition of the timeless, as it dawned in your experience.

Karen: Wow.

Rick: How did you know it was timeless, for instance? And how did you know it was impersonal or empty or whatever else it was?

Karen: Oh gosh, that's such a hard question, it's almost an impossible question to answer. It was just [that] what is clear and obvious was known to be myself. And it was like breaking of the shell of the person as the identity, but not being in denial of the way experience is seemingly happening and which this expression is a part of - is part of the totality of seamless experience.

Rick: So not being in denial means you would still say, "I am Karen and I live here and I have this health problem, and I have that job and this is my cat." So in other words, you still spoke and thought in terms of the personal, but there was this whole new element that had awoken.

Karen: Seeing in context!

Rick: In context of a larger reality.

Karen: ... of the expanse of life, yeah. It was like in a timeless moment, I was seeing that I was nothing and I was seeing that I was everything, which included this small aspect of the totality of experiencing, instead of just being identified with *this*. There was this breaking of *that*, to nothing, to everything, all in one seamless, timeless moment.

Rick: That's beautifully put. And did you lose it again after a while? I mean, did you wake up a week later and think, "Oh God, I'm just this little Karen person now. What happened to that wonderful thing I had?"

Karen: It was never lost, but what I would say is that there were certain identities that were running more strongly than others at certain times. It was very intermittent because there was still a lot of physical constraints in terms of the health and all of that kind of thing, and also the practicalities of dealing with life as it appeared to be, as a result of all the identified thoughts, the actions and the consequences, and allowing those to play out in their own time.

I often use the analogy of throwing a stone in a pond. And when we try and smooth the ripples, we are creating more ripples. So it's just allowing everything to dissipate at its own pace and rate, and just forever returning to recognition.

Rick: So when you say 'practicalities,' do you mean like your finances and all that kind of stuff? Stuff you have to deal with?

Karen: Yeah, things, things that seem important in the experience that we find ourselves in at this moment. We use money, we need a roof over our head, we need food in the fridge - we need those practical things. We don't need a lot if we think about it, but those basic things are required, so taking care of those aspect.

Rick: Like they say, "Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water."

Karen: What's enlightenment??!

Rick: Yeah, but you know what I mean.

Karen: Just teasing.

Rick: Yeah, the “E”- word. So I guess what you’re saying is that as life’s challenges bombarded you, as they always will, the awakening was sort of challenged, or it was perhaps at times overshadowed, somewhat less at other times. Is that what you [would say]? Or was it sort of a fluctuation in the polarity of it and the certainty of it and so on, as various things came at you?

Karen: Never in the certainty, but in terms of how reaction may arise.

Rick: So in other words, you would react more habitually or you’d react in a more conditioned way, and at other times not?

Karen: Right, right, until that started to fall away. But the trust was always there, that life is this, and that never diminished, but the aspects of certain experiences arising, reinviting identification with the personal in varying degrees of intensity, came like waves with certain experiences that followed.

Rick: So you’re saying that even in the most intense of those experiences though, there was a certainty or a something that was never shaken?

Karen: Yeah, I mean I’ve experienced the most depths of despair after the awakening experience, which has been *cradled* in utter peace.

Rick: That’s interesting, because some people would say, “How could you experience despair? Isn’t it supposed to be bliss? Where is there any room for [despair]?”

Karen: That is bliss, that is the bliss, knowing that it’s okay. All inclusive.

Rick: Yeah, so even in the midst of the deepest, darkest times that you’ve had since then, there’s been an undercurrent or a foundation of peace and certainty?

Karen: Yes, certainty in uncertainty, total certainty in uncertainty.

Rick: Which I imagine is the case at this moment, right? Because the word ‘certainty’ actually has a fundamentalist connotation to it, you know ... “I am *certain* that Jesus is Lord!” or, “I am certain that Mohamed is ... there is one God and his name is Allah,” or whatever.

There are all kinds of people in this world who are certain about their convictions, but my understanding of genuine awakening is that it is without the taint of fundamentalism to any degree, and is actually a sort of a resting in not knowing ... is one way of explaining it. It’s paradoxical again because there is a certainty and a complete uncertainty, simultaneously.

Karen: Right.

Rick: Yeah, it’s good for people to hear this stuff, because you know sometimes I have this attitude like, “Well, what’s the point in just talking about it all the time, because people might try to live it on the basis of merely an understanding,” but I think the value in hearing things like this is that - just as you listened to John Wheeler I suspect – it enables people to sort of identify elements

that they are already living, that they hadn't quite noticed. And they go, "Oh, it's okay to have this uncertainty, that doesn't mean that I'm a confused, messed-up person."

Karen: Right, I feel this is really beneficial actually, because the misunderstanding of that pulls people back into identification. The allowing of it is instantaneously freeing.

Rick: Mm-hmm, that's very good. Okay, so we have covered 'meeting people where they are,' and then we covered a little bit of a look at 'what awakening is' by your understanding and experience, and what was next?

Karen: I guess looking at the traps, potentially, that can arise.

Rick: Pre and post?

Karen: Pre and post I guess, but I'm still exploring all of those things and finding a way to articulate what's happening.

Rick: Let's talk about a few of them that you've come up with so far.

Karen: Ooh, what have I come up with so far? Well 'living realization from a memory,' that's a big one.

Rick: Rather than me trying to explain it, what do you mean by that?

Karen: Well, just having an experience of awakening and then living from the perspective of identification again. There's not only living from identification, but there's also living with the identification of an awakened person, because of course there are no awakened people, ultimately.

Rick: So in other words, the person might have an awakening that they lose and then they sort of hang their hat on having had that awakening, is that what you're saying?

Karen: Well I don't see awakening as gaining or losing anything. It's like it opens up, it's an experiential recognition of the timeless, and so that can be memorized – that experiential recognition of the timeless can be recognized – and then taken to mean all sorts of things in a personal sense. And then life is being lived largely from identification, or *wholly* from identification, again, with the *idea* that this awakening experience has transformed something, in a way, when really the behaviors and attitudes are still very much coming from a reactive place.

Rick: Okay, so why would that happen to a person?

Karen: Because thought is very, very manipulative – thought identification is very, very manipulative and subtle. And it is really [about] being open to all these subtleties and being totally ruthless about what's being experienced in this moment.

Rick: So are you saying that that happened to you quite a bit, and that you learned how to relax out of it?

Karen: I would say there were elements of that, definitely, yeah, yeah. And [going] through difficulties that continued to arise from the momentum of past conditioning, this was the opportunity to actually see through that and break away from that, and allow this to fall away by itself. And just to be totally committed to recognizing in each and every moment – and I don't mean getting into a regimented practice about somebody needs to recognize 'what is' all the time, because that can be another trap of identification.

Rick: It can be very manipulative to do that, yeah.

Karen: Right, but just simply to apply what I would call relaxed vigilance.

Rick: Hmm, that's a nice phrase, yeah. This whole thing about gaining and losing, I mean I do know people who say, "Oh, I had this marvelous awakening in 1985 and I was just in a state of bliss for two weeks. And I thought that was it and then I lost it again, and I so long to get back to that" - that does happen to people.

Karen: Yeah, didn't happen here, but you know, all sorts of other subtle things were playing out here. So different people are different, in terms of what's experienced, and so it's making sure that all the bases are covered. And I think another trap can be 'it always happens the way it happened here.'

Rick: Ah, that's another good one, yeah. In fact, that's one of the reasons I like to have people tell their stories. And now you are number 89 in this series, and if a person actually listens to a number of them, it's different for everybody. So it doesn't have to be like Karen or like so-and-so, or whatever.

Karen: Right, right. So it's being open to seeing that in context as well. You know I look at awakening in three main ways, I guess; awakening experiences. And that is that we can have a radical, sudden awakening, like what happened here and I think it's been documented well for a number of other people. Many other people experienced awakening to the timelessness in a sudden, time-bound moment of recognition that seems to fundamentally change how experience is experienced, without changing anything.

And then [there are] those that seem to go through night turning into day, so it's almost like an invisible transition. And yet if they look back, there can be a time recalled when 'what is' wasn't clear and obvious. And then there can be a momentary glimpse into the timeless and then all of a sudden everything seems to close down again and it's lived from identification; life is being lived from identification.

I think these three main aspects fundamentally color the subsequent integration. And where people can get caught, as well, in various ways with those experiences, really color[s] how life is then integrated as itself.

Rick: It's interesting, yeah. It would be interesting for somebody to do a scientific study where they carefully categorized - surveyed a thousand people and broke it down into categories. I bet you that you'd find a certain percentage had this sudden, irrevocable awakening, and then a certain percentage were oozers, as they say, you know, where they just oozed in gradually that they

didn't notice, couldn't put their finger on it. That would be a fascinating thing for someone to undertake.

Karen: Mmm, and I still think that in the vast majority who awaken in a radical sense, there is still an integration process.

Rick: Yeah, in fact I can't think of anyone for whom there isn't, even including some who don't acknowledge that there is but there probably is.

Karen: Yeah, I think even Ramana Maharishi went through a period of integration.

Rick: Oh yeah, he went through 20 years after his awakening where he didn't come out and say anything or do anything; he just sat and meditated. Interesting. In fact, in certain Zen traditions it's kind of formalized that after one awakens they don't go out and teach. They are expected to spend ten years integrating it before they can go out and start teaching people.

Karen: Yeah, and I think there's a tremendous amount of value to that, certainly.

Rick: Okay, so in terms of traps we've covered ... what have we covered? Can you reiterate?

Karen: Living from a memory, thinking it is always my way – in terms of the experiential recognition, and what else did we say? I'm the wrong person to ask!

Rick: Or, "It has to be so-and-so's way," or "the way he describes it isn't happening to me, so I must not be there," you know?

Karen: Right, right.

Rick: So those are a couple of good ones. I think that also you talked about maybe getting ensnared by conditioned tendencies again, something like that. Any others that come to mind?

Karen: Not right now actually. There are a lot, I've got a lot written down but I can't think of anything right now.

Rick: Okay, no, this is good, this is good. So then what's the next major section?

Karen: Well I would say looking at how we can become more conscious as a society, and looking at other ways in which the integration process happens. I just really feel that it is so important to look in each and every moment at how we are relating to one another, and often, relationships provide an ideal basis for which we can explore that.

We are all in a process of becoming more awake to what is already awake, together, because everybody is ourself, effectively. It is a journey of connectedness and the human dynamic is so complex, so it would be looking at ways in which to provide people with a self-reflection tool to illuminate these conditioned tendencies so that they can be clearly seen in the light of Presence.

And there is no need to manipulate behavior or experience in any way; to just allow everything to be as it is, but to really see what is happening. Because often, when these glasses are on it is

like an invisibility cloak. There is just this happening and it is seeing through the tendencies, so it seems normal, not recognized. And so providing something which illumines what's really going on can be extremely beneficial in the ongoing process.

Rick: So what would you provide?

Karen: Well I'm looking into those sorts of things. I think certainly psychotherapy can play a role in looking at conditioned aspects of the idea of self. Often a lot of these things are unnoticed because they are so familiar, and so obviously psychotherapy, not that I know a great deal about it, but that would look at trying to change behaviors to become this very balanced human being.

I think this is not about using tools in that way; this is about perhaps using some sort of framework to illuminate what is not, so it can be clearly seen and allowed to be as it is. And then it will be recognized in experience how certain behaviors are actually *feeding* these dynamics, these unconscious dynamics.

Rick: So I get the sense from what you're saying that as someone who runs around teaching Satsangs, to a certain extent - maybe sometimes over Skype, sometimes in person - you feel a kind of need to find something or some things that can be effective in helping people realize this. You mentioned psychotherapy as a possibility, do you feel that? Like there need to be tools to help people recognize what you are trying to convey to them?

Karen: Ultimately, no.

Rick: There's always that!

Karen: But I think experientially it can be very helpful to look at how this is lived, from a truly awakened perspective.

Rick: And how can a person do that if they don't have a truly awakened perspective? It's a catch 22.

Karen: Right, so it's looking at all the ways that experiencing can be obscured by what is not, effectively, looking at all the ways the conditioned tendencies can be operating, that aren't even seen until they are no longer there. And the only way they get seen is by truly seeing them, and sometimes something needs to be used in order to bring that into focus. It's like we don't even notice we're breathing until the focus is on the breath. So this is similar in a way, as I see it.

I've noticed through what has been experienced *here* that certain aspects of these tendencies can be fully operational in the light of Presence. There can be total presence, there can be total clarity and yet responding to life from something that isn't even noticed.

Rick: Hmm, try to clarify that just a little bit.

Karen: Oh, this is such a tricky thing to try and discuss.

Rick: Yeah, it's abstract but I think you can get it a little more concrete.

Karen: Okay, so say you are totally, totally present and aware right now. And then something happens and there is a responding to what is happening, but the response is actually coming from a learned behavior, rather than from an inspired heart place. And so it almost like these tendencies get seen more and more, and allowed to be as they are more and more, until they fall away or they dissipate by themselves. And so it could almost be said that if we are in denial that they are there, that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, that we're not even open to noticing them.

Rick: So you are saying that the tendency – oh, wait a minute, we're letting some animals in and out here. We have to introduce, officially, Lila.

Karen: Aww, aww, she's beautiful!

Rick: Lila, like 'play.' We won't edit this out; this is for the benefit of all Buddha at the Gas Pump fans, this is the official mascot.

Karen: Your house is like Noah's ark – you've opened that door about ten times.

Rick: I know, I've tried other approaches and none of them worked, so I just open the door, otherwise they scratch.

Karen: I was wondering about leaving my cats the run of the house while this interview was taking place, because they meow beyond the door, but they haven't put in an appearance yet.

Rick: So what I think I understand you to be saying is that learning to bring your attention to recognize that you are operating from a conditioned pattern, rather than a genuine, intuitive, spontaneous thing from the heart, enables those conditioned patterns to dissipate.

Karen: Right, because they can be clearly seen. A lot of what can be driving our actions can be from these unseen tendencies of conditioning, and so in being open to them, it's like experiencing of life itself becomes purer and purer. It is already pure but these tendencies are falling away, enabling everything to be seen and experienced with an increasing brightness, with an increasing joy.

And actually, even if we are not open to seeing unseen aspects of ourself, life often is orchestrating the perfect opportunities for them not to be ignored any longer.

Rick: Very good point, yeah.

Karen: So it doesn't really matter.

Rick: Right. This thing of, and I forget how you phrased it – “already pure” or “already there” – the analogy comes to mind and let's see if you think this fits, of let's say a radio signal from a radio station. It is already a perfectly fine signal, it is potentially crystal clear, but if your radio is not tuned in very well or if it is not pointing in the right direction or something, then you're going to get a static-y version of it. It's not to say that the signal *itself* needs to be improved, although you could stretch the analogy and say maybe you're too far away, the signal is weak, but let's say you have a perfectly adequate signal but in this case your radio needs some adjustment –

you need to turn the dial a little bit, or you need to move the direction or improve the antenna or something, to pick up this signal which is already perfectly fine the way it is. So this whole thing of being or pure awareness or silence or peace or whatever, that it just can't be improved upon is all well and good, but as little human radios, there's so much room for becoming better attuned.

Karen: Right, and experience is constantly shifting and evolving, so to say nothing can be improved is kind of a fixed perspective. And you can't improve on what is because what is is what is, but in terms of an experiential human journey, there's always a deeper and deeper opportunity to rest into that, to be that.

Rick: Yeah, to actually have that [as a] practical, living reality as opposed to a nice notion.

Karen: Exactly, exactly, and often we can be deluding ourselves in the subtlest of ways, it can even sometimes can be disguised as clarity.

Rick: Yeah, it's interesting in a way because people whom I've met who would be considered to be famous saints, very widely known around the world and who have a tremendous presence and a profound influence on lots of people, even there, when you get to know them well, you see that a lot of their stuff appears to be very much culturally conditioned - certain ways they behave and certain things that they believe and so on. So you wonder if one ever is free of a certain amount of personal and cultural baggage, and maybe it's not necessary to be.

And very often people identify those cultural conditionings as characteristic of enlightenment, they think, "Oh, he believes this, therefore that's the enlightened way to believe and I should believe that too," or "He speaks with a certain intonation in his voice and so I will speak that way too (Rick speaking in a hilarious East Indian accent!!), and there's something spiritual about that." So I don't know, it's funny. It's just an observation, maybe you have a comment on it?

Karen: Well even language is conditioned, right? It's learned. We wouldn't be able to speak to one another and we haven't moved in the realm of telepathy yet!

Rick: And even if we had, that would be conceptual in a way; we would have to convey concepts.

Karen: Right, there's always elements of learned behavior, but I guess it is looking at what the behavior is and is it ultimately self-defeating or not? Is it ultimately reinforcing a belief in a separate self, or not? If it is seen in context, like these words are seen in context, then nothing is a problem, ultimately; it's whether we're feeding something we're not seeing, or not.

Rick: It almost seems like the key element is what is predominant, what is running the show, you know, and that's the key question: which thing has the upper hand?

Karen: Right, right. And being ruthlessly honest in any moment about that.

Rick: And like what you said a minute ago which I thought was interesting, is that conditioning can actually be pulling the strings a lot more than we realize, even when we think it's not. And so how would we become aware of that so as to root it out or release one more level of conditioning?

Karen: Well I don't want to get into the game of thinking that there's a personality to be purified, but in terms of using something that reflects what's hidden, so looking at aspects of conditioned personality would be one way. And not actually taking it onboard as trying to change the personality to be something better, but just simply recognize why certain patterns keep occurring, for example.

Because often we can be in a holding path of experiencing, it's like the same things come around and around again, time and time again. Why is that? Because of how we are feeding it invisibly. And so it isn't about trying to perfect our sense of self; it's like holding up what is not to the light so it can be clearly seen, allowed to be as it is and not fed anymore.

Rick: By fed you would mean reinforced.

Karen: By behaviors, attitudes, subtle beliefs, all operating.

Rick: Well I know it is sort of unfashionable to speak in terms of improving the personality, and I can see how if that's one's sole focus, it can be a never ending project, which can ultimately be very frustrating because that is not adequate in and of itself. But that is not to say that, by at least one way of defining it, the personality does *not* become improved. I mean, wouldn't you say that over the years as you have been releasing conditioned tendencies and habitual ways of reacting and responding to things, that that could be construed as an improvement, an improved style of functioning in your life?

Karen: I guess that's one perspective, but I don't see it in that way. It's like melting more and more into being, melting more and more into that which is already awake, but not being in denial of our humanness.

Rick: Right, but that 'melting more and more into that which is already awake' is desirable, you know? You appreciate the fact that that is taking place, you wouldn't voluntarily go back to where you were five years ago.

Karen: No, but is it really desirable or is just simply what is happening?

Rick: Both, I would say.

Karen: Right, there isn't a *desire* to make it happen ...

Rick: Right, but it's happening.

Karen: Right, and if there is a desire it's a desire for what is, and it's a desire to experience what is now, clearly, and not do anything to manipulate that.

Rick: Right, agreed. And by using the word 'desire' I'm not trying to say that, "Oh, I have to have this happen and I'm not going to be happy until it happens," and all that stuff; I'm just saying that it's a nice thing - that's what I mean by the word 'desirable.' There seems to be an evolutionary process taking place and a clarification, an enrichment, a deepening, a letting go of conditioned

tendencies which tend to obscure the more intuitive natural flow of life. The kind of things you've been saying, that's kind of what I'm getting at.

I think it's important to clarify that because there is this sort of stigma in spiritual circles, about the word 'self-improvement' and so on. And rightfully so, because a lot of times that has been presented as the whole package, you know, "Be a better person, learn how to get diamond necklaces if you desire them," and it's all about rearranging the furniture rather than ...

Karen: Yeah, and so this is really about just resting and not *trying* to manipulate anything, which by the very nature of that, truly seeing what is happening, it releases itself.

Rick: Mm-hmm, beautiful. There's a verse in the Gita and I won't quote the whole verse, but one key phrase of it is, "What can restraint accomplish?"

Karen: Awww.

Rick: Well actually, a little bit more of the verse is, "Creatures act according to their own nature; what can restraint accomplish?"

Good, so, okay, we've covered the book – was that it, the book?

Karen: If it ever gets written! We'll see.

Rick: I'm helping you here!

Karen: Yeah, I do feel that that's going to probably cover a broad spectrum of things.

Rick: Mm-hm, I think that'll be a good book.

Karen: From suffering to the full integration, following the experiential recognition, and make it a live journey, but we'll see.

Rick: Well I think if you wait till full integration has happened with a capital 'F.I.,' you'll never finish the book.

Karen: Right! Well integration is an evolutionary process, should we say, a continuing evolutionary process.

Rick: Yeah, right, beautiful. Okay, so what's going on with you these days? Are you giving Satsangs? Besides writing the book, are you traveling, do you talk to people on Skype – one-on-one kind of Satsangs?

Karen: Yes, definitely, I respond to emails, to requests for connections on Skype, and that seems to be the majority of what is happening right now. There's a meeting here in the U.K., in Leicester, next month, in the middle of the month sometimes, with 'Nonduality Meetup.com,' I think it is, through Nick Haiam, he's the organizer. He has organized a meeting on the weekend, so there's that.

There's a meeting in Ireland towards the end of October, I've been invited there. So I will go anywhere within reason, if the costs can be covered, I will happily go anywhere.

Rick: Do you manage to support yourself with this? Do people pay a little fee if they have a consult with you, or do you do retreats and they pay a course fee or something?

Karen: I've not done a retreat as yet, I'm open to doing that. I've been sustaining myself from my own financial means, largely, because I've worked hard.

Rick: So you have some savings or something?

Karen: Right, right, so that's where the majority of the support comes from. But you know, people, if they see the value, and the majority of the people do see the value in what is shared, then they donate accordingly. And some people can't afford to donate and of course that's fine too. So it's available for whoever wants to inquire, and that's it basically.

Rick: That's great, no, I appreciate that. I sort of operate the same way, I mean I don't teach Satsangs or anything, but just this whole interview show is available to whoever wants to listen to it. But there's a 'Donation' button, which I might as well mention, and people occasionally click that and send something in. And that's enabled me to buy equipment and I'm actually going to attend the Science & Nonduality Conference in the fall, in October in California, by virtue of that support, so I very much appreciate that as well.

Karen: Oh that's great, great, yeah.

Rick: Great. Well I really appreciate this, it's really enjoyable to talk to you. Is there anything, you're probably going to say no, but is there anything you feel like we haven't touched upon that you'd like to mention?

Karen: No, not really. I just respond to whatever questions come up, so there's not really a great deal here unless a question gets asked. So yeah, I've really enjoyed speaking with you and I want to thank you from my heart for this opportunity to share. It's really wonderful and it's been a really beautiful way to spend a Sunday afternoon, so thank you, thank you.

Rick: Well thank you, it's mutual. And you respond very nicely to questions, by the way, I really feel like there's a very refreshing depth and clarity to your understanding. And it's very obviously experientially based, which is a point that you have emphasized during this conversation, that you're not just speaking from having read a lot of books; you're speaking from the heart and that's great.

Karen: What else is there?

Rick: Yeah, and it will be fascinating to see how things continue to unfold for you. Maybe in a year or two we can have another one of these and maybe the book will be finished. In fact, when it is, send me a copy, I'll read it and we'll have another conversation.

Karen: Sure, it would be an absolute delight. And I'm available to anybody who wants to get in touch, if anybody feels they want to inquire, then I'm very open to sharing in that way.

Rick: Good, and I'll link to your website from mine so those listening, if they want to get in touch with Karen, go to [www.batgap.com](http://www.batgap.com) and you'll see this interview posted there and there will be a link to her website. And there's obviously a way there to get in touch with you, right?

Karen: Yes there is. There is a 'Contact' tab on the website, and lots of free material as well. And there will also be another podcast on the website within the next couple of days that Nick Haiam has produced.

Rick: Great, okay, thanks. Well let me just make a couple of concluding points. I've been speaking with Karen Richards from the U.K. I'm in the U.S., she's in the U.K., and this is a continuing series – these interviews called *Buddha at the Gas Pump*, the implication being that these days, under very ordinary circumstances, you might meet very awakened people.

And if you go to [www.batgap.com](http://www.batgap.com) B-A-T-G-A-P, you'll see them all. You can sign up for an email newsletter there, to be notified each time a new interview is posted. You can sign up for a podcast so you can listen on your iPod while you're doing other things. And there's also a little discussion group that crops up around every interview – people start posting comments and others respond. And sometimes the person I've interviewed comes in and responds to some of the comments, so I'll invite Karen to do that if there's anything that I think she might want to respond to.

So thank you for listening or watching, and the next interview which should be with Sharon Landrith, who lives in Colorado. So we'll see you then. Thanks for watching.

{BATGAP theme music plays}