

Interview with Kitty and Bob Lloyd

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

February 26, 1996

KL = Kitty Lloyd, BL = Bob Lloyd

**Q:** OK, great. Well, I'm real interested in the, in the history of Desiderata, and was wondering if you could fill me in on that.

**KL:** Well, you know, and my husband said he'd be willing to get on another extension and talk with you, too.

**Q:** Oh, wonderful.

**KL:** 'Cause he's the one who organized the group, back in 1975.

**Q:** Oh, great. OK.

**KL:** And, um, they wanted to have a, kind of a place in the country, and have a community where, you know, everybody kind of works together, and, um, shared the common love for the land, and possible, you know, goals of doing something with the land. Um, however, the group has evolved. And um, he can tell you more about the original history, but we, OK, what we have is 121 acres, and there are ten homesites, and each family, or, um, there's one guy, one person, um, everybody has two acres and then jointly owns the hundred and twenty, well, subtract their two, jointly own the other. But everybody has a deed to their own property, their own individual lot.

**Q:** I see. So they own their lot and their home.

**KL:** Right.

**Q:** I see.

**KL:** And then the, at some point, my husband could tell you the date, they became incorporated. And uh, so our budget consists of dues that people pay, each month, and um, those who live here on the land, um, pay like ninety-five dollars, and those who live somewhere else, or in Austin, pay like eighty. And the difference is that we have a community pool, out here, and so those who live here pay extra for like the chemicals and supplies for the pool and --

**Q:** I see.

**KL:** -- things like that.

**Q:** So some people actually own a two-acre plot but don't live there?

**KL:** Yeah. And that's part of our, about two years ago, we brought up to the group, see, I married Bob in '88, so came into the group new, and then there's another family who live out here, they bought a lot and a house from a guy, who was not one of the original owners, but, but, so they're like third owners of their house.

**BL:** Hello there.

**Q:** Hi.

**KL:** This is Bob.

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**Q:** Hi, Bob.

**BL:** And you are?

**Q:** My name is Deborah?

**BL:** Hi, Deborah.

**Q:** Hi.

**BL:** I'll just listen until I figure out where you guys are.

**Q:** OK.

**KL:** So, um, they're like, the three of us are kind of new, and especially the other couple, Dan and Peggy, they were wondering, they had thought they had bought into a community, and were concerned when they found out that it really wasn't a community. Um, but several years ago, we brought up the fact that, whether peoples' plans with their lots, um, because we would like to do something, uh, that's, you know, agreed upon by the group, with the common property. Right now, uh, are you from Texas?

**Q:** No, I'm from Kansas.

**KL:** OK. Right now, we're growing a crop of mesquite trees, I don't know if you know what they are?

**Q:** No, I don't.

**KL:** They're, they're essentially, oh, scrub trees, or --

**BL:** Scrubby, scrubby trees with thorns.

**Q:** OK.

**KL:** They have a horrendous tap root, and they survive really well down here, but --

**BL:** Ugly.

**KL:** Yeah.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** And basically, basically it's kind of like land has been let go.

**Q:** Yeah.

**KL:** Yeah, it just takes over.

**Q:** So you'd like to do something with that land?

**KL:** Yeah, and we've had various ideas that can't be agreed upon by the general group. Especially the ones, there are several families that live in Austin that have a lot, that haven't built on it, and are sort of, um, oh . . . I don't know, there's, they can't quite decide what they want to with their lot. They continue to pay their monthly assessment, but don't really have any investment, it seems, in the group. Or don't really seem to have any plans or goals, or foresight about moving out here at some point.

**BL:** You're talking [unintelligible].

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**KL:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** [Unintelligible] and I reflect on, and, you know, some point, maybe somebody needs to brief me on exactly, you know, what you, what you want to hear, and --

**Q:** Well, I'd love to hear some about the history and kind of what led up to the place, the land being bought, and what the goals of the group were, things like that.

**BL:** OK, yeah, cause that, that was kind of what I was thinking about, was kind of, as I look back, to the beginnings, of, you know, what did we have in mind, and I can think of some things that we that kind of set ourselves up for some of the difficulties we faced. Um, you know, we were, we were all, going through college during the '60s and, and candidly, I think, there was a certain feeling in the latter part of the '60s and early '70s that uh, wait, it almost seems funny to say now, but I think we felt like the economy was a miracle [?], it was not something we were real excited about, the commercialism of, of, uh, of the country and uh, we, I guess we felt like we could do it better, we, we wanted to do it, we wanted to live life the way it was meant to be, we, I guess we felt, uh, kind of, more naturally and, smell the flowers, and uh, you know, essentially live more in harmony with the land and the earth, and so forth, and so I know that there was a lot of idealism, in the original formation of the group, um, I think the families that we got together, we were all kind of, uh, pretty much products of middle-class families, uh, we, I think we were, we had been raised enough to where we, we wanted to have a house and a family and a lot, you know, we weren't, we weren't hippies enough to where we wanted to live in a commune.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** In other words, we weren't really prepared to make the personal sacrifice, and the sacrifice of your own individuality, that's kind of required when you, you know, sell all your belongings and move into the commune. Um, and we, I guess it was, some thinking that I had done, in conjunction with some friends that, in other words, none of us had enough money to go buy land in the country, and the only thing we could buy was a couple of acres on a country road, with a trailer-house next door. So even that didn't sound good. And so, the original motivation was to combine our resources, you know, you could look at the, you could look at the price of land, and see that if you could get enough people together to buy a hundred acres, you could buy it at a fraction of the price that 2 to 5 acres would sell at. So the idea came to us that, if we pooled our resources to buy the land, out of that land, cut individual homesites, and essentially try to have our cake and eat it, too. Which was, to be able to have a house on a lot and live our lives the way, the way each family wanted to, in other words, without making the personal sacrifice of, of communal life, but have neighbors that you knew and trusted, have, um, people that shared similar goals, and cooperate with community projects, like, initially, it was, you know, the roads, and the water system, and the well, and ended up being the pool, and we imagined, you know, orchards or uh, crops of some kind, or animals, or whatever. You know, we really didn't have any specific ideas about what it was we were going to do in common, but, you know, we started with the purchase of the land, the development of the homesites, and I think, during the early years, felt like, it was about all we could do to, to, you know, build, you know, get our own houses together. You know, keep our families together, and so forth.

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**Q:** Yeah. Was the original group college buddies?

**BL:** Well, um, the original core group uh, came out, there were like three families -- myself and two other families that, believe it or not, I was a folksinger, back in the sixties, the husband of a girl I sang with, um, became a good friend, and he had a long-time buddy from his high school days, and those three families kind of were the original core.

**Q:** I see.

**BL:** And, each, you know, everybody talked to as many friends as they could, but at the end of that initial effort, there were only about five families. And it was clear, from doing the math, that that was not enough to um, to make this work. And so I called the local newspaper, the Austin American Statesman, and talked to a sympathetic soul on the, what do they call it, the desk --

**Q:** The editorial desk?

**BL:** The editorial desk. And just, you know, kind of told him what we were trying to do, and felt like, our story was interesting, and they did about a half-page, and uh, with some photographs -- one of the guys I ran into, during my original search, we were looking at, you know, alternate energy sources, and solar and windmills, and wind energy, and so forth, and, uh, I got in touch with some people through the University of Texas architecture department, and this guy had uh, his term project was "Imaging developing a community of ten families, um, on some land," I mean, virtually what we were doing. And he had a model that he had built, like an architect's model, of this kind of more communal arrangement. In other words, all the houses were kind of clustered together, in the middle of a lot of acreage, and he had worked out all the details of solar and water and crops and rotations, and all that kind of stuff, and so that original article had, you know, pictures of us gathered around his model. And uh, out of that, about fifty people, fifty families or individuals, called us, and about, I guess about ten or fifteen showed up at some of the meetings, and all of that, over a period of about three months, boiled down to an additional five families. So at the end of the summer of '74, we were ten families, or eleven families, actually, that, uh, thought we knew where we were going. [Laughs]. Little did we know.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** Um, and I think it was in those, in those early days filled with dreams of the possibilities that, and I have to say that I think we, we did a lot of the legal work that it takes to hold a group together, and we made enough plans to make it work, 'cause here we are, twenty years later.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** But, but we also failed, in a couple of areas, that, that dealt us our biggest difficulties. One of them, I know, you may have heard in school the, the phrase, "the tyranny of the minority?"

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** What we did, because, I guess we just absolutely believed that we were all soul-mates, in spite of the fact that many of us were meeting each other for the first time, we uh, set the uh, the voting up so that in order to change the by-laws and the basic structure of the group, it took a three-fourths majority.

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Um, and one of my original friends, who was a law student at the time, and has been the lawyer for the group, kind of cautioned us that that was maybe setting the bar a little too high. And it really has made it where, out of the ten families, if, you know, any two-and-a-half of them can stop anything that we want to do.

**Q:** Oh . . .

**BL:** So, you know, it's like, it's like you've got to get virtually everybody to agree on anything you do, and that's harder to do that you might, at first, guess. And I think the other thing that, that we overlooked was, I think we made assumptions about what we all wanted the community to be. Um, I guess everybody assumed that everybody else wanted it to be like they wanted it, and we, even thought there were days [?] that everybody used to get sick of my forms and questionnaires and stuff, [laughs] --

**Q:** [Laughs].

**BL:** I was attempting to gather that kind of information, but we really didn't paint a vivid picture with clear goals. Um, so when everybody said, "Hey, you want to buy some land and live in the country," everybody said "Yeah, you bet." And everybody was full of the -- oh, and God, those early years were just amazing to, to pull that off, and own the land, and to watch people begin to move out here, you know, everybody was uh, just jubilant.

**Q:** I'll bet.

**BL:** Um, but we didn't really have a very clear definition of, OK, what are we going to do with the land across the highway, or, are we going to raise cows, or, um, wild flowers? Um, are we going -- I mean, I think the biggest split was "Are we going to develop the land in the sense of clearing the mesquite and, and making it more, the word that was used around here at the time was making it look more manicured, in other words, um, I guess, mankind has been doing that for thousands of years of uh, altering the environment to make it suit his fancy. You know, there were those in the group that wanted the fields cleared, and mowed, and put in grass, and then there were others who wanted it left alone.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** And so, upon the, upon issues like that, um, many a plan has foundered. [Laughs].

**Q:** [Laughs].

**BL:** But, uh, is that kind of what you had in mind?

**Q:** Oh, exactly what I had in mind, yeah. I'm curious, um, do you have a community house or any sort of community gathering spot?

**KL:** No, but we want one.

**Q:** You want one.

**BL:** We would like to have a building, but I think the community gathering spot, right now, is the pool. Uh, it's, it has a pool house, and a little covered area where you can have picnics, and every year, we

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have, we had a celebration that first year, where, and about three hundred people came to that first celebration of buying of the land. And it's dwindled, a great deal, to where there were probably not twenty people here the last time, but every year, we gather and, over many of the last years, the pool is the place where we have the party, and the get-together. Only, you know, only if we need to be indoors do we meet elsewhere.

**Q:** Yeah. Do you do other things together, like, potlucks or things like that?

**BL:** Yeah.

**KL:** Uh huh. And we have a pool party, and sometime in the, oh, late spring or early summer, when we open the pool, and then we have a Christmas, uh, get-together.

**BL:** And I think that there's still, you know, in spite of the, you know, there's some tension between the two factions, the people that, I guess you could divide the group in two ways -- one is the people that live here or have lived here. Or want to live here, and those that haven't or don't.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** And another would be, as I mentioned earlier, those who kind of want to develop it to a higher level, and those who'd just as soon let it stay wild. Um, but in spite of those differences, I think there's a lot of mutual respect and, and affection, maybe even love, that we feel. Um, I think it's probably true in the original group, I'm, I'm, I wouldn't imagine, like Kitty said earlier, she, you know, she and Dan and Peggy are kind of the newcomers?

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** Um, since they hadn't experienced the fifteen years that went before, it's kind of hard for them to, to have that sense of history with the others.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** But for us [?], so when we get together, you know, at the pool party, or we talk about things, or we get together at the Christmas party, you know, I think there's a sense of a common bond, a kind of a pride that we, that, hell, that we're still here.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** So I, you know, I think there's a sense of satisfaction and, and mutual respect about that.

**Q:** Mmm hmm. Were you able to implement any of your, um, dreams for alternative energy sources?

**BL:** Um --

**KL:** No.

**BL:** Not really.

**Q:** [Laughs]. Uh huh.

**BL:** Well, I, I take that back, in a small way. We have a solar powered automatic gate. [Laughs].

**KL:** [Laughs].

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**Q:** [Laughs]. OK.

**BL:** And, uh, my brother's going to have a solar-powered hot water heater. You know, here's, here's kind of the, if I could span a course of thirty years in a, in a, in a paragraph, there were the early, idealistic years, say, five. Then there was another five or so years of kind of struggle, as, uh, as the, the differences began to emerge. And then the thing kind of lay dormant, and I think everybody, they kind of knew something had gone wrong, but they didn't know why.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** And it was particularly pointed out when Kitty and Dan and Peggy joined the group, and they, um, they kept saying "Hey, Bob, well, where's the group here? Uh, the community?" I still had this illusion, you know? I still imagined that it was working. And it was listening to them, and trying to rationalize what was happening with what was supposed to be happening, that I finally came to grips with the fact that we really had, um, had a fairly major split.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** And, the, the ones that live out here have an advantage, and that's that, you know, we built our houses, we own this lot, and we're not going anywhere. And, the others, you know, if they were to default on their payment, uh, we could buy them out. And, right now, there's one more house, just been put in, one guy has, uh, bought an, bought an older house, and, and moved it into the lot, and my brother is building a house that's -- I mean, there's, there's an example of the contrast -- one guy's bought a house for seven thousand dollars and moved it out here, and by the time he finishes remodeling it, he might have sixty thousand dollars invested. My brother's building a two-hundred thousand dollar house right next door. And uh, so that, I guess it shows that none of us have any sense.

**Q:** [Laughs].

**BL:** Um, but, they're really, so, what's happening is, and there's a, there's two that live here, you know, now, soon to be two more, so that's four. There are three other dwellings of people who have lived here, but are currently renting. So that's seven out of ten.

**KL:** And then there's one that's vacant.

**BL:** And then -- which one?

**KL:** Well, the Briggses.

**BL:** Right. Yeah, they, they have a kind of, kind of a cabin, that's not occupied currently. And they keep talking about coming down here when they, when they retire. Um, but I guess, what our intention is, you know, we're still struggling with the 75 percent rule for changing the structure of the group, um, my belief is that, you know, as my brother and this other guy come out here and, we're thinking of ways to attract, hell, all we need it one or two more families to, interested enough in this to buy out some of the less interested parties.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** But then all of a sudden, we have the votes to change the way we did business.

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**Q:** That's right.

**BL:** And so, like I said, I was going, in a, as quickly as I could, cover thirty years, you know -- I look forward to the next few years as presenting the potential for establishing those goals, of the ones that are here and having the votes to do something, changing perhaps, in fact, I think for sure, lowering the limit. Like, two-thirds is good enough for Congress, it ought to be good enough for us. Um, you know, we don't want to run rough-shod over, um, people, we don't want to do things that, 49 percent of the people don't want to do.

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** But, but we need to be able to get on with something. And I guess my philosophy has always been, pretty much, it's like, you know, I'm excited about whatever the group wants to do. The problem we've had is that, we've been kind of, I think gridlock is the term I've heard, heard used a lot.

**Q:** Yeah, yeah.

**BL:** It's been a little bit of gridlock. Uh, and the gridlock was caused by the two-and-a-half, uh, families that would vote against virtually anything.

**Q:** Right. What are some of the things that you would like to see the community do?

**BL:** Well, Kitty's come up with, I think some really clever ideas. We're near Austin, and uh, the uh, what is it? The National Wild Flower --

**KL:** The National Wild Flower Center --

**BL:** Center is here, Lady Bird Johnson established it. And we've heard reports of a number of people giving up raising cattle, in the interest of raising wild flowers for their seeds, and selling the seeds, um, nationwide.

**Q:** Wow.

**KL:** We found [?] another profitable business, is, not a lot of people know about it, but there are a lot of people that grow herbs, they're bought by companies out of Germany and England, and then actually they turn around and sell them back to us.

**Q:** As medicine or something?

**KL:** Well, as, you know, vitamin supplements, and homeopathic remedies, and things like that.

**Q:** Yeah. Do you garden together at all?

**KL:** Well, um, I have gardened out here. What I'm --

**BL:** But not --

**KL:** -- in the process of doing is --

**BL:** -- not a community garden.

**KL:** No.

**BL:** Is I think, what you were saying.

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**Q:** Yeah.

**KL:** Like I'm in the process of clearing and reforesting our two acres. I mean, we have a lot of, like there is a lot of Spanish oak here and elm and then there's a lot of little junky trees, like the mesquite and so my intention is to get rid of all the -- yeah, they're survivors, but, I mean, I would rather put in some hardwood, things like that --

**BL:** See, Kitty's one of the people that doesn't mind, uh, changing the look of the land. [Laughs].

**Q:** [Laughs].

**KL:** Well I, I don't, you know I've grown up in West Virginia, and I'm used to woods and forests and stuff that you, you know, you just don't, unless you have a cabin in the woods, you just don't let the woods grow up around the house. I mean, there's snakes and things like that, so -- and I'm not [?] into yard, I mean, we just have like native grass that grows up, and if it rains a lot, you have to mow it, but --

**Q:** Yeah.

**KL:** -- otherwise, I'm into, like, you know, trees and shrubs and perennials, things that can take care of themselves.

**BL:** You know, one of the, I think this points out an interesting thing, is that, you know, I think people underestimate the amount of effort it requires to do something, uh, communally, like, in other words, in a community way. Um, well, and I guess it's a matter of choice, too. A lot of the, uh, I guess other groups, like ours, where their expectations were different, um, had a lifestyle that didn't require much income, so they maybe had more free time. Uh, but, a lot of the people, like I said, we kind of grew up with a middle class background, and we all have careers, we've been reasonably successful, um, but what we find is that, you know, forty-hour a week, plus a two hour a day commute to Austin, um, is exhausting. It takes a lot of time. And, pretty, a lot of the rest of your time is, you know, doing repairs on the house, and doing, like Kitty's doing, around the, our yard, our garden, uh, a lot of, I think that's, that's what I'm really coming back to, is that one of the reasons we didn't do much with the community is that for twenty years, everybody has been totally preoccupied with keeping their head above water.

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** Whatever their fam-, whatever they chose to do with their lives, it was pretty much all-consuming. And, back in the early days, we didn't think anything of meeting once a week, or having, you know, coming out here and having a work-weekend, once a month. You know, we'd be out here twelve times a year, for all weekend, you know? Like two days, once a month. You know, we, I could go on about the different community projects, but what happened over time was, you know, people's lives filled up, and taking, you know, a lot of them had kids, you know, I had two, uh, taking care of the kids and your career, and your house and your garden, pretty soon, everybody says, "Hey, let's get together, we're going to have a work weekend," and, you know, what's a good weekend for you? Well, nobody has a good weekend. Or you, I can't count the number of years we'd say, well, you know, all the projects we used to do, we would, you know, the group assessment would buy the materials, and the plan was we were going to do the labor ourselves. And we've done fencing and all kinds of different things. But what

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would happen is, the same two or three people would show up every time, and others just couldn't find the time.

**Q:** Right.

**KL:** Well, and one thing that's happened, too, is that, because there's just two of us, who, um, own out here, the last several years have been spent policing the renters.

**Q:** Ohh . . .

**KL:** It was like, three families that live in houses that are owned by people who live in Austin, and um, it's been a real lesson in government and community, because we have, well, we can see how cities and states and all have rules and things, because every one of our little rules has come out of something that the renters have done.

**Q:** Right.

**KL:** Either to the land, or, or to us, or whatever. That has been, just an ongoing, right now it seems to be, well, died down a bit, but it, there have been times when we've had some really obnoxious renters out here, and they weren't willing to follow certain rules -- like we have a security gate, and, um, once in awhile, it won't work, and when that happens, then they'll leave the gate open. Well, you know, there would be a couple women that would be here during the day by themselves, and they felt really secure when the gate was locked, but, you know, when it was wide open, anybody could just drive back in here, and they were alone -- they didn't particularly care for that. And then, some of these people have pets, which, that's fine, we said you can have pets, but if they're going to be dogs, then you need to either fence a place for them, or keep them on a leash, or something, because they're running loose, and you know, going over and disturbing people in their yard, or their pets, or their kids, or whatever, you know, and just, not going to tolerate it.

**BL:** And that's really been, I think, uh, one of the most difficult things, was when the people who lived here, when the majority of them were not owners, the renters were not invested in, in any way, in the property, uh, the whole nature of the thing changed.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** And so, when Dan and Peggy and Kitty and I were all out here, and the, the renters outnumbered us, you know, three to two, or four to two, uh, that was kind of the straw that broke the camel's back. That's when we went to the group and said, hey, you know, this is not working.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** And uh, there was a kind of a split, you know, the people who had lived out here, understood what we were saying, and the ones who never had thought we were being unreasonable. And uh, and, you know, that was when we kind of quietly made a, a kind of a pact, and said, you know, however long it takes, we're going to change the voting composition of this group, so that we can make it become what it could be. Um, and, and that involves, I think we all believe, owners living here, not renters.

**KL:** And we've decided that time was on our side, because we could outwait them. [Laughs].

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**Q:** Yeah, yeah, that's right.

**KL:** And the, and the other thing was that, uh, just, I think, by bringing that up, this one guy that moved a house out here, Joe, had lived in town, and he was a counselor at a high school, over on the west side of town, which is a fairly wealthy side, and uh, he was getting fairly fed up of dealing with the obnoxious parents and children, and uh, one of the women that had lived out here, but doesn't live here presently, had said, "Well, you know, there's an opening at our school," so he came out here, and he got a job out here, and moved out here, and then he decided, well, you know, I have this lot, let's see about getting a house. So he looked around and he found this old country house, and just, one thing led to another, and now Joe's living out here and then Stewart and Katie are building a house, and they'll be out here by, say, fall and --

**Q:** Well, great! So things are changing then?

**BL:** Yeah, they really are.

**KL:** Slowly but surely.

**Q:** Well, that's wonderful. You know --

**KL:** I think the others will either decide to, you know, get on the wagon or bail out. Bail [?] out.

**BL:** Yeah, 'cause I think they, they, you know, I think they see that, the uh, the momentum that's gathering, and it's hard for me to imagine that they would want to stay around and be a part of an ever-shrinking minority. You know, I, I've given a lot of thought to, you know, I think we're patient for this year -- you know, let Joe get settled, and my brother get moved in here, I'm helping, kind of helping him build his house, and so forth, um, but within another year or so, make a really serious effort to, um, promote the potential that we have here. I mean, I, I, I uh, make a living with computers, I, I work at Trecore [?] aerospace, and I am assistant administrator, a network administrator, and we have computers and stuff here. And uh, I've only been half joking when I was talking about getting a intentional community web page, or something on the internet.

**Q:** Oh, yeah.

**BL:** You know, I have to believe that, well, you know, using the internet, using whatever vehicles are at hand, to put together a colorful, lively, honest, representation of what the community is, what it's history has been, and what the potential is, and like I said, out of all the people there are, all we need it a couple of, couple of families that would like to visit.

**Q:** I think using the Web's a great idea!

**BL:** Yeah. I, I feel sure it would work, and so, uh, I think it's just a matter of time, until we turn that corner.

**KL:** One of the things, too, is when we brought up to the group about what are your intentions out here, they wouldn't vote to put any money in the budget to advertise --

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**Q:** Ohh . . .

**KL:** Any of the lots, or allowing somebody to come in here and say "Oh, I don't want your lot, but I'd like these two acres up here," you know, in the common property, and sell two more. So that's when I decided, well, OK, but that doesn't mean that we can't let people know about this area, and so that's when I decided to pay my ten dollars and join the intentional communities, and put a little ad in there, and we've gotten a lot of responses from that.

**Q:** Do you, um, also put an ad in Communities magazine?

**BL:** No, didn't even know there was one.

**Q:** Yeah, there's a, the same people that make the directory, also put out a magazine that comes out quarterly, and in the back of the magazine, they have a place for people to advertise their communities, and also a place for people who are seeking to kind of describe who they are and what they're looking for. That might be a wonderful place to, um, put an ad -- and I don't think it's very expensive.

**KL:** OK.

**BL:** And that's, you know, there are enough families that want to do this, where we can split the cost of doing that.

**Q:** Great!

**BL:** Like I said, I think, you know, placing ads, um, you know, it's, what we find is that the thing we've done is kind of, you know, it's not a subdivision. It's not a traditional homeowners' association, uh, but it's not a commune, either.

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** I mean, it really is, uh, some number, like six, eight, ten families, pretty much having the privacy and ability to live their life the way they want to, but know that, you know, a hundred yards down the road are other families they could count on if they needed some help. And, and a hundred acres, uh, to, invest your time in community projects, I mean, it just, to me, it seems like an in-, a neat combination.

**Q:** Mmm hmm. Would you say it's kind of similar to co-housing? Or are you familiar with that?

**BL:** Not really.

**Q:** OK, that's just, a new type of community housing, that, that came out of a movement in Denmark. And it's a combination of private houses with shared land, and it just sounds a lot like what you're telling...

**BL:** Well, it really, that, that really is it --

**KL:** [Inaudible] that's a good phrase [?].

**BL:** That was the, that was the original idea. We knew we didn't want to give over our privacy and our own self, uh, self-determination. We didn't want to give up our independence to a community, but we wanted to, um, have the, the benefits of, uh, the economies of scale, that come from cooperative

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ventures. And, and the, insul--, in other words, and the insulation [?] that comes from having a lot of land, instead of two acres on the highway.

**Q:** Right. Yeah. Where did your name come from for the community?

**BL:** It's a poem from the sixties. Um, uh, it was, we, back in the sixties, everyone believed that it was anonymous, and written on a church in Boston, the wall of a church in Boston. Um, it's, uh, you may have heard the words "Go placidly amidst the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence" and then there's a phrase that says "Just like the stars and the trees in the universe, you have a right to be here." Something to that effect. Anyway, it's a really neat poem, and it's called Desiderata, and it's Latin for "that which is desired."

**Q:** Oh, OK.

**BL:** And it seemed appropriate.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** 'Cause this -- actually, this isn't exactly what was desired [laughs].

**Q:** [Laughs]. Right.

**BL:** But we're working on it.

**Q:** It does sound like you're working on it, and you're making some progress.

**BL:** Yeah.

**Q:** Yeah. So, if you had advice to offer other people who were wanting to do something similar, um, what would you tell them?

**BL:** Well [pause] --

**Q:** Be careful how you design your by-laws? [Laughs].

**BL:** [Laughs].

**KL:** [Laughs].

**Q:** I guess.

**BL:** Make sure --

**KL:** Watch out for renters. [Laughs].

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** No, I think, I think --

**KL:** I think just jump in and do it! You know, and it, it just evolves as you go along.

**BL:** Well, you know, I think, go back to the two mistakes I think we made, in other words, give careful thought to, well, I think, I think, you need to design whatever government, and I guess by-laws are a

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government, uh, this is a microcosm of a government. Uh, design your laws assuming that the other members may not share your views.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** I think we overlooked the possibility that we might disagree. We assumed that we were designing the by-laws to protect ourselves from one or two people that might buy someone else out. Some intruder. We didn't realize that the enemy was us.

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** You know, that, that, that ten families were going to have ten, ten different plans. And, and you needed a way to resolve that in a way that didn't produce gridlock.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** And the other, I think, is, is to spend as much time as it takes to find out what your common dream is.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** Like I said, I think that we gave a lot of lip service to a lot of neat ideas, but nobody ever said, in other words, that's what would happen is, like, everybody would talk about these neat ideas, and then, you know, three, two-thirds of them would, would not. And, but we never did sit down with a plan of the land and say "OK. Are we going to put an orchard here or not? Are we going to clear this or not?" And we just, we just assumed that, well, we'll, buy the land and get down the road and uh, it will all work out somehow. So we got down the road, and discovered that only two thirds of everybody wanted to do anything. And that, and it took three-fourths to do anything. So, so I think --

**KL:** Well, you know, I think one thing that happened out here is when the families started having kids, they started looking around at the school system, and the Smithville school system is not the greatest in the world --

**BL:** Yeah, that's true, too.

**KL:** And I think that played a big part in some of these families, to, even who had been here, and moving away.

**Q:** Oh . . .

**BL:** That's absolutely true.

**KL:** And um, those that never moved out here, you know, because of that, you know, seeking a better education for their kids in Austin.

**BL:** And I think, something else we underestimated, too, was, you know, ten families is enough to financially do this, but, and we were all about the same age, and we all had kids at roughly the same time, uh, but, at any given time, there were no more than two or three families with a couple of kids out here. And I think the kids get bored.

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**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** And, like you say, they, they were far enough away from the schools to where they didn't develop friendships, much, there. You know, 'cause they had to come back home here. But there weren't a lot of um, kids to play with. Um, you can remember Dawn?

**KL:** Yeah.

**BL:** There've been a number of the renters that we felt like, were, potential buyers, um, but they've come later, and they had like one kid, and nobody else had any kids. So, in other words, when you consider getting together as adults, and say "Hey, yeah. Ten families. That's enough community for me." Try and imagine your kids, and say, "Well, is five kids enough friends?" Is that enough kids to play with, is that enough for a baseball team?

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** So maybe it's, uh, not quite a critical mass for, for raising kids happily in the country. Maybe it takes more than ten families to, to have enough kids the same age at any given time to, for them to really enjoy the country the way I remember some of my times as a kid in east Texas.

**Q:** Mmm hmm. Yeah. Well, you have an interesting story to tell. You know, it's funny, it reminds me of a story I heard when I talked to a community in Tennessee called Dunmire [?] Hollow -- they, um, have had a similar problem, with a lot of absentee owners who are allowed to vote and make decisions that affect the people who live there, but they don't live there, you know, and they ran into something similar that you have, and they've had renters as well, and it's been a real discouraging situation for them. And --

**BL:** What's the name of their group?

**Q:** It's called Dunmire Hollow, and they're in the directory, as well. I have a good friend named Harvey Baker who lives there, and, and he and his wife Barbara are like, I think they and one other family are the only two homeowners that actually live there. So it's real similar to your situation. And they're really wishing there was more of a sense of community. Although they're a little bit ahead of you guys, because they do have a community house. [Laughs]. And that helps, you know, because they have a place for potlucks and stuff like that. But, but it sounds like, you know, it's not a unique situation, that other communities have encountered something similar.

**BL:** Well, it's funny -- the other night on TV or something, maybe, Kitty, you can, maybe, remember, someone said this, um, someone made a comment about all the communities that grew up out of the sixties and seventies, and how a lot of them, in their opinion, deteriorated into something kind of like a subdivision too far from town, where people commuted to their jobs --

**Q:** Oh, interesting.

**BL:** I mean, um, you know as much --

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**Q:** [Beginning of side B] -- Yeah. Have you guys ever -- oh, go ahead.

**KL:** I think one thing that's interesting is there's a big move by a lot of people to move back to the country, for some of the same, similar ideas, reasons, that we like it, you know, because there's less pollution and crime, and things like that, I mean, not that it isn't out here, but um, at least one thing, you know, I had a house in town, and it was like, I could open my sliding glass door and sit [?] on my neighbor's [unintelligible] [laughs]. And here you can go outside, you know, and sit outside, and you can hear the coyotes howl and, you know, the hoot owls and stuff like that, and there's just a lot of peace and quiet.

**Q:** Yeah.

**KL:** And when I leave my job, which is in health care, you know, and even though we have a commute, that's kind of like a time when we can talk, and um, you know, when we might not ordinarily have had that time to talk and be together, and then when we get out here, it's kind of like, or, to me, it's like, "Oh, this is my castle," you know?

**Q:** Right.

**KL:** -- little high-rise cabin in the woods.

**BL:** Yeah.

**Q:** Have you ever networked with any of the other communities in your area? Like Greenbriar, or anything like that?

**KL:** Not really.

**BL:** Not really.

**KL:** We've had some people come and either look at our place or have been to some of the others, and, um, I don't know -- I don't really know enough about the others, but the impression I got was that a couple of them were sort of commune-like, and people were interested in coming here, but then when they found out there wasn't a place that they could live, unless they owned a house, they weren't really interested.

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** Yeah, the difficulty now is just, you know, the cost of, the cost of buying into this. Um, assuming we left it at the original ten families, um, just, you know, the people who, who are willing to entertain being bought out, you know, are wanting something in the neighborhood of \$25,000 for their portion. Um, and that's a kind of an investment that your average hippie, and I use the word lovingly, um, the average free spirit doesn't have \$25,000 to buy into something like this. And that was one of the things, in other words, I feel like there are creative solution, um, once we, if we have the votes to change the way we do things, in other words, I think there can be, you know, we could find some people to buy out a couple of people, even at those prices. Um, after that, if, you know, it is possible, on 120 acres to create several other homesites without anybody feeling crowded. And make those available, at a nominal amount of money. You know, anything we charge for it is found money for us, something we could invest in a windmill or a, you know, solar energy, or whatever -- some of the dreams that have required more

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money than we had. Um, so [pause] you know, I guess we would like to make it where we've, we've met some neat people that just didn't have the resources to get in under the current um, by-laws, I guess.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** You know, and we, we made, I think it's worth that, it's certainly -- I mean, in twenty years, you know, I guess the land cost us about sixty thousand dollars to start with, which is like \$6,000 per family. Um, and at eighty dollars, or a hundred dollars a month, average over twenty years, and there's, you know, there was like a fifteen or twenty thousand dollar investment in the pool, and fifteen thousand dollars in roads and water system, underground electric system, um, it's pretty easy to argue that it's, that it's worth, you know, fifteen to twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars. Um, but it's hard for the average individual to come up with that kind of money. Or, it's hard for people who want to do this to have that kind of money. It's a kind of a Catch-22. If you have enough money to do this, then chances are you'll go to some subdivision closer to Austin, and if you really want to live in the country, you may not have those resources.

**Q:** Right, yeah.

**BL:** So it's uh, but I think people like that are out there. I mean, my brother's an example -- he's, he's only recently bought into the group. He, he watched it from afar, he's been a career army officer, and uh, interestingly, the, the Army guy and the hippie folksinger. Brothers.

**Q:** [Laughs]. That is funny.

**BL:** Um, but, you know, he, he's always kind of appreciated what we're doing out here, and a couple of years ago paid \$13,000 dollars for one of the lots that was kind of abandoned and then, uh, about to invest considerably in a house out here.

**KL:** Well, I think people are, are, there that want, you know, would enjoy being here. We just have to get the word out.

**BL:** Yeah.

**Q:** Yeah.

**KL:** Talk about it.

**Q:** Well, one of the things I can do is send you a copy of Communities magazine, and --

**BL:** That would be great.

**Q:** OK, I'll be sure to do that. Um, and um, yeah, I have your address here: Route 1, Box 69, is that right?

**BL:** Right.

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**Q:** Smithville. OK. Good, I'll do that. And that will give you, um, it will have instructions in there on how to submit a classified ad. And it wouldn't, it wouldn't cost much, and who knows, it might net you a neat new family. [Laughs].

**BL:** Really. 'Cause you know, I, you know, talking to you, and kind of reminiscing about where we've come from and where we'd like to head, um, I realized that, that putting an ad together, or putting a brochure together, or a mail-out, or even doing something like a web page, none of that would take very much time, I, I guess we sometimes, we sometimes just, uh, get consumed by the process of getting through the day and --

**Q:** That's right.

**BL:** -- doing the job, we, um, we always think, well, next month, or next year, when, what we really need to do is kind of shake off the haze and say, "Hey, let's do it now."

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** And I really appreciate you calling and, and having the interest to listen to our story.

**Q:** Oh, well, it's been fun for me. Um, did, are you familiar with intentional communities page that's already on the Web?

**BL:** No. Well, actually, I, I was --

**KL:** Accessed [?] it the other day, didn't you?

**BL:** Yeah, it's, it's a newsgroup?

**Q:** No, there's actually a home page on the Web that's for intentional communities, and then they have buttons on that page that allow you to hook up to different communities, so maybe you could become like a button on that page.

**BL:** That sounds like a winner.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** You don't have the [unintelligible] do you?

**Q:** I'm afraid I don't have that with me, but I could include that with the information that I sent to you.

**BL:** That'd be great.

**Q:** But if you just used a browser, you know, and you type in "Intentional communities" you'd probably get right there.

**BL:** Yeah. Well, you know, I was, I stumbled onto an intentional communities newsgroup, and there were like only nine letters there, and some of them were really off the wall, I don't even know how they got there. I think they got there by mistake.

**Q:** Oh no!

**BL:** They didn't seem to have anything to do with intentional communities.

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**Q:** Yeah, well, I think you'd enjoy the, the Web page I'm talking about. It's real informational and there's a lot of different groups that are listed, and it's kind of fun to browse through it.

**BL:** Yeah.

**Q:** Good.

**BL:** You know, I guess one of the reasons we hadn't really explored a lot of the other ones, it seems like, it seemed to us, from what I'd heard, uh, that uh, a lot of the other ones had a, I don't know, philosophical or religious underpinnings --

**Q:** Right, right.

**BL:** -- that, uh, that were kind of -- and actually, I have thought about it in the past, is that, I think the reason some of those were successful was because there was more of a sense of harmony of purpose --

**Q:** Yes.

**BL:** And what we lacked was that, that unifying theme. I mean, I think you can get the unifying theme without it being a religion, but we didn't give it enough respect. In other words, we needed more, um, more of a central theme that we all believed in. Uh, than we had. So, yeah. Well, maybe we can think one up, here, now.

**Q:** Great.

**KL:** I think those of us who live here and like, are coming out here --

**BL:** We have one, yeah.

**KL:** Yes. Like the love of this land, and, you know, wanting to share it and take care of it --

**Q:** Yeah, like land stewardship and living in harmony with the earth, I mean, that's an important purpose.

**BL:** Exactly.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** Something else that, that I think has been really valuable, in terms of a sense of community -- the, the feeling, the feeling that you get, simply working with neighbors on a common project. Um, builds a depth to the friendship that, that you don't find often.

**Q:** Yes.

**BL:** And if all we have in common is just a love for living here and a love for the land and, a, a caring about the land, and also a desire to, um, share the, share the work and share the joy of working toward maintaining it, um, the community, in other words, the, the human interactions involved in that community effort, um, that's that's I think, a sufficient philosophy.

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**Q:** Yeah, yeah.

**BL:** It's certainly rewarding enough for all of us. And then, beyond that, you can have your own personal philosophy, or religion, and private life, and still share that, that basic underlying commonality.

**Q:** Mmm hmm. I think you're right.

**KL:** Kind of like the original settlers.

**Q:** Yeah, in a lot of ways, yeah.

**BL:** 'Cause in any community, I mean, all you have to do is read a book or watch a lot of TV, I mean, small towns are full of people that disagree.

**Q:** Sure.

**KL:** Yeah [Laughs].

**Q:** Sure [Laughs].

**BL:** There's nothing --

**KL:** Look at America!

**Q:** Yeah, nothing unique about that.

**BL:** Yeah, so --

**Q:** Wow.

**BL:** I think this is a way for people to, you know, live together where they don't have to share the same philosophy or even the same beliefs, but, but there's something about being out here and just having friends down the road that, that feels really neat. Separate and apart from the religion or philosophy a person has.

**Q:** Sure.

**BL:** What was your name again? I know Kitty probably told me --

**Q:** My name is Deborah Altus - A -

**BL:** Last name again?

**Q:** Altus. A-L-T-U-S.

**BL:** And what are, what are you doing, exactly?

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**Q:** Well, I'm, I'm working for a professor at the University of Kansas, um, I can send you, when I send you this magazine, I'll send you a copy of our brochure that describes the project. Um, he's, for years, he's studied communal and cooperative living, and he's studied a lot of historic communities, but recently his interest has, has um, been focused on communities that came out of the sixties and seventies. And so, he hired me as a research assistant and I've, I have a wonderful job, to be able to go around and interview people, and visit places and try to collect --

**BL:** Sounds really neat [?].

**Q:** -- Yeah, it's really great. I think I have the best job in the world right now. Um, 'cause I get to do a lot of traveling and meet new people. Um, but I'm going around and collecting interview transcripts of people who have been involved in intentional communities, um, basically from the sixties and seventies. And then he hopes to put together a book, and also to have, to collect, um, sort of archive material from that era, so that other people, other scholars or interested people could come and go through it and --

**BL:** That's neat.

**Q:** Yeah, I think so, too.

**BL:** Well, you know, Deborah, interestingly, um, when I did this, I guess, I guess I decided that I invented this idea?

**Q:** [Laughs].

**BL:** You know, I recognize that it was simultaneously invented by thousands of people all across the world, but, um, seemed, seemed like a new idea to me. Um, this, this, this what I felt like was a fairly unique balance between cooperative community and individual freedom, privacy. Um, that, you know, a year or two after this one started, and boy it really seemed to be sailing along, I formed a, I decided I was going to go into business, and I formed an organization called the "Getting Back to the Land Company."

**Q:** Oh.

**BL:** And got my real-estate license, and started organizing a second group, that had about five or six families in it. And they decided on, their, their, their community name was called Paydirt --

**Q:** [Laughs].

**BL:** Which they thought was cute. And uh, and I ran into the roadblock that, the only reason I could organize the first group in the state of Texas was because I was a part of it.

**Q:** Oh . . .

**BL:** If I organized a group that I was not a part of, and there was a joint-ownership of a single entity, i.e. common land, then I was deemed to be a securities broker. And I came to the attention of the Texas securities commission, who diligently reads the want ads, and saw one of the ads I'd put in there, trying to find families. And, you know, basically, uh, the state of Texas was richer than I was. [Laughs]. I couldn't, in other words, the guy that, uh, the Texas securities commission said that they believed that

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what I did, was doing, was probably not illegal, in fact, they even thought it was probably a neat idea, but they were willing to bet that the securities commission would not sanction it. In other words, they would essentially not grant me the right to do that business in Texas, because it would set a precedent to allow, as they said, less-scrupulous people to sell people swampland.

**Q:** Oh . . .

**BL:** And you know, the kind of other real estate rip-offs that you've heard about, over the years.

**Q:** Like Whitewater? [Laughs].

**BL:** Yeah, like Whitewater's, right. So, the reason I say is that, you know, doing this kind of thing, unless you're doing it by yourself it a tough deal. But I, I believed that it was a neat idea enough to try and help other people do it.

**Q:** Yes.

**BL:** And one of the reasons for mentioning this is that, my experience with that second group, um, made me really feel fortunate for the members of the first group. And, and it made me, in spite of the painful history we've had, and the fact that we haven't had all the success we would have liked, um, it still, in all, was a remarkable group. And the fact that virtually all the families are still in there, making their monthly payments, is astonishing to me. Because, I mean, I think it's, it's a really remarkable thing to get that many families to do anything like this and stick with it. Because that second group, um, in spite of the fact that they said they wanted a lot of the same things, I was just astounded at how difficult it was, you know, there just wasn't the chemistry there. And the chemistry of people who wanted to work together and who were willing to make the compromises necessary, is a pretty rare commodity.

**Q:** Uh huh.

**BL:** And uh, I discovered early on in that effort that you couldn't just go find any ten companies, uh, families on the street, and expect to do something like this. So, you know, it's, I have to really take my hat off to the communities that have not only gotten people of like mind together, but who actually pulled off a really serious community venture over a long period of time.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** You know, we kind of ran aground. And, you know, I'm, I'm not giving up on us yet. I believe we have, we still have a future. Um, having learned from our past. But uh, but I really have a lot of respect for people who were able to do it successfully over many years.

**Q:** Mmm hmm, mmm hmm, yeah, I do too.

**BL:** How many have you run into, that you'd stay -- what do you guess is the, the spread, the one's that tried it and didn't make it and that one's that ended up halfway there and, those that you consider really successful.

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**Q:** Oh, gosh, that's a really hard question. Um, I think a lot of the groups out of the sixties and seventies crashed and burned very quickly. I think only a few of them have really survived, sort of long term. And those that have survived, it seems like they've changed in some dramatic ways, like, I don't know if you're familiar with the Farm community, in Tennessee? Kind of classic hippie commune that came out of San Francisco, and um, um, they were wholly communal, you know, shared everything, and uh, they still exist, but in about 1982, they dissolved their communal purse, and basically became more of a cooperative, where people have private income and their own house, but they still share a lot together, and they live on common land. And I've seen a lot of communities go in that direction, where they've gone from being fully communal to being more, kind of like the way you guys are, you know? Because it seems like people need and want more privacy.

**BL:** Yeah.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** It's funny, I guess, like, you know, I sometimes said, you know, I don't know what the hell made me think that at the age of, when I was thirty years old, what made me think I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life? Um, how audacious. But, uh, you know, people really, there's a lot of life left to be lived after thirty, and a lot of the things that seem really neat and ideal, uh, uh, they kind of evolve. You get older, to raise the kids, and uh, there, I guess, you begin to kind of rediscover why societies organize themselves the way they do.

**Q:** That's right.

**BL:** You know? And uh, I mean, so I guess in a lot of ways, we, we had a kind of a head start, I mean, we were starting at a fairly reasonable place, but like I said, I think we made a couple of key underestimations of the task, and uh, um, it's amazing how that kind of stunted the growth of the whole process.

**KL:** Well, as you look at it, it's kind of like, the, when the group started, um, then those years it kind of grew, and people came and went, it's kind of like kids growing. And now, we're getting sort of testy -- it's kind of like we're entering an adolescence.

**BL:** [Laughs]. Yeah.

**KL:** And one thing, I think we have in our favor this year is that we have a president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer, and all three of those offices are held by people who live out here on the land.

**Q:** Well good.

**KL:** And that means we have the checkbook. [Laughs].

**Q:** All right, all right. Yeah.

**BL:** Nobody's ever made off with the funds and gone to Mexico yet, though.

**Q:** [Laughs]. I'm glad that's not happened, yeah.

**KL:** But I mean, we, you know, we voted in a pretty solid budget, and we're going to do [unintelligible] system, just, I don't know. I think just the momentum and, and enthusiasm are just going to grow.

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**Q:** Good.

**BL:** Well, you know, when, if you look back just, uh, well, I guess it's, how long as it been, has Peggy been here?

**KL:** I can't remember.

**BL:** Three or four years, say.

**KL:** Yeah, they came [unintelligible].

**BL:** You know, just three or four years ago, I think the group was at an all-time low ebb, where Kitty and I were the only resident owners left.

**Q:** Wow.

**BL:** All the rest of the houses were occupied by renters, and when Dan and Peggy got here, that's all it took, was somebody, to where we could go over to their house and sit on the front porch and say "Dammit, we gotta make this work." Um, and so out of, just one other family came the energy to dare to dream the dream again. And, and now there's, this year, we're about to double that, where it's four families, four out of ten, and that's damn near half. Uh, like I say, I think, and you know, when Joe, remember, recently, when Joe's been out here talking, you know he, he's passionate about, passionate about planting those trees --

**KL:** Oh, yeah.

**BL:** Back in the beginning, Joe, uh, came out here a lot and camped, and planted a bunch of pine trees, and tried -- I mean, he'd haul water a half a mile from the creek in a bucket.

**Q:** Wow.

**BL:** To water these damn pine trees. And uh, and you know, and we were talking to Joe, and he's, he's still passionate about growing those trees. And uh, so I think, with just this little added energy from these new families, when we say "Hey, what do you want to do up there in the front," uh, we'll be able to do it.

**KL:** Yeah, I mean, like we have this grove of this wild Mexican plum trees that are just growing, I mean, they're just like crowding each other out, and I keep thinking, "Oh, they need to be thinned, oh, they need to be thinned," but it's like, when there's no one excited about going up there and helping you, they just, OK, well, one more year.

**Q:** Right.

**BL:** It's tough --

**KL:** I mean, [unintelligible] enough to put them along the road, and now they're blooming down here, but it's like, well, people need to get in there and thin them out and take some to their place, you know.

**BL:** And I think Kitty hit on a good point there. It's, it's tough to get excited all by yourself, sometimes.

**Q:** Yeah.

**KL:** Although, even when we were at our most despondent, that year Dan and Peggy and we mentioned to the group, "What are they going to do?" and they all, "I don't know," and we were like, "Oh, gosh, you know, we're saddled with this group of don't do, or don't want to do anything people, you know" and

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then we thought, well, now wait a minute. They're paying their eighty bucks a month -- we're able to live out here -- they're paying for us to enjoy this life. [Laughs]. They're paying for the road and everything else, you know? They're part of the budget. And we get to live out here and enjoy it.

**BL:** I think that's one of the things that, that, you know, when the times were the worst, you had to look at yourself and say what's the worst possible outcome here? Well, uh, these other eight families are going to pay to let me live in the country. That's, that's OK.

**Q:** Yeah, that's right.

**BL:** You know, I mean, how bad can it get?

**Q:** Well, it sounds like things are really looking up for you guys, now.

**KL:** I think so.

**Q:** There's a lot of reason to be optimistic about the future and that's good. Yeah. Well hey --

**BL:** I think, being able to talk, you know, talking to you, uh, I guess we don't often go into all of the history and the dreams of the past, at least not all in a stretch. I think to a certain degree, uh, you've had a kind of a catalytic effect here.

**Q:** Oh, good.

**BL:** It's uh, it's neat to revisit those feelings and, and I appreciate your interest and the opportunity to do this.

**Q:** Oh, good, well, I've enjoyed talking to you, too, and I wish you guys a lot of luck. And I'll, I'll send a packet of stuff off to you.

**BL:** OK.

**Q:** Good.

**BL:** Well, that's great. And I, I think, you'd asked earlier about what are some of the things we might wish we'd done differently -- I think we've tiptoed all around it -- one of the things that I think we missed was not, not networking, not getting in touch with the others that were struggling with the same thing. I guess we believed we were the only ones --

**Q:** Right. I think a lot of groups do.

**BL:** And, and, if, you know, so I think, maybe the future, uh, might benefit from us really trying to touch base with some of these other people and take advantage of some of the strengths, that, that come from that. So I, I appreciate you pointing out to us some of the other, other people that are out there that, that we might be able to network with.

**Q:** Good. Well --

**BL:** We need to take the time to get in touch with them.

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**Q:** Yeah, I think you might find that the Web is a good place to hook up with some of those folks, too. All right.

**KL:** What is that work, that term again? Co-housing?

**Q:** Oh, co-housing. Yeah. It's becoming pretty popular in this country, there've been a few developments that have sprung up, like in, there's one in Davis, California, there's one um, on an island, off, near Seattle. I think it's Wood -- Woodby [?] Island? No, I, Bainbridge Island. Um, near Seattle, um, and a bunch of cities are starting developments.

**KL:** Huh.

**Q:** Yeah, it's, I think it's exciting.

**KL:** That is.

**Q:** Seems to be a, a real good thing for this era. It fits a lot of people's needs.

**BL:** Well, I'd mentioned earlier that we'd thought about, you know, originally we thought that ten families was the absolute limit, but the, the amount of, unless we got involved in some business that generated some revenue, the amount of, of community uh, investment you can make is limited by how many people can contribute how much money each month. Unless there's some sort of income. Um, but the idea of the co-housing thing, you know, with a hundred and twenty acres, and there's land around us, that could be had, without increasing the relative density of the housing, um, if the number of people involved in this were increased somewhat, it could significantly increase the, the scale and uh, and nature of the things we could do, uh, in a community. Deborah, what is your experience in terms of the sizes of some of these groups that are, that are able to do significant community ventures?

**Q:** Well, you know, it, it's interesting. I would have thought that there would be some sort of ideal size, but I've visited groups that have been really small, you know, like there's this one sort of family-style community in Missouri that only has about seven people, and then the Farm community has a couple hundred. Um, so I, I don't know if there's an ideal size. It sort of depends on the dynamics of the group.

**BL:** And probably how much each is willing to invest. It would seem logical to me that if you had seven families or seven people, if they were going to do very much together, it would require a fairly major investment on each person's part.

**Q:** Exactly. Mmm hmm.

**BL:** Whereas the larger the group, uh, the more that could be done, or the less investment on an individual basis would be required.

**Q:** Mmm hmm.

**BL:** Yeah. Interesting thoughts.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** How long before the book comes out?

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**Q:** Well, my guess is it'll be a couple of years. 'Cause I'm, I'm working on the project till next October, just sort of collecting interviews, and then, of course, everything will have to be transcribed and gone over, so, um, it'll probably be a little while. Although everybody that's participating in the project, we'll be sure to send you a, a flyer and let you know what's going to happen. So two years or so down the road, you might get a little announcement about a book in the mail.

**KL:** OK.

**BL:** That would be exciting.

**Q:** Yeah.

**BL:** If we were just mentioned in passing. Are you taping this?

**Q:** Yeah, I asked Kitty's permission at the beginning. I hope that was OK with you.

**BL:** Oh, that was absolutely fine. I, I thought, I thought that it made sense for you to do that. I couldn't imagine you writing notes fast enough.

**Q:** Yeah, no, that would be really tough. Yeah, good. OK. Well, it's been great talking with you, and I really appreciate all your time.

**BL:** You bet.

**KL:** Enjoyed it.

**Q:** Good.

**BL:** Um, check -- you said you were going to work on it till next October?

**Q:** Yes.

**BL:** Maybe you could leave word around there that, have somebody check back with us in a couple of years and see where we went to.

**Q:** I'll do that. That's a good idea.

**BL:** OK, well, you take care, and thanks for taking the time.

**Q:** Sure thing.

**KL:** Thank you. Good night.

**Q:** Bye bye.

**BL:** Bye bye.