

Interview with Coyote and Denise

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

May 27, 1996

Q: Denise, did you live communally too?

D: No, I was one of those that when I was in Southern California, I wanted to go to the farm, but I had dogs, and they said that you can't go, with

Q: With animals?

D: With dogs. I was one of those that didn't want to cut off all ties to my family, and if I went to commune it would.

Q: Right. Well, coyote, I'd love to know some about your background, and what led up to you being part of Morningstar and Wheeler's.

C: Well, when I was younger, I was like, trouble. I got busted for doing nasty things like young boys do, like burglary, and drugs, things like that, and I went before the judge and the judge says, "Well, you got your choice, join Job Corps, join the military or go to jail for awhile" So I was like, whoa, big trouble here. So I got a little stay of time there, and I wound up joining the Job Corps, signing on to learn culinary arts, and where did they ship me? Pleasanton California.

Q: And where had you been before?

C: San Bernadino. But, prior to that, I was in South Carolina, and Maryland. I was born in Maryland, got the formative years in South Carolina, and they moved to California where I was told it was oranges and sunshine all year round. So I said, let's go. Thank God, I came to California at the right time. There was major hot rod thing that was going on, which was what I was into, hot rods, fast cars and bikes like that, in fact, the job corps, a friend of mine had long hair, I was always kind of growing my hair long anyway, who wants to cut your hair, you know? He says hey, let's go see San Francisco. What's that you know? Come on man we got a shore leave. After you're there a month or two then you can go to town or whatever, right. So, I went with him, we jumped on a bus went to town, got off on Turk and Eddie, nasty side of town. And went up and got a room at the Y, and the next thing I know we go out there and he says, come on man, check this street out. And I'm looking at the street name and it says "Hate". I go, Hate? He goes, ah man, you'll love it. And we went all the way up there on the bus, got off at Stanyon at the park, got out and all I saw were people with long hair and beards and wavin' flowers at everybody and everyone was just having a good time, and I said, this is my world. Somebody wiped out at Tracy's Coffee and Donut Shop said to me "Want some acid?" I went, yeah! Took it right down there, and that was it, I was hooked. Awhile later, while I was hanging out at the Digger crash pads and stuff, they're a great bunch of people. This friend of mine named Otto showed up, and one day he goes, you gotta come up to this commune, so I said O.K., and the next thing I know, I'm at Morningstar Ranch. I guess I fell in love with Sonoma County and I've been here for just about thirty years now. Went through two communes.

Q: When was it that you went to the Hate? What year was that?

C: '65, '66.

D: You were 18....that would have been more like '66, '67, probably.

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Q: So, right when the Digger scene was just getting going. Right?

C: Oh yeah, fuck, that was great. The church used to let us bake bread over there and we'd make bread in those coffee cans, those big coffee cans, we'd put the bread in there, and put them in ovens, and cook'em up. Then, God, I know so many people from that time zone, most of them are all dead now. Most of them from drug overdoses, things like that. But, Morningstar was wonderful. I guess the place kind of grew on me. I helped save some guy's wife from a car that went over the side of an embankment. Watched people's, at the same time being busted for shoplifting right there in the town, little store, you can't hide anything in a little store like that, so people were like "God damn hippies." And this guy's going, hey that guy saved my wife. And the people are like going "huh?" I even saved one of the local rednecks who hated hippies. Got him out of a tight spot you know, and he's like "Don't tell anybody that you did this." O.K. Mr. Short. He never bothered me anymore, but he did bother some of the others. But, I was one of those kind of hippies that didn't want to go "Don't hit me!!" When they come on to me, it's like hey, swing first and ask questions later. I just was never really that peaceful of a person at that time. I loved the peaceful trip, I had a wonderful time with it. Morningstar was like, I guess you call it proving grounds. We had the finest dope and psychedelics that anybody would ever do in their life would come there, sometimes we'd get packages in the mail. Please try this, and let me know the results, no name, no address, no nothing. We're like wow hey, gulp.

D: That's what he meant by saying that he thought he wouldn't make it to thirty.

Q: Yeah, I understand.

C: I was the guinea pig testing LSD back in the old days, because I wanted to make sure that it was good stuff. You don't want to take bad drugs, they cause bummers. You know what's funny is, I never saw anybody freak out in the old days behind LSD, it wasn't until later when they started introducing foreign substances like Methydrone, what's that stuff that dilates your eyes? Jimpson weed or something like that. Belladonna. They started putting Belladonna in their psychedelics, so that way you're eyes go, and they get really, really big. And you could get lost in there. I guess I just saw everything in a rainbow color all the time. Nowadays, I'm paying for it.

D: Tell her about your house at Morningstar.

C: At Morningstar? I had a tree house up there, it was pretty neat. It wasn't so neat when I saw them tearing it out of the tree. The county, when they came up there and got on our case. Because they found somebody's shithole, for lack of a better term. So all of us are in there digging holes and doing our duty and then covering up, we weren't being really rude about it, except these were running around digging up anywhere where it looked like fresh dirt had been turned over. "Hey I got one over here!! Hey that was giant man." Hey you guys might as well preserve it for fuckin' future references. I don't know, it was really really strange for me, but you know, I hung out. And then when the Ranch got raided, well, it got raided several times, mostly because we were having everybody's daughters up there. They all wanted to get laid by hippies, they didn't want to be hangin' out with rednecks. We had all kinds of people up their, bikers, rednecks, and everybody got along.

Q: Huh, that's something.

C: Yeah, I thought it was wonderful.

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Q: Now you went up there, what, '67, '68 or something?

C: Yeah, right in there at '67 was when I wound up there, it was fantastic.

Q: And was Morningstar just sort of a place where you could just show up and just say I want to live here?

C: There was land denied access to none, anybody could go there. Now, once they start living there, see what I honestly did too, was I'd always take my sleeping bag and just sleep wherever I wanted, outside, inside, we had a couple of houses on the property at that time, the upper and the lower house, where you could crash in there if you really needed to, to get out of the weather. But, outside of that, everybody out there either built a house or had an existing structure up there already.

Q: When you got there, about how many folks were living there?

C: Probably about 40, between 35 and 40 people. And it never really got more than 35, as a general rule. Some people would go back East, some would be down in Southern California, Lou would go down there and record his music, then he would show up later if he went and did a movie or something. "I Love You Alice Betoquas", he did that one while we were all hangin' out on the ranch.

Q: Did they charge any rent for living there?

C: No, the land was already bought and paid for, Lou made sure of that, but then he didn't pay back taxes for awhile, but then when he started coming back to the ranch, he started paying off all the back taxes and everything, so he got that all cleared out. Did some trades with some of the neighbors and stuff. It's in much better shape now than it was then. And, they're all watching out for the interest of the ranch. The people that live around there.

Q: Because they don't want it to be developed?

C: Well, because they don't want it developed, plus the cops have an injunction against anybody living up there.

D: Well, I think Lou got...well **C:** I think he got that cleared.

Q: What, they're afraid that he's going to start another commune or something?

D: Yeah, because there's still a couple of neighbors that are the same people. Then there's some people who were always nice, too.

C: Well, the people that were really assholes to him for so long, are real friendly to him now.

D: Well, he's an old man now. We had, was it your party? We've had a couple of party's up there, once it was Lou's birthday, and then it was a party for Coyote, and cops came, and neighbors were calling. Even though most of us had gray hair and stuff.

C: Had a rock and roll band show up, and some other musicians.

Q: And this was just recently.

D: Yeah just the last few years, people are real scared. But Morningstar has a reputation now, because occasionally people will go camp out there who shouldn't be up there. It still draws attention to the place.

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C: Oh yeah, but then this young man named Bill Wheeler, was collaborating with Lou for awhile. And said, well, if anybody needs to, they can come up to my place, and I waited, I was there at Morningstar all the way up until the cops got there and said "You want to go to jail?" They said you got 24 hours to get off the land, and I said "Man I got to go take a shit." And walked off into the brush and did my thing, and just stayed there, and then when everybody was gone, you know, it was kind of like, whoa.

Q: Now when was that?

C: Probably about '71.

Q: So you'd been there for maybe about three years by that time?

C: Three or four years, yeah. But then I went up to Wheeler's, which had 321 acres as opposed to Lou's 31.7 acres, much more land. Had a wicky-up up there.

Q: You had a what?

C: A wicky-up.

Q: What's that?

C: Where you take a circle of trees and you strip some of the prongs off of it, and you bend all the tops over and lash them together, and then you cover up. It's like a geodesic dome, but it's a natural dome. Dug out the center, and put a little tin dragon in there...Fuck, I was a happy guy. Use wood burners, all of us had wood burners up there, even had a free bakery going up there for awhile, where we would teach people how to bake. I have these medications. Just a, how long have I been positive now?

D: Ten years.

C: Ten, not eleven?

D: Are you going to talk to Bill Wheeler?

Q: I think that Tim already did, and I think that he did Lou too, so I don't think I'll be doing any of those guys, I'm kind of disappointed.

D: Lou would be great, because he's a great storyteller, he's real charismatic.

Q: Yeah, that's what I hear.

D: So when he tell's stories it's just really interesting, he's always got these great little side things. Because he's also politically, very politically aware.

C: Who, Will?

D: Bill, I mean Lou. See, I recently met Lou, it's been probably about six years. So, I met him as an older man. But I knew what he used to look like and stuff. For me it's like, well he's not going on his reputation, I'm getting to know him now, and listened to his stories and stuff. And he was saying how he's got people all over the world that he knows. And, some of them go back to Morningstar, some before and some since, and that he said that he could spend the rest of his life staying with all these different people or on their land, or something, and he really believes because since he opened his land to anybody, that it's all coming back to him. You know, thirty years later.

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C: Karma.

D: I thought that was a really great way to look at it.

Q: That is a really good way to look at it.

C: Yeah, we were all true believers of karma.

Q: Yeah.

C: That's really interesting stuff, I'll tell you.

Q: So, how did Wheeler's compare to Morningstar?

C: Well, like I say, it was more land, it had been through a fire a few years previously where everything was like burned off of it. So I went in there, and got together with a bunch of other people up there and we went and planted trees up there all over the place. Kind of like redid it. I'll tell ya, you're going to have to come up there on Mayday some year. Because we always have a May pole up their, every Mayday. We all got together this year, there was about a hundred of us. And then we have another sister commune, Bodega Pastures, which get together on Easter, where they cook up a couple of lambs, and it's a big pot luck thing, both of them are pot luck. So everybody brings whatever they want to bring. At the Easter one there's usually several hundred people there, all the kids mostly. God, they hate it when people like me show up and they go hey, "I used to change his diaper when he was a kid." You know, and they're like "huh?" Hey, don't be saying that man, you'll ruin it for me.

Q: Were there lots of kids at Morningstar and Wheeler's?

C: There was a number of them, I know of births on Wheeler's, I was there for Harley's. That was a life and death drama, but he pulled through. He had his cord around his neck.

D: There were a lot of families raised at Wheeler's.

C: Yeah, gobs of them. Some of them were born there, and some of them were born off the ranch, but raised up there.

Q: Did they do their own school, or anything like that?

C: Some of them, they tried. Like, Ocean Song, which is up in front of Wheeler's built a school up there, for all the commune children and stuff, so a lot of them went up there. It was recognized as a regular school.

Q: And what's Ocean Song?

C: What did they do up there?

D: It's kind of affiliated with Anonda, that group. See, the one thing that I've seen that was different at Morningstar and Wheeler's from the other communes is that it was total anarchy, they did not believe in rules. Anybody can come and stay, anybody can do what they want. Nobody can get in anybody's face for doing anything. So, there was also wasn't a communal theme, other than anybody can do anything they want. That kind of set up another whole set of problems with people. That they kind of came up with not having that structure. The people who went there went there because they didn't want the structure. They could have went to any of them. But they didn't wanna.

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C: Which was my saving grace.

Q: How long did you stay at Wheeler's?

C: Oh shit, at least ten years or something.

Q: Is it still going on?

C: Yeah, but now it's like a private commune, where they check you out when you come in, and you pay rent.

Q: When you were there was it just free land, no rents?

C: Yeah, towards the end, before I left, he was starting to do that to people up there, either work....

D: It was a couple of years after you left that they started doing that. Well, it made sense.

C: I just had to get out of the commune for awhile, so I went to town.

Q: Well, you had been doing it for a long time.

C: Yeah, well, I met Denise in New Mexico, many, many years ago, almost 24, 25 years ago? Something like that?

D: We originally met, probably '76, I think it was.

C: Yeah, and she asked me if I wanted to carry a case of grapefruit or a tepee, boy, I said, "Give me the grapefruit." Twenty-five foot poles are pretty long, especially when you go down winding hills. You know where Rainbow gatherings are.

Q: Oh, so that was at a Rainbow gathering.

D: That was where we first met.

C: I came in one bus, she came in her bus.

D: We had a lot of crossed paths, not until after we were together did we realize that we had even met before.

Q: Oh really?

D: Well we didn't meet by like name, when you're at a Rainbow gathering, there's so many people.

C: Yeah, and you're always lusting after everybody else. A lot of beautiful people. We've been together now, about 17 years now. Hard to believe.

Q: So pretty much since you left Wheeler's?

C: Almost, I was hanging out with all my old rowdy friends, I was a backyard mechanic. Plus, you know, just hanging around motorcycles, and bikers, rednecks, greasers. You know, I hung out with a wide range of people. Never gave them any shuck and jive, unless it was to both of our advantages. I was just always one of those kind of guys that you could get along with, to a certain degree. And, it always took a lot to piss me off. Like, I don't remember being mad at people for very long, then there are some nowadays, that really get my goat. But, live and let live. What I used to say all the time.

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Q: Can you tell me a little bit about what daily life was like, say starting at Morningstar, some of the things that you might do?

C: Like, open your eyes, roll up a joint, smoke it and say "Hey, nice day." Drop a hit of acid or something. We were all under the psychedelic revolution at that point.

Q: Were there things that people would do together, like would you eat common meals together?

C: Every once in awhile, yeah. We made it a point to do that every so often. We all made a big pot of brown rice, or a big pot of lentils. I still have a phobia against lentils. I ate lentils, lentils, lentils, for years, eating lentils. And, I just don't care for them. I'll eat 'em as doll, but I won't eat it...

Q: Plain.

C: Yeah, I can't stand it, like eggplant, I never used to be able to eat eggplant, now I can eat it, only if it's young and tender, that old stuff, ugh.

Q: So, I don't suppose you would have needed much money living there, but I imagine you would have needed some. How did people get by?

C: Panhandle, some people had inheritances, some people had it stashed away from other stuff that they had done. Or else, you know, just figure out something, that somebody needs.

Q: So you'd do a little work?

C: Do a little bit of drug dealing, or do a little work. I'd do that sometimes, I'd go in and see, like in Occidental, as redneck as that place was, they'd go, ask Mama Feurie, "Oh, Mama Feurie, is there any work I could do to get something to eat?" Oh, yeah, yeah, see those weeds over there? Go pull those. Next thing I know, Manny's coming out, gave us a drink, a sack with half a chicken and french fries in it. Or, duck, whatever they had the most of that day. So we're were like, hey, thanks, thanks Mom. Them old Italian women, they were pretty neat. They were just like having another mother. All they want to do is dote on you, help you out.

Q: Did you do mechanic work some, too?

C: Yeah, I wound up hanging out with friends of mine, and being a backyard mechanic for awhile.

D: But, not back then.

Q: That was later?

C: hat was when I left Wheeler's.

Q: After Wheeler's, I see.

C: I just wanted something different to do, hanging out with, like I said, what people considered, scum. I was hanging out with those kind of guys.

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Q: Well, at Morningstar, besides like, taking acid and hanging out, were there other things that you guys would do, to pass the day?

C: Read sap comics, anything like that. I used to read a lot. I read science fiction, fantasy books. I've always done it, I've always had a big thing about it. I was astounded at the way things have turned out so far. I'm really happy with it.

Q: Looking back, are you glad that you went to the Hate, and then went on to Morningstar and Wheeler's?

C: Oh, hell yeah.

Q: Yeah, they were good choices.

C: Oh, yeah, I wouldn't trade that off for nothing. If I could do it all over again, I'd do it all with more [unintelligible].

D: Would you do it any different?

C: No, I mean, it's like my friend, Obie Ray says, you know "I'm kind of sad that I went through the war." He went through WWII, he fought in all the island campaigns. He said to me "You know, if I had to do it all over again, and I could change anything, I wouldn't do it. Because, I wouldn't be who I am today." I said, hey you know what, you're right. Why should I change myself to appease somebody that I don't even know? I mean now I'm at the whim and the mercy of...I have AIDS now, being stupid, not doing protection. Yeah, what a bummer.

D: See, that is one place I kind of wondered what you would say about whether you'd do things the same, because, part of the problem that he's had, since he's gotten sick, is from all the drugs, and drinking that he had done back then, his liver, it's not horribly damaged, but it's damaged enough to be having trouble handling all the prescription. So, that's one place, like, would you have changed it? You know, had you known, that your liver would get damaged and you would need it later. But, yet, he knows all that, and yet, his answer was still, he'd do everything the same, so it's kind of interesting.

Q: Yeah, that is interesting.

C: Well, you know, it's like back in those days, I had a hell of an exhaust system. I could eat a hundred hits of acid and function just like normal. Walk around and go visit people, hey, what's going on. And, they didn't even know I was high on acid, you know. And, they're like, "Hey, what are you up to?" Boy, I feel funny today, I'm like, well, I took some acid. "You're on acid???" Go any more?? Gee, you don't even look like you're ripped!" Yeah, but I am. That was what everybody was, that's what most people who were there, were there for, was the escape. From the every day ho-hum rigors of reality. Now that we're all older, we think different. And, I sure don't want to change what I'm doing right now.

D: You guys, what, never had a gardener, did you?

C: Yeah we did. We used to trade fruits and vegetables with another commune called Owen Polly.

Q: Oh, I've heard about that one, but I haven't talked to anybody from there.

C: Who's that, Don Mosher?

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Q: I have Don and Sheila McCoy, Don was like the founder or something? I think that's the name.

C: Yeah, Don McCoy. Yeah, that's it.

Q: Yeah, they live in Marin, somewhere. I hope I might be able to talk to them later in the week.

C: Yeah, he's cool. He's another one of those great people that was there.

Q: What was Owen Polly like?

C: Pretty neat. They had a big ole' swimming pool out there. Big, huge place. From what I here, the dead were hangin out up in the back end of it. And, they were growing something else. So we'd go up with our stuff, and bring back some of their stuff. Just like make a swap. Then, we'd all hang out and get high. Just, have a nice day.

Q: Did you do trades like that with any other communes in the area?

C: Well, we would try, like I said, the one that Peter Coyote was at, I don't recall seeing a garden over there. But we'd all get together, once a year, every once in a while. We got together one year for the Fourth of July, something like that, about six communes showed up. People from six different communes, from all over the United States showed up for that.

Q: That was at Morningstar or Wheeler's?

C: Wheeler's. I think that's the only time I've ever seen, like twenty-five guitar players all playing together. One group, nobody even knew each other, but everybody had an idea of what they were doing. And, of course, you had all this other musical equipment, so everybody was into acoustic sounds. I used to play drums, until I had my drums stolen. I've often wondered about getting another one.

Q: So, was it a pretty creative scene?

C: Yeah, most of them were artists of different forms, different kinds. I guess that's why we all got along so good. A lot of them were college people, that had been studying, going to college and stuff. I think some of them went back. I finally broke down, I went back, I took courses at a junior college for a couple of years. The first time I'd been in school in twenty-two years. I was blown out of the water. I didn't have to raise my hand to say "Can I go to the bathroom." I just got up and walked out of the room, and they didn't say anything. I was like Whoa, hey, power. Then I'd go back in the room and say "Where are we at?" I had two people, one in front, one next to me, and we all kept each other appraised on what was going on. And they liked hanging out with me, cause I was the hippie.

D: The thing I saw was interesting, when we got together, I asked him to call information one time to get a phone number. He said "What are you talking about?" I said you know, 4-1-1. He goes....

Q: Because you hadn't had to do stuff like that.

C: I never had...."What's that?"

D: No driver's license, hardly anybody had cars.

Q: That's real interesting.

D: Nothing, nothing, not even to know how to call 411, I was like totally baffled, bank accounts...

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C: We were the only commune up their at Morningstar that had a pay phone in the front yard. When you pulled up, there's the pay phone. It's kind of neat, you know, go up there and call the operator and go "Yeah, operator, I want to call blah, blah, blah....reverse the charges."

Q: Were there other things that you didn't know how to do, once you got back to the mainstream world?

C: Yeah, there was a number of things, I can't quite recall what they were. But anything having to do with civilization, I was like, whoa. I did not want to be in it, or a part of it.

Q: Now, when you went to the Hate, did you skip out on your Job Corps thing?

C: Yeah.

Q: So, was that ever a problem?

C: No, they found me one day, while I was walking around with this really gorgeous thing. And, "Hey, what are you doing over here?" I said, what the hell you wanna know for? "Oh it's you." It turned out to be the guy that was my counselor or whatever. He said, "Well, I'd wondered what had happened to you." I said, yeah, I got brought over here by somebody, and I wound up staying here. It was funnier than hell.

Q: How about the draft? Was that an issue at all?

C: Well, they classified me as 1-A, but when I went to sign up in the military, they said "Whoa, we don't want you." I went on the assumption that they really didn't want me. But, you know, me and several hundred other young men, we all burned our cards one day, in panhandle park. Cause I wasn't going for it anywhere, I didn't like having a number, especially a draft number, and I wasn't going to war. I'd go over there, I'd probably get killed the moment I stepped off the airplane or something.

D: What was it you Mom said? You see, when he left Pleasanton, he didn't see his family or get in touch with them again for about 17 1/2 years. Half his life. That's really common of people who went to communes. And, that's like I said, I knew that's what would have happened to me if I'd have gone. And, she said, that at one point, they come to her...

C: Oh, the FBI?

D: Yeah, why did they go to her? What were they looking for you for?

C: Draft evasion, and they found me right there in a jail cell.

D: Right, so then when they went and saw his Mom, she said, well, I haven't seen him in X amount of years. And they said, well, he's in jail. And that's why they didn't want you, because you had this drug record. This drug arrest record. So, they didn't want to pursue him, because they figured he was unstable.

C: Even the judge said, get out of here.

Q: So, what happened when you reconnected with your family?

C: It was a mind blower, my Mom still didn't think it was me, till I opened my mouth. Then she said "Oh, it's him." Then she saw me snoring and she said "Oh, that's him for sure, I recognize that look anywhere."

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D: What's real interesting is she said to me "I can't even picture him being wild and loud and rowdy. He was always such a quiet keep to himself kind of guy at home." So, when he left, he really just became this other persona.

C: Yeah, the communes are a great way to build character, I'll tell ya. And, more respect for humanity. Because, you have to live in it.

Q: So, how long did you live in the tree house for? Was that the whole time you were at Morningstar?

C: No, not the whole time, like I said, I was like, what they call a homeless beggar, I just stayed in different houses, like if somebody was going to be gone for awhile, I'd go stay in their house. Any place that was open. Or, I'd go hang out in the upper house, or the lower house. I was always after young women.

Q: Did you, over winter in the tree house?

C: Yeah.

Q: Wasn't that cold?

C: Yeah, it was a little bit cold.

D: You didn't have any heat in there did you?

C: I was going to put a fireplace in there, but then I decide that probably wasn't a good idea because I was right in the middle of the tree. You know, and hot ash and shit, it would probably catch the dry stuff on fire, but I never did it.

Q: Was there some kind of mission to Morningstar, or some kind of overriding purpose? Other than opening up the land, free to people.

C: Promoting mental health. You know, I'd say, a lot of people got into yoganonda, or Zen Buddhism, things like that. Yeah, some of the people did go towards a religious way. I wound up, me and Denise wound up becoming Buddhist, a few years ago, what six years, seven years?

D: Ten.

C: Ten years ago, we became Buddhist. That's probably the only thing that I found that I can relate to as far as religion. You know, you just have a Mantra that you sound out and it carries on over. "Nam ya ho, rengo kio" Pretty neat, good people, they've been in the country as long as I've been a hippie. Yeah, because George Williams came to the country in the sixties.

Q: I was just wondering if people at Morningstar or Wheeler's got into Buddhism, or was that just something that came later for you?

C: That came later for me, but there were some people that were Zen-Buddhists that I was associating with, which is a different sect of Buddhism. I don't know, I had a hard time with it. But then, Lou had Indian, he'd go to India and he'd bring home, like Sharinjiba, and Swami Nataraja, which means King of the Dancers, and all these other high people, and brought them over to this country. And, there was another people that was involved in that, Ed Cohen.

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Q: Were they Hindus? That he would bring back. Or, I suppose it doesn't matter.

C: I think they were Hindus, yeah, are there Buddhists or Muslims in India?

D: There's a number of Buddhists, Hindu.

C: Muslims, yeah, it could be Hindus.

Q: And, they would hang out at Morningstar for awhile?

C: Yeah, they'd come out and one guy says, "Wow, American Port Wine, just like liquid hashish." You know and it's like, huh? And he went on to start his own little block of houses in the city.

Q: Now, who did this, this is one of the Indians, or Lou?

C: This is one of the Indians, because he tried to start his own thing. He bought a place up near Morningstar, I don't know what ever happened with the people that lived there.

Q: And, he also tried something in the city, you said?

C: Yeah, he started a few houses down there, sometimes Lou would go over there. Ramone knows about those places. He should.

Q: You mentioned before, Bodega Pastures, that was also kind of a sister commune, you said?

C: Yeah.

Q: Did you go there?

C: No, I'd just go visit.

Q: And, what was that like?

C: Nice, big huge rolling hills out there, you get the ocean fog.

D: That's a type of commune that I guess you could say has more of a theme, you know, an communal theme in that, you have to be pretty much sponsored, somebody that lives there has to say that they'll be responsible for you, basically. And, that whether you stay or not has to be approved by everybody, once you've been there for awhile. So, you know, people build up real houses, and have electricity and stuff. I mean, not like houses like this, but not shacks.

Q: Does it still exist?

D: Oh, yeah. There's a few that are still happening around, and even Wheeler's is still really happening, but it's really toned down, I mean when we first got together, there was probably 50 or 60 people there, and now there's probably twenty. You know, far less. Also, I asked a friend that lived at Wheeler's Ranch just a few years ago and they've known each other the whole time, and you know, I was talking about how he could be such a minimalist like he was saying, you know, I didn't have heat, and she said well, you know you don't have a car, and it's winter and you want to get somewhere and it's raining, and generally people put you in the back of their pick up, and you gotta be okay with it. So, to be able to live like that you have to have accepted life on a different kind of level, not complain about discomforts, and when you get something, it's like a real gift. You know, simple pleasures, you know that's why when you were saying, well, what did you used to do...

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C: Take off our clothes and run rampant through the brush.

D: It was minimal, it was really minimal, other than, in a way it was like a total rebellion of how everybody was raised, treating themselves like kids, letting themselves be kids.

C: I did not like growing up as a kid.

D: At Wheeler Ranch, life was an experiment, people would hear different things, there would be very, I mean like one woman, oh, for months and months and months, she wouldn't wash her hair, she just everyday, washed it with water, she didn't use soap, you know, just something new to try. Another woman decided that since you went around naked most of the time anyway, that when she had her period, she'd just let herself flow, and not even try and stop it and control it. You know, people just tried really wacky things, but they tried different things. Sexuality, sexual experimentation was totally at a peak. Everyone was like living out all their fantasies, of who they ever wanted to be, or what they wanted to try. Everybody just...

C: We took about thirty five people to a Clap clinic one time, because we all had a big orgy up there, and nobody knew who was infected, so we all went up and got the shots. Standing in that little hallway, on both sides of the hallway, bent over, and getting shot. One of them said, my motto is swallow and shoot'em. Zip, zip, bam bam, and then, no sex for a week.

D: So, that was probably the hardest for you.

C: That was the hardest.

Q: I asked you about daily life at Morningstar, was daily life at Wheeler's any different? Or, was it pretty much the same sort of thing.

C: Well, we had more room to move, up there. More room to be creative. Yeah, well you know, like in most communes, you got your good element, and you got your bad element. We saw a little of all of it, people that really didn't know what the hell they were doing. But then I thought about, well I didn't know any of this shit either, when I first came around. So, why should I be hypocritical of somebody else? So, it was really hard for me to be judgmental towards a lot of the people, but if you gave me a reason to, it would never really die out. You know, it's like, get out. You know, but we had this thing, that the land took care of itself. The land either accepted you or rejected you. And, if it didn't want you there, you wound up having a big series of mishaps, happening to you all the time. And, I noticed it a lot. I'd see people that would show up, and they'd leave, no explanation why they were leaving, except that they "I just can't take it anymore." The land would take care of its own. It'll here long after I'm gone.

D: Actually, in some ways, one of the things that kind of made Wheeler Ranch not be as fun of a place anymore. Some people, when they started working and getting money, actually the worst was there were two brothers that just got into coke and started tweaking. When I first started, you know in '78, when we first got together and I started going and visiting everybody there, it was like, things are still pretty okay. You know, you drive down the road, and every place there was a wide area, there was always clusters of people, waiting to see who was coming in and what party was going to happen next. And then, after a couple of years, it was like the place wasn't being bulldozed, people started making their houses a little bit nicer, and settling in a little more, and then these two brothers just really started tweaking and almost like terrorizing everybody. That was one of the things about it, you had a lot of really great people, but you also could have some people that were really screwed up. And, nobody

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wanted to intervene too much, it was like everybody was trying to be as diplomatic and as free as possible, until things got pretty bad.

Q: Would you have meetings?

C: What kind of meetings did we have up at Morningstar? We didn't really have meetings, we all just, if somebody showed up with a lot of acid, we'd all do a bunch of acid. And, we'd all hang out together. Like someone we'd have this, okay everybody's got a favorite spot on the ranch, so let's see where you're at. You know, so we'd all go to our favorite place on the ranch, sometimes it would be in the night, you know, walking around out there, but nobody cared. Because, we were doing what we wanted to do. Is to hang out. Up at Wheeler's we did, because we wound up incorporating as a church up there. The Ahempsa Church. I understand it can be pronounced Aheempsa or Ahempsa. Aheempsa is the good way, bad news if you use the other way.

Q: Okay.

C: The President of the church was God, the Vice-President was the palliated woodpecker. And then, everybody else was the deacons and the pulpit. And we'd all get together every so often to discuss what, if they're was anything that we really needed to be concerned about, like the roadways, water, things like that. In the old days, we used to carry wine bottles, gallon bottles, to get water, while we were doing all that, we'd find spring boxes and things like that. Had a well, up at Wheeler's we did things like that. Morningstar had a well on it, but I'll be damned if that things ever worked right. Actually, it did work for awhile, and then we had to build a, the county came in and said that they were going to close us down unless we built a shower, which we did, and it had to be segregated, men, women.

Q: The county required that?

C: Yeah.

Q: Wow.

C: So this guy named Gary Sodder, who was an architect, he came and figured out how to do it, so we did it, and they came up and said, oh that's wrong. We were off by a couple of inches on one corner. And we were all like what? This is your blueprints. But, they left us alone for awhile after that. But, you can't sleep up there supposedly, but I know people that do go up there overnight, maybe a couple of days out in the old apple orchard or something at Morningstar. It's kind of cool. I like going up there every once in awhile.

Q: Did you have electricity?

C: At Morningstar?

Q: Yeah.

C: In the beginning we did, but after the bulldozers went through, everything got kind of knocked down and taken out. We had our, we had only one source of power and that was at the front gate there, in a little barn. That had power tools in it.

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D: Well, when Bill bought the place, there was a house and electricity and everything there. But, while he was in Eskrow, there was a fire that went through.

C: Yeah, some idiot, built a fire in his living room floor. The woman I was doing a thing with conceived that night.

D: No, that happened while the place was in Eskrow. The big fire that went through.

C: At Wheeler's?

D: Yeah, before anybody even moved there.

C: Oh, we're talking about the Boocoo fire, that's the one you're talking about, the one that swept up all up the coast line and it was huge.

D: But we all started going there, where he said that they had planted trees, the trees were all really small. You know like 8, 10, 12 feet tall, which was really small. And, now they're giant. In fact, they planted them way too close, because they grew so fast.

Q: That must be nice to see.

D: Well they talked to people that didn't live at Wheeler's who used to know everybody. They said that everybody used to smell like charcoal al the time. It took a long time to..

C: Are you building a wood fire? Are you camping out? And they'd go yeah.

Q: That's incredible.

C: It was pretty neat.

Q: Yeah, but it must be fun to see how the trees have grown, that you made a difference in the land.

C: Those trees are well over forty feet tall now. I think they're growing like at a rate of ten feet every two years or something.

Q: How did you cook, did you use propane stoves, or wood stoves?

C: Propane was, what? We didn't really use propane out there, not until much, much later. In the old days, if you had to have a quick fire, it was Coleman camp stove. That most of us used. Or, you used the wood burner, or dug a hole in the ground, started a fire in that, and put a grill over it. And, that was cooking.

Q: Wow, pretty primitive.

C: Yeah, well we were primitive people.

D: But, eventually there were a number of people who went in to starting to haul propane, but that was like twenty years after it was... you know it was a long time it was probably mid to late 80's, when people started doing that.

C: That's the word right there, voluntary primitivism. I still get tongue tied on some of those words. So you know, we was just going on the whims of the Gods, you know, whatever was going to happen, happened.

Q: Well, you were all pretty young weren't you? It's probably easier to do that when you're young.

D: Well he was old, he was 32.

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Q: Well that's true he was "old". But he was older than most of the folks there. **C:** Sure got laid by a lot of young ladies up there though.

Q: Were most of the folks, probably like, 20's?

C: Yeah, right around in there, teenagers to mid to late 20's. There were a few older ones up there. They were reaping the benefits of the young. I guess most everybody, what everybody was doing up there was drugs and fornicating.

Q: Was there any common work that people were expected to do? To help with, like hauling water?

C: Well, hauling water, was an individual's choice. But sometimes we had to go elsewhere to get water. Because you can't trust some of the springs up there, you know, Ecoli, and all these other exotic diseases that we were unused to. I mean, we even had a case of hepatitis break out up here one time. That was really strange. Public health came up, had a globulin table set up, we all walked in and they gave us a big glemoglobulin shot, and they said, okay, now don't drink any alcohol for a week or two. So we didn't. Nobody likes hepatitis, that's a scary thing.

Q: Yeah. Did you have any regular rituals or celebrations?

C: Well, Mayday was our favorite. Easter, that's another one. Any reason was a good reason to have a party.

Q: Solstices or equinoxes?

C: Yeah, them too. You know, we partied on anything.

Q: Would you do anything like, sweats?

C: Once in awhile yeah.

D: In fact, after you had left, they had, or was there already a sauna?

C: Oh yeah, the sauna was already there.

D: After he left, they started having meetings, monthly meetings, and that's where they would have them. In the sauna, so everybody would be naked, so it was kind of different.

Q: This was at Wheeler's after you left?

C: Yeah. It's funny to see people wearing underwear in a damn sauna. Hey, "What are you doing with those on?"

D: In fact, back in '78, '79, and for years, people were, lots of people would be naked at a meeting, but now it's like no matter how hot it is, nobody does it anymore.

C: There's a number of them that still do it still.

Q: Do you have any feeling for why that's changed?

C: You know, I try to think about that sometimes, wondering why everyone went the other way, because we were all free and loose, but then we didn't think we had a care in the world. But, now everybody's got a care. Most of them have got cars, most of us are on disability now, too many

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psychedelics they say. When they ask me how many acid trips I've had, I tell them that I've had well over a hundred trips.

D: What, a hundred? He has a reputation amongst anybody that has ever lived on any of these communes that have ever did drugs, of taking not only more drugs over the long run, but more drugs at one time.

Q: Wow, it is amazing that you're alive.

C: I mean, I could eat a hundred to two hundred hits of LSD and not bat an eye. You know, it's like wow, hey, this feels good.

D: See I don't know if, if I had come up to Morningstar and Wheeler's, I don't know if I could have handled it, because I think it would have been...I like a little more structure than what all that was. And you know, it ended up that some of the people that lived at Wheeler's and Morningstar did too, they felt that way, but they stayed there, and then went on to school and got Master's degrees, and are doing all sorts of other things now, because they didn't want to just do the party scene, but they didn't want to leave either. So they put themselves through school while living their.

C: What got me one day, is after I went back to school, is I got this letter, and I open it up, and it said, "You are on the Dean's highest honor roll." I went huh? I was astounded. Well, when I was in school, I made F's, D's and F's, and I went from a D, well, they said I was a C student, to within two semesters, I was already up to an A student. I was like, Whoa.

Q: What were you studying?

C: I was taking mechanics courses. I was also learning how to be a diesel mechanic, I'd already been through the automotive program, now I was finishing up the diesel program, and then I had a back injury, and then I got AIDS. Everything kind of went out the backdoor. Big time. Kind of a bummer. But, now that I'm living with it, it's not really that bad. Almost everybody I know that has AIDS right now, the ones that are still alive, said that they wouldn't change anything, if they could change it all over again, they wouldn't, because, it's helped them to get their health back together. I'm getting healthier. I can't believe I weigh 200 lbs. right now.

Q: You look healthy.

C: Oh, I know, it's this new Protiase inhibitor that I'm taking, I promote those things anywhere, because they're doing the job. My friends tell me, laughingly, hey the [unintelligible] poster boy. You know and it's like, whoa, I am. I like being healthy. I like having a lot of weight on.

D: Well, you know it's interesting, cause when I had said earlier that his Mother said he was a totally different kind of person. When he got real sick last year, because he was going to the doctor a lot, they were all calling him by his birth name, and I started noticing him, like, he wasn't like himself. It's like, what's going on? And, when, he got this really high fever one time, and I was trying to distinguish whether he was disoriented or what, and I said what's your name? And, he didn't give me the name Coyote. He gave me his other name, and his last name. And that's not, nobody calls him by that name, except at the doctor's. So, I got this really strong feeling that Paul might have been fine when he was a child because he needed that persona to keep him alive, because he had a pretty miserable childhood. But, that Coyote, was the survivor, even though it was a different kind of survival, because it was very

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spontaneous and very wild, he was the survivor and he's the one who could do it, so I really had to tell all the doctors to stop calling him Paul, and start calling him Coyote. They said we need Coyote here, not Paul, Paul is not strong enough to take care of you, and Coyote is. You know, because, you know, to have that spirit, that lust for life spirit, even though in some ways it's real out of control, like when you're just doing tons of drugs, but meanwhile it can pull you through things, that being more meek and mild and accepting, and tame, can't do for you. I think that kind of fits in with why people don't get naked at the celebrations anymore, as they're out in society and not living there anymore, and working, and doing stuff, that...

Q: So, society kind of puts a damper on that lust for life?

D: Because in so many places you have to compromise, whether it's in school or jobs, but in communes, there's no rules, and no compromise, ever. Except what you're totally willing to do.

Q: How did you get the name Coyote?

C: Well, I was called Wolf, but the way I howled, everybody said hey, you ain't a wolf, you're a coyote. So, I said, hey, you know what, you're right. So, I became Coyote. It was on Ashbury Street Digger Commune. I was on acid when I came to that conclusion. That's me. And, I've never regretted it since. I meet American Indian Natives, and they go, oh, the trickster, and I go what, I ain't the trickster. And they go, no, no, no, coyote. Huh?

D: Even Buddha said that about coyotes.

C: So you know, I just tell people, yeah, I'm the guy that brought the fire from the Gods. Cause that's what coyotes did in the legends.

D: Have you looked through the Morningstar scrapbook?

Q: No, I haven't seen it.

C: Now that was an interesting thing, the Morningstar scrapbook, nobody wanted to take credit to be the author. So I said, hey, what about me? So, I signed on.

Q: Well, the Rainbow gatherings that you guys have been to are communal places in a way.

D: Yeah, it's enormous.

C: That's, that's what I looked like when I was 21.

D: There's even younger pictures of you in there.

C: Yeah, there's a snotty nosed brat in there.

Q: The Morningstar scrapbook, when was this put out? I was just wondering if it has a year in here.

C: I don't know.

Q: Was this a long time ago, or more recently?

D: Oh no, it was in the sixties. Late 60's I think, wasn't it Coyote?

C: What, commune?

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Q: That this was published, put together.

C: Probably late 70's.

D: No! I don't think it was late 70's. You were already at Wheeler's? Were you at Wheeler's when this came out or Morningstar?

C: I was up at Wheeler's. We'd already been running it into the ground trying to figure out...

D: Do you have Peggy and Bishop's name?

Q: I did get their name.

D: Because, they'll help. Peggy is really good with dates.

C: Oh man, Peggy is smart.

Q: Oh, okay, well that's good to know.

C: She's really smart.

Q: I should write that down.

C: Her husband, Bishop, and I were buddy, buddies, back when. Do you have their number on there?

Q: I do, and they live in Sebastapool? Is that right?

C: Yes. No, no, they're not in Sebastapool, that's their mailing address. They're in Guerenville. She could tell you a lot of stuff.

Q: That's good to know, I'll see if I can get in touch with them.

C: The Saltsman's.

Q: Okay, the Saltsman's, I have just Salt's. So you help to put this thing together, then. This scrapbook.

C: I was there during most of that. That was their manifest of their, in the beginning.

Q: With the church and all?

C: No with the ranch itself.

Q: It says the Morningstar faith, and they have....

C: Yeah, that was our faith, a community church. We were real happy with that. You know, a bunch of us doing things, you know, a lot of people got upset about the nudity in it, but hey, that's the way we were, that's how we were living. They even tried talking to students at the local high schools about it. And they were just like, Whoa. The principal came down and took a copy and said "Well, I don't know if this is allowed on the campus." And then the Vice-Principal came down to get his copy, and then one of the other, the main nurse I think, came down and got her copy. So everybody says it's like yakety, yakety, yakety, yak. I was just like, you people are interested in this stuff?

Q: Oh, there's a picture of Ramone. Oh that's wonderful!

C: What's that. Oh that's solar...

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Q: I don't know what he's doing.

C: That's a little thing he designed for making color spots on his eyelids.

D: That's what I said, everybody did major experimentation.

C: Oh, wow, I guess they did put the horses in the backyard.

Q: Now when you left Morningstar to go to Wheeler's, was that kind of the end of Morningstar?

C: No, people were still there, hanging out. But, it wasn't quite the same vibe as it was previously.

Q: Because the police and the city, kind of, prevented....

C: Yeah, they were in there being, they were raining on our parade.

Q: Yeah, did a lot of Morningstar people go up to Wheeler's?

C: A number of them went up there, just cause of the fact that it was more inaccessible. See, there's the phone booth right there. It's neat. You could add money in there if you wanted, you know, but most everybody up there just called collect, or something. I think we were given a certain amount of local calls, too.

D: Well, even, the ranch did that,

Q: Had a phone booth?

D: At one point, they, there was electricity to the water, to the pump, and so they built a little building, and there was like a freezer and a phone, and a washer, and so it was kind of like, you know. And for people it was like really convenient, it was like really luxurious to have that.

Q: Yeah, I'll bet. Because, otherwise, how did you wash your clothes, just like in a creek, or something?

C: No, we'd take it to the laundromat. If you were into washing your clothes.

D: Tell her what it was like when you guys would go to town at the first of the month, since hardly any of you guys had cars.

C: What, at Wheeler's?

D: Yeah, or at Morningstar.

C: Oh man, we'd go on flatbeds, cause that's all we had up there as far as big vehicles. Like a deuce and a half flatbed. Sometimes they'd have steak sides. But, I'll tell you what, I used to be able to roll a cigarette or a joint bouncing up and down the road there on the tailgate, no problem. Even in the pouring down rain. I didn't care. Then, years later, we got a school bus up there, so that's how we all went to town was in the bus. People would look out the window, "Oh, the hippies are in town, yep, here come them Wheelerites."

Q: What did the townsfolk think of you guys?

C: They weren't sure what to make of us, but eventually, we all got along. They started, people started taking their hate from the hippies, and putting it on the gay people up here. Which is a pisser. You know, they're doing the same thing as everybody else, trying to exist.

D: And, you were probably single-handedly responsible for dosing a lot of rednecks.

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Q: Oh really?

D: Getting them to mellow out, about hippies.

C: And these guys were just like, "Whoa, hey, jump back jack!!" And it's like, what the hell are you telling me here? And they're like "Oh, this guy ain't backing down." And it's like, why should I back down from people like you? You know. It's like I said, the way I met a lot of people was the end of our fists. Cause I did not want to be [unintelligible], put us under just because of who I am.

D: But weren't the local people pretty gnarly to the hippies?

C: Oh, yeah. They were real gnarly. But, like I said, they burned down, we had a hippie head shop in the middle of Occidental for awhile, and the townspeople set fire to it.

Q: Whoa.

C: Burned it down because they didn't want "No hippie scum" living in their town.

D: That's what Sonoma county rednecks did to hippies all through the 60's and 70's.

C: Or else beat the hell out of you. They're the old adage they say about bikers, you know, ten bikers on one person. Rat-pack as the term was said. I mean, I got jumped a few times, but I just started swinging and they're all like Whoa, this hippie's fighting. Hey, leave this guy alone. You know, if I'm fighting back, they're thinking, most of the hippies I knew, some of the most outrageous people, they knew martial arts, they knew all these weird things, plus street fighting. So, I got a hell of an education growin' up as a hippie. So, you know, you just can't let people push you around, that's all. A lot of people, don't mind it. I'm just one that never really wanted to be pushed around. I'm a rebellious person, right?

D: Absolutely.

Q: What was the best part of communal living for you?

C: The diversity of humanity. There was people from all walks of life. Every kind of color, we all just got along. You go out into the "real world", you know, and it's like prejudiced everywhere. They're always uptight about something or another. And here we come along happy and carefree and didn't give a shit. Not until years later.

Q: What was the worst part, or the hardest part?

C: Living off of lentils. That was the hardest, to me. It was kind of interesting. Too bad Ramone doesn't have any more of these.

Q: Yeah, it would be fun to get a hold of one.

C: That's the dynamic duo, as they were called. Bill Wheeler, and Lou Gottlieb.

Q: They look good together.

D: Well, you know one thing, like I said about Lou, you know, he's got a lot of friends from back then, and people willing to give him places to live, and yet, at Wheeler Ranch, what had ended up happening, at least half the people who left, said it was because of Bill being a jerk. And, I mean, I never lived there, I didn't have kind of relationship with Bill, but as a landowner, the things that they always complained about were things they though were just, but, it just made sense that he'd ask for those things. But, living there, and having the agreement that it's open land, ad anything goes. To people who make that

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commitment, you can't because your landowner changed rules. Or, make rules all of a sudden, because you want rules. So, there was that problem. I asked Lou, when he made that remark about it coming back to him. Well if it came back to you so well, if it's coming back to you now, why do you think, Bill ended up making lots of enemies, I mean, there were lots of friends, but there were lots of enemies, Lou didn't have that problem. He said that he was 42 when he bought Morningstar, Bill was 24 when he started Wheeler's, so realizing that Bill was only in his early 20's, that totally made sense as to why there became, problems. Because, you wasn't 20 years older than them. People in their 20's go through a lot of stuff.

C: There's another one [picture] of me, taken about the same time, this was taken by Paul Seviant, the head of the narcotics division, found as we were drinking a gallon of red mountain burgundy or something. "Hey you guys mind if we take your picture?" Huh? Who are you? "Police" Oh, then we do mind. "Well, too bad, too late."

Q: So, how did you get a copy of that picture?

C: We just went down to the county courthouse and asked for it. Got a court order, a guy named Rex Sayer, was Sonoma County Superior Court Judge, said, "yeah, that's okay." We had to do that a lot. Then one of our favorite people that was up there, got murdered.

Q: What happened?

C: Well, he just, wrong place at the wrong time.

Q: Would you describe the communes you've been a part of as successful?

C: Pardon?

Q: Would you describe the communes that you've been a part of as successful?

C: For what they were at the time, yes, they were very successful. It pulled a lot of weird people out of the boondocks. And here he goes, we call him Father, Saranjiba, "Why buy hashish when the red mountain is just as good?" He was in heaven out here.

Q: Look at that picture.

D: Was that the headstone? My favorite picture was the one, find that one in there where the cops are at the front gate to harass them, and she, like, never wore clothes, and she went walking, and she was gorgeous, and in her early 20's, and really tan, with dreds, twenty years before dreds. And, she went walking up to the gate with her kid on tit, and they're like dying, because, they really want to look at her. But they gotta not look at her, you know. What did they call her? Their secret weapon? Send her to the gate...

C: Yeah, the divine Mother, there she is.

Q: And that's her greeting the cops?

D: Look at the guys' faces it's so funny.

C: They're like, "oh God,"

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Q: Yeah, look at his eyes, you can see where they are.

C: One time they came up there and Sammy stole everything out of their cop car, everything, including the gun. And the cops are like "what are we going to do?" And we need our stuff back, Hey, do you know how much that stuff cost?" and we're all just like, well, be nice to people and you...it's okay.

Q: Why did you end up deciding to leave Wheeler's? Just got tired of it?

C: Yeah, I was just getting tired of the same ole, same ole, same ole.

Q: After you left, did you ever want to seek out communal living again, or was that phase kind of over?

C: Well, I'd go hang out with the people...

D: Even elsewhere, would you ever want to live communally again?

C: I've thought about it a number of times, if I could, I would.

D: As long as there's like electricity, and TV, and...I don't think you'd want to live like that again.

C: You know, who else is good to talk to is Chaqutah Ed, or Ed Walkingstick wonder.

D: Sky.

C: Sky, yeah, Ed Sky...

D: No, he doesn't go by Ed anymore.

C: Well, he calls himself Sky now.

Q: Chaqutah Ed does? Calls himself Sky?

C: He's still got, I think he's still got lots and lots of pictures. Things like that. Of the good ole days.

Q: Does he live around here?

C: No, he's up in Oregon. Washington area. I'll see him up at the Oregon Country Fair this year, because, he does the morning song and starts the fair.

D: There's a lot of people at the Oregon Country Fair that used to live at Wheeler's.

Q: Well, Tim is going to be up there, so hopefully he'll get to do some interviews with those folks. That would be good.

C: Tell him we're at Booth 195.

Q: Okay, I'll do that.

D: Oh, yeah, and that, Sky, has an, he makes Indian flutes. He has, he built a cart that he pushes through there. There's only one person that walks through the fair that's an Indian that has crafts on.

Q: Okay.

C: Yeah, and just say, "Where's Coyote?" Shit, I don't think he's been to our booth yet. It's kind of hard, like dodging between 10 and 30 thousand people to get to places up there. I think that's what we got up there on a Saturday, no that was on a Friday too, huh. 10,000 on a Friday, and more than that the next two days. So, there's like between 30 and 50 thousand people, from everywhere around the world.

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Q: That's huge.

C: I recommend that anybody that wants to see anything about diversity and alternate living lifestyles should go up there and check it out.

D: In fact, the fair is solar powered. There's no electricity on the property, anywhere.

Q: Really? That's wonderful.

D: They do everything...

C: They build outhouses up there...

D: 100% recycled, it's the largest group of people that do recycling.

C: They've got awards for it.

D: So much of that is from the hippie thing. IN fact, one of the guys, Garbage Mike, would probably be fun to talk to. They call him Garbage Mike because he's the one who organized garbage runs, and dump runs, and recycling runs.

C: Yeah, I used to kick him in the but to get up, Come on Mike, let's go get that garbage man. "I'm up, I'm up, give me a minute or two."

D: He doesn't have a phone, he's a little harder to get to.

Q: Yeah, I think that Lou mentioned him too.

C: Mike Siegler, garbage.

Q: Yeah, he lives in Occidental?

D: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, Lou gave me his Mom's phone number and said his Mom might be able to get me in touch with him.

C: Yeah, she's in San Rafael.

D: We might have a P.O. Box.

C: That's about it.

Q: And, is he likely to be at the fair?

C: No.

D: Well, I don't know, he might, sometimes he shows up there. We never know.

C: He might. Everybody gets, you know, he gets kind of obnoxious sometimes. Always wants to pee in your ear or something.

D: Yeah, he's one of those that has to shock people to get...

C: Alright Mike, put it back in your pants, before you get hurt.

Q: As kind of a final question, if people were going to live together communally, what advice would you give them? What do you think works?

C: Try to get along. Find some common ground where you all can get along together. That's the hard part. But, you know, being young and inexperienced, back in them days was quite a challenge. Cause, all of us have problems from our childhood. I was trying to get out of mine. Cause I grew up in an

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abusive household. I did not like it. That's why I never went home for so many years. But, you know, conscience got the better of me, my wife kept going, "How come you never get in touch with your Mother?" I don't know, I don't know where she is. "Well, where's the last time you saw her?" I don't know, I don't remember. Then just out of the clear blue sky, I thought, I flashed on my Grandmother's name, so I called back East to my grandmother, and sure enough, she was there, and she says "Who is this?" And, I said this is your son, your grandson...blah, blah, blah, blah. "Oh my stars, and garters! Does your Mother know?" No, do you know where I can reach her? Yeah, here, call this number. I called her up and she about fell over in a faint when she found out it was me. Seventeen years is a long time.

Q: Sure is.

C: It was kind of, different.

In, I think it was 1971, or '72, when one of the times Wheeler's got bulldozed, it was about a dozen people I guess that ended up taking any of their money that they had, pooled it, and bought land up in Humboldt county and started commune up there. Which is totally different than any of the communes in Sonoma county, in that they all own it together. Instead of like one or two people own the land, and open it up. And, a few years ago, one of the guys, there died from prostate cancer and it was, you know, they had to hire some lawyers, because it was the first time in all the twenty some odd years that they had any problem with how they had originally set everything up, because they had not put anything in, in case of death. You know, but the way they did it, to solve all problems for the future, is that nobody could ever sell out, all you could do was leave your house and whatever area you squatted on to your kids, grandkids, it has to stay in the family. And that kind of settled any problems of later on, when somebody wants to get out because they want to do something different.

C: You know even when [unintelligible] hung himself,

D: That was somebody else, yeah, I mean twenty some odd years nobody dies, and then in two years three people died. Two from illness and one suicide. It was like very, very weird that they had to fix it the first time, to come up with it. You know, there have been many divorces, but now there's two houses, two sets of families, that's actually what the problem was. What do we do when the ex-wife has her house, and now he's dead, and his new wife and family are in that house, so it's just how to correct the paper work, so it can still stay in without any problems.

Q: Did that commune have a name?

C: HokaHey.

Q: HokaHey? How do you spell that?

C: H-O-K-A-H-E-Y.

Q: Does that mean something?

D: Do you know what it means?

C: No.

D: Peggy probably knows.

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Q: And, so it still exists because they own the land, but it's not a drop-in sort of place.

D: Never was.

C: Well, one of them's a nurse, one of them works at the local hospital. The other one's an artist, he does plays, he acts...he does things for like, N.O.R.M.A.L.

D: The group NORMAL.

C: National Organization for Reformed Marijuana [unintelligible].

D: What you'd asked earlier, have the communes been, I don't remember how you asked it, interactive? These people got involved in the community, up there, and built a school. And, taught at the school, and got real involved in meshing the community with the commune and how it all worked together, in being more full sufficient that way. Because I know some people at Wheeler's had a problem because of the kids. Some of them had to take another house closer to town in order, during the school year, for the kid to be able to get to school all time, cause they didn't have a car. So, there were a lot of problems, some of the people sent there kids to Anonda, to the school up there. Because, you know, that's in walking distance. You know, there was periods of kids all loved it, then when they got to be teenagers, in some ways they hated it, because, you know, they couldn't just like, go hang out with friends because they lived so far away. But, they're all growing up, and they're loving it again. And, that's when they all go back to...One of the kids left at ten, and has been in Oregon, he's been there for a month now, hanging out. Cause he's now like twenty. You know, here he came back to it, because he loves it.

C: It's hard to believe. I met one kid the other day, I changed his diapers, he's 26 years old.

Q: So, they have fond memories of their childhood's?

C: Oh yeah, what kid wouldn't like running around without diapers on, you know.

Q: Well, and there's always lots of other people to play with.

C: Yeah, everybody was really into helping the kids out.

D: Well, and the parents tended to not be the type that totally hovered over the kids. The kids had lots of freedoms, they could visit people a mile and a half a way through the woods, they could go visiting and stuff. You know, so in a way, the kids were really independent, compared to most kids.

C: eah, they want to get somewhere, walk.

D: Where is it? The commune in Laytonville, that the hog farm has.

Q: Oh yeah, Black Oak Ranch.

D: Yeah, they have like a summer camp for kids to come into the country.

Q: Yeah, Camp [Wantarain?]

D: Well, yeah, one of the people there sent their daughter when she was like 9 or ten there, she said she hated it. Her vacation would be for her to go in the city and stay in a house with a shower. Who wants to live in tents an haul water and stuff, and play out in the woods and stuff, when that's what you do everyday.