

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Well, what we're doing is really just trying to record what happened and, as that brochure says, we're really focusing on '65 to '75 -- things that were created then. So, I guess for openers, I'd be curious to know how you came to the idea of starting this kind of project. I mean, obviously, there was a lot of energy in that direction around, at the time, but is there some particular thing that got you going?

A: Well, I think the major impetus that continued our interest was the first Earth book (?), 1970, I think, someplace around there.

Q: I think that's right.

A: So, we had been thinking about changing our lifestyles so that we were living more sustainable. At the time, we were living in Philadelphia. If ever there's a non-sustainable city, there's one and, it was interesting, we did a whole analysis of what would happen if any two of the, I think we figured out, seven systems went down at one time in that city and, then, in late '70-'71, I went to an American Friend Service Committee Conference that they have every ten years to re-evaluate their programs to see what they need to let go of and what the future holds that they need to be involved with. Someplace, during that time -- it's always a bit difficult to try and describe -- it became very clear to me that I was supposed to start a community and I didn't know anything about - I mean, this was not something I had ever thought about. I didn't know anything about them. I'd never been in one. I'd never known anyone who'd been in one and, so, I came back home after that conference and started talking to people to who lived in our house or lived near us or were in the Service Committee or whatever and we had about nine months in which we sat around every Sunday night. There was a group of us that met every Sunday night to decide what kind of community we were talking and we set up some criteria and, then, started looking at the geography and political climate in different places in the United States. We considered Canada and decided that wasn't right - that the problems in the United States were ours -- that we needed to take responsibility for. So, I'm trying to think what the month was. I think it must have been October, maybe. A bunch of us, six of us, took our vacations together and we had decided, by that time, someplace in Oregon, near Eugene, and we flew out and started looking for places. A friend of ours' father was a real estate man and, so, we stayed with them when we were here and he took us all over and, then, through a series of circumstances, we heard about a place on the other side of the hill where a Friend had bought a little valley. So, we called and asked if we could come out and see if there was any property left in his little valley. So, we came out one day and he said, well, he'd bought everything that was in that section but he'd heard that across the hill there was a farm for sale and, so, we came over and took a quick look at it and went back to Eugene and got a real estate person because, otherwise, we would have aced him out of his commissions. So, we were very careful not to do anything -- just look at it. I think our family brought him out the next day. That was the next to the last day we were going to be here. It was named Alpha before we ever bought it. It was named Alpha in 1912 or something like that. It was a post office. The living room of the farm house was the post office for this area and we had some post marks around 1914. So, we came back the next day and were here about an hour -- went in and signed the paper.

Q: What was here, the house and the barn - the big barn?

A: The big barn was here. That was here -- let's see, there's nothing on this side of the creek. We built all that. The cottage was there. Only, the cottage that you see out there was the chicken coop, which

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

we converted. The auto shop, which is up this way was the tramp shed. That got converted. We took down some structures, small structures, that were pretty fallen down. The man who owned it -- it's only had three owners, the Swansons and the Kellers and Alpha had a bad back injury. He was a woods person but he couldn't keep up the farm. So, he had to sell it.

Q: How big is it? How many acres?

A: 280 acres.

Q: Is that what it was?

A: No, it was 360 acres and he was in court with a dispute with somebody who wanted, actually, 120 acres and he couldn't sell it because he had a loan with the government and you have to pay off the whole thing in order to sell any piece of your property and he couldn't have done it. So, the person had taken him to court. So, in order to settle that, and get clear title, we agreed to sell 80 acres of the 360 to Miguel. So, we were originally were going to buy 360. So, our neighbor to the north [unintelligible].

Q: Well, that was, what . . . ?

A: '72.

Q: That you actually bought it. Then, did you move out immediately?

A: Somebody came out in fact, our birthday is April Fools day, which we think is very appropriate. So, Linda came out first. She drove across with two dogs in the back and, then, flew her cats out and in a VW -- and she had learned to drive a week before she started. In Philadelphia, your driving test is never on the street. It's just in a loft. So, we had her call home every night to be sure that she was okay and, then, after Linda, the Williams came and they were from Yellow Springs. They're both now dead but they were here a long time and, then, came a couple who really weren't real sure they wanted to be with us. In fact, when we decided to go to a common community in the first year, they left. They didn't want -- we recognized, after we were here a short time, either we were going to pool everything we had, or we were going to lose it all.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, because '72-'73 was some very bad years and the only thing that really saved us was that we got a contract. We -- this is a whole 'nother story. Glen, who was the last person who came out from the original group, was at the post office, one day, and saw a Notice for Bidding for a mail route and he brought it home and he said, shall we do this and we said, sure. We didn't [unintelligible] what we were doing. So, we bid it and we got the contract and we've had it ever since. So, 23 years -- 22 years, actually.

Q: And the post office went for that? It seems like to have a communal group -- it seems like flies in the face . . .

A: It's in my name . . .

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: I see.

A: And, at that point, I was bondable.

Q: Oh, okay. Okay.

A: So, you don't have to have bonds, I don't think, anymore, but you did at that point and I was bondable.

Q: So, that became your initial economic underpinning?

A: That became our salvation.

Q: Now, that can't be that much money for supporting a whole group.

A: \$2,000. Well, it wasn't that. It was \$1,500, probably.

Q: A month?

A: Mmm-hmm. We lived very simply, very simply. We got \$1.00 a week as an allowance. We tried, back then, a whole bunch of different things that didn't work very well that, since, have become very successful other places. We built driers -- food driers. We built looms and the person who was the builder of the loom left. That was the couple that didn't stay. He went on to be very successful. His wife is [unintelligible] and they have another whole story to tell after they left here. We tried to grow worms. Oh, later on, we contracted with East Wind to construct sandals that they have, you know, their sandals and we did that for a while but we never -- the mail route has always been our underpinning, plus the store. Now, we started the store route six months after we were here because we didn't want to be known as the strange people up the road and there was no way anyone was going to come to meet us here. So, we opened the store with \$600 -- all of the -- everything. Fortunately, we got given the store to use for the first two years with no rent. So, that was nice. Glen Hovemann(?), who was here, his family moved out to Mapleton from Minneapolis to be near him and they bought that store and gave it to us for two years free and, then, we bought it from him, eventually.

Q: Oh, so you own the building?

A: We own the building.

Q: Oh, that's nice.

A: Yeah. [unintelligible] Have you been there?

Q: Yeah. We ate lunch there, today.

A: Oh, good. Good, you know. First, it's really interesting to look at the first years and now because we couldn't do it with the people today. There is a different expectation that people have. I mean, we started out working 12 hours a day, seven days a week. We quickly learned why you do have a day off. We did learn that very early but we continued up until, oh, I don't know, the first four years or five years working, pretty much, a ten hour day, five and six days a week, at least, and that didn't include prep for dinner and dishes or milking or the long days at the store. We kept the store open until 11 and 12 o'clock at night. This is not the current idea of people today. They want an eight hour day.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: [unintelligible] Well, you probably can get along with that today, though.

A: Well, we can and we do and we're still not doing things that we need to do, though, I mean. So, it's -- it depends on how you want things to be around here. It's like, today, all our cars went down but one. So, if we were doing things correctly, we would be doing maintenance so that that didn't happen. The mail cars always are okay but the other cars, our general cars, three or four of them went down today -- three, three went down. So, we're not doing the maintenance that we should be doing on them in order not to have that happen and we survive. Like, recently, Jim was, because he's retired, at one of his birthdays they gave him a car that's his. It does not belong to the general big fleet. So, but we had to use it today to send Amber down to the store -- to open the store. But, if we were doing things correctly, we wouldn't have our cars go down. So, yes, we live a very middle class lifestyle in many ways.

Q: Some ways.

A: Many ways. Many ways. There's very little that we don't have that we would like. I mean, that people would like. We have people who have special soaps that they get. They're quite expensive. There are people who have selected and elected to drink soy milk and rice cream and they're not cheap.

Q: Yeah. But, still, I bet just dividing it all up you're not spending what a middle class suburban family is per person.

A: Oh, no. We're probably \$250 per person per month.

Q: That's not, in American terms, wild luxury.

A: No. Oh, we're not luxurious. I don't think we're luxurious at all and we're pretty damn comfortable. We don't have television.

Q: That's a rule?

A: That's a rule. There's no television. There is a VCR and a television at the store that people can go watch, whatever they are, videos down there but they can't come home except if you poll the whole house and they feel it's okay for it to come home for a special occasion but, in general, it does not live here, at all. For a long time, we didn't have anything. This is only like two years ago --- two years ago when somebody gave it to us. So, we had a big to-do about whether to throw it away or give it to Goodwill or what to do with it. So, but, back then, and, now, today, we have \$50 a month for spending money.

Q: You used to get, what did you say, \$1.00 a week?

A: \$1.00 a week. We've had \$1.00 a week for quite a while, in fact, and, then, it went up to \$5.00 and it stayed there quite a while and, then, I think it went to \$15 and, then, \$25 and, then, we doubled it and that's what I think [unintelligible].

Q: I think that's about right, yeah. I remember that. Twin Oaks is not too much more than that, I think.

A: Right. So, that's where it went. I think it's just interesting. I would say, as our income expectations went up, our work productivity went down and I think our culture has a lot to do with who's coming to

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

the community, right now. People are coming out of an instant gratification, with fairly high level middle class expectations. A lot of people who come here who have some, if not, completed college, have degrees and the idea of being out in the woods chopping for ten hours a day is not their ideal.

Q: Is that right? Now, for me, that's still an attractive idea.

A: Yeah, I know, and for me, too. I mean, I work long hours and enjoy it. I don't consider it being -- and, after being in Israel, I don't even use the word work, anymore. I mean, in being in the Kibbutz and listening to the extraordinary things that they do as just as a matter of course, not some big push, but just as a matter of course, I'm just reluctant to use the word work, anymore. When I was at [unintelligible] and the Rabbi woman, who did the bar mitzvah -- I saw her. I was having breakfast with her husband the next day and she came in and he asked her how she was and she said, well, I'm a little tired but I'm okay. I had to get up at 5:30 to go and weed my cotton row and I looked at him and he said, oh, yes, everybody, all the adults down to a certain level of the children have a long row of cotton that they are responsible for over and above their work and they have to weed it and take care of it and water it and all and each one of those rows is worth 400 shekels.

Q: So, you've got to make it?

A: So, at 5:30 in the morning they go and do . . .

Q: That's work.

A: I mean, you know, and they had -- how many do they have -- I guess that they have 200. But, of those, my guess is 50 or 60 are underage children. So, they have 150, say, rows of cotton at 400 shekels a row, you know, that's going to pay for something.

Q: That's a big item for them.

A: That's a big item. That's over and above what [unintelligible]. So, you know, I just sit and I think, we're pretty spoiled. We're just pretty spoiled and, still, we have a beautiful place. We seem to be fine. We have good health, in general. No one is sickly. We eat well. It's very different than it was in the beginning. Very different.

Q: Sounds like it.

A: Very different.

Q: You mentioned these original people were largely Quakers.

A: No.

Q: Oh, is that not . . .

A: Not Quaker.

Q: Okay.

A: They were associated with Quakers but Jim and I, I think, are the only two card carrying

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Quakers. Glen was doing his alternative service at the Service Committee. So, he's sort of a fellow traveler. Linda lived with us in our house in Philadelphia -- Linda Williams -- and the Williams, who came from Yellow Springs, went to meeting but I think they were really Unitarians but they had gone to meeting quite a bit and, let's see, the Sweats(?) -- no, I think you're right, the Sweats were Quakers. They are the couple, the weavers and loom builders, that left after we decided to be a [unintelligible] community.

Q: I just am curious to what extent you think was -- I mean, would saying that it was Quaker inspired in some way, would that be a fair characterization?

A: Yeah, it is. Well, and our basic practices are Quaker.

Q: Well, consensus decision-making certainly smacks of it.

A: That's right. Right. No, it is. Non-violence is a basic tenant here. No guns are allowed on the property, at all. Violence is not allowed and is worked with if it appears. Simple living, which is another Quaker principle. Respect for each other in a very real sense is practiced here a lot. So, yes, it's based -- I'm sure it's based on Quaker principles and, therefore, has that background but we've never been a Quaker community in a sense of, you know, everybody being Quaker. We've had Quakers who've come and gone. In fact, we have a Quaker family right now who is thinking about coming and visiting to stay -- a family of six.

Q: Okay. Beyond that, is there anything that you would characterize as a guiding ideology or something, that is, as close as there is to something?

A: Yeah. Do you have the early article that was in Communitots (?) -- the first volume of Community Magazine?

Q: Was there more than one issue of Communitots?

A: I think there were two.

Q: I have one copy, so I don't know.

A: Because Glen's article on us is in there. It was right at the time we were deciding to come out here and, I think, still is really good and he ended up -- I think the last sentence, or something, very close to it is "We'll live ourselves into the future" was kind of a concept. We knew that we knew so little about what we were addressing, which was, basically, we looked at the situation growing somewhat out of the Earth Day that we were so far off track in this country that we didn't even know where the track was to get on to -- that we were all city people. We decided to go to the country because we felt cities were so distracting that we could be easily distracted from what we wanted by living in the city and that's why we decided to go to the country. I think that's still true. So, we didn't start out with a great big blueprint because we didn't know how to draw it, basically. We had some general ideas and we had some general thoughts like non-violence, respect for each other. Just a little thing - ever since we started the store, we have a policy against taking identification on checks.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Really?

A: It's a policy that says we do not do that.

Q: You just take checks and that's it?

A: We trust people. That either the check is good or it's not good and a piece of plastic's not going to make any difference.

Q: In Garberville, California, [unintelligible] or something like that and we were short on cash, a woman took our Kansas check and specifically didn't ask for - I mean, specifically said she wanted it. We asked, "Do you want ID?" "No," she said. "I believe in trusting people," and she said "You know, I don't have a problem with it."

A: We don't either. Twenty-three years, we've probably had 23 checks not make it.

Q: That's amazing.

A: Yes, and I think it says a lot. People say, "Well, you have a self-selected clientele." Anybody walks in that store. I mean, we have checks from all over the country.

Q: Yeah, sure, there are all sorts of travelers going through there.

A: Right, that are going through there. So, anyway, that's an indication of what felt something had gone wrong. There's a trust level in this county -- that it has disappeared and had, then. I mean, it's not just today but was doing it then and this was kind of our way of -- now, there are a number of places in Eugene that do not ask for identification.

Q: Well, that's wonderful. It sounds like, maybe, the country is changing a little.

A: Right. Well, and Oregon is different -- different state of mind. So, what else do you need?

Q: Well, let's see. What else? I have a whole list of things. I should give you one of these and you could look at it. We need to talk a little bit about food and stuff. What about organization of work? Did you early start on with a calendar schedule of jobs listed?

A: No, what we started, oh dear. No, what we started out with was every Monday night we got together and had a list of things that had to be done and we took like from four to six hours deciding who was going to do what and, remember, these are all city people and, then, we'd arrive at whatever dates a project was going to happen and we wouldn't have the materials. So, it took quite a while for us to get organized so far as work was concerned. We had a lot of people who worked hard but we weren't organized. Some things that we did have together. Everybody cooked dinner or breakfast. Everybody cleaned house. Those were general assigned -- everybody was assigned to those every week. So, you cooked one dinner and one breakfast and you did housekeeping. We had a number of interesting experiences with the men, who didn't think they should have to cook.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Really?

A: But they did and we said, you don't cook, we don't eat your night and, then, what they cooked, we didn't necessarily want to eat. Anyway, we stayed with it and that's still true. Everybody cooks and everybody cleans, also.

Q: Good policy.

A: Yeah. This was in '72. A little before the women's movement. Let's see, what else. We did in -- oh, I've forgotten when it was. Let's see, it was in the second or third year, a man came to visit Linda from Rhode Island?

Q: He knew her in Providence where they [unintelligible]. [unintelligible] at Rhode Island and she was in school.

A: Yeah. He was a professor of economics and he came to visit her and, for a week, and stayed five years and he helped us put together the way that we still do planning. We have teams and committees and we have -- we used to have, we haven't re-instituted this recently -- we will -- a yearly plan that was put together in December and January from information that came through the teams to the committees and the committees to the house, including how much money and how many hours we're going to need for different projects and, now, we have [end of side one].

Q: . . . a weekly plan for every person here.

A: It's on there and what you're going to do during the week.

Q: So, it's pretty much all day you have a job, then, it looks like.

A: That's right. Everybody works five days a week, except, when you're 65, you go down to four days a week. No, when you're 60, you go down to four days a week and, when you're 65, you go down to three and, when you're 70, you're off the plan.

Q: And do people pretty much just fall into line and do what they're supposed to do and stick with it?

A: Well, you have the right to say to the planner I don't want to do this and planner will try and accommodate you. In general, people sort of are in the areas that they want to be. We figured for a long time and this is not true very much anymore that, if you got to do what you wanted to do 50% of the time, you were ahead of the game.

Q: Yeah. I see you've even got the cars all scheduled on here.

A: That's right but you see, when all three of 'em go down, you have a problem. Esmerelda's radiator went out. Big Red's radiator went out and Baby Blue's brakes went out.

Q: That's serious stuff.

A: That's serious stuff.

Q: So, you have people who are car mechanics?

A: Will has just pulled the two radiators and is taking them down.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: I see.

A: Now, interesting story in the beginning, to just how -- we, we do know a little more than we did. We had the tractor that we inherited with the place. The first year we had it, we left it outside during the winter and water got into the motor and, so, we took it in. Now, remember that we had very little money. So, we took it into BMR, which is the [unintelligible] Ferguson place and they repaired it and it was \$112. That was a lot of money. We brought it back, put it in -- three months later, we left the tractor out in the rain -- \$112. That's the last time we left the tractor out. But it's -- I think it's indicative of how green people are when they go to community. We were and, as far as I hear the tales, so were a lot of other people at that time. [unintelligible]

Q: You know, this is a classic story that you go back to the 19th century communities, you know, Oneida(?), and places like that, they had all these urban people who tried to farm and didn't know how.

A: Right. Right. It's amazing. It's just amazing and, you know, over the years, we have had some absolutely fantastic gardens that people, who had come here with no gardening experience, after like three years -- I mean, it takes a year, usually, to get into it, another to really make it work. By the third year, if people stay here, we have incredible gardens. [unintelligible] And, then, at the end of five years or seven years, they leave and, so then, you have to start all over again.

Q: Is that a typical pattern, five, seven years?

A: Seven years is the pattern.

Q: Is that it?

A: So far as I can find out. I know it's a pattern here and I hear from Gordon and Karrin(?) that it is a pattern -- is that they go -- it goes like this. You know, you have an increase in population and people stay and stay and stay and, then, you have a drop in population and, then, you go back up again and, so, experience goes with that disappearance or that drop.

Q: Right.

A: And, so, you have to reinvent a lot of wheels.

Q: So, is there any reason why that occurs, do you know?

A: Not that I know of. I haven't -- I haven't sociologically taken it, you know, pulled it apart of what's happening in the world or whatever, at all, but I have seen a seven year cycle.

Q: So, now you're high, right?

A: We're going up. We're in our ascendancy for another two years, or so. You know we have nine residents, now, and eleven is the most we've ever had. Residents are people who make a six month commitment and, then, you can re-up for six months.

Q: So, that's candidate membership, essentially?

A: Right. Then, at the end of the year, you can ask for membership but you have to be here a year before you can ask.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: So, nine, that's -- for a place the size of Alpha, nine's a lot.

A: Nine's a lot. It's a lot. Eleven's the most we've ever had but nine is a lot. And, they always, they have -- they become bonded together -- them, as opposed to members.

Q: Yeah? Is that right?

A: Always happens and it just takes time to work it through.

Q: Now, you've built a lot of the buildings, right?

A: This building we built.

Q: I mean, this is nicely done. So, was this built by people who didn't know anything about construction?

A: Well, we had two -- three people working on this building. [unintelligible] -- three people who weren't builders but had some idea.

Q: It just seems like it's . . .

A: No, it is. It was designed by an architect -- a friend of the farm's who just graduated from architecture school. He did this building and he renovated the store.

Q: Oh, really? The store's nice. It's a pretty place.

A: Isn't that pretty? Yeah. That was a smoke shop when we bought it.

Q: Oh, was it?

A: So, we had a lot of work to do. And we -- that -- you saw the skylight that's where you eat?

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: Well, we opened up that roof in November -- in late November and everybody thought we were out of our minds and it rained in Walton and it rained in Deadwood and it rained in Florence and it did not rain a drop in Mapleton [unintelligible]. So, I felt very much -- here's Jay.

Q: Oh, yeah. Okay.

A: Okay?

Q: Yeah, great.

A: Jay, you haven't met Tim. [Tape turned off and then continued] And sprouts and whole wheat . . .

Q: In 1972, that was . . .

A: We did not have any white bread . . .

Jay: You guys really were radicals, weren't you?

A: Yes. Yes, we really were, in the middle of redneck country, you know. People would come by and "No white bread." No, we have whole wheat, we have light rye, we have dark rye. That's all. And avocados weren't known, let alone sprouts. Tubby Beers(?) who was a big horse logger up here said to

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

me the first time I asked if he wanted sprouts, he said "Sprouts? Alfalfa sprouts? I feed alfalfa to my horses." I'll never forget it. It was so funny. But, now, the favorite sandwich is a [unintelligible] -- eats avocado and tomatoes and sprouts on whole wheat. I mean, we serve thousands.

Jay: How long did it take for the local community to accept Alpha Farm?

A: Okay, there are two different answers to this question. One is the farm. The farm, itself, attracted people to buying land around because the big turnover from the old families was happening and their younger -- their daughters and sons and things didn't want to work in the woods. They didn't want to inherit the farm and all that hard work and, so, they were selling and we -- because we were here, attracted alternative people here. So, within the space of like five to seven years . . .

Jay: You created a whole new community.

A: There's -- Deadwood community is totally different than any place in Oregon. It's totally different. It is all alternative with maybe two exceptions -- a ten, twelve mile stretch along this road.

Jay: Remarkable.

A: Yeah. It's totally different. The county, the state and the federal government have Deadwood circled in red and they know if they're going to come to us, they have to be -- certain things have to be -- used to be that BLM or whoever would just walk across your land and do whatever they wanted. Not anymore they don't. They call, they write a letter, they call again, then they set up a time to meet you and, then, they'll walk across. We have no spraying on Deadwood Creek Road, at all. We met them down about three miles -- this was years and years ago -- with about 13 cars and we boxed in the spraying truck and said to them, "Eugene is that-a-way. Don't ever come back." They never came back.

Q: Wow.

A: I mean, I can tell you story after story but this community is really different in that respect. We have our fire department here that's very ragtag but we have a phone tree so that if there's a fire someplace, we'll have everybody up there within ten minutes wherever it is and we've had some -- so, that's this area. This is the farm. So, within ten years, this whole community had just totally turned over. We had our own organizations. We had our own co-ops for food buying and quilting and all of that. Now, the store is another story. The store is in downtown Mapleton. It's just a long block. The people down there are old. They've been there many years. They're still there. They're more -- they were more mill people than woods people. Quite conservative. Quite very conservative. Still very conservative and three men who came in every morning after we started and had coffee was the banker, the unofficial mayor of Mapleton and the local antique dealer -- big store. Everyday they came in for coffee in order to legitimize us. They never said this.

Q: Really?

A: They never said it but that's what . . .

Jay: But, if they were there, then the place was okay.

A: It was okay.

Q: What -- do you have any idea what was going on in their minds?

A: Yeah. They liked us. They liked us.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Jay: It's like I wondered how many people and for how long thought that this was just a bunch of hippies running around without their clothes and smoking dope.

A: Oh, years.

Jay: You know?

A: Years. Yeah. There -- we figured -- I talked to Pony, he was the bank President at one time, and I said, okay, lemme give you my estimate and, then, you tell me whether you think I'm right -- that 50% of the people in this area -- Mapleton particularly, larger Mapleton area -- think we're okay and come in and are regular. Another 30% to 40% will come in for a special gift where, okay, we're tolerable, they'll leave us alone, but we're okay and 10% will never walk in the door. "That's right."

Jay: That's not bad percentages.

A: Right. Right. No, and we had to prove that already. Like, in the beginning I had nothing out that had anything to do with drugs, even books that said they were bad, I didn't have anything. We had nothing that anyone could consider paraphernalia, of any kind.

Jay: Right.

A: We did not have our bodies, ourselves, out on the shelves. We had it underneath. We're in conservative country. Show Me. Do you remember the magazine Show Me?

Jay: Sure do.

A: It was three years before I put that out and, now, naturally it's been -- there's a whole warehouse of that they can't sell because they say it's exploitive -- it was exploiting the children. One of the greatest books ever written.

Jay: Absolutely.

A: Absolutely. I told them I -- if they would tell me where it was, I would go and steal some. Did you now the books, Tim?

Q: No, I don't know.

A: It's two children and their parents explaining sexuality and it is . . .

Jay: It's the best that's ever been done.

A: Absolutely. That's right. It's absolutely fabulous.

Jay: Yeah, without a doubt. I read that book to my son when he was a child.

A: Yeah, right. Oh, it is a fabulous book. Anyway, they got sued.

Q: Really?

A: A little, [unintelligible].

Jay: Oh, I don't even remember but . . .

A: But they still have a whole warehouse full of 'em. Anyway, that's the kind of care we took that -- of what we had to show. Also, every person who lived at Alpha had to work at the store, so that they saw everyone of us. Well, we had people who were 50, 40, 30, 20 and, so, there was a great mix and there are still people who remember the Williams who have since died. They were tall, gangly people and just as sweet as could be and they won us a lot of [unintelligible]. So, Mapleton is different than the farm. At the farm we created our own surroundings. In Mapleton, we have to intermix with what's there and not be too outrageous. But, we were radical.

Jay: I know.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: For sure.

A: But, for instance, I mean, one of the things that said to me, recently -- this was about five years ago -- that we were accepted, is we needed to pay back a lot of the people who had been here before and invested and we had it invested in things like this, so we had no ready cash. The bank gave us a \$175,000 loan.

Q: Wow.

Jay: That is a real statement.

A: Isn't it? I think so. I think so.

Q: Yeah. Is that the same banker?

A: Yeah. No, well, it's the same bank but it's not the same banker. So, well that's 23 years or 19 years later, we have a track record. We're still here.

Jay: Well, I was gonna say, kind of being a product of the '60s and '70s, it seems like a lot of communities started but very few have lasted and, then, maybe just kind of the circles that I run in.

Q: Yeah, as a percentage that's true. It's not absolutely true. There are hundreds of 'em still around.

Jay: Are there really?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: In fact, there are thousands. There's hundred -- there's a window and I hope you're really looking at this, this window between what I would consider '68, '69 and '73, there's a window there that a lot of communities started and failed in that time but a lot started that are still around and I don't know if it has to do with Earth Day and the basic reasoning which was different than the early 60s, go out and have, you know, run around naked and smoke dope.

Jay: Well, it was kind of the whole, you know, free love concept and, you know, I think that a lot of the communities probably were set up to fail because they didn't have a basis of anything lasting. **A:** That's right and they weren't expecting to last, either, you know, and we were expecting to last. We started with the idea this is where we were going to be. This is where I'm going to die and, so, it had -- it's a different -- someplace in there, there was this little window and, if you go down the list in the directory, a lot of communities started that are still in there, started in that little window. You know, and, then, there are the old communities that are still growing, you know, older.

Q: Right. Right. There are a lot of those, too.

A: There are a lot of those but this new wave -- what I call the new wave of community -- is someplace right in there, so magic dust dropped, distributed. It's after the big 60s rah-rah and had more stability.

Jay: Oh, I think the interesting thing is, as climate changes in this country, which seems to be just kind of a perpetual circle, it feels like we're getting to a place where more communities are going to start because mainstream society just isn't an alternative for a lot people.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

A: Also, not for the world. I mean, the earth, itself, is not. We're really -- I think -- well, Tim knows this but I have a very strong feeling we're heading for a really major bump, either economically or ecologically, or both.

Jay: Yeah, but, I mean, my sense is it's going to be both.

A: Both?

Jay: And I have nothing to base that on but a gut feeling.

A: I know, it's -- yeah.

Jay: It's just not good what we're doing. You know, I'm watching the government strip the Endangered Species Act and it will be a skeleton, at best, in five years.

A: Right. Well, and the whole welfare system.

Jay: And something has to give.

A: That's right.

Jay: You know, they can't like keep stretching that rubber band.

A: But they think they can. It's just amazing.

Jay: Oh, sure and, given the political climate, the stretching is just going to become more intense.

A: Right.

Jay: It's not going to be so [unintelligible].

A: Well, and we're going to have this. We're going to have the very wealthy up here and we're going to have this incredible mass of people who are really unhappy and really underclass.

Jay: That's -- I guess I was talking to Laura -- but we were talking about kind of the climate in cities and my sense is the climate in the cities now is no worse than it was in the 60s. You know, the division between the haves and the have nots is, you know, widening again and, when you have too many people that are have nots and have no personal power and no hope, that's when things get really ugly. It's happening again.

A: I know. I know. You know, and we do not pay any attention to Santianna. If you don't learn your lessons, you're bound to repeat 'em.

Jay: That's right.

A: And that's what we're going to do.

Jay: How many times have we repeated history? It's frightening.

A: I know. We're very slow learners. Extremely slow.

Jay: But I look at people my age, who went through the '60s and had these great ideals and . . .

A: Didn't do anything with them.

Jay: No. You know, it's really sad because I think that we really had the opportunity to change the world.

A: But we did not have thoughtful, philosophically rounded leaders.

Jay: Right.

A: They were -- we didn't have Thomas Jefferson.

Jay: That's right.

A: And so we had no one to coalesce around in order to make, to take that energy and to turn the country around.

Jay: That's right.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

A: We had people who were on acid and people who were, you know, great at the band and wonderful singers and [unintelligible] but we did not have the philosophical . . .

Jay: The leader. That's right.

A: We did not have the philosophical leader or leaders. You know, when you think about the time when we had Franklin and Madison and Monroe and Jefferson, all at one stake, one period of time.

Jay: You know, is that incredible?

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: I mean . . .

Jay: Thinkers.

A: I know.

Jay: With a plan.

A: I know.

Jay: People with a philosophy, you know. I mean, the buzz word, today, is family values but these were people that had what are truly family values and they viewed the country as a family.

A: That's right. And, I mean, we didn't have 'em. We didn't have 'em in the '60s.

Jay: No, it's true.

A: You know, and I see that as the problem today.

Jay: Yep.

A: We don't have leaders today of the alternative, the philosophically grounded alternatives. I mean, I could, you know -- I'm always amazed that people ask me to do keynote speeches and people aren't saying the things that we need to say, out loud, up front and we don't have people doing it. We just don't. Very few. A few. And, fortunately, we have -- what is that radio program -- New Dimensions and we have, you know, we have High Tower but we're talking about reaching this many.

Q: Right.

A: We don't have someone out there. Jesse Jackson is not . . .

Jay: He's not the answer.

Q: No.

A: He's not the answer. And we haven't got one. And we need more than one. We need a number.

Jay: Yeah. We need a whole cadre of them.

A: That's right. We need the constitutional convention all over again. But it's -- and I think that, if we're going to pull through that you're right, that communities are going to be what pulls us through and this is, I guess, it's the only thing I can think of that has sanity in it, today. I mean, any other approach to living is really -- you know, we're not taking it seriously.

Jay: Right.

A: We're really not. I mean, we have, you know, even though we have four cars down or three cars down, or whatever, we don't have 15 cars.

Jay: Yesterday, it was four cars.

A: I know but it's only three, today.

Jay: Yeah, but four all at once is pretty [unintelligible].

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

A: So, and I think we're still at the same place we were when we started Alpha is that we have to find another track and we're trying. We have to honor the earth and, if we don't do it, it's going to spew us. There is nothing that says human beings can't be an endangered species.

Jay: That's right.

A: There is nothing that guarantees us continuous and I think the things we started with are the same things we're trying to struggle with. Now, the whole idea of bi-regionalism was something that we thought about way before the word was invented -- that we need to be paying more attention to where we live, where we are and working where we are than having Washington tell us what's good for here. I mean, it doesn't take me a cabinet level person to know that the two spotted owls over there, and two spotted owls are over there and, when you clear-cut this one, there are no spotted owls over there. That does not take me a hearing in Washington, D.C. to know.

Jay: Which means their whole food chain is destroyed.

A: Yeah, it's that whole -- that means that whole thing has gone, you know, and I think we're still back where we were when we started, those of us who started at the time when that ecological, environmental, or whatever, consciousness began [unintelligible].

Q: Actually, that's directly connected to another question on my list.

A: Go.

Q: So, what is the practical -- what would you say the practical side of that here -- how do you try to live lightly, alternative energy, outhouses as opposed to toilets? I mean, what, just what kinds of . . .?

A: Okay, we have tried -- lemme give you the positive and, then, I'll give you the negative.

Q: Okay.

A: We hired the only forester, in Oregon, who will help us maintain our forest. We have 220 acres of trees, which is second or third growth. This was all cut over in the '30s.

Q: Really?

A: The whole thing. And we want to maintain it and we want to use some of the wood and his program increases the canopy, which is the major thing you have to do with trees and, so, by very selective cutting on a rotation that he has worked out for us, we will not quite, I think she said, double our canopy over the period that he has set out for us. So, that's one way that we feel really important.

Another is, when we had people from Fenthorn(?) come here. You know Fenthorn?

Q: Sure. Yeah.

A: You know Fenthorn?

Jay: No.

A: It's a community in Scotland that is very in touch with the [unintelligible], the spirits of the animals and the plants. They came here. Peter Caddy(?) came several times, a number of times, but this was another woman who was very in touch with the wild spirits and, so, while they were here, we asked them to walk around and tell how we were doing. Well, we weren't doing very well because what we were doing was manicuring and the spirits said they had no place to feel wild. So, we have set aside - if

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

you walk up here just a little ways, there's a lodge and then a little hut. Beyond that, no one goes. That's off limits and that's been for a number of years, now.

Q: Literally, no one goes in there?

A: No one goes in it. Other ways that we've tried to behave and make others behave -- this is a spawning creek, this one right here. About eight years ago, I walked out one day and it was all silted up and I was down at the store [unintelligible] -- I was down at the store and the Fish & Game man came in for lunch like he did periodically. I said I'd really like him to look at our creek 'cause it seemed to me it was not in good shape. So, he came up and he looked at it and he drove around up above it, way up and they were building a road by side casting. You know, side cutting? You build the road and push it over this way.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: Well, they had built this road by side casting, which, even at that time, was no longer a regular practice. What they do now is end haul. It all goes on trucks and they end haul to a approved place. Well, they hadn't been doing it. It cost them a million dollars. They had to go. So, those were the good [unintelligible].

Q: Have you tried any wind power, solar, building . . .?

A: We do not have -- okay, we don't have enough solar power . . .

Q: Yeah, that's true, [unintelligible].

A: To be useful. We've had it tested. I mean, we've had people from Eugene, at the University come out and tell us. We tried -- we measured the wind power. It's not enough. By the time you get it down here, it's gone. Water power. In the wintertime, we could have generated enough from the top of our property to the furthest end of our property, way down, a mile, but, by the time we brought it back to here, we're losing a lot of it and it's hardly a big enough drop to make any difference. So, we measured the drop. There is one place in the winter, if we could approval from BLM, which is back here but, again, we'd be in an area that we considered sacred, so, that we might get some. Now, we can't put generators in the creeks anymore because of the fish.

Q: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

A: So, that's out. So, that's why we did the drop to see if there was enough. If we'd just put a channel and there just isn't enough drop in a mile. We're about a mile long [unintelligible]. So, what else. Oh, there's a composting toilet that, actually, was one of the 500 that was, no, 100, that was approved in Oregon and it's in that bathroom, which we discovered we have to do adjustments to because the liquid part is too much for this area. It won't evaporate. So, we have to put a draw of some kind and we haven't done that. But, it is there and it's all approved. Putting up outhouses around here is a real problem because of the water table.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: You've had outhouses, though, have you not?

A: We do. We've had it in three different places and we're going to have to move it again and we don't know where. No, we have had -- we do have -- we have an outhouse but it's -- the water table -- we had to bring our water leach field all the way across and out to the front of the farmhouse because we can't put it out here. The water table is right up, right up there.

Q: Well, yeah.

A: So, you can't put it [unintelligible]. So, we've worked with it but we haven't - [unintelligible] small things we can do. One of the things I have in mind is to get two horses and do our shopping in Eugene every other week with horses and a wagon.

Jay: Taking the day to get there . . .

Q: Yeah. Yeah. Right.

A: Day to get there, day to get home and, then, when you're in town, to use some kind of, whatever, I don't know what. Not to -- but to have 'em outside of town where you loaded it.

Q: Wow, well.

A: That's one of my ideas.

Q: That'd be different.

A: Well, I mean, that's what we're going to be at, you know, maybe not my lifetime but Morgan's lifetime, that's what they're going to do. I thought of that several times and I think it'd be a statement.

Q: Oh, yeah, it would be. Oh, it'd be a wonderful educational tool.

A: Right. We're going to have to go back [unintelligible]-- back in the sense of the mechanics of how we just lost touch and we've lost -- I mean, yes, you know, looking at the full moon the other night and all the stars. Wow, we're pretty insignificant. So, . . .

Q: Yeah. Well, let me ask [unintelligible], okay?

A: Okay, ask the question. Question.

Q: Living arrangements. Do you follow the thing that they do at Twin Oaks in East Wind, everyone has a room?

A: Yes.

Q: Just curious. Is it mainly families, married couples, or couples?

A: Here?

Q: Yeah, or . . .

A: It's changed over time.

Jay: We started out with three couples and two singles who were not connected the first year.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

A: Yeah. Yeah, but, in general, I think we have not been equal, families and non. I think we've had more single people. Now, what's happened, in the past, and, actually, even now, is people have come together as partners and have split and found other people here. In fact, we had three marriages in something like two years of that having happened. And, let's see, we actually had who many weddings - six?

Jay: At the last count.

A: Five or six marriages and only one has broken up and they're not living here, now, but they're -- we keep track of 'em. But, I think living in community releases some of the strictures, the binding that people feel in the society like you have to hold on even if it's not working and you come to community and, you know, you're accepted for yourself. You have a place where you're honored. You have work, honorable work, to do on your own and I think it releases people from that. That's my experience from that.

Jay: [unintelligible] if a marriage is not well put together, it's likely to [unintelligible].

A: It generally . . .

Jay: [unintelligible]

A: You could say it. I'm not.

Q: Do you have any relationship rules for the good of the community? Are there any forbidden practices?

A: We have -- we do have a policy. Anyone can have any relationship with anyone at the farm if they want to so long as it does not interfere with the function of the farm. Quote, unquote.

Q: Now, that's a wonderful rule but, in real life, it'd probably . . .

A: That's what happens. That's what happens. In fact, the other day because I wanted to know where someone was, in case I had to find her, I violated one of our agreements, which is never to ask anybody where they sleep at night. But I had to know and I'd said - I started with, this is an impertinent question and violating a rule, I know it, and I have a reason and I really need to know and it was fine with her. But, actually, I shouldn't have done it. We really do abide pretty much with that. Now, some people think we should change it because, where the line comes in that it's interfering with the function of the farm, some people have a lot more tolerance than others. So, they can listen to people arguing and having scenes and all much longer than others. But, pretty much, I think we do pretty well as giving people individual freedom in their relationships. I think that's generally true and has been.

Q: And it works.

A: And it works and we've had some horrendous situations. However, okay, what?

Q: Let's see.

A: I gotta write that book.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Yeah, really, really. That's right. What about any rules or agreements about dress or matters of style or anything like that. Like, at the farm in Tennessee, you know, they had specific rules, actually. I don't know if they're written but you couldn't cut your hair.

A: Oh, really? I [unintelligible].

Q: Yeah. That was -- for until, you know, until the '80s changeover.

A: Really?

Q: Written or not, that was it. You couldn't cut your hair and some things -- I just wondered, did you ever have any kind of . . . ?

Jay: Remember the cartoon we had on the bulletin board for a while?

A: What?

Jay: It had this crowd of hippies sitting around one man in a three-piece, you know, the suit and one of the bearded hippies were saying, "I never thought we'd have to have a dress code in this commune."

Q: Yeah. Really.

A: The closest we ever came to that is in the beginning at the store. It was -- people were required to wear certain clothing because we were trying to not offend. Now, what's worn at the store would offend me but it's the thing that's okay and, going into Eugene, I see people all the time in clothing that the kids are wearing. So, I can't [unintelligible] but, in the beginning, we did have. We even had dresses that people -- we just left at the store and people put on but that's all. Want more stories -- do you want more stories?

Q: Yeah, sure. Of course.

A: There used to be two middle-aged men, who came around with vegetables during the summer and people up and down the valley would buy them. So, one day, they drove in with their vegetables and Linda and Judy, who were here, wanted to buy some and, so, they ran out to the cart with not a stitch of clothing.

Jay: They were gardening at the time.

A: Yes. Well, you understand these two men's eyes were about this . . . and the story that they carried up out of the valley was incredible. So, we talked about that and decided that it was okay to be nude in the garden but you had to have something to put on as soon as anyone drove across that you didn't know -- that you had to have something to cover you. Okay. So, there's one.

Q: Is that still the case today?

A: That's still the case today. Yeah. I was surprised not to see more people than I did yesterday. The other one, which is a fun story, used to be that we had a lot of logging up here and, so, the log trucks came down the road and you know Jack Brakes? Uh-uh-uh-uh-uh.

Jay: Jake Brakes.

A: Jake Brakes. Well, Linda, who was our main tractor driver, was haying the south field and Linda was very hot, so Linda always hayed without a top on and you can see the south field from the road. So, as they went by, you would hear this uh-uh-uh . . . uh-uh all the time when she was haying the fields. So, it

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

was -- we had interesting times with what we wear and don't wear but, generally, we don't go nude. I think that's a generality. Oh, the other thing is Kate, who was the older woman, who lived here, originally, got us to agree to an agreement at the table that you never came to the table for dinner without a top on. Now, implicit in that is the agreement that there'll be a bottom on but we never did spell it out. So, she really didn't approve of sitting at the table [unintelligible].

Q: So, you don't have a Twin Oaks style clothing optional dining area?

A: No.

Q: What about children? Are there -- you've had children, I know. Are they communally raised? Do they have a separate living quarters -- separate . . .?

A: No, we're not kibbutz-kind children. We didn't have children for a long time after my two left. We wanted 'em. We now have 'em, [unintelligible]. We have a commitment to public school systems. We do not home school. We do not send to private schools and we follow the children to school by having people who are in the classrooms helping the teachers. So, we're very active in that when we have children there, which is most of the time. Recently, I was with a woman who's a midwife. She's also a Lakota medicine woman and she said there is a new group of children coming in and she calls them and, apparently some others, calls them the root children and that they are different and I think we've got one of them in Morgan. I think he's different. He's -- he is exceedingly clear that this is his place. He's known. . .

Q: How old is he?

A: Six. He's known this since he was four. Very clear. His family's been through all kinds of [unintelligible]. No problem. This is his place and he's very clear about it. It isn't -- there's no philosophical stuff about it. He's planted. He's definitely of the earth. At this place on the earth and it's interesting to watch him. He's different from the other kids in this respect. The other kids came here -- now he was born while his family was here and, though he was born in a clinic in Eugene, he's different. He's different. So, I'm watching that a lot, just after she told me about that 'cause it really identified Morgan and what the difference was and the other kids who've come here really go through some very interesting changes. They could become very independent, self-reliant.

Jay: Amazing communicators.

A: Right.

Jay: Certainly one of the things that struck me.

A: Really?

Jay: I would, during the course of the day, have sat and talked with some of them and, is it Tom?

A: Tom [unintelligible].

Jay: Talked about what it was like living [unintelligible]. The pros and the cons and, if he hadn't told me his age, I would have sworn he was 18 or 19.

A: Really?

Jay: Yeah.

A: Yeah, he's very mature. Yeah.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Jay: Very clear about, you know, these are the good parts and these aren't such good parts. It's like a long time to spend on a school bus everyday.

A: Right.

Jay: And I miss TV. You know, sometimes there's just not enough to do but I really like working and there's an investment. I mean, you know I have a 17 year old son I would like give my right arm for him to be invested like that. But, yeah, they're remarkable communicators.

A: Now, most of the kids -- Tom was not a communicator when he came here, at all.

Jay: Really?

A: At all. Never. Nothing.

Jay: Wow. Well, he was lying in the hammock and I went over and just started talking to him when I was -- I [unintelligible]. It was really an amazing thing and there's a self-assurance with the kids here. Even when they're playing games, they're -- I don't know quite how -- it's almost a confidence in themselves as people that really comes through. It's pretty neat.

A: These are all new kids, except for Morgan. Oh, well, and MacKenzie.

Jay: I haven't met MacKenzie.

A: You haven't met MacKenzie, yet.

Jay: And I agree with you. Morgan is very different from all the others. He's a pretty interesting kid.\

A: I know. I wish I wasn't so invested in him because I'd like to have someone who's just objectively watching this kid and I just can't do it. I mean, . . .

Jay: He'd blow 'em away.

A: He'd just be -- he blows me away all the time, you know. I just can't believe what he'd say. At one -- when he was first born, he didn't say anything. I mean, when kids are babbling and beginning momma and da-da and mother and chair and all of those, the first thing he said was a complete sentence. Two weeks later, he was into compound sentences.

Jay: Wow.

A: Absolutely correct. Not a word out of place.

Q: Amazing.

Jay: I think the other thing that I noticed is that kids, older kids, are usually pretty good about infants but at arms length and, here, there is a connection between the kids and Alder.

A: Oh, yeah.

Jay: Where they just like took over the caring.

A: That's right.

Jay: And you didn't get the feeling they were being stuck with it, had to do it, that they wanted to.

A: Oh, yeah. Luke and Alder are extremely close. Extremely close. And that's sort of what he's describing is pretty much consistent from the time that we started again having children. I had my first two here and the Williams' had one. So, we had three and they were pre-teen into teenage by the time we got here. So, they went through -- wait a minute, I keep forgetting this story. You don't know, probably, that I have two adopted children. One of 'em is Mexican and deaf and the other one is black from the worst ghetto of Philadelphia. They're now 30 -- 40 years old. Well, when we came here, 23 years ago, they thought we had lost our minds.

Jay: I'm sure they did.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

A: However, on September 3 or 4, when school started, I went down to the Mapleton school system with my two children in hand. They had never had a black child. They had never had a Mexican child. They had never had a deaf child. So, I blithely march into the school, enroll them in school and they never blinked an eye, which I consider remarkable.

Jay: Who didn't blink? The school or the kids?

A: The school. The school system.

Q: That is remarkable.

Jay: That's amazing.

A: Never, ever blinked an eye. They had, as you know, if you know school systems, they had a secretary to the superintendent, who was incredible and every time she saw [unintelligible] coming up, she was there smiling [unintelligible] and the only time I had any problems was when, one day, Sassy, my black daughter -- I was cooking over in the farmhouse -- came in after the bus ride and she said to me, "Mother, I know that you believe in non-violence and I know that I'm not supposed to hit anybody," she said, "but, if he spits on me once more." I said tell me what's happened. So, well, it turns out this kid had been spitting on her and she'd been putting up with it and I turned to her and I said I never told you you had to put up with being spit on. However, give me one day. Don't hit him. Give me one day. "Okay," she said, "that's fine." So, I went down to the school the next morning, bright and early, and I said this is the situation and I need to tell you that I'm going to release her from her obligation of nonviolence to me if you can't stop this kid from doing this and what I need to tell you is that Sassy will mop the floor up with this kid. She was the head of a gang of boys and he won't know what happened to him and it's okay with me. Well, I got a phone call about four hours later from the secretary and she said, "I don't think you're going to have any problem. We just had the family in and they seem to understand the situation." He never spit anymore.

Q: That was the end of it, huh? Great.

A: That's the only incident that I can -- that I ever had -- I had to deal with and she could've. She would've mopped the floor up with him because she was strong. [unintelligible]. So, that's, anyway, those are stories.

Q: Well, I have to ask the inevitable question and turn off the recorder, if you tell me to, but I figure I have to ask the 60s communes about drugs.

A: We have a policy of no hard drugs on the farm. Anybody who has hard drugs has to leave. So far as I know, we have never had them, nor had to have anybody leave. We have had people here who are past withdrawal, whatever it is, sanctuary, so that they're in a place where there aren't any drugs. The one -- obviously, there's a key word in there, hard drugs. My opinion is, though I cannot tell you this definitely, is that there are people and always have been people at the farm who have smoked marijuana. However, our drug policy is the following: You cannot buy, sell, barter, or grow marijuana.

Q: Okay, buy, sell, barter or grow, which means you can accept a gift? Okay.

A: And I think that's how people get it. Deadwood, for many years, not now so far as I know, was known as Deadwood Gold. I mean, the growing here was apparently extremely fine. I don't --

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

apparently, it's gotten beyond anything that we have around here, anymore, but it's not grown on this land and we don't sell it, barter it or . . .

Q: Anyone ever been busted here or anything like that?

A: That's why we have that policy.

Q: Right. Yeah.

A: I mean, we could destroy Alpha's reputation in one headline.

Q: That's true. Although, wouldn't it be logical -- well, I think maybe, not today, but 15 years ago that everyone just presumed it was druggy as could be. That was the general public presumption.

A: I -- see, this policy, it took us a long time. I mean, a long time, probably six months to come to this. We have -- there's another part of it about hallucinogens because there was one person here when we did this drug policy who wanted the right to have ceremonial mushrooms and that was approved so long as they had a contact person and they went away from the major portion of the farm and it was a spiritual experience and we've only had it happen twice but [unintelligible]. But I've been able to say that policy for a long time and I was very active in saying that policy back then. There have been raids all up and own Deadwood but never here.

Q: Well, that's impressive. Maybe it worked.

A: We have a very good relationship with officials, whether they're police or they're county planning departments or whatever. I mean, this building is, technically, illegal but it's legal and it was gotten through because it's a bunkhouse. It's not a dwelling. There is no kitchen. That's just a little pullman kitchen over there and they sought that out for us.

Q: They did?

A: Yeah. They came out with that possibility for us.

Q: Now, that says volumes about how you relate to the community.

A: That's right. That's right and we're active on that. I mean, when I go down and have my fight with the BLM every three years about a place down here that they keep wanting to log, we have a very cordial relationship and I keep explaining to them that, you know, if they really can't not log that, I'm happy to be in court with them. It doesn't matter, you know, that's what the court system's for and I -- it's really, it's okay and they say, "Well, we'll put that one over for another three years." And it's true, you know, as messed up as our court system is, I still think it's there to use, if you need to and, so, I'm very straight-forward with them and I'm not angry and I'm not -- I don't blast them or anything like that. I'm always very polite and everyone -- all of us are. Paul used to go in. Andrew used to go in. We're all - we had -- this house was, originally, given permit in '78. The inspector was just out yesterday because we thought he was supposed to come and they thought we were supposed to ask him to come to tell us whether they could sign off or not and we have two small cosmetic things to do but it could have cost us \$1,000 and they're going to approve it as of the '78 permit.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Really? Great.

A: So, we're pretty good. I was in politics a long time. [unintelligible].

JAY: Why did you stop?

A: I learned. I learned. Okay, what else?

Q: Well, let's see. That's actually -- yeah, it's pretty much it. I mean, I have a whole list but we've pretty much got at 'em through other things.

A: Right.

Q: One other question about children. Again, I'm interested, in light of Twin Oaks and such, where they really control reproductive freedom, in a sense.

A: We had the first Twin Oaks baby here, Obadiah, who was conceived at Twin Oaks and they would not let her have it there, between, now I've lost the names. Anyway, she came here and had her baby.

Q: So, you have not had restrictions on . . . ?

A: No, in fact . . .

Q: 'Cause, economically, that's a big decision. Children are a drain, right? I mean, for a community that's struggling. Weren't you desperate in the early years?

A: I think they're essential. If a community is going to be a community, children are essential, unless we want to follow the mainstream of segregating old people, children, babies. [Side one ends] Yeah. So, I think they're essential to a community.

Q: So, people -- so, okay, it's just if they happen, they happen.

A: Yeah, and people are, generally, encouraged to look at what's the situation. For instance, we had -- for a while, we had about five women who were an age when they might want to have children and they talked about it and sort of set an order that they might adhere to and, in fact, it wasn't adhered to. We had two right on top of each other. So, I think -- I don't think it's something you can really -- I think Twin Oaks made a mistake in what they did. They didn't have any children for a while, at all.

Q: That's right. I remember that, yeah.

A: You know. They didn't allow them. Then, you got your name on the list and they let you, you know, have it.

Q: Do you have 'em here? Do you have home births, essentially here?

A: Oh, yes. We've had home births. Now, we don't have any midwives, right now, who'll come out but we did for a number of years and, so, that helped us. We'd had, I think, four, maybe five that were here and the cottage had -- [unintelligible] kid Kachina was born here, Muffy's kids were born here. Yeah, and everybody joined in. It was great.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Oh, I imagine. Yeah. That'd be a neat . . .

A: And the -- MacKenzie, we tried to have MacKenzie here and MacKenzie was too big and, after a day of incredible labor, we finally had to take MacKenzie, take Sally to the hospital. She had to have a C-section.

Q: Oh, that's -- yeah, geez.

A: Yeah. But everyone was there with her, you know, and I think all the kids here have seen babies born. So, there's a real -- and we've had people die here - older people die.

Q: Well, you've said the founding couple.

A: Well, no, they didn't die here. Lief's(?) -- oh, we have another policy. When you become a member, you list all the people you would be responsible for if you lived out in the general world.

Q: Like your elderly parents or . . .?

A: Or a friend or a sister or a brother or a past, whatever, and Alpha takes responsibility for those people. So, in Lief's case, he has a brother and he had a mother and father, or a father and stepmother, actually, and they lived down in Whittier, California and they got too old to maintain their own house. So, what we did, I drove down, no, I flew down. Lief drove down and packed them up. I drove them back in the car and they'd never been here and we made the cottage for them so that it was really, really, you know, useful for them and they were elderly and they're part -- they're two of the people in the Life article, both of whom have died since. May died right when that article came out and, then, he died, oh, maybe less than a year later but -- and everybody, I mean, Morgan and everyone who was here went through those times and went to the funeral. We have our own cemetery here, on the farm.

Jay: Amazing.

A: I like it.

Q: Yeah, I think you do.

A: Oh, I do.

Q: So, are you the only remaining veteran of the founding -- well, Jim?

A: Jim. Jim [unintelligible]. There were actually -- there were, basically, six of us. Two are dead. Jim and I and, then, one man, Glen, decided -- he met his wife here, had his children here and he decided he wanted to be a corporate lawyer. Now, there is no way that a corporate lawyer can be here and practice. So, he left and went to law school in Eugene, graduated, became the clerk for one of the Supreme Court, Oregon's Supreme Court justices. Then, got a very nice job because that was a nice entryway.

Q: Sure.

A: Practiced for about three years or four years and decided this was not for him, which I knew his sense of spiritually. I mean, law, aw, give me a break. So, he -- so, they did a number of other things. Now, they're at Ayala.

Interview with Caroline Estes

Interviewer: Tim Miller

July 18, 1995

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah. I presume you're going to go to Ayala.

Q: Yeah, eventually, yeah.

A: And, so, that was, anyway, he was just here not too long ago and, so, they're down there. Then, the other person, Linda, fell in love with a hermit and, except for trappest monks, it's very hard for a hermit to live in a community. We tried everything we could think of. We tried setting up special spaces for him and his not having to come to dinner [unintelligible].

Q: There were still just too many people.

A: There's just too many people. This energy is just too much, so she moved to Eugene with him. They stayed together for six, seven years and he had a fantastic way to make an income given his desire. He went into -- he had a contract with all of the restaurants in Eugene. He walked in and sharpened their knives every so often on a regular schedule and that's how he made his money and no one talked to -- didn't have to talk to anybody. He didn't have to anything. Went in, went to the knives, sharpened the knives, put 'em back, walked out. That's the only contact he had to have with people. **Q:** Wow.

A: Which is great.

Q: Yeah. Sure, sure.

A: You know, when you think about it, he really had made his own niche, basically, in the whole thing, which is great but it didn't work in community. So, we were sad because Linda was a great asset. She was our first gardener, potter. She still lives in Eugene. They've split but she still lives in Eugene and is one of the Saturday market's flower and vegetable growers. She really has some beautiful stuff.