

Interview with Harvey Baker
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
October 19, 1995

Q: This is Thursday, October 19th, in an interview with J. Harvey Baker of Dunmire Hollow community in Tennessee. Harvey, can you tell me something about the conditions or, maybe, about your background that led up to you starting and becoming a member of Dunmire Hollow?

A: Well, I grew up in a family with 5 kids two brothers and two sisters and my family my mother in particular was particularly was fairly relaxed about the state of her house and, so, all the neighborhood kids tended to end up a lot of the time at our house because they could come there and play and not have somebody to give them a hard time and, so, I grew up around a lot of people and, when I went to college, I wasn't particularly wealthy enough to have a single room and lived with other people the whole time and, then, went to graduate school and shared housing with people and, often, fairly well, in situations where we shared food and cooking and cleaning and were friends instead of just, you know, kind of random housemates and, then, we went off to Italy and was the loneliest I'd ever been in my life, living alone in an alien culture and, so, when I went to Mexico, I decided to do better than that and lived with a family for a while and shared an apartment with a woman who wasn't there much because she was in an insane asylum mental hospital most of the time and, then, also, shared an apartment with a couple of my students and, when I came back to the U.S., it was just natural for me to look for some kind of a shared housing situation when I moved to Champagne-Urbana, Illinois and the first folks we met were folk dancers and they had a friend who lived in a house like that and they arranged for us to meet and we moved in not too long after that.

Q: What year was that?

A: That was the winter of 1973 in like February of '73.

Q: So, during like the summer of love and kind of the big hippie times, were you overseas?

A: I was overseas, or out of the country from 1970 from the fall of 1970 to the late fall, early winter of 1972. So, I was around for the '60s part of this period.

Q: Where were you at that point?

A: I was at Overland College from '62 to '66 and, then, at Brandyce(?) University from the fall of '66 to the fall of '70.

Q: When you were at Brandyce, did you would you have identified yourself as a hippie?

A: I never did in those days because I knew that I was a student and I knew people who were more easily identified as hippies and we were different. I even though I didn't spend ever minute studying, I definitely paid attention to studentness and took it fairly seriously and, you know, enjoyed time off but, also, never really, you know, wandered around the country or smoked a lot of dope and never do any work or [unintelligible]. I had a friend who was in school with me who shared his house with a bunch of people who would have been more reasonably called hippies and he, finally, moved out to get rid of them because they weren't paying any doing any share of anything.

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Q: Were you interested at all in the things that were happening during that period in the, sort of, consciousness raising, the acid tripping, any of that?

A: Well, a little bit. I mean, I wasn't interested enough in, what'd you call, uncontrolled group scenes, for example, to go to Woodstock, which was, more or less, down the road. I mean, it was a couple of hours away from where I was living and my roommate had a girlfriend who got slipped some acid in a punch bowl at a party that nobody told her about and, so, [unintelligible] with enough for me to be rather wary of taking acid, even though it would have helped her if she had chosen it and known what was going on. She started having flashbacks and other strange things happen to her afterwards. She had no understanding of what was going on. I don't know. I mean, I was kind of busy doing other stuff and, you know, learning a lot and doing a lot of new things anyway. So, I I kept hearing some of the less attractive aspects of that lifestyle, too. The same roommate, Bob Warren, that you met, had an old girlfriend come through who'd been out in San Francisco and, when she left, she left him a present, which was some crab lice and, according to him, he found out from her that that was just part of life was having crabs. It didn't appeal to me, particularly.

Q: So, in '73, you found yourself in Champagne and found a group household to move into?

A: Mmm-hmm.

Q: Want to tell me something about that?

A: Well, it was kind of a rundown house with approximately 7 people living there normally. It was kind of hard to say exactly how many. It was full but it was, you know, between 6 and 8 or 9 people easily and we shared food and had a garden in the backyard and a fleet of [unintelligible] bicycles to get around town with and most of the people worked in a variety of worker-owned businesses that were flourishing at that time. There was an auto repair garage that David Baker worked at and a restaurant that several people worked at and a health food store and there was a custom clothing collective and a record collective and bicycle repair collective and some others that I've probably forgotten. The house was owned by an Iranian family that were using that for the 1 or 2 rooms of the house for their kids to live in while they were in school and, so, there tended to be an Iranian contingent around the house most of the time we were there sometimes more involved with us and sometimes less.

Q: So, tell me what became of this shared household.

A: Well, at a certain point, people started moving down here because well, let's see, first, I left and, then, came back after a year teaching in Seattle and, about a year after I came back, the Iranian family decided that everybody needed to move out and some more of the family were going to move there and it was going to be just for them and, so, those of us who still wanted to live there and hadn't already moved down to Tennessee, found an apartment on the other side of town and lived there for a year while we continued to get ready to move and various people who were part of the community up there lived in that apartment, although most of them ended up not moving down here permanently.

Q: Tell me some more about why you wanted to move to Tennessee?

A: Well, it was pretty clear to us. We investigated the possibility of finding a piece of land just outside of Champagne-Urbana and it was pretty clear to us that that was not economically feasible. The farmland

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was selling for \$2-3,000 an acre and even the non-farming land out of town was very expensive because there was so little of it. We found one piece of land but the last time it had been sold, even though it wasn't for sale then, the last time it had been sold, it had sold for over a \$1,000 an acre. It was just kind of scrubby river bottom. So, we figured we needed to move this community of people somewhere because we recognized that people would wander off looking for greener pasture if we didn't all wander off together. So, whoever went travelling was charged with the task of investigating whatever part of the country they went to and people went to California and the land was outrageously priced and they went to Minnesota and it was outrageously cold and they went to Vermont and it was outrageously cold and outrageously priced and, then, some people came down to visit friends of theirs that were at Stephen's farm and they looked around and they said, "oh, \$200 an acre. Good water," you know, "pleasant neighbors," and, so, they came back and reported to the group and people went organized a search party to come to down to this part of the country to look for land and they found a nice piece and the guy had friends down the road from the land and decided the guy that owned it and, so, he decided not to sell it because he was afraid of what his neighbors would say. So, we kept looking and, then, found this piece, which the guy that owned it was sufficiently greedy that he wanted to sell to the ignorant outsiders. Took the money and ran.

Q: Why did you want to live in a rural area? What was appealing about that?

A: One thing I had noticed living in Champagne-Urbana is that I used, or took advantage of almost none of the conveniences of the city or the attractions and entertainment, restaurants, stuff like that and intended to be mostly at home or hanging out with friends or working in my wood shop and I was interested in integrating my life more, especially having more control over my food supply 'cause, even in the early '70s, it was clear the U.S. commercial food production was going downhill as far as the quality. So and I knew that I didn't want to live alone in the country. I wanted to live with a group of friends. We'd had friends who moved to the country in various parts of the country and found themselves often pretty isolated and, sometimes, even harassed by their neighbors, depending on what the neighbors were like and, so, I was interested in not just living alone in the country. I wanted to live with some other people.

Q: Now, you had a PhD in Math, right?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You have, I should say.

A: Still do, yeah.

Q: And you were teaching at the University of Illinois, right?

A: The first time I was in Champagne-Urbana I taught there. The second time they decided that they could get more for their money by hiring graduate students instead of people with PhDs. So, they hired two graduate students from Chicago at the last minute instead of me and, so, I ended working for a friend who ran a bike shop as a bicycle mechanic.

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Q: So, when you moved down here to the farm, were you pretty much giving up your career aspirations at that point, at least in terms of pursuing math?

A: No. I'd given them up 2 years before when I stopped quit working my contract at the University of Washington ran out. I looked around at the job situation and figured that there was too much work and too little chance at success to go looking for jobs in mathematics. Every year I was out made me less desirable rather than more desirable, both for pay reasons and, also, because I had been out a number of years and hadn't become the next superstar and the universities were basically they were fishing for the next big superstars and, if you weren't going to be one of them, they would rather not even bother with you and, so, the longer somebody was out without, you know, massive papers and mathematical celebrity, the less chance they had of getting a job. So, I just figured I'd go off and do other stuff and leave the math jobs for the people that didn't have anything else going on in there lives.

Q: Were you concerned about how you were going to make a living when you came down here?

A: No, I just I already had learned a certain amount of woodworking and had tools and I planned to build a woodworking shop and I wasn't sure how successful the business would be but I knew that I could at least support myself with it.

Q: So, what year did you guys finally come down here or was it all at once? Did it happen more in shifts?

A: It happened, essentially, over a 3-year period or 3 spring and summers. People some people moved here the spring or early summer that we actually bought the land, which was 1974 and another family or 2 moved here in '75 and the last group came down in '76, which I was one of the folks that came in '76. We moved here I think it was the 20th of April.

Q: Were there any buildings on the land?

A: Not when we bought it, no.

Q: So, at first, what did you live in?

A: Well, I actually don't know what people oh, actually, I do know. The first families that moved here were caretakers for a farmer who had some cattle and an old house on a farm about 5 miles from here and, so, they lived there while they started working on building stuff here and people lived, you know, would build a tent platform just a platform in the woods and, then, put a tent on it while they were working on their house. Certainly, a number of people would live in whatever structure already had a roof on while they worked on their houses and most of the houses, the first summer, were, essentially, one-room shacks and, so, they were fairly quick would have been fairly quick to build if people had had any time, money and experience but they were trying to work to survive and find or scrounge materials. We tore quite a few old barns and old houses in the area to get materials.

Q: Was that because you didn't want to spend money or didn't have the money or because that was just the way that people at that time were doing things?

A: Well, it was a combination of reasons. One was that people, even in those days, were into recycling and, in fact, we set up a recycling center with barrels for all the different things on our land and, then, discovered, after they were full, that there was no place practical to take them. I mean, people the rest

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of the world wasn't into recycling enough, yet, to use the material. So, recycling old buildings was reasonable. For some people, work was scarce and, so, by recycling or tearing down a barn, you've circumvented the scarcity of money and my girlfriend, Judy, and I made a conscious decision that if we had our choice between working for money to someday build our house and doing direct action that worked on our house, we would do the direct action. So, if we had a choice between taking more time and taking more time, we chose taking more time and tearing down a house was kind of like that. Although, in a lot of ways, once you had it all home, it was very nice because you had a whole variety of materials for all different kinds of uses and you could create a house that had a lot of character.

Q: Now, as I've been walking around Dunmire Hollow, I would say that the architecture's kind of unusual. How would you describe it?

A: Most owner built housing does not conform to typical U.S. housing styles. People, especially if they've been around unusual housing or built a house before, they have a much better sense of what they want and what would satisfy their housing needs than your average contractor who likes to build things the same over and over again and people have often built their houses in stages and, so, they either they figure out what they need compared to what they have and try to add that on or they get brilliant insights or whatever as the process of building a house goes on after, you know, if they live in it for a while and, so, they can modify it, remodel and whatever to really come closer to suiting them.

Q: How many of you were there in the original group? I guess you said people kind of came down in shifts and '76 was the last group to come down. So, how many were you at that point?

A: That summer, the summer of '76, there were 17 adults, 3 visiting adults and 7 kids and 1 visiting kid. So, that makes 28 people here on the land that summer. That fall, I guess it was Labor Day weekend, one family, a couple and their daughter left, and about that same time the visitors left the summer visitors.

Q: At this point in your life would you have identified yourself as being a hippie?

A: I sometimes use the phrase unreconstructed hippie because of the fact that I still I don't know if cling is the right word but still hold onto many of the values that I valued when I moved here in the early '70s when I got involved in this but it's not really the same word. It doesn't have the same meaning as was used when it was applied to people in the late '60s.

Q: Did your group have, say, a shared spirituality?

A: No. There's your one word answer.

Q: Okay. Okay. Did you have some sort of a shared mission?

A: No. In fact, rather than having you fish, I'll talk about this for a minute. There if you looked at all the people that were part of our community and that moved here, there's no one particular reason that's common to all of them why people moved here. In other words, each there were overlapping interests or reasons but there was no one thing you could point to and say all these people have that one thing in common and that's why they're all here.

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Q: Did they all use Dr. Brahners(?)?

A: I didn't for years.

Q: I'm sorry.

A: No. In fact, one time we sat down in a meeting and each person told the reasons that they were there and the person that was taking the notes kind of abbreviated them and, then, we looked and there was not a single thing that everybody said that was, you know, that everybody said that was the reason for them being here. I mean, one woman was moved here because all her friends were here and she was an intensely social person and just wanted to be in that social juice. Another person, who happened to be her husband, at the time, moved here because it was the staging ground at the next attempt at a revolution and another person moved here because he just loved horticulture and wanted to have room for an orchard and a garden and just I mean, there were many people had secondary reasons and, if you looked at it, there were always a number of people that shared interests with any given person but and some of their interests overlapped with some other people. So, there's this kind of pool of overlapping interests and reasons but there was no one thing you could point to. Nowadays, we can say that everybody that lives here wants to live in the country but even in the beginning that was not true. It happened that the group moved to the country and some people moved with it either in spite of it or without any reference to it being in the country.

Q: Would you have described yourself as being typical of hippie households or groups that went back to the land?

A: I'm not sure I would have. I mean, there were some things that were typical, I would guess, but 4 people in the community went on a tour of the west back in the early days. I think it was the winter of '76 and came back and reported that we were far more pragmatic than any of the other places that they'd visited where a lot of people just, you know, they didn't have a clue about the physical plane and didn't seem to be really learning it that quickly and this place tended to be more oriented toward actually, if nothing else, surviving on the physical plane until we had time to do other stuff.

Q: So, tell me something about your legal structure. How the land and the houses are set up.

A: When we first bought the land, the deed was in 2 peoples' name and we knew that was not a good idea and, after a couple of years, we managed to form a small for-profit corporation with both voting shares and non-voting shares and the corporation owns the land and a variety of people, all of whom have either lived here in the past or live here now, have voting shares and the non-voting shares are bookkeeping shares for all the money people have put in beyond the first \$100. We've never done any kind of condominium style arrangements where the houses or actually anything attached to the land is owned by the corporation and one could argue that I could remove everything but the concrete footings for this house and, so, the materials in this house belong to me but we're not particularly worried about the legal details. When we set up the corporation, we had no real access to competent legal advice that could understand us and we got tired of paying for incompetent legal advice that couldn't understand us very quickly. So, we went ahead and did a very simple and straight forward thing that allowed us to get the land out of the financial situation with 2 people and we're kind of stuck with it. It would be very hard to convert because of some peoples' ideas or emotions about it. So, I don't know what more that clear?

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Q: Mmmm-hmmm. So, that means that you don't have any equity in your house according to your corporate charter or bylaws?

A: Actually, it depends on what you mean. We our current agreement is that each person here agrees to sell their house for whatever actual money they put into it, you know, actual cash money rather than some, you know, market value and we're explicitly anti-real estate speculation and anti-house speculation and, so, if I sold this house, I could probably sell it within that agreement for about \$5,000, which is what I have in it. Now, if I were to move and some family or some person wanted to live in the house and were interested in buying it, I would have that \$5,000 in equity, you could say, but I don't have any equity built up because of appreciation of value.

Q: Okay.

A: And it's we have tried to make it clear from the beginning that there are no guarantees if you leave and leave a house behind that anybody would ever buy it. You know, the community, per se, is not responsible for paying you back and is not responsible for finding a suitable person or family and is compelled to take whoever shows up and wants to buy the house if the community doesn't want them as part of the community.

Q: Are most of these ideas unwritten?

A: We do have some things written down. Some of the things would have to be found in the old journal meeting notes and some of our social agreements and our membership process we have written down where we can find it. We created those outside of normal meetings. We did what we call process meetings for a few winters.

Q: Getting back to more of the social structure of things. In the early years, did you have nuclear family households or what were your households like?

A: The first 2 couples that moved here well, let me start by saying that in Illinois most of the people in the community lived in 2 group living situations: the house in town that I lived in, a polyurethane dome that a couple of people built, and, then, they added a barn to the land so that there is room for more people to live there and, so, we came from these 2 group living situations but the first 2 families to move here were each of the couples contained a person who had been married the two couples, a man and a woman, and the 2 couples had been married to each other and, then, they divorced and got together with new mates and were not about to live in the same house with each other and, so, they started building separate dwellings and there tended to be an immediate heading in that direction. There was quite a nesting instinct among a lot of the couples and they wanted their own little house and, also, there was a plan to build a large community center that would be temporary housing for people if they needed and it became clear pretty soon that it was a far too big project to be accomplished with the resources and time at hand before the winter. So, we were there was a plan to build this gargantuan community center and people realized that it was not going to get done by winter time and they needed somewhere to live and, so, they started scurrying around building very crude one-room shacks out of plastic, fiberglass insulation and the slab wood that they cut off of logs at the sawmill when they're making them rectangular so they can saw them up into boards. So, it was much quicker to build a variety of one-room shacks than it was a big, permanent structure for the whole community. So,

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that's how the tradition of nuclear families started but the second winter, no, the first winter, one of the houses burned down when a guest didn't turn the stove down before he left and caught the house on fire and, so, within a week, they had added an even cruder addition onto one of the other one-room shacks to make it a two-room shack with 2 sleeping lofts and 2 families moved in and lived in that for the rest of the winter.

Q: Were the shacks pretty rustic?

A: Crude is a much better word.

Q: Okay.

A: Some of them had nice touches of, you know, a particularly nice shaped tree branch for a door handle or something like that but, as houses, they worked very poorly. They were very leaky, poorly insulated. Often the roof leaked. They had mice and rats in them and wasps and stuff.

Q: Any plumbing?

A: Well, usually, there was a sink that had a pipe going outdoors but there'd be no running water.

Q: How about would there be any sort of a toilet?

A: Just an outhouse.

Q: An outhouse and heating by wood?

A: By wood.

Q: Cooking by wood, too?

A: Some of the houses had gas stoves with a propane gas bottle outside. The first winter, nobody really had a kitchen set-up and, so, everybody cooked over a fire a firepit in what was called a cook tent, which was a kind of a it wasn't really a tent. It was more like a bunch of poles tied together at the top sort of like a teepee with plastic around it and 1 or 2 people would cook supper for everybody. People would mostly eat cereal for breakfast. By the second winter, a lot of people had their own kitchens more usable. So, people ate mostly at home.

Q: Originally, did you have an idea that you would be eating communally and bathing communally and all that in the community house?

A: I don't think we had anything planned out like that. I mean, I don't I personally felt, you know, assumed that we would tend to be living in group houses like we had been in Illinois and I was kind of surprised when there was an immediate shift in direction when people started living here but, as there got to be more and more babies, it got to seem more reasonable not to have 6 babies living in the same house, trying to wake each other up all the time, and it became clear that, you know, the space from people being spread out more would probably help people get along better.

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Q: When did you build the community center?

A: It was started the first summer of '74 and all that got done was the concrete floor and block walls of the what is now the bath house part. The next spring, early summer, the roof and walls of the bath house got done and the following year, December of '76, the spring of '76, the main the big room got, at least, enclosed and we got a well dug and running water in the spring or early summer of '76.

Q: So, does that mean you didn't have showers here for about 2 years?

A: It meant that we had a barrel over the creek that we filled up from the creek that was an outdoor shower and we'd become friends with an elderly woman who had an old style 3 or 4 cabins along the highway kind of motel about 2 miles, 2 1/2 miles from here, and she would let us take showers for a quarter or 15 cents. Although, I, actually, never did that. I just jumped in the creek.

Q: Even in the wintertime?

A: Well, I'd pick a pleasant day and go for a run, get warmed up, and jump in the creek.

Q: Wow.

A: Although, I also wasn't here the first 2 winters except to visit. So, in the summertime, it was no big deal.

Q: How would you describe those early years in terms, I don't know, just the difficulty of the living conditions? I mean, I know I'm putting words in your mouth. I don't quite know how to ask this but did you find the living conditions difficult or hard?

A: Personally, I found I felt that I did not consider the way other people were living here, many of the other people here I did not consider those conditions acceptable for the long term. I was more than willing to live rustically in the short term but I knew that I was not going to live in a house I would not build a house that didn't work well and that wasn't comfortable to be in and I planned my house and spent more time in Illinois accumulating more money and more tools and more knowledge so that I would not have to come down here and throw something together and live in it uncomfortably for years. I mean, it was unacceptable to me to live in a house where, when you woke up in the morning, every bit of water in the house was frozen, including the water around my contact lenses.

Q: And was that the way it was in the beginning?

A: That was the way it was in this one house. The guy didn't cut firewood for the next year until he was going out cutting a tree down on Saturday and trying to burn it Monday, Tuesday and, you know, through the week and had a house that the wind roared through when it was windy and it was just, you know, it was hell and I was not about to do that. Well, Judy and I moved here and the first thing we built was a storage shed for our quality stuff that needed protection from the weather and also a large part of it for lumber for our building projects and for my eventual woodworking business and people were envious of our shed. It had screens and we also, for the long run, we had purchased a propane refrigerator and gas stove and, so, we had a refrigerator and people were envious of our very small RV refrigerator and envious, in fact, that we had screens and good ventilation in our 8x16 shed and were living without, pretty much, without mice and, you know, vast numbers of obnoxious insects.

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Q: Could they not afford those things?

A: It's really hard to say. Some of the people the first year or two were really strapped financially but some of the houses they tore down must have had screens and they could have nailed them up over openings or something. Part of it was also I mean, like the siding I put on the shed was from a house that was being torn down by some other people and they just didn't think there was any way to take it off without just ripping it to shreds to get it out of the way and I had spent some time reading about house dismantling and had bought the appropriate tools and, so, I could take it down intact faster than they could rip it up, tearing it off destructively and, so, I brought it home and put it up on the shed and it made a nice, relatively weatherproof siding for the shed. But people didn't go into this project having spent a lot of time planning houses or learning about house building or house destruction or much of anything. There was pretty severe reaction against book learning because they'd been spending so much of their lives learning book learning that didn't seem very relevant.

Q: So, were these mainly well-educated professional types that came down here?

A: They were people who had gone to college. Some of them had gotten out. Many of the them had dropped out. None of them really had, except for me and Judy and David, who is an auto mechanic, and his wife, eventually after a couple of years, got a degree in nursing, but most of the people that were here could not be called professional because they had no marketable skills for earning money. A lot of the people here the first summer they were running fences and painting barn roofs and cleaning motel rooms and taking boards off the saw mill on the night shift or splitting hickory logs into 2x2s for hammer handles. The good sign that I noticed fairly soon was that people were motivated to improve themselves and their situation. If they had not been willing to do that, I probably wouldn't have even moved here or stayed after I got here. But they formed a construction crew and actually taxed themselves to buy more tools so they'd be able to work more efficiently.

Q: Can you describe the racial ethnic background and socioeconomic background of the people who came down here?

A: Most of the people were either WASPs or Jews, I guess you'd say. A lot of the people were from Chicago and the Chicago . . .

Q: So, tell me when you first realized you were a community and what you called yourselves in the beginning?

A: Well, first of all, we were part of a larger community which was this whole group of people that hung out at the health food store, ate at the restaurant, worked at the restaurant, worked in the collective businesses. There was a whole amorphous community of people in Champagne-Urbana at that time and we were part of that community that the collective businesses formed what they call Community Council that taxed all the businesses to create a fund to help more collective businesses get started and, so, the concept of community was floating around pretty explicitly and I believe it was Steve or somebody called a meeting of whoever was interested to start thinking about buying land somewhere and a bunch of people showed up and everybody knew a bunch of people in the room, although not necessarily anyone knew everybody in the room, and we just kind of proceeded in that way. I mean, it was more or less the subgroup of people in this larger community that wanted to do something with it

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and move somewhere with it and keep it going and it tended to be mostly people who were living at the Dome and people who were living at our house in town. The Dome was called the Dome and our house was called Mobraze(?) which is a Varsity(?) word for struggle and it was for some reason, people gave that a checking account the house had that name and, so, there it was on the checking account, so we started calling the house Mobraze and the group that was going to do this land thing started calling itself Mahayanna(?), which is an adjective normally for a form of Buddhism that [unintelligible] called the big boat style of Buddhism where you're not, you know, no one person is enlightened until everybody's enlightened so everybody kind of works together or it's a more outward looking form of Buddhism than the Iniyanna(?) Buddhism where people classically go off to a cave and meditate on their navel for a while and it's it kind of expressed the idea that we were all in it together and, so, we set up a bank account called the Mahayanna Land Account and the corporation that now owns the land is called the Mahayanna Land Corporation. It wasn't really until later, after we owned the land and the land was, of course, called Dunmire Hollow because the Dunmires owned it when the U.S. Geological Survey made the topological maps and put right on the map Dunmire Hollow and, so, that's what it was known as from then on and we didn't really start calling our community Dunmire Hollow Community until after we had pretty well kind of gotten serious ties with the piece of land and it wasn't ever a decision of the group to do that. It just seemed like calling it Dunmire Hollow didn't express the fact that we were a community, so we called it Dunmire Hollow Community but, really, it's Dunmire Hollow, which is the piece of land and the people living here and Mahayanna is this larger community of people, some of whom haven't lived here in years but who are still connected as people to this community of people. So, we could have 2 names. In fact, our phone list has what we call outer Mahayanna, which are all the people that used to live here that are still involved with us.

Q: So that name's still a part of you in a lot of ways?

A: Yeah. It still is. It's still part of the corporation. I mean, it's the corporate name and still a part a name for the community that includes people who don't live here.

Q: Have you had any community businesses or products?

A: Well, there was a construction company that often kept most of the males here employed. We tried at a time when the local culture was not particularly enlightened, we attempted to integrate women into our construction crews and didn't have much luck with it because we still wanted people who did the work to get paid and the local people didn't really feel like paying women to do construction work. They didn't believe they could do it and the women got a fair amount of harassment, usually verbal, from people. There was an early business was making barn wood planter pots for people to plant in and a guy here, Mark, who was going to be my woodworking partner, got a table saw and some pieces of information on how to make octagonal and hexagonal tapered pots and, so, they started making them out of old barn wood. Then, they started having to buy lumber from the sawmills to make old barn wood planters because they didn't have time to go tear down anymore old barns and the business kept people alive for one season but it really the pots weren't very well made and they didn't hold up very well.

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Q: Did your community have any special attitudes or practices surrounding food?

A: People, by and large, tended to be mostly into what you'd call whole foods but very few people were very exclusive about it, you know, completely exclusive anyway. I mean, when a 2-year old throws a fit if you go by the convenience without stopping to get her a treat you know that people stop there to get treats pretty regularly and we all through the years, our community potluck suppers tended to be mostly vegetarian because there's always been 1 or 2 people who were either vegetarian or mostly vegetarian around but most of the people here are not exactly vegetarians. Many folks don't eat much meat and many here mostly eat fish if they have any animal products or dairy products but people are mostly into natural foods and mostly vegetarian but very few people are food fanatics.

Q: Is gardening or was gardening a big part of your community?

A: For many of the people, gardening was a big part. For some of the people, it's been a non-existent part and gardening there were very opposite styles of gardening that could have torn our community apart if we had insisted on everybody gardening together. We tried that the first year and it was a disaster and, so, the next year we tried each family being responsible for one crop and people figured out that some folks had no talent for gardening and other folks did and, if they wanted broccoli, they better raise a few plants of their own and, so, since we had enough land, we started being garden anarchists and you can garden any way you want as long as you don't start gardening in somebody else's plot. So, some families have shared gardens. Some people have shared a row crop like corn or something like that and, then, had their own gardens, you know, family gardens for other stuff and some people have never grown a garden.

Q: Does your community have any special attitudes or practices regarding sexual activities?

A: We don't have any particular group doctrine or even, maybe, explicit agreements regarding sexual preferences, activities, or whatever. I would say that we would not be excited about sexual contact between adults and children. In fact, we would be very unexcited by that but we people's sexual preferences are not part of the group agreements.

Q: Would you say are you any different than mainstream society?

A: You mean regarding our sexual . . . ?

Q: Beliefs.

A: Beliefs?

Q: Yeah.

A: I would say that, at times in the past, we have definitely been different. There have been times when a fair number of people were experimenting with open marriages and open relationships and multiple sexual relationships with varying degrees of officialness. I would say that we're probably more tolerant of non-heterosexual preferences although, most of the time this community has existed, most, if not all, of the people at any given time have been either heterosexual or non-practicing homosexuals.

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Q: How about attitudes or practices surrounding drugs?

A: We had some agreements in the early days, some of which were maintained and some of which were broken. In the early days, this community a lot of the people in this community smoked pot and some people occasionally did acid. We had an agreement not to grow any pot on our land because it jeopardized the ownership of the land. We had an agreement not to sell pot to local people and especially not to local school kids and, eventually, people were growing pot on our land which I was not excited about because I knew that the legal system does what it wants to you when it catches you instead of what you tell it to do to you. At one point, people were growing out in their gardens in the middle of the clearing because it was the best soil for it and the best sunshine and they started out growing it behind their houses in the woods but it didn't grow very well there and a sheriff's deputy walked through our hollow coming to see me about making some furniture for him and walked by some, you know, about 50 feet, maybe a 100 ft., from some pot plants that were in clear view but he didn't see them because there were other weeds there mixed in with them. When he became sheriff, the drug surveillance helicopters came over our place pretty heavily, though, because he suspected us even though he missed his chance. But, after that event, some of us who were not excited about growing pot on our land had more ammunition to persuade people to stop doing it and our currently, nobody that I know of is growing pot here or has for many years.

Q: What have your relationships been like with your surrounding neighbors, not your neighbors within Dunmire Hollow, but outside?

A: The people that we've had any dealings with have tended to express the fact that they like us and respect us and find us to be good neighbors. It's possible that folks who've never met us still, after 20 years, make remarks about us like calling this place "hippie hollow" and stuff like that but we've got pretty good relations with a lot of our neighbors in this part of the county. We participate in the volunteer fire department and community center up the road from us, helped build the building and get it off the project off the ground when they were still looking for money and, you know, help with the fish fries and the other fund raisers and go to meetings and talk to the folks.

Q: Does the community have any sort of a commitment to energy efficiency or saving resources?

A: We have a set of agreements that includes stewardship of the land. There's a general understanding that we don't want to get too extravagant with energy and stuff like that. Most of the houses have some passive solar component. People try to build them fairly efficient thermally.

Q: Well, just as an example, I've noticed you have a composting toilet. You heat with wood. You don't have hot water in your house and, when I went over to the community center, there's no toilet in that building. There's just an outhouse. It's a composting outhouse, I think, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: Are most of the dwellings around here similar in that way?

A: Most of the dwellings heat exclusively or mostly with wood. Two of them have one building, a small cabin, has a small propane heater in it and one large house has a propane heater backup for when they're away from home or if it's real cold, they can run both stoves. Most houses are heated with

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wood. There are there's one official flush toilet in the whole community and most of the houses have composting toilets. I'd say all but 2.

Q: So, that flush toilet household has a septic tank, then?

A: Yeah, and they live up on the ridge as far as possible that you can get on our land from the springs that we drink out of. The community center does have a septic tank and septic system but, essentially, we only run gray water through it. It's very near the well that we drink out of [unintelligible].

Q: Have you had connections with other intentional communities?

A: Me, personally, or the community?

Q: Well, how about let's start with the community and, then, let's talk about you.

A: Okay. The community has connections of longstanding kind of overlapping interests and, essentially, shared membership for a while with Short Mountain Sanctuary. One woman, who died recently, who lived here was deeply involved with Short Mountain as well as this community and, so, there's a fair connection between those communities and we have a community called Flatrock Community outside of Murphysboro that we felt a special kind of kindred spirit with or bonding with because the people there in many ways were very similar to the people here the same kind of community. The major difference was that they had a really grungy piece of land in some respects and they didn't really it was hard for them to imagine it being their permanent home, whereas we had a much nicer place. They had the advantage of being a couple miles from a university town so they could they had a lot more pool of people that they could look for members from.

Q: Now, you mentioned at the beginning when you guys were looking for land that some people from your shared house or the place the other there were 2 shared households one of them went down to the Farm and that's how you got the idea that there was some cheap land around here that you might be able to buy. So, you've had some contact with the Farm as well?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, people here people in our original community were affected in different ways and to different extents by the existence of the Farm. One couple in our original community moved to the Farm after being here just a few weeks in Tennessee just a few weeks to have a baby and stayed at the Farm for years after that. Other a couple other families here went to the Farm to have babies but came back here afterwards. One guy, while his wife was there waiting to have her baby, helped the orchard enthusiast over there plant a bunch of fruit trees and got the Farm orchard off the ground and people have had, you know, differing amounts of enthusiasm for Stephen's philosophy but, in some respects, we've had very little connection with the Farm until recent years. In the early days, they definitely had, what we would consider, an attitude about things. For example, they really didn't want us to buy this land and move here because we didn't cop to Stephen so they couldn't control us. They were afraid we would ruin their reputation. Of course, Stephen was the one and a couple of people there were the one's that spent time for growing pot, which didn't help our reputation any, probably, but they and they figured if you didn't if you weren't followers of Stephen, you just didn't know how to do whatever. I mean, I was talking to a guy for a while, we played basketball with a team from the Farm and we met kind of halfway in between and I was talking about, you know, that we had a construction crew and this

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guy was like challenging me about whether we really were competent, you know, could we really lay blocks. I don't know. I told him, well, we, you know, me and another guy can just about just walk down the wall. I'm putting on the mud and he's setting the blocks and scraping off the excess and we can just truck down the wall. But there's just an attitude that they were that they had their shit together and nobody else did, especially not us and we were bourgeois and they were, you know, more pure than we were and it wasn't until after their financial crisis and all that that they started talking about networking and started actually asking like, "well, what did you do about, you know, people leaving and still holding to their houses?" It was the first time in, you know, 13, 14 years of being around them that anybody'd ever acted like they didn't have the answers already. So, after that, I mean, not that we necessarily told them we had all their answers but there was a lot more 2-way communication after that and, so, we have pretty good relations with them. It is interesting that it would probably be possible for us to now claim that they're more bourgeois than we are, at least some of them, not that we're necessarily into those comparisons but . . .

Q: Well, talk some about your personal networking.

A: Whoo, where to start. Well . . .

Q: Well, maybe with the resurrection of the FIC or do you want to start before that?

A: Why don't I start with that. I had visited some communities when I was travelling before I moved to Illinois the first time and I visited some after I lived in Illinois, like when I was living in Seattle, and I'd also discovered, both through my visiting and also through reading about other communities that some communities, especially the famous ones, people were pretty burned out on visitors and you could show up there and, really, you know, the person in charge of visitors might spend some time with you but you really wouldn't get a chance to meet anybody in the community and hang out with them because you'd just be another damn visitor and I wanted I have been and continue to be curious about and interested in communities and I wanted to be able to visit communities and kind of get right in there with the people and hang out with them and see what was really going on and that was one of my major motivations when I got an announcement for kind of a revitalizing the Fellowship of Intentional Communities meeting announcement to go and attend because I figured if I got to meet people from other communities I'd have somebody to go be with and they'd introduce me to people and it'd be an in into communities, so I wouldn't just be a random visitor and it turned out that the first meeting was at Tangee(?) Homestead outside of Philadelphia and Barbara was going to Baltimore to see her family, anyway, and American was just opening its hub in Nashville. They were selling one-way tickets real cheap from anywhere to Nashville and, so, I could afford to go and the people at Tangee Homestead were putting the participants up, you know, in their homes and I got a ride from a guy who was going near Baltimore and, so, I could go.

Q: How did it happen that you got an invitation?

A: Well, I assume that it was because we were in some minimal, early directory that or on a mailing list. We'd subscribed to Communities Magazine something having to do, probably with Communities Magazine or the directory they put out. I'm not really sure. I don't think it was addressed to me, personally, but, you know, we were on a few mailing lists at that point.

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Q: So, you went up to Tangee Homestead and you went to this meeting and what happened?

A: Well, I felt like I was an oddball there because Charles Betterton and Alan Butcher, in particular, and, to a lesser extent, Dan Christenberry and Peter Robinson, who were there from Shannon Farm, were breathing this exuberant intentional community is the answer to everybody's problems kind of an attitude or emotion or whatever and, then, I saw community in my life in a broader sense where I was definitely living in an intentional community but that community was part of a county-wide community of alternative people. There was part of a bioregional community of people that, even though I hadn't tapped into it much, was already part of a national or continental bioregional community. So, I had a broader sense of community and was very hardened when they incorporated the organization of the fellowship for intentional communities rather than of intentional communities the next year, which meant that they were looking at community intentionally but not necessarily limiting it just to people living on one piece of land together.

Q: So, that experience led into a lot of networking for you, didn't it.

A: Yep. Yeah.

Q: Now, can you describe some of that?

A: Well, I missed the 2 meetings that they had at Stell(?) in Illinois where they incorporated but the next time there was a meeting, I heard about it because, of course, I'd been to one, so I was on the mailing list and it was at East Wind, which is only 350 miles from here and, so, my shop partner, David, and I went over to the meeting and hung out at East Wind with the people and met some nice folks and went to the FIC meeting and met a lot of the people who were active, some of whom I hadn't who'd gotten involved or had shown up at the Stell meeting that I had not seen in Tangee and I was interested. David was a little more skeptical about whether or not the group would ever do anything to make it worthwhile to go to meetings but I was interested and, so, the next meeting was at Green Pasture Estates in New Hampshire and Barbara and I went up there and, with a few twists and turns of fate, I ended up on the Board.

Q: When was that?

A: That was spring of '88, I believe.

Q: Okay.

A: And, after that Board meeting, Barbara and Dan and I toured a few communities in Western Massachusetts and across the border of New York State and started getting to know communities as people who were doing this community networking thing and I've been on the Board ever since and, at one point, sprained my ankle and couldn't do anything but FIC work for a while and, so, then, got my arm twisted to be on the Administrative Committee.

Q: 'Cause they saw how productive you could be?

A: Right. Every now and then they hope for another injury but . . .

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Q: Oh, gosh.

A: Actually, they're kind to me and don't hope for that.

Q: Well, getting back to your community some. You've mentioned to me that you've had some problems with people having claim to a dwelling but, yet, not living here, living somewhere else and not letting people use their house while they're gone. Can you talk some about that and where you think your community's headed?

A: Okay. As a process over history, we've had more and more people, families who've built houses here, move away and still maintain some form of non-legal possession of their house and it started slowly and, now, we have at least half the houses on our land in that category and find ourselves half empty and, yet, full at the same time because the people who built the houses don't want anybody else to use them and we're not excited about the idea of forcibly taking somebody's house away from them because we would also, then, leave ourselves open to the same treatment at some point whether we were here or not. So, it's not a precedent we wanted to get started on, nor is it the sort of thing that has any guarantee of avoiding legal action. We're not excited about paying lawyers large amounts of money to try to save us from people we think of as our friends. So, we're in kind of a quandary about what to do and the people who are gone each family has their own personal or family reasons, which are not always the same. All of them seem to feel like it's kind of their security blanket to have. If their current life goes to hell in a hand basket, they've always got Dunmire Hollow to fall back on. We don't think that's a very healthy way to maintain the living, breathing, vital community here but, whenever we try to talk to them about it, they either get upset or change the subject or both and tell us what we can do to take care of ourselves and our problem and they don't see it as their problem.

Q: So, where do you see yourself headed or where do you see the community headed?

A: Well, in some respects, it's a serious problem and, in other respects, it isn't because we Barbara and I and Steve and Nancy don't figure that we're going to be going anywhere and Steve and Nancy's sons and daughters-in-law may or may or not be staying around but and David and Karen are likely to be moving here in the next few years after their Nashville stint is over. So, I mean, it's not thrilling the way things are but it's also not a disaster and, so, we're just going to try to work on and see if we can get some movement out of people somehow or figure a way around it. But it doesn't, you know I feel like, with 540 or so communities listed in Communities Directory, people have a wider selection than they ever have, if they're looking for a community, and coming to one that seems like almost a ghost town is not one that's going to be real attractive to them, especially if there's also these ghosts of people that they might have to deal with later that they don't have any real opportunity to get to know and decide if they really want to be in community with them. So, it leaves us kind of, you know, wondering how to make our community more attractive to possible new members. We still haven't found a lot of options, yet, besides ineffective ones.

Q: Do you see yourself growing old here?

A: Possibly.

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Q: Would you like to?

A: As far as I know, now. I'm not about to say that I will never leave this place except in a casket and, even then, I would try not to leave but, after the various twists and turns in my life, I'm not really ready to say this is the only place I'll ever live.

Q: Looking at it real practically, you probably have to do some if you got to the point where, maybe, your mobility was limited as a real old person, it would be hard to get around here, wouldn't it? There's lots of steps, long walks.

A: Well, unlike many people, I purposefully put all the necessary parts of my house on one level. The guest room is a different level. The deck is a different level but the deck is definitely rampable. The deck is rampable to the ground, although I haven't done that and I have avoided building a driveway and putting a garage or a parking area where I could ramp into the house if I needed to until such time that I need to do it. I figure if bulldozers and backhoes no longer exist when I get old, I'm going to have more trouble than just having a ramp access to my house. There's going to be a lot more wrong with the world than that but there's only been one person in a wheelchair who's visited us here in this house and we had to help him up the hill pretty seriously but we got him up here. It's not currently set up for handicapped access and it was I realized when Barbara was gone and I had my sprained ankle and was on crutches, I relied on friends here to help me get my firewood in but, once it was in the house, I could deal with everything myself.

Q: Was it at that point, when you had your sprained ankle was living in community a good thing that you had those people to help you with wood and all?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Okay. you've been here, now, well, on the land, I guess, for about 21 years? Is that right?

A: I personally have been here 19 1/2 years.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: The community's been here almost 22. It'll be 22 years in January.

Q: Okay. That's a good chunk of time. How do you look back on those years? How do you feel about them?

A: Probably the same way I feel about my life in general.

Q: Which is?

A: Which is that I'm basically content with what I've done and when I've done it. I once had a talk with my sister who was filled with regrets and guilt about things she'd done or not done in her life and there was it was a real shock to me because I've not always operated from as much knowledge as I would have had 10 years down the road but I feel like I've generally made good choices for what I've done with myself, how I've treated people and what I've done with my time and energy over the years.

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Q: Now, a lot of the really hippie communities of the '60s and early '70s didn't last very long. That might even be an understatement but Dunmire Hollow has lasted into the mid-1990s and that's quite something. What led to its success? What's the glue here?

A: There are a few factors that I will at least a few that I can think of one is that we had a very limited collection of rules/agreements. In fact, people would ask us what are the rules here and we'd say, well, there are 2 rules. The first rule is there are no rules and the second rule is you have to work out your conflicts and, usually, that got a life but we were real serious about that because, in fact, we don't talk about rules here. We talk about agreements and the agreements are reached by consensus and, if somebody is tired of or is no longer in agreement with that agreement, in order for it to change, they have to get everybody to agree to a change in the agreement. So, it's agreements are much more a process, you know, it makes visible the fact that it's a process of people agreeing rather than a rule imposed from somewhere outside the group. So, that's one of the things is that we've and the fact that we only had those 2 rules, if you want to say that, was another factor in our success. We do have a core set of agreements, which we've actually worked on and written out over the years but, outside of those core agreements, we left things pretty much very arbitrarily. We try to have, outside of the core of our community's values, we try to let people do whatever they want because that means there's more people who can live here. If you start restricting people to do exactly this and exactly that in every aspect of life, pretty soon there's only 1 person living here and, maybe, they get tired of it and leave, too. So, we see the flexibility in a lot of areas in life, like in gardening where you can garden by yourself, you can garden with friends, you can garden part with friends and part by yourself, you can garden not at all, and this kind of flexibility means that people don't have to leave this community because they don't like the way we garden and, you know, flexibility to eat what you want to eat and be considerate of people the one night a week we eat together and, you know, bring food that everybody can share in is a flexibility so that people don't have to leave because they're the wrong brand of dietary extremist. So, the other aspect, I think, that really helped was that we had both a combination of kind of basic financial responsibility and people's generosity and flexibility above that level. For example, in the early days, everybody contributed \$10 a month toward the land payments and we figured that so that, with that \$10 a month, we'd had exact, you know, \$20 more than we needed each month for the land payment and, yet, some people gave significantly more than that, \$50 or \$60 a month because they wanted to see the community able to capitalize itself faster than just paying off the land and some of that money was used to pay extra payments so that we'd get done sooner and pay less interest and some of that money was used for the community buildings and other community facilities but there was a basic agreement that everybody was at this one level, everybody was responsible to contribute financially. There was no, okay, well, you're doing other things you're not going to have to contribute financially and this other person is not doing those things, so they're going to have to contribute more financially. Another time, we were contributing \$25 a month and many of us wanted to capitalize the community faster than we were doing at that level and one family was complaining that that was too much and, so, instead of strongarming them to contribute the little more that we wanted can do per month or them complaining to us forever ...