

Interview with David Baker and Karen Baker

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

October 19, 1995

DB = David Baker; KB = Karen Baker

Q: . . . with David Baker on October 19, 1995, at Dunmire Hollow, Tennessee. David, can you tell me something about your background and the things that led up to you being involved in Dunmire Hollow?

DB: Let's see. Well, I went to college and dropped out of college and wound up in the Navy. I went into the Navy in 1966, got out in 1970 and . . .

Q: Did you go to Vietnam?

DB: Yeah. I wasn't in Vietnam. I was out, you know, floating around.

Q: Oh, right. Okay.

DB: Yeah, I was there in '67, actually, and, then I was in the Navy for four whole years. So, I got out in '70. Went back to college at the University of Illinois in Champagne and didn't stay in college very long. I wound up in the alternative hippie scene there. Wound up working in a garage collective. Learned how to, you know, basically, just learned how to work on cars through working on my own car and, then, once I was in the garage, I just studied on my own, you know, learned how to do it and did that, basically, until '74 when I moved to Tennessee.

Q: Getting back on track a little bit to your Navy time, about '66 to '70, is that about right?

DB: Yes.

Q: So, that was kind of the beginning of the, and maybe the peak, I guess, of the hippie period. Was any of that going on in the Navy or . . .

DB: Well, yeah, but it was real underground. I mean and, really, I didn't I really had to wait until I got out before I could really do anything except, you know, let my hair grow as long as I possibly could, which wasn't very long and stuff like that, you know, and wear wire-rimmed glasses and that sort of thing. I mean, it was all very subtle.

Q: But were you attracted to that?

DB: Yeah. I, you know, the war had been a real turn-off experience. I had gone in thinking, you know, being you know, I'd grown up on the glory of war and, you know, the goodness of America and I believed all that stuff and I enlisted and but it didn't take me very long to realize that, you know, the average American military man was not how he had been portrayed. You know, these guys were, basically, out of control jerks, you know. I mean, not just the young ones but the old ones, too. I mean, the whole American military, at that time I think, you know, looking back, a lot of the problems we had in Vietnam was that the American military had become corrupt and I saw that corruption from, basically, from the worm's eye view, you know, and I was that disillusioned me and, then, you know, of course, all the things that came out about the war that disillusioned everybody else, disillusioned me. I mean, it was one of those deals where you had to decide which side you were on, basically, and I decided fairly early on that I was, you know what side I was on.

Q: Did you know about the scene that was going on in San Francisco?

DB: I basically, stumbled over it. We my ship stopped in San Francisco for 3 days on the way back from Vietnam, which would have been in the fall of '67, November or something like that and I had friends

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there and, so, I got a 3-day pass and, you know, saw Haight-Ashbury, saw hippies, you know. I was yeah, I saw all that.

Q: And was that exciting, interesting?

DB: Yeah. I mean, yeah.

Q: So, you came back from the war, went to Champagne-Urbana to college and, then, joined a garage collective.

DB: Right.

Q: And did you live in a shared household at that point?

DB: I did. I tried. One time I moved into this house just as it was breaking up and, so, I didn't I only lived there a month or two. You know, it was like this it was in the process of exploding when we moved in and, so, we never and, then, I lived later on, I lived in another house for it was less than a year. I never did real well, you know, in big houses packed with people. It wasn't exactly my idea of a great way to live.

Q: Was being part of a collective kind of part of the scene back then? Was that happening a lot around there?

DB: Yeah, there were 15 or so, you know. There were enough that there was a collective that did a community directory of all the collectives.

Q: So, when I interviewed Harvey, he mentioned that some of the original members of this community came from a couple of group houses in the Champagne-Urbana area but you weren't part of that?

DB: I was had been a resident of one of them for a brief period of time, yeah.

Q: Oh, okay, I see, and that's how you met up with the people that moved out here?

DB: Yeah, that, and through the garage collective and just through, you know it was kind of a it wasn't that big a scene. I mean, it's a fairly big university in a middle-sized city, a 100,000 or so.

Q: So, would you have described yourself as part of an alternative scene?

DB: Yeah.

Q: At that point, would you have identified as being a hippie?

DB: Yeah, yeah, still.

Q: Did you grow your hair long?

DB: Not real long 'cause, working as a mechanic, it would get in the way. It was unsafe and I had to, you know, wash it a lot and stuff.

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Q: Yeah.

DB: Yeah, but I still, you know, I had a beard and I, you know, I dressed and I had a VW bus that was orange and stuff, you know. Yeah, I identified myself as one of the freaks, you know.

Q: So, how did you come to move down here? What led to this?

DB: Well, there was a group of people that was kind of coalescing around the idea of getting some land. See, Illinois was that area of Illinois is intensively farmed and, so, the land is valuable as agricultural land. So and it was a university town. So, you know, housing was slummy and expensive and, you know, life was just what not much fun because you were having to pay the man, you know, just for a place to live and, so, the idea of getting some land where we could, you know, kind of let it all hang out, do what we wanted to do and have, you know, have it be cheap was real attractive for some of us and there was this group of people that started having meetings, I think, about once a week on Sundays, I think. It might have been Monday. I don't even know but, you know, it was once a week when people got together and talked about and it was kind of a fluid group, you know. People would come in and out of it and a lot of the people that didn't end up here wound up in California.

Q: Living together or just . . . ?

DB: No.

Q: Individually?

DB: Just, yeah. There was another community that had its that came together in Illinois and, then, they wound up buying land in Virginia but I don't think anything really came of it as a community, per se, and, then, there were other people who moved to a particular area of Kentucky where there was kind of a community-like scene, although I think they pretty much had their own land, you know.

Q: So, was it pretty common, during that era for people to be doing this kind of moving back to land in groups?

DB: Yeah. It was, you know, it was an idea that was abroad in the popular culture and there were songs about it, you know. I can even remember the groups . . .

KB: That book that I told you about?

Q: Yeah.

KB: Is called Do You Believe in Magic.

Q: Okay. I'll have to get hold of that.

KB: Right.

DB: Yeah. It was an idea that was just circulating around and . . .

Q: Why do you think so many people were drawn to that kind of living?

DB: Well, I personally was profoundly alienated. I had come my education was all towards an interest really. Before that, it had all been towards, you know, being a scientist. I was good in math and science and stuff and I figured I would just grow up and get a degree and become a scientist except that, by that

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time, the only people who were doing scientists were the large institutions and I had you know, the government and universities and big companies and stuff and I just by that time, I didn't want to have anything to do with that scene, you know. It was like "the system." We called it "the system" and we hated it and at least, I did, you know. I didn't want to have anything to do with it. It was like a moral imperative to find a way to live that didn't involve cooperation or, you know, furthering the aims of "the system." So, yeah, it was what else can you do except to go someplace and start over, you know?

Q: So, was that almost kind of a mission, an unstated mission of your group?

DB: Well, we used to have endless conversations about what it was, you know, was our mission and did we have one and stuff and we really never we always came up with a blank. We never really agreed. I think that's not necessarily true of all communities. I think a lot of communities, actually, sort of were founded on the basis of a common unifying idea or something but not this community, I don't think. I mean, it was this community was always small. It was always people by people had to figure out how to do it by themselves, pretty much. I mean, we couldn't really lean on each other because none of us had any money and none of us had a whole lot in the way of skills or opportunities, you know. We had purposely moved onto this undeveloped piece of land way out in the boondocks, you know, and people were going to tear down houses for materials to build their houses. People were living in plastic and slabwood shacks, old tent, you know.

Q: How did you get the money to buy the land?

DB: Well, it was cheap for one thing. It was \$37,000 and we needed a \$12,000 down payment and it was we financed it over 10 years and . . .

Q: How many acres is it?

DB: 160. And the down payment was raised by having yard sales and bake sales and people, you know, paying what they could and getting short-term loans from parents and siblings and whatever and we, you know that came together. We got that within a few months, really 2 or 3 months it took us to raise that and that was fairly miraculous because most of us really didn't have. There were 1 or 2 individuals that had some savings and stuff but the rest of us were just living hand to mouth on, you know, low paying jobs.

Q: So, what were you living in when you first moved down here because there weren't any houses on the land, were there?

DB: No.

Q: No.

DB: I was with a woman and the two of us came down here and we lived in a tent through summer and, then, we actually, then, she went and she got into nursing school. She went to nursing school at Columbia State which is like 50 miles from here. So, we went and rented a place in Columbia for the period of time almost 2 years that she was in school. So, we came back here in the spring of '76 and we had \$1,000 or \$1,500 saved up, acquired through various means to whatever and we bought we were probably one of the first people that bought 2x4s and plywood and stuff and built that room and had it

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up with a roof on it within a couple of weeks and moved in, you know. I mean, just lived in a construction zone and what you see is something that's there've been episodic zones happen to make it be like what you see now. So.

Q: How would you describe the architecture of your house?

DB: I don't know. People have asked me that before and I just don't know. It's a cabin in the woods, I guess.

Q: Does it have like three stories? When I ran by today, it looked pretty tall.

DB: Well, it's yeah, it's like a split-level on the first floor and, then, there's a second floor. It's really 2-story but it's 2 levels on the first floor.

Q: Was it built out of salvage materials?

DB: Some. Yeah. Some of it's scrounged, you know, like some of it was bought new from the sawmill, some of it was bought new from the lumber yard, just whatever.

Q: So, were you off the grid here?

DB: Yes.

Q: And what are you using?

DB: Let's see, around 1979, I started experimenting with water power and, until just a few years ago, I was running a small water wheel, which was very small. It was, you know couldn't run a refrigerator or anything like that. It was just lights and the stereo and, then, around . . .

KB: Essentials for hippies, lights and a stereo.

Q: Lights and a stereo.

DB: Then, around 1989, I had a I received a inheritance and I spent part of that on a bunch of solar panels and batteries and a Sunfrost refrigerator and inverters. So, now we have a fairly advanced . . .

Q: So, you have an active solar system?

DB: Well, active passive more refers to heat rather than . . .

Q: Oh, okay.

DB: But this is, yeah, this is electric solar electric.

Q: Solar electric.

DB: Photovoltaic panels.

Q: Okay.

DB: And, so, what I have now is, as far as they go, a fairly high capacity system. I mean, I have a refrigerator and satellite dish and microwave oven.

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Q: Wow.

DB: And all that other stuff. Bright lights.

Q: So, for the first few years, though, you didn't have any electricity, because you said in '79 . . .

DB: Kerosene lamps did a lot. We'd carry a car battery down to the barn and charge it up and bring it back and use it for like a reading light like something like this.

Q: Yeah.

DB: You know and like a car stereo. So, we had tunes all along.

Q: How about water and plumbing?

DB: Fairly early, I did this water system and it's a gravity feed water system with a tank up above the house and, for a while, I filled the tank with a gas-powered pump. Before we had that system, I just had a rain barrel, you know, which, when it rained a lot, we had fairly clean water for washing up but, when it didn't rain much, it'd get scummy and we'd just haul it from the creek. But, then, within it was within 2 years, I had this other system. I use a hydraulic ram, which is a water-powered water pump to keep water in the tank. So, we have water in the house.

Q: Do you have a toilet?

DB: No.

Q: Do you have an outhouse?

DB: Outhouse.

Q: Not a composting . . . ?

DB: Oh, a composting outhouse.

Q: It's a composting outhouse?

DB: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

DB: It's attached to the house. It's like a breezeway between the house and the outhouse.

Q: So, what drives your commitment to energy efficiency?

DB: Well, just I like to tinker. I've always liked you know, that's what drew me to being a mechanic even though I didn't have, you know, the academic training to be a scientist. I've always enjoyed working with my hands. I just like making things. I like tinkering with stuff. I like taking stuff and making it work and, so, the house is right near this creek that runs all the time. It's a year-a-round spring fed creek and I just from even when we were just deciding to build the house, I've always had in the back of my mind of, you know, experimenting with water power and, so, when I got, you know, to a point where I could do it I did it. Sort of worked. It didn't work very well and, then, there came a turning point when I realized I needed more electricity and I was and I had gotten this money and I was,

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actually, toying with the idea of using the money to just build another house closer to the grid. See, where this house is is real far away from the grid. In order to get grid electricity in here would be we'd have to cut down a lot of trees and just open up a big swath through the woods and I just I knew that other people in the community would not want that and I didn't want it. So, it was either build another house in another location on the land and bring the grid electricity to it or, you know, do the solar panel bit, which, you know I mean, there are having lived with it, I can tell you there are, you know it's not as convenient as having grid electricity. I mean, there are times when the sun doesn't shine, you know, and it's, you know and my wife, Karen, now, we've been together 5 years. She's not she's pretty much a technophobe so it's hard for her to understand how the thing works and, you know, in my absence or whatever, it would be difficult to manage the system. So, you know, there's a lot of reasons not to do that kind of thing but, you know, we're pretty much stuck with it at this point.

Q: Do you have hot water?

DB: I did have a hot water system. It worked off the heat stove and I because we've been leaving the house unattended a lot, I just disconnected that system. So, it's now working but it could easily, you know I intend to have it again and she wants available hot water during other seasons of the year. So, we may get one of those demand heaters. But, at this time, we don't have running hot water. We have to heat water on the stove.

Q: And, when you take showers, do you have to go to the community house?

DB: I've got a little cold water shower hooked up to the system. It's an outdoor cold water shower. So, in the summertime, it's easy to just rinse off but, yeah, the rest of the time it's down to the community center. It's about half a mile. It's no big deal.

Q: Yeah.

DB: It's a nice walk.

Q: In the early years, before the community center was built, what did you do for showers and stuff like that?

DB: Well, in the early days, that was a real priority was to get the community center up and running and, actually, by the time we moved here in '76, it was about the time showers were inaugurated and I imagine what a lot of people did was, you know, spit baths and jumping in the creek.

Q: That must have been cold in the wintertime, though.

DB: Yeah. Sure.

Q: Yeah.

DB: And some people worked at, you know, cleaning motels. So, they could go to work and use the facilities there. I mean, different people did different things. There were people who worked at the hospital and the hospital had a little lounge where people could change clothes and take a shower and stuff like that. I mean, people did all kinds of things to get by.

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Q: Yeah. So, can you tell me something about in the early days what daily life was like here, what people did, how you went about your business?

DB: Well, we were real poor. Nobody had much of any money. Probably the best paying job you could get around here would be \$4.00 an hour, you know, stringing fences or hauling hay. I mean, it was just really thin, you know. So, although well, unless you had a nursing degree or some other kind of credentials. You know, I could fix cars and I could, you know I had a lot a skills associated with that, like welding and electrical and stuff like that. So, you know, you just got work wherever you could. There was some construction work available but, you know, we didn't have very many vehicles. We shared you know, we had 2 or 3 trucks that the community and all were shared in different ways and stuff and we used to have weekly meetings where we'd have these endless conversations about dogs and vehicle sharing and we also we had a limited income sharing system during the first few years where we everybody we had this system called the kitty and everybody paid I don't even remember what it was I think it was, you know, around 40 or 50 dollars a week 30, 40, 50 dollars a week, somewhere around in there and everybody paid that much in every week and, then, but, then everybody could take out of the kitty money for their basic living expenses, which included gas to go to town but not gas to go to Champagne, you know.

Q: Yeah.

DB: Which included, you know, margarine but not butter. You know, we used to have these endless conversations about what it included and what it didn't include and that's really what made it fall apart because it just wasn't workable. It wasn't manageable.

Q: So, things were a lot more communal in the early days.

DB: In the earlier days, yeah, we'd . . .

Q: Did you eat together?

DB: During that first summer, we did, yeah. Now, we have a weekly potluck. But that first summer the very first summer the summer of '74, when we were camping out in a tent and stuff, we had an area called the cook tent that we had set up and we had completely communal meals.

Q: So, you cooked out of that tent?

DB: Well, the cook tent was really a, oh, let's see, there were a couple of picnic tables. There were a couple of like slab and plastic shacks that were like for fruit storage and for cooking in inclement weather and stuff.

Q: And what would you cook off of?

DB: I think we had these little propane stoves or kohlman stoves or, you know, I don't even remember.

Q: And what kind of food were you eating?

DB: Most of the people, at that point, were into whole grains, you know, health foodsy stuff but not everybody. I mean, I was a real garbage eater at that time, you know.

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Q: A lot of vegetarian food?

DB: Yeah.

Q: Were there fights at the weekly meetings about food and what was served?

DB: Of course.

Q: Did you have vegetarian versus meateater arguments?

DB: Of course.

Q: Of course. Who won?

DB: The meateaters won and, then, the vegetarians won. I mean, nobody had to do anything that I mean, it was a noncoercive or, at least, there were always enough people, you know if somebody spoke up and said I think we should all blah-blah-blah, there was always somebody who stood up and said, "No, we don't all have to blah-blah-blah," you know.

Q: Yeah.

DB: So, we never really settled into a thing where we all had to blah-blah-blah.

Q: Yeah.

DB: And that's really good as far as I'm concerned because I couldn't have lived in a place that had that heavy a group mentality.

Q: Based on what Harvey told me, it sounds like this community does not have very many rules. Would you agree with that?

DB: Right. In fact, it's been a struggle for us to agree on the rules that we do have because, for a long time, we had this mythology that said well, if somebody comes here and they don't really belong here, they won't be able to get it together to stay here because it was hard to be here, you know, and somebody who was lazy or venile or stupid or didn't have the ambition to do it would I mean, there was one guy who said, "well, I'm going to go to town and get materials to build my house," and he left and we never saw him again, you know, and he was kind of the architype of, whoa, we didn't really think we wanted him here anyway. Good thing he didn't come back and that's how and, for a long time, that's how it was taken care of. We didn't have to kick people out because they took themselves away.

Q: Self selection.

DB: But, then, it got to a point where that didn't happen anymore. Once the community got built up and there were actually houses that these deadbeats could live in, you know, then we had different problems. There was one time in the history of this community where we let a bunch of new people come live here and they were they, actually, outnumbered the old guard and they started fighting with each other and it was and the old guard was didn't have the backbone to stand up to them and, so, for 2 years, it went on like that making it nearly intolerable to live here and I was thinking of ways to try to get out of here, you know, and it was a very uncomfortable time in our history and we, eventually, you

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know, gathered up the stuff to sit down and write some rules and make some people believe they had to follow them and we got rid of some people and things have been better since.

Q: So, what kind of rules did you write up?

DB: Oh, it's . . .

Q: Is it endless?

KB: No.

DB: Do we have a copy of it?

KB: If there's one at the center [unintelligible].

DB: Social we call it our social agreement.

KB: The social agreement. You should get a copy.

Q: Yeah, I would like that.

DB: You should get a copy of that.

Q: Yeah.

KB: He says we're a bunch of anarchists trying to write a constitution. It's kind of hard.

Q: Oh, I'll bet.

DB: Yeah, and it's still and we hopefully we acknowledge, anyway that it's still a process and that, if somebody comes along and looks at our social agreement and says, "you know, I really want to be a part of this but I can't abide by this part of your agreements," then, we'll talk about it, you know. We're open to changing them but we just need something to hold people to, you know, if they start behaving in erratic or destructive ways that we need to be able to say, "Well, look, you agreed to this."

KB: Even it worked out real well with the last person who stayed here for a while and, you know, I mean, there were good feelings. I mean, she went ahead and went on because the agreements were a lot clearer.

DB: Yeah, written down agreements and, you know, really understood agreements about, you know okay, one of them is now that, if you come here to live here, it's with the idea in mind that you're going to become a member of the community. You're not just going to live here and pay rent and be a renter, you know, and, so, if you're here after a certain period of time, you have to get off the dime. You have to make a decision. Either you're going to make a commitment to it or you gotta leave.

Q: What does it mean to be a member? Do you have to buy a membership share? So, what would be the difference between . . .

DB: It's sort of it's nebulous.

Q: . . . being a regular member?

DB: Well, member isn't the word we use. What do we use? We use . . .

KB: Visitor.

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DB: Well, there's visitors and there's provisional residents and, then, there's full-time residents and, then, there's shareholders and it's sort of like this stair step you have to go through to go from one category to the next and, to become a shareholder, everybody else has to really feel like you really made a commitment.

Q: So, you have to get voted in by everybody?

DB: Mmm-hmm.

Q: And it's a consensus process?

DB: Mmm-hmm.

Q: So, can somebody rent a house here?

DB: Mmm-hmm.

KB: If there's one available.

Q: If there's one available. But, after a certain point, after they've lived here for awhile, you would talk to them about becoming moving up on the ladder?

DB: Yeah.

KB: They have to have a sponsor. When somebody comes here, they can't just come here and, you know, show up and say, "I want to live here." They have to have somebody ... somebody needs to take them under their wing and say, "I'll be their sponsor," and make sure that they keep up their agreements. They have to put a make a financial deposit, which . . .

DB: Pay their bills and . . .

KB: Pay their bills.

DB: . . . keep their promises and, you know.

Q: And, then, is there a monthly land tax?

DB: Yeah, they're community payments. It's \$25 a month.

Q: Twenty-five dollars. And what does that go towards?

DB: Fifteen of it goes to the kitty, which is a reduced form of the old kitty system, which, basically, pays utilities on the community center and barn, upkeep of the roads, upkeep of the tractor and garden implements and that sort of thing, their own income and that sort of thing.

Q: Property tax?

DB: No. And, then, the \$10 goes to a fund which covers things like the property taxes and a fund that's used for capital improvements like, you know, additions.

KB: The porch on the center.

DB: The porch on the center and stuff like that. You know, there are gray areas. I mean, sometimes, if there's a lot of money in the kitty and not much in the other account, we'll slush some over.

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Q: Now, you guys don't live here full-time, now, right?

DB: Right.

Q: Is that because of work or school or something or . . .

DB: Well, I met Karen 5 years ago and she has a son who's now a senior in high school. So, he was like 13 at the time and she has a job and a life in Nashville. So, it started off with us just getting together on weekends and but it's gotten much more than that 'cause, in '92, we bought a fixer-upper house in Nashville. So, we've got a tenant upstairs, now. So, we're landlords and there's still a lot of work to be done on the house and she's 1 year ago she started this much more demanding job, which has kept us in Nashville a lot kept me in Nashville a lot more. It used to be I could get away during the week and come down here and do stuff but, now, she really depends on me a lot more to do household stuff because she doesn't really she can't get away even to do the grocery shopping or . . .

Q: Wow. So, when your son is out of the house, is your goal to kind of move back down here?

KB: Mmm-hmm.

DB: Yeah. We'll have the house. We'll have 2 rental units in the house plus a small apartment that we can stay in when we're in the city and the rent will cover the mortgage plus several hundred dollars a month.

Q: What draws you back down here?

DB: I just want to get out of the rat race. I was out of the rat race for 20 years and I liked it and I want to get back out of it. I mean, she's in the she's the one who's really in the rat race. I just I'm sort of semi in it.

Q: What do you do?

DB: Well, I work on the house and I do a lot of cooking and shopping and cleaning and stuff. Then, I try to keep up with things here, which I'm not being very successful at and, you know. I repair all our vehicles, which now there are 3 in the family, now, and, you know, we've got 5 air conditioners and 2 refrigerators and a washer and a dryer, you know.

KB: We couldn't do what we I don't make very much money. So, we couldn't do what we do if he couldn't do everything. I mean, we put it we took the upstairs of our house and he gutted the whole thing and made an apartment a nice two bedroom apartment for \$5,000 and we couldn't have done that if he, you know, he scrounged a lot and stuff.

DB: Yeah, it would have cost us \$30,000 if we'd have paid a contractor to do it.

KB: But, even if, you know, if you weren't so good at finding things cheap, we still would have had to pay a lot more just for materials.

DB: Right.

KB: And I just my plan, before I met David was to get my son through high school and move to a community in the country and I knew I thought I would either live on the Farm or there's a place in East Tennessee where everybody owns their own land but it's a community, really, and 'cause I knew that I wanted to be in the country but I also knew I had lived on a farm in a real small town as a child and I

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know how provincial people can be and I didn't want to be by myself in the country. I wanted to be in a community. So, when I met him, it was like . . .

Q: Whoa. It's coming together.

KB: It was kind of too scary because it was like so perfect. I didn't want to just love him because I wanted to go here, you know.

Q: Oh, that's great. That's great. So, Harvey said there's a lot of kind of absentee I don't know what you want to call it a lot of people not living here right now.

DB: Right.

Q: Is that a problem for the community?

DB: Yeah. Oh, I was back here a couple weeks ago and had to run off some diggers. People were digging up roots in our woods.

Q: Why?

DB: Well, there's a market for them, you know, you can get cash for I mean, ginseng is . . .

Q: Oh, ginseng. Oh, okay.

DB: But they weren't digging ginseng, but they were digging I mean, there's other stuff. There's, actually, with the popularity of medicinals is sort of growing again and, plus, our worldwide markets, they're, you know because of the you know, we're getting so global these days. Anyway, there's a whole list of things that there's a market for and these sleazoids came onto our land and was digging in, you know, in our woods and made me real mad and the fact that there's fewer people around it's harder to keep folks a couple of people at bay.

Q: Makes you vulnerable?

DB: 'Cause if they come into your woods and dig your roots, they'd come into your house and take your stereo or whatever, you know. Why not?

KB: Plus it's harder to keep a community going when well, like sometime well, like you've been here when there hasn't even been a potluck.

DB: Right.

KB: There aren't enough people to have a potluck.

Q: Wow. Yeah.

KB: And trying to get somebody new like there's just basically, right now, 4 people who could take on somebody new as a sponsor: Barbara and Harvey or Nancy and Steve and Nancy's so busy and Steve . . .

DB: Steve wouldn't want to.

KB: You know. So, it's a problem not having I mean, I really want to get here if I can.

DB: Yeah. But, on the other hand, there's probably there's more people there was a time when there were at the low ebb of this community, there was Harvey and his woman had left him, so it was just him. It was just me. There was Andy, who was just Andy, and there was Linda, who was just Linda and

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her child, Elma. So, there was a time when there was 4 single adults and 1 child living here. So, you know, people moan and groan about this place being a low ebb and there not being enough energy to do everything and stuff and I remember those times and I . . .

KB: That's true and we have Tharrin (?) and Penny and Tazio and Anna coming back.

DB: Right. So, one of things, you know, I've learned from living here is that things are cyclical. Things, you know, if you, you know, in politics, people say, "Oh, if you just if we follow the current trends, oh, no, world disaster will happen." Well, the current trend never continues forever because things are cyclical, you know, and people respond to things and, if it gets to where there's not enough people here, well, there's a lot of houses here and, you know, houses create an empty house creates a kind of a vacuum that people will find again.

Q: Wants to fill.

DB: Right.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

DB: You know. So. But it takes a certain kind of person who wants to live this way, you know. Some people need the stimulation of being able to go down to the corner 7-11 at any time of day or night. I don't need that but some people do.

KB: We have that in Nashville.

DB: We have it in Nashville.

Q: How has life changed let's say, comparing life now to life in the early '70s, what's different?

DB: I'm older.

Q: Yeah.

DB: I'm seeing certain effects of that like my vision is not what it used to be. In fact, that's what motivated me getting more electricity is the realization that I needed more light to be able to see what I was doing. I've got you . . .

DB: You know, it's a real hassle living two places but it's really worth it. I complain about it a lot.

Q: Well, what's changed about the community, though? How is it different from the early '70s? You mentioned . . .

DB: Well, everybody's getting older, you know. The kids grew up, you know.

KB: Do you think it's softer, now? I mean, softer meaning like easier.

Q: Posher?

KB: Right. Easier to like . . .

DB: Well, yeah, it's more comfortable. Yeah, we were you know, in the very early days, we were you know, comfort level was a daily struggle but, you know, now I got a, you know, got a satellite dish and a La-Z-Boy, you know, a microwave and a refrigerator. I mean, I lived over 10 years without any refrigeration here. I'd have a . . .

KB: I told him I said, "I don't know how interested I would have been in living here if you hadn't had a refrigerator.

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Q: Without a refrigerator.

DB: I mean, for a while, I had a kerosene powered refrigerator but it just made the house stink from kerosene fumes and, so, I got rid of that. I would haul ice in the summer and leave stuff outside the door or on the floor in the winter. We got by okay. But it's nice to have a refrigerator. I mean, yeah, the comfort level the level of, well, of prosperity, you know, like I can make a pretty good wage working in the woodshop and I don't have to leave Dunmire Hollow, you know. So, that, you know, just developing, you know we're not callow 20-somethings. We're experienced. I just turned 50.

Q: That's right.

KB: What about the relationships with people? With the community members? Can I ask him this?

Q: Yes, please. Please do.

DB: Well, you know, with people you've known and worked with for 20 years, you know, like between me and Harvey. We don't even need to talk that much. We just I mean, we do we talk from time to time but long periods of time will go between when we really sit down and have a heart to heart about things. So, a lot of it's just doing stuff together and we work together real well and I think that, you know, there's a synergy between the 2 of us, by me being gone well, he was gone a lot when Barbara when he first met Barbara and she was living and working in Nashville and, now, it's my turn to be gone a lot and it sort of it does interfere with, you know, how prosperous our business is and stuff 'cause there is a synergy between the 2 of us that doesn't when either one of us is working on our own is not as it's not as juicy or it's not as affective or whatever as when we're working together.

Q: So, you also do cabinetry?

DB: Yeah. I'm a partner Harvey and I are partners in the woodshop business.

Q: Okay. You didn't mention that part when I asked you what you did, I don't think.

DB: Oh, did you ask me what I did?

Q: Yeah.

DB: I probably, yeah. Well, see, I'm not doing that much. I mean, it's something that's . . .

KB: He makes porch swings. He makes . . .

DB: I make porch swings. We do, you know, projects together and he does and we do projects on our own, too.

KB: One thing that I really attracted me to David was that he had wonderful friends and, to me, that was real unusual in a man and I think that's part of comes from, partly from, living in community. You're really, you know, in close contact and, yet, you're not in the same house. I think that probably helps the friendship a lot.

Q: Yeah.

DB: Yeah, see, in our early experiments in living together, it was like, you know, people would throw horrendous fits because somebody didn't clean the bathroom. Well, you know, I don't think it's fair to get mad at somebody for what they didn't do.

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KB: He's all the time saying that to me and I say . . .

DB: I mean, if I say I'll do something or if I know that I have a commitment to do something and I don't do it, that's one thing but, you know, to just have somebody get mad at you because you didn't do something, well, there's a hundred millions that you didn't do. Why should somebody get mad at you for that one thing, you know. That's arbitrary. Anyway, those kinds of disputes arise when people live too closely together and I think that, you know I've always needed my space and I, you know, I've always needed to be able to have, you know if I want to put up solar panels in my front yard and have to cut down a bunch of trees so that the sun will shine on them, I don't want to have to go around and ask everybody's permission to do that, you know. I did mention to people that that's what I was going to do and nobody said, "Well, gee, I don't think you should do that." But, if somebody had said that, we probably would have had a pretty good, old set-to about it because, you know, one of the reasons I've felt comfortable living here is that I feel like I have autonomy over my own life and, you know, a lot of people wouldn't want to live in a community because they'd say, "well, I don't want to have to," you know, "have everything I do be," you know, "subject to the decision of a committee," and stuff. I feel like there's a certain area of things that I can do and I don't have to I may have to get my wife to go along with it but I don't have to get everybody in the community to go along with how I arrange the furniture in my house [unintelligible] even with the house. I mean, we don't . . .

KB: When we built the addition to the house . . .

DB: I mean, in a regular in Nashville, you have to get a building permit if you want to screen in your porch, you know. I mean, we don't have that kind of bureaucracy here.

KB: He has he's always said that this community runs on doer's choice. I mean, if you're going to do something, you do it the way you've you think is best to do it, usually, unless it's . . .

DB: Unless somebody else wants to come along and do it with you and have their say about it.

KB: Or unless it involves community land like cutting down all the bushes around the pond.

DB: Right. Yeah.

Q: I get the impression someone's tried that.

KB: Someone did it.

Q: Oh, God. Oh, wow. Yeah.

DB: Yeah, right. If somebody wanted to go if somebody decided that they wanted to tear out a wall at the community center and just went ahead and did it without checking it out with people, then that would be a problem but, if they want to do it in their house, it's not a big deal.

Q: A lot of the early hippie communities and back to the land movements didn't last very long.

DB: Right.

Q: In fact, I guess most of them probably blew up pretty quickly. How come Dunmire Hollow's lasted so long?

DB: I've always thought it was because we were a 100 miles from the nearest we were farther from a source of good jobs than you could commute to. A lot of these communities I know about people would, you know, if it was within 50 miles of a job, they'd get a job and start commuting 50 miles and,

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then, after they got burnt out on commuting 50 miles, they'd move. Well, here, it was no possibility. If you wanted to get that kind of a job, you had to move first and, so, it made people kind of keep their nose to the grindstone and figure out a way to live closer to home and develop skills that you needed to, you know, survive [unintelligible] and we had people like Harvey who is, you know, just an exceptional individual who made the investment in the woodshop and, then, the woodworking, even though, you know, he's got a PhD in mathematics and, you know, I wasn't, you know at the time, I was a mechanic and I was moving into, maybe, doing some carpentry but I didn't conceive of myself as being somebody who had the patience or whatever to do that kind of fine woodworking that he does and it was but he went ahead and built the shop, you know, and several years later, you know, he came to me and said, "would you like to collaborate with me on this project," and I said, yes. So, that's our partnership grew out of that. I was glad to have the woodshop to go down and saw off wood in but I just didn't see myself as being a furniture maker at that time.

KB: You know what else that you know what else is that he is like one of the most stubborn people that I've ever met. Harvey's not real stubborn. At least, I haven't observed that but you are and Linda is.

DB: Yeah.

KB: Linda's very stubborn and, also, something else, you and Harvey, Linda and Steve and Nancy all come from large families. Large, loud families.

DB: Andy. Andy.

KB: Andy. Andy, too. Large, loud at least, his family's loud and the Kubek's are loud. I don't know about Harvey's family.

DB: Yeah.

KB: Large, loud families where, you know, where you, you know, you had disagreements and you had to shout them out. I think that may have had something to do with it.

DB: Yeah. Right and, maybe, people weren't comfortable with that dynamic mode. Yeah, run away. That's interesting. I've never thought . . .

Q: So, in a sense, you're family background prepared you for living in community?

DB: That's very possible. I, you know . . .

KB: I never thought of that, either, but just thinking . . .

DB: You're right.

Q: Do you see yourself growing old here?

DB: Absolutely.

Q: I guess, just in closing, you've been involved in this community for quite a few years. How would you reflect upon that time? I know that's kind of a broad question but . . .

DB: I think if the physical environment had not been so special, you know, just this land. If this land had not been so special that the community might have broken up, too. It's like there's times when the community wasn't going very well or wasn't very strong or wasn't, you know, wasn't was struggling or stumbling or whatever but just being able to live in this environment was, you know kept me here. I mean, really, in our day-to-day living, we don't really spend that much time together, you know. This house is pretty isolated from the rest of the houses in the Hollow, you know. I couldn't, you know

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people don't stop by here very often, you know, but I like it, you know. I like being back here next to the creek and away from a lot of hustle and bustle. Like I say, I like living outside of the rat race. I like being able to wake up in the morning and decide what I'm going to do that day. I don't like being I mean, look at that book she's got. That rules her life.

KB: It doesn't get in here, it gets forgotten.

DB: And the community but the community's very important because I don't think I could have stayed here for 20 years without that cocoon around me, you know, of, you know, somebody to talk to when I needed to talk to somebody, you know, or somebody to borrow a tool from. Somebody to give a hand to or get a hand from. Some, you know just, you know, the shared effort of, you know, having a nice community center, a shop, all that kind of stuff 'cause that is really enriching. If I had to do all that stuff, you know, unto myself or unto my family or whatever, I could do it. I mean, I know a lot of people who've done it and it's not a bad lifestyle but, really, living in a community, it's made it easier. We can have we have more land more better land than we could have had if each one of us had tried to go out and buy 10 or 15 acres.

Q: Well, great. Thank you.