

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** February 26th, interview with Arol. So, Arol, can you tell me some about the history of Zendik farm?

**AROL:** Like from the beginning, you mean?

**Q:** Yeah, from the beginning, and how you became involved with it?

**AROL:** Well, um, I got together with Wolf [?] Zendik in 1961. And uh, after we'd been together for about 8 years, um -- we had always done a lot of anthropological and a lot of primate -- we had studied ancient cultures a lot, primitive cultures, not civilizations. And then we went back to primates, because we were trying to get a . . . a view on, kind of how, what were we, you know? And what we began to see is that we are a group animal. We are a, um, -- there's only one primate that travels alone, and that's an orang, and they're very, almost strictly tree dwellers. All the other primates tend to be troops. See we study ostrolopithecus [?], and the first hominids and all that, and obviously, that's how we took over the earth. We were able to . . . even though we were smaller than so many, and weaker, we were able to communicate very finely with each other, and hang together, and cooperate, and eventually took over the planet, obviously. So, we were alone, you know, just a couple, and we were doing these studies and stuff, and then um, we wanted to experiment, and seeing about -- we were living in LA by this time, we were back in LA, and we were artists, and we wanted to see if we could do art away from the commercial pressures of the city, and grow our own food and do all that, and become communal with other artists. And uh, Wolf's parents had a ten acre farm out in the high desert of California, and they said, "Well, you guys can live at " the Ranch, they called it then, "if you pay the taxes and the utilities and stuff, you can live there." So we went out there, and there was about six houses or something, you know ranch houses and stuff. And uh, we uh, I was back in New York at the time. Actually, it was Wolf's idea, I was horrified. I didn't want to live with a bunch of people. I was from New York City, so it didn't sound appealing to me to live with a bunch of people. But he felt that our studies had kind of pointed to that, and that was the thing to do. I was in New York at the time, so I put up sign all around it, figures, and all these coffeehouses and bars. Before I got back to California, about 60 people had left from New York City and other parts of the country, and had come to Farm. So there was like, oh, 60, maybe 65 people in hearses and bikes and school buses, just descended on this little farming town, about 85 miles east of LA. And there were a lot of people from LA who lived out there. And we went through a lot, a lot of changes, and eventually sold that place and moved to the low desert, and uh -- we inherited that place, a part of that place, and then we sold it, and we went to the low desert . And then we began to see the smog and all that crap was just following us everywhere, so we decided to hit the road. So we got into buses and all of that --

**Q:** When was this? Was this early '70's?

**AROL:** This is early '70's, right. We had a band in '72. We have a lot of old pictures, if you want to see them, of the band and the community. And we were there in the high desert, probably about 6, 7 years, and then the low desert. We, of course, were into organic gardening, we were into herbs, we were vegetarians, we were raw food vegetarians actually. And uh, . . . but we were smoking a lot of dope, and hash, and acid, and anything we could get a hold of, except hard-core. There was -- never had anybody into shooting up, heroin, or um, . . . anything. Any speed or anything. No hard drugs, and no hard liquor. So it was beer, wine, grass, hash, acid, stuff like that. Had a band. We played at a lot of universities. And uh, . . . eventually we went to Florida. We broke up the group. It wasn't, we were

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

having a very rough time, we didn't really know what we were doing. And um, we moved to Florida, and then we had a surprise, I got pregnant when I was about 38, and had a little kid in Coconut Grove, Florida. And so we were living in town --

**Q:** Was this just you and Wolf?

**AROL:** Myself, and Wolf, and then some other people, we tried again. We started recruiting people again, were going to do it again. And then, it became, then the child began to symbolize for us, all children, and the future, and okay, what's this kid going to have? As far as we could see, what this kid was going to have was a pretty messed up life, unless we could form a cohesive community, in which this child could grow up in. And then, we came back to California, again parents helped us. We stayed in a place. After Wolf's mother died, we sold it, and we went to Topanga [?] -- we just travelled, for about nine years, we were everywhere. We were in Topanga, we were in Malibu [?], we were in the desert, we were twice in the desert, we were in the low desert, in the high desert -- we were just like everywhere. Well, finally, we were in the low desert, and by that time there were four kids with us besides our own little girl. And uh, um, my daughter and the other little kids started getting depressed. "What's going on?" "Well, we hate the desert." "Why do you hate the desert?" "'Cause we want to live where there's trees and we want horses --" you know, they were saying, let's settle down. Which I really wanted to do all that time, because the first farm was really where I learned herbs, and learned healing, and learned farming, and I really was very, very attached to the land. And when we left, I felt like I was in exile, all those years. Every place was very strange to me. So anyway, we sold the place in Topanga Canyon, and there was a place up in the high mountains outside of San Diego, a place called Boulevard, which is beautiful, beautiful country. And it was up above the desert. So we went up there, we plopped all our money down, and we got 75 acres. And the kids started getting horses. And there were pine trees and mountains and hiking, and all the rest of it, and they were very happy. And that's when we really started getting our shit together as far as getting cohesive, as far as getting . . . structure. As far as, uh, really beginning to structure how to do this thing. You know, how do you do this thing? How do humans make this work? All the time we were, we began to publish in '79 a little hand made mimeograph thing, for people, people would leave the farm, but they wanted something to do. They don't want to just be people. So we said, "Well, let's put this thing together, and see if you can sell it for a quarter." And we called it the Cosmic Revolutionist. And they go out, and, God, they sold like -- they were gone. So then we upped the price to 50 cents, again the same thing happened . Went up to a dollar, but by this time we were just cranking it out and cranking it out. Well by the time we got up to Boulevard, we realized, we found out that we could publish cheaper with a web press, than we were doing on our own little home press. So that's when we started doing the Eclevem [?] Interviews -- Chen can par you up with all our old stuff if you want it. And started doing interviews with a lot of people -- Paul Erlick [?], Earnest Conebach [?], Loretta Switt [?], uh, Angie Dickenson, Godfree Regio [?] - anybody who was involved in any way in planetary work, either with the ecology or with people or with children or with animals or anything. We published that for awhile, was an interview magazine. Then every time we would get an influx of people, they would change the style of the magazine. And we have always attracted young people, and the longer we've been around, the younger the age has gotten. So, I guess, Jeffrey was the one that told us we had the youngest, highest proportion of young people than any other community. And we're very, kind of tribal, attitude. Again, that was told to us. We were just

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

busy working these things out, and weren't really, you know, entitling ourselves too much. But that's what we do, we tend to attract young people, and artistic people. We have a lot of artists here. Practically all of them draw or paint, or architecture or dance, or do music, or something. So, that's a very big part of this community. Of course, Wolf's a writer, and I was an actress, and a dancer, and so we have always tended towards art, and attract, obviously, artist types. Now a lot of kids that show up don't know they're artists. You know, they're just doodlers or something, you know? Well the magazine turned out to where we were publishing 50,000 quarterly. We were just like, cranking them out. They were just selling everywhere. Well then the band started recording their music, and then we started selling tapes and now we're going to be selling CDs, so that kind of, -- we've backed off the magazine to about 30,000 an issue now, because we sell so many tapes, we sell so much music now, as well. So we don't publish quite as many magazines. That's the main source of income for the group, is the magazines and the music. The band now is getting ready to tour, the band's ready to get gigs and start working. They've got a CD out, and um, going to be pushing that, etcetera, etcetera. Wolf and I have shows in Austin. So we do video, media, print media, music media -- we just do that while we build this place. We have extensive plans -- a group of architects in San Francisco have done these blueprints for us, we're going to start building around the river. It's called E Colony [?], and it's all . . . off the grid, it's designed to be off the grid, stobil [?], cobb [?], a lot of earth-buildings. These buildings were here, this building and this building were here, but they looked nothing like this. They were falling down, six rattlers were living in this house. [unintelligible] was ready to be burned. When the realtor showed it to us, he said, "Well, you'll burn this, and you'll burn that." But we didn't. We renovated it totally. We have a full-on dance studio, full music studio, recording studio. People do pottery, jewelry, leather-work. Some of our saddles we built ourselves. And a full-on, you know, as you saw, carpentry and mechanic shop, blacksmithing. Raise horses, dogs find their way here from all over the world. Got about 35 dogs. . . . That's my daughter. She had a young baby -- at a young age she had a young baby. She's actually 19. She's a dancer. So what else can I tell you?

**Q:** Can you tell me something about your mission and your beliefs?

**AROL:** Yeah. It's basically, we have several things. Of course, we have a philosopher living with us, so, we -- Wolf Zendik's our philosopher, and he comes up with these things, and we work them out. And then we see whether they work or not.

**Q:** You're his laboratory, right?

**AROL:** Yeah, we're the living laboratory, and he's the resident philosopher. Um, . . . there's a lot of tenets, but basically our socio-political ideas for eco-librium, which says that basically that you take the ecology as your basic premise for survival. You take your bio-region, you take the biota, you take the sky, the air, the earth, the water, first, and then everything comes, you build everything from that. It's a cooperative culture. It's a um, one-on-one democracy, it's not a representational democracy. It ultimately -- we did an eco-amendment to the constitution, with the environmental law clinic at USD, we had a lot of fun with that, and we set up a government based on bio-regions, the country broken down into bio-regions, general bio-regions. We can give you a copy of that -- turned into a forming government, not an eco-amendment. So we never went ahead with it. We believe in that, eco-librium.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

Our spiritual belief is what we call cre-evolution, which is creative evolution, essentially. Um, . . . those are kind of some of the basic premises, and within that there are other premises. We believe that, um, . . . the natural world is not competitive, it's essentially cooperative. And no other species is competitive with itself. We believe competition is all wrong, capitalism is all wrong, high finance is all wrong. You have a world based on an abstraction which is finance, instead of what's real, and you get what you've got. Cre-evolution just says that we are in the stream of evolution, we are evolving, we're evolving right now. Evolution doesn't like stop in that sense. So evolution is going, and we have a creative, objective mind, and we can affect evolution. In fact, that's what we do. So we need to recognize that and use our creativity into that evolutionary stream. So you're fades in the sense of that's mere fate, but there's evolution in like taking my creativity, my objectivity, and I'm putting it into that, you so can affect the future, you can affect your future, the future of the earth, everything. So we have a responsibility for that. We have a conscience for that. We have a consciousness for that. And uh, we believe that human beings are meant to live together, to survive together. But, without it, you have what you have. It's been getting worse and worse and worse as the centuries go on, as it breaks down, as that -- whatever was left of that extended family, tribal thing, has been shattered more and more, you have what you have, which is total disintegration -- corruption, pollution, all of that you can trace to us. And we are -- I always feel that being communal creatures is in our DNA, it's actually in our genes to be that, and not to do that is kind of like a sin against biology, it just like doesn't make sense. And will lead to what it's lead to. So, we're very politically oriented in the sense of, I mean we had, we started a political movement, several. The Eclive [?] Alliance, Zendik Action Party -- we've done things like that, but we keep veering away from that kind of political activism, because it seems to -- the problem is the whole system. In other words, you can't join the Democratic Party to do good, because you can't, you can't do good. You can't be a president and do good, you can't be a congressman and do good, because the whole thing is corrupt, so you could say it's at the roots. So you have to dig the whole thing out. So it's a spiritual, political, emotional, intellectual problem, you know it's all of it. Um, . . . how exactly we're going to bring that together, I'm not sure yet. You know, I'm in touch with people all over the world who feel the same, but we haven't like --

**Q:** Connected?

**AROL:** No, how do you slide it in there? Where do you do that? Well one way is you try to create an example. So that's what this is. This is a home place, it's 300 acres, it's certified -- all these fields are organic. They are producing, we produced the same amount of alfalfa last year as the commercial grower did. So, we're proving it can be done. When we came here, the old boys came around and told me no way could we farm here without pesticides or herbicides, you know? "No way, girl." And then they come up and they see the sorghum and they see, I mean, we don't just do vegetables in a small plot. We do major amounts, for us, major amounts of land. Seventy-five acres of wheat, and fifty acres of corn, and 100 acres of sorghum. You know, we do major planting, and we do it without chemicals, of any kind. So we prove it can be done, even here in Texas, which is hell as far as mosquitos and bugs, and you know, everything. In the summer, this is -- not mosquitos, but just stuff that eats everything. And then we have workless [?] meetings, we have living therapy sessions, but we consider this whole thing a living therapy. Because -- therapy doesn't work because you can't, just like medicine doesn't work, because you can't go someplace once a week and find out what's wrong with you, and then go back into

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

the same atmosphere. That's why you can't bust a kid for grass, throw him in jail, or crack, throw him in jail, and go back to his neighborhood. It's impossible, there's no way, you're in your medium. So it's a two-fold thing here. So living therapy is on-going. You're always seeing clusters of people stopping and saying, "Well, what's happening," and working it out. And then we have living therapy sessions as well, we have, we do theater, we're getting ready to film now, so we do theater. And theater is a weird thing, because it turns into another form of psychotherapy. And dance of course, I mean, Faun's [?] class the other day, they decided to dance with feeling, these kids who had never danced before, and about six girls were sobbing on the floor, you know, because they couldn't do it, or didn't know how to express it. So it's a therapy that's going on all the time in the sense that we're not communal, we don't know anything about it, we weren't raised that way, we weren't schooled that way. At least most of us. We don't know anything about it -- how do you do this thing? We were raised to be loners, you know, and constantly in communal life, you run up against yourself, in one form or another. So it's very exciting. It's very exciting, opportunities, a very exciting way to live. Nobody's ever bored -- they might be miserable, but they're not bored! And the other basic -- one of the basic premises here, which would be kind of under the heading of "eco-librium" is the genius potential principle, which just simply says that everyone is born unique, and it's the function of your culture to discover what that is, and provide the atmosphere, provide the support, within which that child can find their genius, what they're great at. So obviously here, people come in their late teens or early '20's, or up to 30, and they have no idea, they're just been stoned for ten years or five years or whatever, they don't know what they are. And they may go from one thing to another to another, and uh, then they find the area they really love. Bosha [?] is just like a master builder, just a fine artist -- he didn't do anything but get stoned and mess around. He didn't know. But now he's one of the major movers in the colony project as far as working out the models and working to scale. So we just find these geniuses all the time. Have a kid that shows up that is, all he's ever been in is LA gangs, and he's got a million tattoos all over him, and has been -- his mother locked him out of the house and changed all the locks because he was ripping her off blind, you know, and he looks at you when he first comes to you, and you think, "God, is this kid all there?" And then, drives out and becomes, and then he turns out to become this genius sculptor, this genius diesel mechanic. I mean, he can read manuals that -- the old guys here come to him! You know diesel engines are very, very complicated machines, and he's like overhauled a diesel tractor, and all the guys, they'll lend him any equipment, because they know that he will fix it properly. One of the old guys here gave us a combine, he likes that kid so much! He should have it. So this is constant. Given an opportunity, you can learn anything here. You can learn building, you can learn eco-architecture, you can learn computers, you can learn computer graphics, you can learn graphics, you can learn dance, you can learn organic cooking -- just this wide spectrum. There's hardly any spectrum of human endeavor we don't cover here. And then there's a center for maximum potential building systems in Austin, around by Plenyfisk [?], there's like the guy in the country, I mean he studied with Ian McHarg [?] and all that, I mean as far as systems are concerned, and uh, how to work the architecture, how to work your gray water and all that stuff, he's our main advisor, he's the one that's running our e-colony project for us. He's the one that assigns us what to do. As far as Pleny's concerned, we're one of the few places in the world that's truly recycling and truly doing it. Because we have to work the systems out here. All the buildings are, all these were added on, all these kitchens and bathrooms and all that, and then kids that never did anything but hang out, get stoned, go to nightclubs and bother their parents, were figuring out

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

how to recreate the original siding. A friend came and said, "Well I've got this mill. If your kids will mill the wood on this." All the cedar inside, all the, everything is milled by these kids. And uh, these are people who couldn't do anything, they're throw-away people. Now a strange thing about this, and this may be true in all communities, I'm not exactly sure -- most of these people here are not street people, they didn't come off the street. They are kids out of middle-class to upper-class families. Some have been in rehabs half their life, others have been in and out of jail, some have never gotten in trouble, been like, grade -A students. I mean, Chen's got his B.A. and was captain of the football team, football scholarships. It's a wide range, you know. But given the opportunity in a noncompetitive, supporting atmosphere, they find what they are great at, and then they are encouraged to take over that area. "Could you take responsibility there?" So we've developed this system of what we call "strators" or administrators, and those are people who take a bottom-line in that area. Now when they go to work in another area to help out, that's not their bottom line, so they kind of work for that other person. It's built on your willingness to take responsibility, and a large extent, how much you know in that area. But that leaves it wide open for people who've been here a year or so, to take over areas. They don't have to wait and be here 20 years or something. As soon as you, you say "Yeah, I'm willing to take responsibility," we go, "Oh, yeah, here, it's yours! I'll go do something else!" Not that they're left alone with it, they're helped with it, but we encourage people to take responsibility, to understand that they can, that they're brilliant, that they have an innate genius in them, and they have something to give. They have something precious. And we believe that can be, if that can be extrapolated, if that can be -- so if you get 1,000 people here, ultimately, doing that, then why couldn't you get 50,000 people or 100,000 people? A million? You see what I mean. Now everybody says, see, we are so worldly oriented, they'll say, "Well how are you going to stop the fundamentalists in Arabia?" and this and that -- my contention is you don't kind of pay attention to that on a certain level. You just keep . . . building and pushing out, and you keep the philosophy, these philosophies, these ideas pushing out there into the world. Because it's philosophy that changes everything. The idea has to be there first. And then, humanity can go. And it doesn't take very many people to change history. It just doesn't. You don't need -- you need less than 1%, at least that's what it's been historically. Now history so far has just been this mess. It's just, Wolf's got a great line -- I can't think of it right now. But it's just been one mess after another. I mean, you study -- the kids work out of that comic, have you seen that? History of the Universe? It's a great comic. It's done in a comic form. But anyway, the kids come out of those classes going, "Jesus Christ! It's more death, and death, and death, and death!" Yeah, wars, wars, wars, wars and rapes. They finally said just like, "Can we use a different book?" Because like, "Isn't there any other thing we can do?" 'Cause it was just getting so bad! See, and that's our history so far, and we're saying there's no reason for it anymore. There's a place that we can go, even if we -- our contention is that when people say, "Well, we've been competitive, and we've always been competitive," and our contention is, "Well, yeah, you have an objective mind also, and you've always had that, and your objective mind can tell you that's not the best, most efficient way to run your life. So isn't it time to change?" So the contention is, once you know, once you have objectivity and you can see the beginning, middle, and end, then you can begin to change that beginning, middle, and end. So that's basically um, Chen's very good at running you all this down, probably better than I am. Which I thought he could talk to you too. But that's basically it. So we go into every area. If you live here, your sexuality is messed with, that's discussed, that's open, you know. If you're in a couple relationship, that's

discussed, that's open, that's open for input. If you're not in that relation - whatever your sexual thing is, that's open news. Nothing here is kept private in that sense of, private in the sense of not being questioned. Everything's opened to question -- how you raise a child, uh, how you conduct yourself sexually, socially, all these things are out in the open. Um, I mean I have a lot of people from different communities come here and say they could never live here, because they couldn't handle that kind of open, um, inquiry. But --

**Q:** Because someone's calling you on your behavior a lot?

**AROL:** Yeah, they can. They can say, "Well, what was that?" It used to be very, kind of nasty. But it isn't anymore. Now it's like, "Okay, what's your problem? Why are you behaving that way? What's happening inside you? Do you need help? Is something really disturbing you?" So that the prompting now, or the inquiry is more, um, "What do you think you need to do?" or, "How could this day be better?" or "What do you think is wrong?" You see? Instead of going at you. So, it's getting very, uh, gentle in that way. But it's very tough here, in the sense that, that honesty is a basic thing we believe in. We believe that if the world would stop lying, we'd be fine. I mean, that's what Buckminster [?] Fuller was saying before he died, if we just stop lying, if we just stop lying, if we just tell the truth. And our contention is that the truth is everything. It's everything. So it's this process here of learning to live that way, on what we call the "truth way." Which means it's always open, it's never -- it's kind of like a-truth, in the sense of Truth, capital T burned in fire, you know? Because what's true is always open to, I mean we just discovered another galaxy. We're very kind of science-oriented in that sense, you know? What's true? What is true? Does that work, or doesn't it work? What's the cause, what's the effect? How does this work? And you can't get anywhere as long as you're lying. But you have to have an atmosphere within which you can live in such a way that you don't have to lie to survive. And up till now, we've had to lie to survive. There's no way you're not going to have to lie. We were taught it in school, we were taught it everywhere, you know? To lie by omission, little white lies, all these things -- they kill your soul, ultimately. So we feel you have to create an atmosphere within which people don't have to lie anymore. They can learn that they're not going to get hurt for telling the truth. And that takes years and years and years, because that is a basic . . . thing that's been like crammed into us, very early, we pick up early, "Oh, you don't say that there, you don't do this, you don't do that; oh I can't do this, I can't do that." We pick it up. Even without being taught, we pick it up from the culture. So it's a cultural problem, everything's a cultural problem, you can't escape your culture. There's no way any of us can escape our culture. So how about creating a different kind of culture? And I have a lot of hope for that in the sense that, as you probably know, children will immediately go for it. Children can, that's all they want to do anyway, is tell you the truth. They're just taught not to. This book, my daughter is starting to teach him [daughter's child] and another one and half year old, the Institute for Human Potential, in Philadelphia, run by Glen Doman [?] -- he believes you should teach infants to read and to math, languages and all that, by the time they're five. They should know all that. That um, he used the phrase, he used the quote from someone, I forgot who said it -- oh, Birchwind [?] Russel -- "All children are born geniuses, and the system spends their first six years de-geniusing them." It's just like all wrong, what's going on. All wrong. By the time the child -- and Doman's contention is that by the time the child is six, when they do start to learn, the brain is beginning to slow down! So it's not the right time. And the thing is parent-based, where parents can teach their children these things, and they have these kits and

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

seminars and stuff, and they're just wonderful people, working with children. They started working with children by working with brain-damaged children. There was a bunch of um, psychologists and um, surgeons and all these people working with brain-damaged children, and they weren't getting anywhere until they kind of joined together -- speaks for cooperation again -- and then they began working with children, and they found that they had children with half a brain, just learning at incredible rates. So then they started looking at well children to see the differences, and found that their brain-damaged children were passing the well children. They just like [hits her forehead], they were like, "What?! What is going on here? Why should this be?" So anyway, they've been working since the '70's, and they've developed this system, and they're just wonderful people, they're just like brilliant people. So they're starting that form of schooling now, with the little ones. I knew about it when Fawn with three or four, but I just didn't have the temperament to do it. So I never did it, so I've had these old books around, and this little baby was sitting one day, and he had nothing to do, and I have this whole series of ecology cards -- you know, it shows you the train and what it's called, and then animals and where they're from, what part of the planet. I was showing it to him, and I had this 11 month old child sitting there looking at the cards, not ripping them up or throwing them or anything, just kind of turning them all different ways and kind of studying it, and then I remembered the books. Because that's the basis of the books are these cards and stuff. So I dug them out, and I thought, "God are these guys still going?" because Wolf and I saw a lot of documentaries on them in the late '70's. And I called them, and they're going stronger than ever. And they were just wonderful. So they're starting this system. That's a little outtake. But see, that's what happens when you're always looking for the truth or something. You find these marvelous people all over the world doing particular forms of work that are so avant garde, or so ahead of anything, and they don't have any power in the world, they're not given anything by the rest of the culture, but those are the true geniuses and pioneers, and we need a culture within which those people have a say. Those people are on what we call an eco-librium counsel in their particular expertise, and they have input. And they'll say, "Well, let's do this," and "let's do that." And other people have their input. It's all this exciting free-for-all of ideas and actions that are beneficial. It's the only way, of course, we're going to survive. Otherwise we won't. It's just the ecology will -- it won't. It won't be able to withstand what we are doing and have done. So that's basically it. they're very, out there, concerned, working all the time. And that's why we work with a lot of people, with our neighbors, with people in Austin, with people around the world, with different organizations, we try to contribute. Of course, if there's a local issue that comes up that needs people to fight, we'll get right into it. If we believe in it, we'll go all out for it. We did in California and we will anywhere. So I can give you, Chen has a lot of old media and stuff like that, and I'll give you some of my stuff in that way too. And you know, we suffer being called a cult, and eating babies, and all kinds of weird stuff. And uh, we've been called sexist and ageist, and every -ist there is, depending on your point of view. And uh, we just keep going on. And what's strange now is we're having a really high influx of young people now. We're in the middle of a -- I mean we no sooner fill the beds and all of a sudden we turn around and there's four or five more people coming. So it's a very, it's moving. We're trying to keep up with it. We have some people, like we have a kid right now that's from a university --

**Q:** One from Antioch?

**AROL:** Yeah, Josh, is Josh from Antioch, I think he is. And so he's just doing an internship. And certain universities will give them credit for coming here and experiencing this. And then I go on a tour once a year and talk at universities. And they give me a lot of money for me to tell that we need to have a revolution and that they shouldn't be in school, and stuff like that. So we get influxes sometimes of college people, college kids. It's very, um, free-swinging, open-ended kind of community, because we sell the magazine on the streets, and the tapes on the streets, so the kids get their street fix. They can get on whatever costume they like, they can go down to 6th St at night, they can go on road trips. They can still . . . so it's very kind of contemporary in that sense, you know, like a lot of kids won't wear tie-dyes, because it's too hippie, they'll only wear black and white. Some kids have piercings and some people wear dreads, and other people look like '60's hippies, because that's their style, and we just kind of leave all that alone, and let people go. There's no like, rules in that sense. We've gone through trying to get rules in that sense, but none of us are very good cops. So if it doesn't work naturally, we don't push too hard on it, you know?

**Q:** Yeah. Do you have any behavioral rules? About living here? Like rules about drugs, or sex, or anything like that?

**AROL:** Right now, we don't use drugs. We have, but we made a communal decision not to use to drugs. And you have to exercise if you live here. Yeah, you have to, you have to do weights or run, or bicycle, or something. You uh, if you have a problem, you need to bring it up. They're just trying an experiment right now with kind of a buddy system. When you come here, somebody who thinks they might be interested in you, in helping you integrate, becomes your mentor, your person that you can go to with problems. And everybody here has a mentor, all of us have mentors, somebody we can talk to. And then the mentors kind of meet and talk about different problems they're running into, and then in living therapy, the things come up. And so we try to do that. Um, . . . sex is, you can avail yourself when you first come here of a thing that we developed which is a third party system, which is you go to someone and tell that person you're interested in someone, and that person goes to the other person and tells them. The reason we started that was because we found that so many people are so shy that way, or so easily hurt that way. Or feel coerced or intimidated, or a lot of girls felt like if a guy hit on them, they have to. And um, then sometimes people aren't interested, and we thought the third party would kind of cushion all that. So you didn't have to have that coming at you, and you didn't have to be [tape ends] . . . but whoever they hit up has to know that that's available to them, that they don't have to. So that people aren't coerced. And people aren't -- because you bring in all that baggage with you, you know, and so we try to work the system out so that you could go through a third party if you want to. Lot of crazy gossip gets going because of that, you know. "Boy, I hear that all the girls have to make it with all the men!" And stuff like that. But um, that's one of the things we developed. We have a work list. We used to have a work list that we'd publish daily, but it turned out, it's 35 [unintelligible], yeah, and printing out on the computer every day, it was insane. So we don't do that so much anymore. We work with strangers [?] now, and work, now we work out what we think we can do for that week, you know? So, um, behavior, um, if you're being a creep and the people that you live with can't take you anymore, then they call a meeting. And get together and try to find out maybe you should be living somewhere else, or maybe you can change your behavior. If you're on tobacco, then there's a place to go smoke

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

and we'll help you quit, once you're here. Um, we drink homemade beer, homemade wine. And maybe once a year when the mushrooms are here. We've been starting that ritual of doing mushroom, everybody together.

**Q:** Do you see that as sort of a spiritual thing?

**AROL:** Yeah. It's kind of a spiritual, it's there. It's just comes at the right time of year. It's always kind of like right on. I used to do peyote that way, and stuff like that. And it feels good to everyone, it feels right. They've tried things, like everybody smoking grass again, and they don't care for it. It's weird, because when we gave up grass, of course we lost some people who couldn't handle it. I always thought, "Well God, these guys are going to go out, they stay with people around the road, and everybody's a stoner, for sure they're going to get stoned," but nobody did. It's really strange. The longer they've been without drugs, the more strange it is to do drugs. Um, we stopped doing drugs and stopped doing alcohol, and stopped doing coffee, and stopped smoking cigarettes and all of that really for health reasons. We were just getting too sick. The immune system was being dragged down and there was a lot of sickness in the community. [Chen and Shey come in]. . . . I thought maybe talking to you and Chen might be good too. Give you a different overview than me.

**SHEY:** You might like to see all the school's we've been to.

**AROL:** Yeah, I talked to her, I told her we'd do that. Chen, I thought you guys could talk to Deborah a little bit.

**CHEN:** Sure.

**AROL:** Just to get more balance, you know, than just talking to me, and also, I thought she should get a copy of all our old media. You know, from way back?

**CHEN:** Okay, we'll have to get Laura –

**SHEY:** I have a lot of it too.

**AROL:** Even going back to '70, '71, '72, when that stuff was out. Yeah, that was right after the '60's, that stuff from the first farm.

**SHEY:** Oh, those photos are great!

**CHEN:** Thing is, none of that stuff's true though!

**Q:** None of it's true?

**CHEN:** The media.

**AROL:** We won't talk to media anymore.

**SHEY:** CNN did us, yeah. Oh, that was bad.

**AROL:** CNN was the last straw.

**Q:** Did they come out here?

**AROL:** Oh, they spent a week here. About five days, and it was hell.

**SHEY:** It was terrible. They said, they initially called to do it on eco-architecture. They didn't even! It was such bullshit!

**AROL:** Dan Lieberman came all the way from San Francisco, the architect, and put up a partial structure - they didn't even use that.

**SHEY:** They didn't show Arol at all. They just wanted to do a cult.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**AROL:** Yeah, I didn't exist. So they got Wolf saying, Wolf being a madman on TV, everybody saying "Life sucks."

**SHEY:** An hour from Waco.

**AROL:** Yeah, this is an hour from -- it was a real pistol shot.

**Q:** Oh, that's really bad.

**AROL:** Yeah, they were bad. Well, it was just an environmental show, so not that many people saw it! "It's only the environment!"

**Q:** God, that's a sad commentary!

**AROL:** It is. One of my relatives, I said, "Well, we're going to be on CNN." "Oh yeah? Which show?" I said, "Well, they got this environment show," everybody kind of goes, "Oh," and starts talking to each other. Absolutely no interest. So, I thought maybe you guys could -- I kind of gave her a brief history of where we are and where we're going and all of that. But if you guys could give her more, and then just pile her, I thought, with the old magazines, the mandate, the interviews. You know, anything that makes sense, that she might want, one of each.

**SHEY:** We can talk, and then we can go to the office together.

**AROL:** Alright, I'm going to coast where the roses should go. But I have to leave about 3:30.

**Q:** Yeah, and she gave me a really nice overview.

**CHEN:** Is it too windy out here for the tape?

**Q:** I don't think so. One thing I'm really curious about, is um, I live on a farm, so I know how much work it takes to make a farm go. How do you guys have time to also do all your art? 'Cause I know you're really involved in art.

**CHEN:** Well, we prioritize art into our work day, you know? And --

**SHEY:** Well a lot of our art is tied into our survival. So when there's a magazine to be done, we need the drawings, we need the poetry, and we need the music for the new CD, we need the dance for the show. You know what I mean? Especially when art is tied into our survival, we definitely --

**CHEN:** And art is philosophically tied into our survival, because we believe in it. And we're also saying that anything can be an art form, whether it's mechanics or carpentry or dance, or cooking, or whatever it is. That's one of our ideals. Did she talk to you about the genius potential?

**Q:** A little bit, yeah.

**CHEN:** Yeah, just that, and if you, that's really one of the main premises of the community -- you can do something I can't do, I can do something you can't do, and one of the primary functions of culture is to find out where the individual excels, and then to give them the ego and training support, and you know? To have them whale [?] in that area, and then just mix all those things together. So, people need to do their art. They might need that, you know they need some time to concentrate and do something for their head.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**SHEY:** But we also really find that as far as bringing people into the community, bringing out who they really are, even recently we started doing theater again, after a lot of years of not doing it, and you can just see that people are so much happier. You know it's like a therapy. So, --

**CHEN:** And it gives them a sense of self, you know, that their creativity has a place to be, you know, exercise, so then they feel better. And we do it at night, you know do theater meetings at night and stuff. So, I guess that's the answer.

**Q:** It seems to be everywhere. It's wonderful. Yeah. So you've been part of Zendik Farm for a long time, haven't you?

**CHEN:** Right.

**Q:** About 15 years or so?

**CHEN:** Oh, since '81, and then I left for a couple of years. And I came back.

**Q:** So in the '80's, it was in, east of San Diego?

**CHEN:** Well, it was in Topanga. And then it was, then we moved, uh, then we ended up in a place called Boulevard, which is east San Diego county, in the mountains. That was beautiful, it was a beautiful place.

**Q:** Why did you end up leaving there?

**CHEN:** Because we wanted to get a better agricultural base. There's not enough rain there, and the smog was coming in.

**SHEY:** Soil is, it was high desert.

**CHEN:** The soil was weak. Also Wolf had a lung problem, and we wanted to all be together.

**SHEY:** The elevation was too high, he couldn't breathe there. There wasn't enough available oxygen.

**CHEN:** With the smog, yeah. And just for a number of reasons. Out here, we don't have building codes, you know.

**SHEY:** We're much more, as far as spreading our ideas and our outreach, we're much more centrally located here. For years, we mainly distributed our literature in California. It wasn't until we moved here that we really started going into the East Coast, and Midwest, you know, which has made a big difference in the amount of people that know about us.

**Q:** Yeah, I know you guys came through Lawrence a year or two ago or so.

**SHEY:** Yeah, we usually go there for Day on the Hill.

**Q:** That's great. Have you been a part of the community for a long time?

**SHEY:** About eight years.

**Q:** Eight years. Wow.

**SHEY:** Yeah, I moved here when I was 18, went to the farm in California, from Chicago, a suburb there.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** So can you tell me somewhat what daily life is like here? Like, you get together at breakfast and then decide on what work you're going to do for the day? How does that work?

**SHEY:** The way that the work is organized is, we keep a lot of books that have ongoing projects, future projects, and different people are called "stators," for administrator, in each area. So then we keep a weekly list, it's typed on the computer, it changes every week, of what we want to accomplish. So that we set over the weekend, and a few of us discuss it, come up with that. And then on a daily basis, we do meetings with more of the newer people. The core, the 15 of us in the core, we have a pretty ongoing communication about our survival priorities.

**CHEN:** People are kind of already more into their genius potential in the core, so they kind of, know what they're going to be working on.

**SHEY:** They're set to go.

**CHEN:** Or if they're strators, they know they're going to be working in carpentry, or know what they have to do to sell on schedule every week.

**SHEY:** But then for people who've been here anywhere from brand new to a few years, we have a daily morning meeting, and go from there. We do things in blocks, we find that people really enjoy big communal projects. You know, "Everybody work on the garden." Whatever we can. That works well. I think it's pretty hard work though.

**CHEN:** What do you mean, what's hard work?

**SHEY:** Well, I mean, . . . you know the hours that we work and the farm work and everything.

**CHEN:** Oh, yeah!

**Q:** Pretty physical.

**SHEY:** Yeah, most people aren't really used to it at first.

**Q:** Now this e-colony project that you're working on, is that like an eco-village?

**CHEN:** Right. Right.

**Q:** Okay. 'Cause I went to the Farm eco-village when I was in Tennessee, so, I thought maybe it was the same kind of thing.

**CHEN:** Yeah, did she tell you about Dan Liebermann, and all that, the architect? He built all the plans. So I'm not sure when we'll get to that, as soon as we can, maybe the spring.

**Q:** Now what is the core that you guys talked about? Those are just long-term members?

**CHEN:** Well, they're long-term members, and they're members that are pretty grounded philosophically. This is a whole different culture, it's not just community living. We have a different set of ideas on nearly everything, from aesthetics, to sexuality, to politics, to education, to agriculture, to just everything. And so it's a different, it's a whole different way of being, really. We're almost like we're trying to create a new species really, and do that philosophically by, by working the mind. Did Arol tell you about cre-evolution?

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** A little bit.

**CHEN:** Yeah. It's just --cre-evolution is, we see, we don't see evolution as a random process. We see it as a, uh, a development, kind of a universal quest for greater and greater consciousness, greater and greater sensual and conscious awareness by life itself. It's almost like the universe has evolved a system to know itself in a certain sense. So we see that expanse from the single cell to the human being being the highest object of consciousness that we know of on the earth, and so now being aware of that expansion that evolution seems to be driving for, we consciously put the mind into that and accelerate it by, uh, by using the mind, by developing our psychic abilities, by saving the rain forests, by taking responsibility for everything within the scope of our consciousness, which is called cosmic responsibility. So, so the core are people that have hung in and have a basic or pretty strong philosophic grasp of those concepts, and are actively trying to live by them. It's difficult, because you come here, you're trained by a culture that is killing everything. You know, that is deadly, that has a high tolerance for boredom.

**SHEY:** Where lying is reflexive. The myths we've all been handed, it's really reflexive. Set out to not go for the myths here, but to go for what really is going to work. And it's very shattering to your makeup, in every way, when you come here, and it takes a long time, a number of years to really --

**CHEN:** --change those reflexes . Because you're everybody's schiz, intellectually, nobody believes in poisoning the Mississippi, what the hell, nobody wants a poison -- you ask anybody, "No, I don't want to drink poison water. Good point." Well then you got to change the way you live. "Yeah, but I really like to --" you know what I mean? It's like, so we're all schiz, we have our intellect or our ideals, and we have our unconscious training. And the thing to do is to integrate those two and be aware of your, what your real, your operating philosophy is, is not what your ideals are, because you were trained again, by a suicidal culture. So the process of being in the core is working very deeply to educate our id in a certain sense, if you want to put it in those terms, and bring it up, so that you're constantly striving for your ideals. In my exchanges with Shey, in my exchanges with you, how I relate to the baby, how I treat a tool -- you know, just everything. And how I deal with the world. And it takes time. Because we all have our -- we're all shmucks on a certain level.

**SHEY:** Did Arol talk to you at all about living therapy?

**Q:** Just a little bit. She said that um, you know, in a sense everything that you do is therapy --

**CHEN:** Exactly.

**Q:** --but that you also have living therapy sessions.

**CHEN:** Right.

**SHEY:** Well, the core group, really, is a constant living therapy. Every morning, it's telling our dreams, "I'm off," or "You look off." A lot of constant exchange that way. In other words, there's nothing I can ask him or tell him.

**CHEN:** Right, about anything , sexuality, just, we want to be like totally open. We're on the truth way, which is really, that's what the core, to the extent you really, philosophically believe, well, you know, you could have a dream that's kind of embarrassing, you know, or revealing about yourself, and you might not want to tell it, but you just know, "Well, I've got to get honest, because life's going to reveal that anyway, so I might as well get honest."

**SHEY:** Take that risk now.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**CHEN:** Yeah. Just go for -- 'cause ultimately, truth is the only thing that's going work, and that's the way to pleasure. So, it takes awhile to believe that, because we all had to be like this in the culture, you know, we're all getting hit at, and everything.

**Q:** So how does one become part of the core? Is it just, you sort of evolve into that after you've been here awhile?

**SHEY:** Yeah. A lot of it I think has to do with, as a person is here awhile and gets a grasp on the philosophy, especially cooperation, communication, then that person becomes someone that we can work with, and count on, on a survival level. Which makes the relationship deepen, you know? And then you find a person ready to apprentice to the core, is what we do initially. It's pretty slow though, it's not . . .

**CHEN:** Yeah, because it's a different, it takes, it takes time to really . . . give up our belief in being secretive, or lying, or being -- most people lie by omission, you know, they don't say it. So it takes a long time for people to kind of give that up, and uh, 'cause they develop a certain set of reflexes for survival in a corrupt culture, so it takes a long time to give that up. Which is why I left, I didn't want to give that up, it's too scary. It's like an animal survival -- it's like asking another animal not to drink water, you know. For social survival, you have to learn to deal, and you know.

**Q:** What has your relationship been like with the surrounding community. I know you're pretty rural, but you have some neighbors.

**CHEN:** Oh yeah. I think it's really good, I mean, we lend a lot of equipment back and forth. Arol's on the -- wasn't Arol on the damn chamber of commerce or something like that?

**SHEY:** Yeah, we get involved on that level, a lot of the local -- we believe in that . We shop locally as much as we can, when we have to buy stuff.

**CHEN:** We have a guy who lent us his, we have a couple of farmers that knew this property before, and they lent us equipment, and we lend them equipment. Well it's actually three of our neighbors that we work with, pretty close that way.

**SHEY:** We have a real good relationship with the local sheriff, we were on the volunteer fire department, we had a truck here for awhile.

**Q:** And you clean the highway, I noticed.

**SHEY:** We clean the highway, I mean we --

**CHEN:** It needs a cleaning right now.

**SHEY:** --we really believe in that.

**CHEN:** Yeah, we want to do that as much as possible. I mean, I'm sure --

**SHEY:** We have open houses here.

**CHEN:** Yeah. We're very open, we want to be very open with the world. Not going to be used as a tourist attraction, but we want to be, we don't really have anything to hide, you know.

**Q:** Do you have a lot of people that kind of just drop in and want to stay?

**CHEN:** We have some . . . well, we usually have, usually people call first.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**SHEY:** We try to encourage that. I mean it fluctuates . Well go through a time when we aren't getting many letters or many people coming here, and then, boom, all of a sudden we're inundated.

**Q:** Did the Directory really pick up your visitor --?

**CHEN:** No, not really. Most of the kids find us through um, we've had a much better rate of success for people that have met us through the magazine or music tapes. We've had, I don't know. We just had a guy call another day from the Directory, and he's coming.

**SHEY:** Josh is here, from the Directory.

**CHEN:** He is? Oh that's true.

**Q:** Someone from the FIC?

**CHEN:** No, it's from the Directory of Intentional Communities, that book.

**Q:** Yeah, that's put out by the FIC. So I've been involved with them, but I don't think I remember meeting Josh.

**CHEN:** Oh, Josh, he's a college kid from Antioch.

**SHEY:** Yeah, he's just someone who read about us.

**Q:** Oh I see, through the Directory. Got it. I thought you meant someone from the directory, like Jeff. I guess Jeff's come here a few times.

**CHEN:** Yeah, that was at Boulevard.

**SHEY:** Has Jeff come visit our farm here?

**CHEN:** I don't think so.

**Q:** Oh, just in San Diego? Oh, okay. Well one of the things I asked you on the phone that I'm curious about and I'd love to hear you talk about a bit, is why you think that this place is lasted, whereas a lot of communal groups seem to crash and burn rather quickly.

**CHEN:** Right. I think it's the philosophy. I think, again, like I said on the phone, any reason any culture works -- the reason anything works at all is it's whether it's true or not, whether its philosophy -- so you either have enough truth going to make it work. And we, and the other reason is, is because it's an open-ended philosophy. We'll do things, and we'll see, well that's not working, and we'll change it. And we're not, we're not liberals, we won't just let anybody -- we'll kick people out if they're just too disruptive of the community. We don't like to do that, but if it's necessary for our survival, we're going to do it. We have really strong leadership. And we're, and that's part of our philosophy. We believe that certain people have the ability to lead. We don't really -- see, we don't really operate on, well in the beginning certainly, we didn't operate very much on consensus, you know. Now, it's not like a, it's not like the stock process of consensus, it's just, with the core, we've known each other for so long, we just kind of go with it. If it's an idea that sounds true, then there is kind of almost a psychic consensus, you could say. There's kind of a, "Yeah, that sounds right, let's try that." But, uh, you know, I mean, we do have leaders, Arol and Wolf are the primary leaders, and they're the ones with the greatest vision, you know? But everybody has input, it's not like just a one way thing. It's not like a -- and it's getting more and more two way, as we've been trained, and then the student starts teaching the teacher, to a

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

degree. So uh, but I think that's why, the philosophy, Wolf's -- and now, we're really getting into sexuality. We've had to really deal with that and try to understand that. And also the whole, the whole thing of taking responsibility, philosophically. In other words, we have to be each other's insurance, you don't just have car insurance, you have to know, "Hey, he's off today, he really shouldn't be going to pick up the produce today, because I don't feel good about it." And you say that. You say so. It's very, out. We're trying to really be out with it, whether it hurts that person or not, too bad. It's your vehicle, and it's their well-being you're trying to, save their day, and make the thing work, so you have to say it. You might be wrong, but it doesn't matter. So it's just, that philosophy is really what makes it work. And strong leadership. A willing to go it alone, really, and in a certain sense Arol and Wolf have to be willing to go alone, "This is what we're trying to do here, this is what we're doing," so you have to be willing to give. Like if I'm running a selling crew and we're in New Orleans, I'm going to say, "Well look, I really think we should work this street tonight." And maybe some people don't agree with that, and you listen to their input and you may change your mind, but you may say, "No, I'm taking responsibility for this." And then they go with it, they cooperate. And then when you go home, if didn't work, then you review it, and "Well, maybe you shouldn't run crews, because this is the second time you've made the wrong decision." And so it's not, --- it's not like a strict hierarchy in that, I mean Arol and Wolf are the leaders, but with everybody else, I might be the strator in one area, but somebody else is a strator -- you know what I mean? It depends on where we're working, where that person has the say. And it's not really like a . . . you know, like a "in your face," you know what I mean? It's friendly, it's a discussion, it's cooperation. So I guess that's why. It's a real commitment to find out what's true and going for cooperation. I'm sure a lot of communities, they get egos, and nobody wants to bend, and they're so into being right, you know, there's no real kind of, and they just explode, I guess, I'm sure that's probably what happens, you know.

**Q:** Is part of it also being flexible and willing to change, if you need to?

**CHEN:** Oh yeah, yeah. That's why we have changed a lot of things. I mean, we were, I mean if you look back at some of the things we did, we were like real dummies. I mean, like --

**Q:** How have some of the things changed since you came here?

**CHEN:** Like, well like we would try to bring people in off the street, and try to bring them right into the big house, and they'd be like instantly like integrated into the community in a certain sense. It was way too tough for them. It was a pain in the ass for us. I want to be able to say to Shey, "Listen, I was really upset with you because of that," I want to be able to come off straight. And with them, you can't really, because that violates their, "Well, that's not nice." or whatever. So now, it's just too rough for them, and so, we have a set up, that's why we came with the core, partly. And then they have, there are different levels of integration, so they kind of integrate at their own pace . But for as long as we did that, when you look back at it, it's like dumb. When you're into it, you don't see it as dumb. That we should've done it years ago, but. But, see, we have a faith, well, a belief, because we've seen the data, that if we're really interested in this, in bringing a benevolent way to the earth, that it's, that we're going to find an answer, because we're going to glean truth out of our experience and be able to implement into our life, and it's going to get better. And we've found that to be true. So that's one area. That's the main thing I can think of.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** Have you seen things change much?

**SHEY:** Oh, tons. Incredibly. I mean it's like a whole different, oh boy.

**CHEN:** We did drugs, you know we used to do --

**SHEY:** The way we do therapy, and work on our problems and on evolving, is totally different.

**CHEN:** It's become a lot gentler.

**Q:** That's what Arol said. That the way you kind of confront each other is more gentle now than it used to be.

**CHEN:** Yeah, it used to be pretty hard core. You had to be tough.

**Q:** Do you like the gentle approach better?

**CHEN:** Oh much better.

**SHEY:** Oh yeah. Well, it's much more effective!

**CHEN:** Yeah, because people aren't afraid to get honest.

**SHEY:** That's why.

**CHEN:** I'm not going to get honest with you if you're going to jump all over my case, you know? I'm going to be afraid, then I'm going to stay a dealer. We've had to really work on our anger, Arol and Wolf's anger, our anger, you know everybody's anger has had to come -- because, just because, again, it's not true, doesn't work. We're after what works. That's our modus operandi. What the hell's going to work here? Well anger doesn't work. The only time we say you can get angry is if you really feel like that's the only thing that would work and you run it through your brain first. Say, well this person needs a little anger. But we're still, we're still reflecting, all together that way. We know pretty much everybody's a shmuck at a certain level, and everybody who comes here is pretty much an ego-maniac. Because you have to be. I'm not putting anybody down. In a world that's so competitive and is vicious, to survive, you hold onto that little voice in your head. All these kids that came here were saying "No" to the schools, "No" to the churches, "No" to the corporations, "No" to the advertising –

**SHEY:** "No" to their parents.

**CHEN:** --"No" to their parents, "No" to the TV, "No" to the record music industry -- you know, they didn't fit. And so, they're going to come here and say "No" to us! That's their pattern, that's how they survive.

**SHEY:** As much as they love it here, it's not really a question of that.

**CHEN:** When you say, "You really shouldn't eat three cheeseburgers a day, " "Well fuck you!" It's like, so that's going to happen, but it doesn't -- and so you have to have compassion for that, but on the same time you have to firmly and gently steer them into a better way. Because Shey can see me better than I can see myself, and I can see her.

**SHEY:** Takes a long time to build that kind of trust.

**CHEN:** Yeah. You may not like the input, but you learn to see that wow, that's what works.

**Q:** Do you guys have any sort of regular rituals or things that you do together as a group on a regular basis?

**SHEY:** Well, we have our morning meetings, every morning, and twice weekly we do a full community meeting, at lunch.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**CHEN:** A work list meeting.

**SHEY:** Uh we do --

**CHEN:** Culture socials.

**SHEY:** Yeah, where everybody brings things to share, what they're reading, music they like, music they play, poetry they've written.

**Q:** That sounds nice. How often do you do culture socials?

**SHEY:** Try to do it once a week. Doesn't end up that frequently at all. We do living therapy meetings, which is, --

**CHEN:** Periodically we've done meta-trance sessions, chanting, --

**SHEY:** --dream work.

**CHEN:** We're always working on dream work.

**SHEY:** Religious, spiritual stuff.

**CHEN:** We're going to build a temple, where it's going to just be really quiet, a place where we can go, and kind of, uh, get in touch with our psychic, spiritual side. You know, and just do some internal work. You know, where you just get a quiet place where you can get to work on yourself, feel your connection with the earth.

**SHEY:** That's an area that we really want to build on.

**CHEN:** Yeah, we haven't --

**SHEY:** We tend to, we're all pretty workaholic kind of types, so we -- you know, someone came here and did a media story, said it looked like, well we used to wear more tie-dye then, but "tie-dyed ant colony. "

**CHEN:** That's what the guy from CNN said, he said, "Well, I couldn't live here, because you guys work too hard. "

**SHEY:** We just go at it, you know. But it's something we really have to work at, to slow down, and feel our spirituality.

**CHEN:** I think we've gotten better.

**SHEY:** Absolutely.

**CHEN:** But we do need to work more on our spirituality. But uh, we are working on it, you know.

**Q:** You know it's interesting that you say that, because I've just been interviewing people who used to live at the Farm community in Tennessee, which is another really long-lasting community, and they all said that they all worked really hard too, they were kind of workaholics, and they really had to work at trying to program in some relaxation and quiet time into their lives. I wonder if in some ways that may be the hallmark of a community that works, is one where people do work hard, and do their share of the labor.

**CHEN:** Right. Yeah, we, we do -- I mean I think it's better now because of the theater, and with the meetings, I mean, I don't -- in the summer-times we work long days, because we take a break in the heat. But in the winter it's not, I don't think anybody, I mean we work hard. The core works really hard. Pretty much our whole day is work, because if you're not doing physical work, you're counselling people, or doing writing at night, or--

**SHEY:** Did you tell her at all about mentoring?

**CHEN:** No, I haven't told her.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** Oh, yeah I heard a little bit about that, I think Arol mentioned that people take on a mentor when they come here.

**CHEN:** Right.

**SHEY:** It's kind of, really it's something we've tried to get going for years, but really in the past 6 months or so, it's really kicked in as how we help each other, and everyone who comes here. Whoever's really interested in them, I mean, we'll ask, "Well who wants to mentor Joe? He just got here." And find out who's interested, and then it's that person's responsibility to get to know them. Teach them, philosophically, and bring them in, help them with the transition into this culture here.

**Q:** And about how many people live here?

**CHEN:** About 45 right now, 47 at the most.

**Q:** Wow, that's pretty fair sized.

**SHEY:** It fluctuates.

**CHEN:** I think we're on an up. Because I think we're learning, I think this whole separation thing has really helped, and we're learning the mentoring process, and I think we're just learning how to kind of deal with people better, have more of their needs met. And I think the things in the culture are getting more and more desperate too.

**Q:** Yeah, so more people will be seeking you out.

**CHEN:** Yeah, right. A lot of people, what happens is, they get the mag -- it's like, you put out a mag and then, like, a lot of people now are coming in with the AI [?] mag, it's been out for two years or something. People have been calling lately, "Oh, I got the AI mag, I got it from a friend." We had a person get a friend, "A friend gave me a mag, I guess it's five years old." I mean, people hang onto these magazines. They're really works of art.

**SHEY:** I mean, it's pretty strange, like in our travels across the country, we'll go to a new city that we've never sold our magazine at, and within five minutes, we find someone saying, "Oh yeah, I've read your magazine for a year." I've had really strange stuff happen that way.

**Q:** Are you hoping to grow, do you have an ideal size that you're shooting for or anything like that?

**CHEN:** We're uh, yeah, we're hoping to grow, definitely. I don't think we have any ideal size. We'll probably know that when we get to it, or a little after, you know? Hear the feedback, and then maybe we would get another place or something. But that would be a considerable number. I mean, we could hold a lot of people, I think 3 to 5 hundred, here. There'll be growing pains and stuff. But that's longterm.

**SHEY:** Not on a big hurry on that level, you know really.

**Q:** Take it as it comes.

**SHEY:** Yeah. I think, you know, right now we have a group of people now who've been here, a year or a little more, who are forming kind of a solid group. We sometimes refer to them as the "outer core." They're really getting onto it. And as we build an outer group of people that are very solid, then our

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

capabilities to help people grow. We can expand more. But that's a slow process, because it's growing quality people, you know.

**CHEN:** Yeah, it's changing their whole survival matrix and belief system, and that's rough. It takes time to do that.

**Q:** What do you guys like the best about living here?

**SHEY:** In my head popped that I'm not alone. That's just what I was thinking. You know, which is on every level -- in my relationships, in my work, I'm not an isolated unit.

**CHEN:** For me it's the uh, the meaning of everything. That it has meaning, that I have real relationships. That I can be honest, I don't have to -- most jobs are just going nowhere, they're just so uh, . . . I guess, yeah just the philosophy, that it's on-going, that it's exciting. It's really like a huge adventure, you know, and it's so rich. I mean --

**SHEY:** Someday soon, Chen will wake up and say, "I'm a wealthy man!"

**CHEN:** Well we are totally wealthy. We're wealthy because of each other. We can do, you know, I can't do that carpentry. But I can live in the building. And I can put out a magazine that helps generate the funds to pay for the nails, you know. You dove-tail it. But really everything about it is just so rich, I feel really good about it.

**Q:** Are there down sides to communal living, things that are hard for you?

**CHEN:** I don't feel that now. I think I used to feel that. Like the downside would be the fear of being revealed. Fear of being hurt, rejected, you know. But uh, and like, a lot of people "Well, I'd like my own space," and everything. But uh, when you live with people you can be honest with, that's not really a problem that you're afraid of. So I don't really have any down sides.

**SHEY:** I know personally, I go through times when I'm kind of "peopled out," you know? If another person calls my name and asks me another question . . . I feel like I'm going to scream.

**CHEN:** That's true. I still have that.

**Q:** Do you have a way to deal with that? I mean like, a place you can go and escape and be alone?

**CHEN:** You carry a big stick!

**Q:** Well maybe that's what your temple will help with is that you can go and be quiet or something.

**CHEN:** Yeah, exactly, yeah. You just tell people --

**SHEY:** And we do try to set up, you know, if people can not come into the house at certain times.

**CHEN:** Right. Like we have a thing, we don't want people roaming in the house in the mornings, 'cause that's when we discuss our dreams or we're working out the day, or if we're on somebody about something that they need to work on, you know.

**SHEY:** It's usually, I know for me, it's a matter of balance. Maybe I just need to go for a hike or something, you know. Put it off a little too long. [tape ends]

**Q:** How do you spell Chen?

**CHEN:** C-H-E-N.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** And Shey?

**SHEY:** S-H-E-Y.

**Q:** Okay, good. Just like they sound. Well one thing I'm thinking I'm curious about is how economics work here. I assume you pool everything and it's all communal economics?

**CHEN:** Right.

**Q:** But like, what if somebody wants something, like I need a new pair of shoes or something like that? How does that all work?

**CHEN:** Well, it's pretty -- if you need a new pair of shoes, it's pretty easy. If you're in the core, people don't usually use things frivolously, so if you need a pair of shoes, just put it on the list, and we'll get it if we can.

**SHEY:** A lot of times, you ask around, and the shoes are here. We get a lot of stuff donated. But then there's things like running shoes, we get those donated to --

**CHEN:** But boots, if I need a new pair of work boots, let's put it on the list and get something cheap somewhere, if we can.

**Q:** But there's not like a person you go to who handles the money that you go and get money from or something like that?

**CHEN:** No, you just put it on the shopping list.

**SHEY:** Yeah, and then the person who does the shopping list, and all the money goes through Arol. And we really oversee the income.

**CHEN:** Right, Shey and I, we generate the income, and Arol spends it. No, but she has the best overview, really, of our needs, and --

**SHEY:** Chen works with her a lot on the spending, because he has a degree in economics.

**CHEN:** Yeah, in the big money things, she'll run it through me. But she was, I mean, those are just part of survival, and it's pretty logical. It's not like a big bickering thing, you need new shoes, you know what I mean? It doesn't really even come up, because our work is too important. I'm sure new people, I'm sure in their head they'll say, "Well they got this or that."

**SHEY:** And some people are parents.

**CHEN:** If people are here, once they're here and they feel like they're making a solid contribution -- we don't know if they're going to stay, but at least they're working hard and the vibes are good -- they need a pair of shoes, we'll give them a pair of shoes. But a lot times, like Shey said, they're here, or they're show up. Somebody will come or some neighbor will donate a bunch of boots or, you know, we just are able to manifest them. It's not really a big -- we have so much stuff people are pretty much -- most people here aren't really that stuff-oriented anyway.

**SHEY:** And we end up living really well.

**CHEN:** Yeah, we have a really high quality of life. Our per capita income, I'm sure it's well below the poverty line, but the quality of life, to me, is the best in the world -- the best food, the most real relationships. We don't use money in between us.

**SHEY:** Which is a lot of the reason that we've been able to stay together all these years. We can be so much more honest with each other.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** Without money getting in the way?

**SHEY:** Yeah. There's nothing like, it just doesn't even -- one person comes from a very wealthy background, one comes from a poverty-stricken background, and that's not an issue here.

**CHEN:** Yeah. It's just straight across. We say, "Communication, not currency."

**SHEY:** I own part of the farm, my parents bought it for me for my 25th birthday. Part of the farm wasn't bought yet, and I mean, I forget that, that it's "mine." It just doesn't feel that way among us at all.

**Q:** So is part of the land owned by a corporation, or is it all owned by individuals?

**CHEN:** We're a non-profit corporation, so it's owned by a corporational thing.

**Q:** Are you incorporated as a monastery, like some groups are, 501D or whatever?

**CHEN:** No we're a 501C, we're an educational funded agency.

**SHEY:** Arol owns 200 acres and I own 100 acres.

**CHEN:** I see. And then the foundation owns the buildings and . . . all that.

**Q:** Oh, so part of the land is Arol's and part of it's yours, but you give it to the community to use.

**CHEN:** Yeah, if there was any question of that, if it felt like some kind of scam or something, you know, the community would collapse on itself. Nobody would stay. If I felt like Arol or Wolf were ripping us off, if they weren't benevolent, you know, we're not stupid, so we'd just get the hell out of here.

**Q:** So since you're a 501C3, does that mean that everybody has to do individual income tax forms?

**CHEN:** We don't do it. No one gets a wage or a salary.

**Q:** Oh I see, so if you're below poverty, you don't have to do it.

**SHEY:** Yeah, it's all room and board work exchange.

**CHEN:** Yeah, nobody gets a wage, so there's no income.

**Q:** Okay, that makes sense.

**SHEY:** Really simple economic structure.

**CHEN:** Yeah, we really believe in that, simplifying it. Money is an abstraction, you know. And it just, uh, I mean, you hear them say, "Well, we're going to have bad air." I mean there was actually a headline in the New York Times that said "Costs of clean air are too high." I mean come on! It's our air! Or "it's not economically feasible to clean out the Mississippi River," -- that's our fucking water supply! What the hell are you doing? So it's money -- money is an abstraction, a piece of paper -- this is the essence of life: our air, water, food, and sex are important, and then there is a hole in the sky! I mean, what do you need? It's not working. So the signs are everywhere, we have to go and get the directions. So that's what this is.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** What are your individual living situations like? Does each person get a private room? How does that work?

**SHEY:** I live in a bedroom upstairs with three other women. It's a big bedroom. And I have my own little area, bed and shelves kind of. Chen lives in his own bedroom, it's just a small room that's connected at the Treehouse to a lot of different rooms.

**CHEN:** It's half of a workshop. But I lived in a room with six people for awhile.

**SHEY:** No one has, yeah, most of us share. Hardly anybody lives alone. We're not opposed to that though. I mean, whatever works. And it fluctuates -- it's been co-ed, it's been separate, mixed ranged of how long people have been here.

**CHEN:** Yeah, we try to put people together with people that have been here for awhile. In other words, that have been -- because as you get a new cultural outlook, it is harder to take people off the street. But once we expand the e-colony, then we'll probably have maybe just two or three people living together. Like some of the houses, the newer houses, are six, seven people in a room. Big room.

**Q:** Do you have any feelings as a community about, like, people coupling together, being married or hanging together as a couple?

**CHEN:** Well, we have no problem with -- we're not really sure what really works as far as monogamy or polygamy -- I mean we don't have any bigamists or anything. But it's pretty open that way.

**SHEY:** I mean there are definitely people who couple, and mainly have sex with each other or only with each other for periods of time, and have children together. You know, but at the same time, there are no couples that live together in their own house. We tried that. We've done that. There was a time when a lot of couples were living together. It really didn't work. It may work again though. We're not, we're always -- each individual, each couple, it's unique. We try to find out how everybody involved is going to feel the best.

**CHEN:** But the couple can't be the primary unit. The community has to be the primary unit. Because, then you get a closed thing, and then you get the lie [?] going on, it's just --

**SHEY:** Well that's how you have the what, 80% divorce rate?

**CHEN:** No, it's not that high. But it's pretty high. Yeah, it just doesn't work. It has to be totally open to input, and you know, to -- of course you're going to connect with somebody individually better, maybe, but I have to be able to say, if Shey's gotten involved monogamously, that's fine, but if I see something, it has to be open to my input, because I can see their relationship, I can see that the guy's doing this, or she's doing --

**Q:** So the couples can't have secrets and things that are just between the two of them.

**CHEN:** No, right.

**SHEY:** The couple can't be imploded on each other.

**CHEN:** It can't be like a separate unit.

**SHEY:** We believe in love and bonding and dependency, but it has to be open. Which is a big challenge. It's an enormous challenge.

**CHEN:** Yeah, it's hard work.

**SHEY:** That's one of the areas where we do a lot of living therapy, --

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** Over relationships?

**SHEY:** Relationships and sexuality.

**CHEN:** If somebody's off, there's usually something going on there, in that area. You check there first.

**SHEY:** And there, the key is always honesty -- well what's really going on? What is really happening?

**CHEN:** If someone's in pain, then they're bullshitting somewhere. It's not -- they're lying somewhere. Not consciously, you know, they may have some philosophic myth that they're operating under, "For guys, lie only." Or possessiveness, and so then they run into that wall, and she wants to make it with somebody else, she's attracted to -- we kind of feel like if everybody was clean and free that it might be like a lot more open sexually. But we're not sure about that.

**SHEY:** Don't know anything about bonobo [?] monkeys.

**CHEN:** Yeah, do you know anything about the bonobos? They're like this species of monkeys, unlike the chimps, they don't really have wars, and they have a much more relaxed social atmosphere. With the chimps there's always domination things, and there's wars and there's fighting. But they have, the bonobos just have sex all the time. They're always rubbing genitals, --

**SHEY:** They'll come to a tree that's full of fruit, which with other chimps would cause a lot of fighting, and they'll all get to the tree, and they'll get very excited, and then they'll all be sexual with each other for a few minutes, and then they'll eat the fruit, at peace. Documentaries say that these monkeys truly make love, not war, it works, you know.

**CHEN:** And so that seems to be, we feel like a lot of the wars and a lot of the problems in the culture are sexual. People are just so repressed and have no idea what's going on with them, so we really have to address that. And we're like an organic social laboratory in a sense.

**SHEY:** We do a lot of therapy that way.

**CHEN:** Or we've developed a thing called ero-sensual.

**SHEY:** It's erotic-sensual therapy.

**CHEN:** Where you get together with someone and you don't go for orgasm, you just go for the sensuality of the moment, you know, where you try -- it's a touching thing, you might be touching genitals, but it's to try to train our sensuality, combined with our eroticism, without like the ego, --

**SHEY:** Without the ego, you know, "Look at this catch in my bed," you know, all that, to try to really --

**CHEN:** Try to go for the actual, physical . . . uh, emotional pleasure of the moment, the touch sensation of it, so that you're really there, sexually, so it's not like a symbolic . . . so it's like, 'cause that's such a strong drive, obviously, organically. And it should be, for orgasm, that's undeniable, and we don't want to -- but it's a symbol, guys with magazines, or this girl, she's got to look like this, or she's got to, you know what I mean.

**SHEY:** Yeah, there's really been a number done on us that way. We feel that, as a culture here, and with our mission in our world, if we don't in the sexual area really become revolutionaries and have our --

**CHEN:** We want our culture to have it's own sexuality too. And that's --

**SHEY:** And we want our children to grow up very free and open, and beautiful.

**CHEN:** So that's something that we're working on. And it's, like anything, it's hard work. And it's an adventure. We don't really know where it's going to go . It's like science. We need more data, and you see what works. Well, that didn't work. So. So it's, um, it's a huge thing, we've really gotten to work on that, recently, that's kind of a thing that's come up in the last year or something. Because we've just

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

done a lot of things with couples, and you know, it's just, uh, people get shmucking, gaming with each other, so we're trying --

**SHEY:** It brings out the worse in everybody, the sexuality and the couples, and then when you live communally, you're face to face with the worst in everybody, and it's like, what are we going to do?

**CHEN:** We decided not to shoot each other.

**SHEY:** Wolf developed ero-sensual therapy, and a lot of it has to do with the self. And knowing who you are, and what you need, and having a sense of what you believe in, and really, you know, instead of all of your energy and focus going onto your sexual partner or your needs that way, but freeing that energy up, so it's around all the time, and you can enjoy your life.

**CHEN:** So that yeah, so that you're just not so preoccupied with that. With that need, which of course is a strong need, and should be fulfilled. In the context of life.

**Q:** What are your attitudes toward homosexuality?

**CHEN:** Well, homosexuality, we see it as -- we have homosexuals here. We don't really have a problem. We don't have, we don't practice anal sex, for health reasons, but, and we don't really believe, uh, but we don't really, from our point of view, and this is again, an open question, we don't really see, we see, homosexuality as an aberration. We don't really see it as a biological . . . so uh, but anyways. Yeah, just that it's not really, we don't really see any reason why evolution would come up with homosexuality, you know. It's not healthy, uh, it's not, you know, it seems to be more prevalent when cultures break down. I think it's increased because of the alienation, the social alienation that everybody feels that is especially strong between the sexes, you know. But --

**SHEY:** We really do, with ero-sensual therapy, believe that people should love each other across the board. I mean, it's not, um, --

**CHEN:** Yeah, it's not like some big taboo with us or anything. You know what I mean. It's not like, if somebody might be a homosexual here all their life, that's fine. But we still, philosophically, we don't really -- you know a lot of people think it may be genetic or it may be, it seems to be in all cultures -- we still feel like it's pretty much cultural. There really haven't been any healthy cultures in human history yet, I mean there's been some pretty clean primitive cultures, but they still have their myths, and you know. So, we want to -- at this point we don't really kind of believe in it as a -- we see it as an aberration, we don't really see it as operable [?] -- we're not against it in the sense of, it's fine if people are homosexual, we have homosexuals here. It's no problem.

**SHEY:** We have some gay women who are . . .

**Q:** So is Wolf not around that much anymore? Is he not well or something?

**CHEN:** He's okay right now. He's around at theater meetings, and he's going today to the eye doctor.

**SHEY:** Usually once or twice a week he'll come over at night for . . .

**CHEN:** We did a dance party the other night, and he was in on that one.

**SHEY:** I mean, he interacts a lot more with the core, on the therapy, family level, really.

**Q:** I think the guy who showed me around said he's 75 or something.

**SHEY:** And in order to live, he puts a lot of energy into his exercise and his different health regimes.

**CHEN:** He has emphysema, and he's got like, other health problems.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**SHEY:** He lifts weights.

**Q:** Is that from smoking?

**CHEN:** Smoking dope, he was doing a lot of dope in his younger years. And smoking, living in LA. He had tuberculosis several times. So he needs accommodation in those things. He has digestive problems, absorbing nutrients. So he's got a -- his survival requirements [unintelligible] . . . he does weights, and he walks, and he's got to do [unintelligible] almost every day. He's just like really into a strict health regime.

**SHEY:** I mean, all of these ideas that we've been talking to you about, cre-evolution and ero-sensual therapy, and living therapy, they originated in his mind. So, he, his genius potential in life is as a philosopher. And this culture here gives him the go-ahead, in fact, so that's really his contribution.

Whereas someone else is a carpenter, and someone else is a gardener, he's a philosopher.

**CHEN:** Arol's genius is really a social overview on what people need and who people are. She's very good at reading people. So she kind of -- he deals with the philosophy, and she kind of deals with the world.

**SHEY:** The implementing, well Wolf has this concept, how are we going to make it functional here?

**CHEN:** Yeah. How are we going to make this community work, and what are the social rituals, and who is this person, what does this person need? Just like constant meetings, like, well I think this person needs a road trip. You know, whatever this person needs, to help them in their evolutionary progression. She is an absolute social genius. And she's, she's just great with the world, where he's not. He should stay in his room. I'm kidding. So that's pretty much, but he is brilliant.

**SHEY:** Eco-librium, really all of this is his idea.

**CHEN:** He saw that he had to build a culture. He was an artist. He said for years, "Well, I know more than these people, I know about how the unconscious works, and I know about Jung and Freud."

**SHEY:** He lived on the Left Bank in Paris.

**CHEN:** And he, but after he had a kid, he thought, "That's not enough. I have to give a kid a culture. I can't be just a Bohemian artist, that's not enough. I've got to be a revolutionary." So really, you could say, in a certain sense, eco-librium came out of the ultimately responsible parents, because they wanted to build a culture for their daughter. So, and if you're going to have -- and then that has to be, it just can't be an isolated group in the mountains, because they'll destroy the ozone or the rain forests. So it has to be allowed into the world. So that's why we're revolutionaries.

**Q:** Now, is "Zendik" actually Wolf's last name?

**CHEN:** No, it's a Sanskrit word. It originally means heretic, but we've kind of changed the meaning now to mean "One who lives and creates within the natural laws of cause and effect." So. And we've adopted that meaning.

**Q:** And do you guys take names when you come here?

**CHEN:** Yeah.

**Q:** And do the names mean something? Or are they given to you by Wolf?

**SHEY:** Some people will change their name the first day they're here, some people won't for a year or two. Some people's names mean something. Some people's names are . . .

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**CHEN:** Just sound aesthetic.

**SHEY:** Or their name put backwards, or drop a letter, or a name they've always liked.

**CHEN:** We do that for, just, again, to try to help with the transformation of the person. To help them move on.

**Q:** I know some communities try to plan their kids. Do you guys try to plan your pregnancies?

**SHEY:** So they aren't all at once?

**Q:** Well, or just so that the community can afford having a kid. Because some communities might be really poor and not have a whole bunch of kids all of a sudden.

**CHEN:** Yeah, we try to plan our kids. We're not always successful. Chi [?] was planned. But Timkay [?] wasn't. But it's worked out. It's worked.

**SHEY:** There's not that many of us that are in the boat for getting, having children, you know what I mean? Like, I know that I don't want to have a kid for five or ten years. There's another woman who wants to have a kid. But, --

**CHEN:** And she's probably the next one that would.

**SHEY:** Right. You know, we're pretty conscious about it. But that doesn't always work that way.

**Q:** So it's not like you have to come to the community and ask for permission or anything?

**CHEN:** Well, that's what we would like.

**SHEY:** We wouldn't want anybody to have a kid here who hadn't been here for a number of years. You know what I mean?

**Q:** Yeah, I can understand that.

**CHEN:** You know, because it's such a huge change. To be more grounded in the philosophy, so that they -- because it's going to be a communal project, raising a kid.

**Q:** Yeah, how do you do the child-rearing?

**CHEN:** Well, the mother has, you know, obviously is one of the primary care-takers. But then everybody has input. Now what we found is everybody has input, especially Arol. Arol's the --

**SHEY:** She's the grandma.

**CHEN:** She really has a great sense for what children need. What we've really found is very interesting is the kid is off, and we look at the mother. Something's going on with the mother, and there's usually something going on with her relationship with the father, or something. The kid is like a, reflects the mother's unconscious, the kid is like a barometer of where the mother's at that day. I mean we've had kids screaming and yelling, and then we finally talk to the mother, and she'll get honest, and the kid just calms right down. It's a really interesting phenomena. Pretty logical, but as, again, as nuclear families, you lose that knowledge. You don't have that, because you're not in it together, comparing those notes. So, yeah, but the kid is raised primarily by the mother.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** And then do they live in the same room as the mom?

**SHEY:** It really . . . yeah. The children do, and some of the kids will sleep with their mom a lot of the time.

**Q:** And then when kids get to be school age, you home school them?

**CHEN:** Yeah, we home school. I mean, they're running, well we're going to be teaching -- there's these books by Glen Doman.

**Q:** Oh yeah, that's the human potential people that Arol told me about.

**CHEN:** Yeah, teach your baby to read, and so we'll be educating the kids like, now, you know what I mean, like after a year or something. I mean, but they're getting, they're in on the raps, they hear about problems between the adults. They hear, they're exposed to the work in the garden, they help their mothers, you know, weeding, plants. They're encouraged to -- I mean, Colt's 12, he can make a lunch for 30 people. And he knows all about the animals, they're there for the birthing of the goats, or they take care of the goats and horses and chickens. You know, they're just very involved. Or if they're into mechanics, you know. And they know people, they're really hip with people. Because they're exposed to all the different people that come through. They get pretty good at that. And they're very hip to the adults, they know when we're off. And they have a . . . they can get help from their parents, or if their parents are off that day, they don't feel abandoned, because there's other adults they can connect with. So they're in a very secure matrix. Which is what that, it's what Jane Goodall found with Grub, you know, her son, that if, the best mothers, were strict, but they made their kids feel secure, and then they were like the freest kids. So that's pretty much how we raise kids. We give them history, and you know. I mean, like it's interesting, I was reading this, you know, the People's History of the United States, I don't know if you ever read that. It's just reading it out loud at dinner, always with the kids here, and they asked me stop reading, because it was just slaughter. The Indians, and the Civil War, and the slaves. It was just like, history is so brutal, if you really get into it. Get away from the kings and the queens, and this president signing that bill, which really doesn't mean a hell of a lot. When you get down to it. So, anyways. But they have a rich -- one of the little girls couldn't really read. She's 13 now. At 10 she wasn't a very good reader, and Richole he could read anything. But now at 13 she's a really good reader. So it's like, they learn at their own pace, we don't pressure them. School's, I mean, we just don't believe in really at all. Not really. Maybe for some specialized type work. We don't really kind of believe in . . . regular schools. Did you ever hear about John Gotto [?], the guy who wrote Doublemas [?] Down? Yeah, he's really good. He says that the kid, today, between TV and schooling, they have about 8 hours a week to form a unique consciousness. They are so inundated with what they're supposed to do, you know, they have no touch with their basic genius potential, their basic, what they're interested in . They're just kind of slotted into a program. We don't want to do that. We want to let the kid flower. We want to let the people who come here kind of bloom into their genius potential. That's what we want to do. Because we believe in people. We don't believe people are born in sin, that they're essentially evil. We just believe that evil is really just stupidity. Because people haven't been trained. Same with us. So we have to learn how to be brilliant. Learn how to think, learn how to take control of our lives, you know. Really challenges you on a profound level, philosophically. Anyway, I'm going off. It's good stuff. This place really is an incredible place. If you stay longer, you'd see it like

layers of an onion. It gets more and more profound. I mean I can still read an essay now and get more out of it, and I've been reading the same essay for 15 years, but I have a greater level of understanding. I didn't see that, something that I thought I knew. Or you see it more on a gut level.

**Q:** Do you think this community would be able to sustain itself without Wolf's philosophy and Arol's nurturing?

**CHEN:** Well, I think we have the philosophy. At this point, no. I mean, I think it would, yes, but I think it would be a lot rougher road. We'd have to learn quick, and we'd probably, make some mistakes. But the core would hang in together, even if we lost the land, we'd all go rent apartments next to each or something like that. You know what I mean? We're committed to each other. I believe in these people and I believe we're going to be something together. So the core is, will definitely do that. I think that -- the philosophy's already here, so there is no "without Wolf's philosophy," we already have it. See what I mean. We're not going to miss that. We'll miss the, he's still evolving, and he's still coming up with new concepts, like ero-sensuality. There's a lot of work that he can still do. But, and without Arol's genius, I think it would be very difficult. But I think we have enough going that we could -- we'd definitely struggle, but I think we'd come through it. I don't think that would've happened maybe, maybe five years ago. But I think we've done enough work now that we're committed.

**Q:** Yeah. If a group of people were going to live together communally, what advice would you give them to make it work?

**CHEN:** Uh, . . . to . . . just get absolutely honest as they possibly can with everything. And uh, . . . that they need, I would tell them to check out the Zendik philosophy. Like I've . . . uh, . . . or just, but really honesty, get on the truth wave. That's the only thing that's going to work. That's what we want to do. Like, I don't know much about Twin Oaks, but I don't think most of the people here would fit there. And then they probably wouldn't fit here.

**Q:** 'Cause it's too structured or something?

**CHEN:** From what I've heard, yeah, philosophically, there would probably a gap or something. So I think we have a definite structure, but like, you know the people from Zeg at all?

**Q:** They're from Germany, right? Yeah, I've heard a little bit about them.

**CHEN:** They visited here. They really liked us, and they, but, they said that they felt like that we're closer to kind of what they're doing. They didn't feel like that -- Twin Oaks, they're very successful, they had a lot of money, but yeah I guess it's too structured, or too . . . it's not really that revolutionary in the philosophy. It's more of a community, but based on kind of a different, I don't know what the economics --

**Q:** More community for community's sake rather than for any --

**CHEN:** Yeah, than an evolutionary push. And I don't think that that is, uh, it's a group of people living together -- which I totally applaud, and if they have been able to make it work, they've got to be doing something right. They've got to have some truth going. See what I mean, there's no question -- I commend anybody to live in community, it's hard work. And it takes courage. But I just think that just

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

to be as absolutely honest as you can. But see, you're not going to be, because you don't trust anybody, you can't just grab seven people off the street and say, "Okay, we're going to be honest." People have no idea how to be honest. Not really, they have to kind of learn it. So I think they would want to apprentice to community. And that could be anywhere from up to one -- I mean people come here all the time and say, "Well, I'm going to start my own community." They inherited some land. I don't think they ever really do it. It's very difficult to do. To get -- it's hard to get five people to get together for dinner once a week, let alone live together. Make all the decisions. . . so. Have you heard anything about Dream Time Village up in Wisconsin? They're brand new. . . I don't know how big they are. I know it was set up by a couple artists out in Madison, they set up some place. They got some dough, and they're pretty, they're uh, they just started, but they do a lot of primitive [?] culture classes. I think they're doing okay.

**Q:** Do you guys network much with other communities?

**CHEN:** Not a whole lot. And we're not against that. We're probably going to join this exchange design, with the other --

**Q:** With the Eco-village people?

**CHEN:** Yeah, we're going to do that. And we believe in that, but we're just so up against it as far as work. You know, it's just like,

**Q:** You're running a big operation.

**CHEN:** Yeah, and with the amount of work we're doing on people . . . it's not like everybody just has their own lives and we just got to do the gardening and art -- you've got to take care if they're off, like that girl today, Deborah, was freaking out. She's only been there six weeks, and her boyfriend wrote her a letter, and she's really emotional anyway, she's like, she's really good person, she's very honest, but she's very emotional. So I've got to stop my day, and get in there, and help her out. But that's part of the work. She, uh, . . . it's just that kind of work that we don't really have that much time to network. I mean I don't know exactly what that would do anyway. I mean, I know, I believe in it that we need to help each other, with . . . that's the way we see the future, thing, if the farm has developed a new technique for, you know, composting, irrigation system, or graywater, or for sexuality, then we could like network and say, "Well, we're doing this with couples. This seems to work. But that doesn't work." And somebody else will say, "Well we've already done that, and it didn't work." You see what I mean, or "We found this out about --" so, yeah, I think we should increase the rate of evolution, but I'm not sure, just to be honest, I mean, some communities, I don't know how much we have in common with. You know what I mean, philosophically, because we're not, we don't have separate money things, and we are really all for one and one for all. That's quite a bit different than everybody has their own money, or nuclear families, or, you know.

**Q:** Yeah. Now you did say you network some with Greenbryer [?] ?

**CHEN:** Yeah, I don't know about "network", we're just kind of friends and social with them.

Interview with Arol, Chen, and Shey

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

**Q:** Okay, I see, because they've had midwives that have come here.

**CHEN:** Oh yeah, for two of our children. They've since retired, but our doctor is there. He lives there.

**Q:** Oh, that's where you go for medical --

**CHEN:** Yeah, well he has an office in town, but yeah, he's a great doctor, I really like him. He was here too for the births. He's really blown away by this place, he really likes it. I mean, this place, no one has lived here for, this house, I don't know if anyone showed you the photo, anyways --

**Q:** Yeah, Arol said it was pretty bad, there were just snakes living in here.

**CHEN:** Oh, yeah, it hadn't been -- 1873 it was built, and the realtor said to burn it.

**Q:** And then most of the outbuildings you guys have built too, right?

**CHEN:** Oh yeah, there weren't any outbuildings. Oh I guess there was the goat barn. That little cabin there. But we've improved the goat barn too.

**Q:** Well I think that's probably all the questions I have.