

Interview with Ben Jefferies  
Interviewer: Jason Paul Kingman  
April 7, 2010

**Q:** Can you describe to me the place where you are living right now? What is its name and where is it located?

**A:** I lived for two years in the Sunflower House Cooperative which is a student cooperative at 14th and Tennessee streets in Lawrence, Kansas.

**Q:** When did you live there?

**A:** I do not live there any longer. I lived there up until May of 2009.

**Q:** Was there a certain ideology or group idea that was behind living in this cooperative?

**A:** It is an intentional community; there's no ideology as far as a common religious experience or anything like that, or anything that binds us specifically, but there were certain group goals such as the promotion of diversity, a generally socially conscious community, and towards the end we actually started to incorporate certain environmental justice components of how we live, and that included taking actions and setting aside specific days where we would focus on gardening, updating our appliances. So there was some sort of group bond although it wasn't a specifically codified ideology.

**Q:** How did you see those goals played out in everyday life? For instance, were there certain selection policies that promoted diversity, or did you just hope diverse people would come?

**A:** We tried to promote diversity; we gave preference to those applicants that were students, and we generally tried to promote diversity from those applicants. There wasn't a specific mechanism, but there was always that unspoken goal. The community itself chose to promote those things. Are you asking how that ended up playing out?

**Q:** Yes, do you have any statistics or percentages of diversity in the house?

**A:** No, I don't have any exact percentages, but I think in relation to the population of Lawrence I think we are always over-representative of African-American students. We are definitely over-representative of queer students that lived in the house as well. We almost always had a male-heavy population, and that probably has something to do with the condition of the house itself – not being an aesthetically pleasing environment.

**Q:** Did you hear that from women who came into the house, that the house wasn't well kept?

**A:** I heard that from everyone who came into the house [laughs]. But I did hear that specifically from women, some who were reflecting on the preferences of other women.

**Q:** How many women were living there when you lived there?

**A:** Well there were thirty people who lived in the house. At one point, there were as few as a quarter [of the house population] living there. But I also remember one point when there was actually a female majority at one point. But as a rule, I would say it normally ranged from 30 – 40 percent female.

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**Q:** Can you elaborate on the condition of the house, and the fact that you said it was not aesthetically pleasing?

**A:** It's a very old house that has a varied history. It was originally two houses that were built together and it served as a doctor's office, a geriatric care unit; at one point it was the student health center much like Watkins is today.

**Q:** I can't imagine all those students being in that little area!

**A:** It is a very old structure, and it's falling apart. I would say it was in the 1990s that the house started being taken care of less well and so there were deteriorating conditions that ranged from foundation issues to very small things like cleanliness. I think in any cooperative living situation there are problems with personal responsibility and accountability, and so the house is often really dirty – beer bottles and trash lying around. It is actually being renovated as we speak.

**Q:** What organization oversees the cooperative? If I'm not mistaken, there are three cooperatives, including the Sunflower House, that are connected?

**A:** There are three student cooperatives that fall under the University of Kansas Student Housing Association (UKSHA) – which has no relation to the university itself; it is a totally independent entity – and those are the Sunflower House, the Olive House at 1614 Kentucky St., and the Ad Astra House which is at 10th and Kentucky.

**Q:** As far as the house is concerned, how is the space divided? Are there private bedrooms? What does it look like on the inside?

**A:** You walk through the front of the house and there is a long lounge that spans the front of both of the houses – the front door is in the middle of these two houses that are built together. To the left is a snack kitchen, which looks like a pretty decent sized kitchen that everyone shares to prepare their own meals. If you were to go downstairs you would find a tool room, laundry facilities, and a couple of game rooms, a TV room and home theatre, and also there is also the large dining room and industrial sized kitchen that we use to prepare huge community meals. Those are all of the common areas, everything else beyond that is 30 bedrooms.

**Q:** How many people live in one room?

**A:** Just one, unless you opt to live with more. For a while I lived with one other person to cut rent – it was probably the cheapest rent anyone was paying in Lawrence at the time [laughs]. I have heard of four people sharing one bedroom in order to get the cheapest rent ever!

**Q:** How does the rent work? Is it monthly or yearly?

**A:** You pay month by month, and the lease is month by month as well in order to fit in with the needs of the students. Many people choose to live there because it is not as much of a commitment. Rent ranges anywhere from \$230 a month all the way up to \$310, which includes utilities, soap, just about anything you need to live. If people share a room, there is an \$80 fee for the extra person for utilities and supplies.

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**Q:** So if you had four people in a room, even with the extra fees, you could be paying a really cheap rent.

**A:** Yeah, depending on the room, you could definitely be paying just a little over a hundred dollars a month.

**Q:** How does the food work? Does rent cover food costs?

**A:** There is an extra meal fee on top of rent, and the house chooses how many community meals want to be made each semester. If there are more people who come in during the semester who want more meals, the house will vote on a meal increase. Those particular procedures were decided by simple majority. There were semesters when I lived there when there were no community meals, and other semesters where there were five meals a week.

**Q:** So it just depends on what the people living there at the time want?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** In other situations that required voting, was it always decided by simple majority?

**A:** We have a relatively large house manual that dictates voting procedures for all different types of situations. If you want to amend the manual, you would have to have a 2/3 majority. If you wanted to spend any amount of money over one hundred dollars you had to have a simple majority vote, and then vote on it again a week later. So that was sort of like a double action system, which proved to be very effective. That rule [the double action system] was only used if there was a problem with the decision making, if someone brought it up. For instance, if someone didn't agree with a purchase, they might remind the house that we would have to vote on it a week later. It was a very sort of self-service system; there were rules, but it was very easy to use them only as it helped the community.

**Q:** Where is the money kept? Is it kept in a local bank?

**A:** As far as I know, it is kept in the Midwest Regional Credit Union.

**Q:** Who has access to the money?

**A:** There is a treasurer, and they are the only person in the house who has access to the money. There is also an executive secretary of UKSHA that has access to all the bank accounts of all the coops.

**Q:** What are the different duties within the house besides treasurer?

**A:** There is a person who collects rents, a person who keeps track of all of the points for the work sharing system, cleaning coordinator, repair coordinator, cooking coordinator, shopping coordinator, and tech wizard to name a few. These positions are elected by the house, for whatever length of term we see fit. It is essentially a bureaucracy that keeps the house running on a daily basis.

**Q:** Can you tell me your story of how you came to live in the Sunflower House?

**A:** I came from an interesting situation, which is not representative of the community. Most people live there because it is cheap, and it fits with their lifestyle. I came to the Sunflower House after transferring from George Mason University and I was reading about cooperatives and intentional communities and I

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started researching cooperatives in Lawrence. I found out about the Sunflower House through the website of a Palestinian activist who was living there at the time. I called them, set up an interview, was accepted, and then decided to live there.

**Q:** When exactly did you move in?

**A:** Well I live close to Lawrence, so I came back [from George Mason] and lived with my parents for a time while I was filling out the application and interviewing with the co-op. I then moved in after that.

**Q:** What year in school were you then?

**A:** That was the start of my sophomore year.

**Q:** So you lived there during your sophomore and junior years?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What do you think is a major draw for other students who live there? Did you hear of many others who were interested of living and investigating an intentional community?

**A:** No. Most of the appeal is the fact that it is cheap. And more or less, the co-op fills a need. The house has been around since 1969, and it seems to suit the needs of many students who don't want to commit to a year-long lease or know that they are only going to need a place to live for a couple of months. Many people also live there because their friends live there, and word of mouth. I have recruited a lot of people through word of mouth. But overall, I can remember only two or three people who moved in explicitly because they were excited about intentional communities.

**Q:** Do you think people are aware that they are living in an intentional community or commune?

**A:** Overall, I would say no. I think most people understand those terms, but I don't think they understand the content or the substance of what it means to live in an intentional community. There are however elaborate attempts to overcome that; every new member that moves in has to go through a four week orientation that involves reading the entire house manual – which is a 70 page endeavor – and reading about all of the rules and the history of the co-op. Some people are genuinely affected by that and become excited about communes and such. I think most people are aware of the terms either because of the training, or that they came in with the knowledge, or they just pick it up after a couple of months living in the house.

**Q:** How were the interpersonal relations in the house while you were living there? Was there a lot of tension, or was it generally pretty amicable?

**A:** There was a mix. I would say that it was generally pretty amicable, but any time you put 30 people in a house together there is bound to be tension and a lot of problems. Those problems also tend to get noticed more than the amiable relationships, but that being said, almost everyone I know who has lived at Sunflower House has created lasting relationships that have continued even after they didn't live in the house together. We always had a good time hanging out together; there was a genuine sense of camaraderie among the housemates. There was even a point when people came to call themselves "sunflowers." But there were always ups and downs. When you have that many young people living

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together, people would date, and then when the dating ended their were always disputes surrounding that.

**Q:** I know some communities have weekly meetings where disputes are intentionally brought out in the open. Did Sunflower have something like that?

**A:** There is a meeting every week, but that is mainly for business issues. Sometimes personal issues made their way into the meeting, but there was no formal time when we could talk about issues with other people living in the house. However, there were many times when I lived there that people would “throw” those meetings and try to make it a mental health night and we would come together and talk about problems. There are house activities on many nights of the week, like game night, movie night, and lots of party nights.

**Q:** I have personally never been to one, but the Sunflower House party is pretty infamous. Did you usually stick around for the parties? Did you enjoy that party atmosphere?

**A:** I did enjoy the parties and the party atmosphere. Towards the end of my time there I did get burned out on it and I did choose to leave or be somewhere else during those big parties. There were a mix of people who lived at the house – some people weren’t really into that party atmosphere.

**Q:** How was housework divided among the members of the house?

**A:** We have a very elaborate system to divide housework. It is a work share program that is a point system. The Sunflower House began as University of Kansas Center for Human Development property, where it was a graduate student and his professor’s project to study communes and work sharing systems. You should look up Keith Miller sometime – there are a number of articles about his experiments done in the Sunflower House. The work sharing system that we still maintain was developed from that experiment. Essentially, there is a list of jobs and chores around the house that people earn points for doing. Every resident is responsible for getting one hundred points a week. If your balance falls below sixty points at the end of a week, then you are fined the amount of points that you need to get to one hundred. When I was there, points were worth 40 cents each, and that even moved up to 50 cents. The fines are applied to the rent and you have to pay that.

**Q:** Do you think that system worked well?

**A:** Relatively well. There were still people that didn’t do their work. There also developed a market for points where some people would work a lot and then sell their points to others who didn’t want to work at a cost less than market value of the point. But generally, I think it worked pretty well. There aren’t set jobs for each resident, you just sign up to do different jobs each week. So for instance you could clean a hallway or a bathroom from week to week.

**Q:** How do you know how many points each duty is worth?

**A:** Each job has a set amount of points that are decided at meetings. Generally, an hour worth of work is worth fifty points.

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**Q:** Was the outside of the house also included in house duties?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** And was any food grown on the grounds of the Sunflower House?

**A:** There are small garden patches, but because of the location on the street and the trees around the house they never really produced enough food for anyone in the house.

**Q:** Within the house, are there any cottage industries?

**A:** There was one group of people that came together and decided to sell crafts. Another one of my friends decided to recycle paper into artisan paper, but I don't think anyone really made any large profits from them. You would be interested to know that the Community Mercantile began from a group of students in the Sunflower House who rented one half of the basement and began to sell products from there. Once they developed a larger market, they then moved to their first location.

**Q:** Does the relationship between the Merc and the Sunflower House continue today?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Does UKSHA own the land that the house is on?

**A:** I believe that the title for the property is kept under UKSHA.

**Q:** What is the formal governing structure for the house?

**A:** There is an executive secretary of UKSHA who is the only paid employee of the cooperative system in Lawrence.

**Q:** For example, when you come together at a meeting, who runs the meeting?

**A:** It rotates, and it depends on the meeting. Within UKSHA, there is an executive hierarchy that includes a president, treasurer, and secretary. I served as president for one year, and I was on the board for my second year. But within the house, meetings are run as horizontally as you could imagine. There is a meeting coordinator, but they just have a checklist to facilitate the meeting.

**Q:** Would that person get points for being the meeting coordinator?

**A:** Yeah, of course.

**Q:** Where did the food come from? Where was it bought, and who made the decisions about what food to bring into the house?

**A:** We designate a food program director, who volunteers to put together menus for the semester. These menus are saved and reused as much as possible. There is a food purchaser who got many of their [work share] points by going to purchase all of the food. We shopped mainly at Checker's [grocery store at 23rd and Louisiana in Lawrence, KS] for about as cheap as we could, because that was the main goal at the time – to do things cheaply; that was the economic position that most of us were in. We were pretty successful at that, and we did manage to eat very cheaply. Meals at Sunflower House were about 2-3 dollars per meal.

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**Q:** That's like a school lunch! [laughs]

**A:** Yes, it was very cheap.

**Q:** I assume there were a lot of options for vegetarians and vegans in the house?

**A:** Yes, many! At any one time, there were probably only about two vegans there, and probably six to ten vegetarians. I would say the large majority of the residents were omnivores.

**Q:** Did you like the food?

**A:** Yeah, I mean, of course there were times when it wasn't my taste, but I would say we had pretty good food for most of the meals.

**Q:** So when you were there the emphasis was cheap food. Do you know if there has been a shift towards fair food, or more locally-sourced food in recent years?

**A:** Nope, it's all about being cheap. That's the economic position of most of the people in the house. People do many other things for social and environmental justice, but maybe more in word and less in deed when I think about it. But for most people there, they are living at the co-op because they don't have any money.

**Q:** While you were there, was there ever a push towards self-sufficiency, such as "let's grow our own food" or "let's produce our own energy"?

**A:** Yes, we switched over to LED light bulbs which reduced our energy usage enormously. Many people have researched grants to purchase solar panels and solar water heating systems. There has also always been talk about gardening. But the real [environmental] benefit of the property is that it is a lot of people living in a small space. In that way, the property is more sustainable than many others. It is contributing less to urban sprawl in Lawrence, and using space more wisely. But really, the property doesn't lend itself to growing things. Right now the renovations that are happening are very "green" by construction standards.

**Q:** Do you know what some of those are?

**A:** They are refitting the house with high efficiency central heating and cooling, which is new. In fact, the house was very energy efficient in the past because there was no central air system [laughs]. During the summers, if you wanted air conditioning in your room, you could install a window unit and pay an extra fee. While I was there, I just used a fan and open windows to keep cool.

**Q:** Do you think these "green" improvements are based on a passion for the environmental movement, or just because they are cheap?

**A:** I think environmental sustainability is a concern for UKSHA, as well as many of the residents of the house.

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**Q:** I can definitely understand how that is more efficient, since there are many houses the same size as the Sunflower House along Tennessee street that house less than half of the number of people that it does.

**A:** Since the house has served many purposes throughout the years, including a doctor's office, it has been designed to waste no space. Besides the common areas that I described earlier, there are really only bedrooms and narrow hallways to conserve space.

**Q:** How did people gain membership to live there?

**A:** Potential members fill out an application and they have an interview with other house members. At the subsequent meeting, which happens every Monday, the house members vote on new members. You have to get seventy-five percent "yes" vote by current members.

**Q:** Have you ever seen people denied membership?

**A:** Oh, yes. Lots. Many.

**Q:** What were some reasons for denial?

**A:** Well, being generally crazy. Sometimes people in the house have heard about a "bad" person, or we can just tell if a person isn't going to be responsible. We try to ask a lot of questions at the interview to gauge how responsible they will be. Some people are up front about their lack of financial resources, and we fear that they won't be able to pay the rent.

**Q:** Is it all students who live there?

**A:** No, probably about half students.

**Q:** What is the age range of people who live there?

**A:** The youngest person who I ever saw live there was sixteen, and we had to take some legal action to allow her to live there. The oldest person that I've ever seen there was probably about fifty. But the older people tend to just be non-traditional students.

**Q:** Are the older, non-traditional students aware of the hippie vibe of the co-op?

**A:** Yeah, I think they are aware, but ultimately it is just cheap. Though there was an older woman who lived there who was very into intentional communities at one point.

**Q:** Were there any rules about dress or personal style in the house?

**A:** There was one rule, that you can be naked.

**Q:** Oh, really? So in the house you can be nude in communal areas?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** Did you ever go nude yourself?

**A:** Yeah, I was all about it! [laughs]



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**Q:** How does the Sunflower House interact with the neighbors? It is kind of an interesting mix on that street with the fraternities and sororities across the street, and the bar crowd just down the block.

**A:** There isn't a lot of interaction with the Greek houses on the street. The last interaction I can remember with any Greek house was when a Greek member came to Sunflower House for a party and stole a bunch of stuff. He got in a fight with a member of the house, and got his arm broken! So there's not much interaction with the Greeks; more antagonistic than anything. We don't tend to like them and they don't tend to like us even more. There have been instances of drive-by fireworks thrown at the house, which we later found out was by Greeks. However, with our neighbors who aren't Greek, we have pretty amiable relations. We usually know the neighbors, and we hang out with them and they come to the house and hang out with us. One time, we even had a neighbor who spent so much time at the house that he would give house tours to visitors and give them applications.

**Q:** How did parking work? Did a lot of residents have cars?

**A:** That is the good thing, that most of the residents do not have cars. There's only ten parking spots for thirty people living in the house, which is against city codes. But the law was grandfathered in for us because of the age of the house.

**Q:** As far as zoning goes, how does the house stay in the legal limit with so many residents?

**A:** It is technically zoned as a boarding house.

**Q:** Were there any rules about drug usage or alcohol consumption?

**A:** Nope, no rules.

**Q:** Did you notice a lot of drug usage?

**A:** Yeah, definitely.

**Q:** Can you elaborate on that?

**A:** There was a lot of weed, and a lot of drinking. Harder drugs were less visible; people tended to keep that under wraps. It did happen, but it was generally looked down upon by most of the house, so it was more private. When I say hard drugs I don't include hallucinogens – maybe out of personal preference – but there was always a fair bit of hallucinogens. It would definitely have been a rare week if someone didn't choose to trip on something.

**Q:** So I assume that you can smoke in the house?

**A:** Yes, you can't smoke in common areas, but you can smoke in your room.

**Q:** Did anyone's drug or alcohol usage become a problem?

**A:** Oh yeah.

**Q:** Can you describe a certain situation?

**A:** Yeah, there were a few situations where alcoholics – real alcoholics – drank so much that they had to be taken to the hospital. There was a person long ago, and this may just be a legend, who died in the

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house of a heroin overdose. But there aren't many problems with weed, unless you count people who are just so lazy from smoking too much that they don't do their work.

**Q:** Did you ever have to personally call an ambulance for someone while you were there?

**A:** No, but I did have to take someone to the hospital at one point.

**Q:** I'm sure there were a lot of interesting characters who lived in the house. Could you describe some of them for me?

**A:** Well, if your professor listens to this, he will remember Chad Steel. Chad Steel is a man, a myth, and a legend, for sure. Chad is a very smart individual – one of my favorite people in the house. He is also a Judo master, and he has a hammer and sickle tattoo on his breast. He's full of contradictions but one of the best people to have around almost as "house guard" when things got rough. He was always there to break an arm or get people out of the house who needed to be out of the house.

**Q:** Did he live there when you lived there?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** Does he still live there to your knowledge?

**A:** No, but he lived there for a total of four or five years.

**Q:** Were there any children in the house?

**A:** No, I believe that it happened in the past. We had one person come talk to us [the UKSHA executive board] about that, and we decided it was not an environment that was conducive to child rearing. That being said, we did have one member of the house who got pregnant. She moved next door to have the baby, and brought the baby over to the house often. Myself and a few others would babysit for the baby.

**Q:** Were there objections when you were babysitting?

**A:** No, having a child around for a short period of time didn't bother anyone. We just felt that there were times in the house when things happened that we didn't want to expose children to.

**Q:** Were there a lot of artists in the house?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** Were there group art expressions?

**A:** You were allowed to paint your own room, and so a lot of people did that. You can also paint common areas, too.

**Q:** Is it a pretty colorful place on the inside?

**A:** Yes- definitely. There is a lot of art and a lot of artists in the house.

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**Q:** Were there any efforts to showcase the art that was happening in the house, such as gallery nights?

**A:** No, nothing that formal or organized.

**Q:** You said earlier that there were a lot of relationships in the house. How did relationships happen in the house?

**A:** A lot of it was younger students that weren't technically in school at the time, and most of it was short-term relationships fueled by drugs or alcohol.

**Q:** So a lot of hook ups?

**A:** Yup.

**Q:** Were there any infamous hook ups that you can remember hearing about?

**A:** Yeah, the word got around the house pretty quickly. But, most of the people [at the co-op] are pretty liberated in their opinion about sexuality, and so they were fine with it. There were some negative issues that came out of [sexual] interpersonal relationships, but generally it was fine.

**Q:** So do you think most people in the house were open to having very open sexual relationships with others in the house?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** I assume there were homosexual relationships as well, as you said the house was very queer friendly?

**A:** Yeah. There was once when I was there that a very involved relationship occurred between two males.

**Q:** Were there any rules regarding sexual practice or relationships?

**A:** Nope [laughs].

**Q:** Are there any day-to-day aspects of living communally that significantly differ from current living situation?

**A:** [long pause] Well, kind of. As far as cooking meals and stuff, that is different. I think it was just really nice to always have people around, and always have someone to talk to. There is always something going on. Granted, this isn't so good if you want to be studious – there are a lot of distractions. But those distractions were generally positive. A lot of good, beautiful social relationships were built when people got together and decided to do a project, or make signs for a protest or rally, or go out and do political graffiti. You can call that bad but I choose to call it good. So I miss that, for sure. And actually, I am planning on moving back into an intentional community because of that.

**Q:** What is your plan with your next intentional community?

**A:** I hope to move into the Koinonia community, underneath the Ecumenical Christian Ministries (ECM) building [on the KU campus in Lawrence].

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**Q:** Is Koinonia very similar to the Sunflower House?

**A:** It is a little bit different because it is built on a Christian faith principle.

**Q:** Do you know much about it yet?

**A:** Yeah, I hang out there a lot; I have a lot of friends who live there already.

**Q:** How does the Christian ideology affect the living situation?

**A:** They take the positive social aspects from Christianity [and apply them to the community]. It really isn't based in any Christian rituals such as a prayer or sacrament, but it's just good, healthy Christian social living that, to me, spans beyond Christianity. It is embedded in the idea of love thy neighbor and do unto others...

**Q:** If you had to pick the best aspect of living communally, would it be the social relationships?

**A:** Oh yeah, definitely. It was amazing to have so many good, interesting people around. And having so many good people that you could do things with – things that you couldn't do if you were living with one or two other people. I miss that for sure.

**Q:** If you had to pick the worst aspect of living communally, what would that be?

**A:** For me, it would have to be a combination of irresponsibility and the party atmosphere. The parties got to be too much for me, and the individual irresponsibility. People wouldn't do their chores and in turn screw over their roommates and the entire house as a whole. There's a bit of a culture that developed at times of people not giving a fuck... and that was the worst. But I think that comes from my position as a very responsible person who really worked on the house and dedicated a lot of energy to it.

**Q:** And I'm sure it's so much different for you – coming in with an idea of an intentional community – to see people not be responsible.

**A:** For sure.

**Q:** So when did you decide to leave, and why was that?

**A:** I decided to leave during the winter of my second year there. I decided to study abroad and I wouldn't have been back in Lawrence for a while. I decided to leave because it was becoming too stressful for me and it was taking too much of my time. There were other things I wanted to focus on. I found myself spending so much of my time on the house, and the relationships there, that I needed... [long pause] just to be in a more stable environment.

**Q:** To what kind of living situation did you move?

**A:** An apartment, with a roommate.

**Q:** Overall, do you think your time there was a success?

**A:** Huge success. I learned more living there for two years about myself, about interpersonal relations, about everything really than I had learned anywhere else. It was absolutely huge living around that

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many cool people; people who had so much to offer and challenged me to address my own privileges and my own behavior. They helped me to understand that if you want to get things done in a large group of people, there are strategies to do it tactfully. I think I improved as a person so much from those two years.

**Q:** I always imagined communal life to be very inspiring. Do you think you were more inspired or more annoyed for most of your time at the Sunflower House?

**A:** More inspired, for sure.

**Q:** Do you have any funny anecdotes about your time there?

**A:** [long pause] Well, in an inappropriate way, there was a lot of sexual experimentation that happened in the house that might not have happened in other environments...

**Q:** Like what? I'm interested.

**A:** [laughing] Well... okay I don't give a fuck. My first experience with a man was in the house, and my first experience with multiple partners at a time was in the house as well.

**Q:** Any other funny stories?

**A:** One of my things that we did was go around at night and dumpster dive for pizza ingredients like vegetables and pizza dough and then take whatever we found back to the house and make pizzas. On one of those trips we found, behind a store on Massachusetts Street whose name I won't mention, a huge wagon wheel that we thought was awesome. So we rolled this wagon wheel all the way across town back to the house making the most racket you can imagine at 3 AM. We got back to the house and decided we should bury it in the front yard, so half of the wheel is sticking out of the ground. Now, I think it looks really nice. But when we were burying it a cop stopped and asked us if we needed any help. We just said, "No, we're fine!" [laughs] There are a lot of good Chad Steel stories, too, like one night there were three guys at the house during a party, and they got kicked out. They tried to come back into the party and ended up coming up a back flight of stairs and punching a little window out on the door. One of my friends went after them and tried to tell them off, and the guys pulled him down the stairs – hurting him pretty bad – and someone who is seeing all of this yells, "Get Chad!" And so Chad comes out barefoot in the snow and roundhouse kicks one kid in the face and grabs the arm of another kid and breaks it within a minute. There were all sorts of wild things that happened like that from time to time.

**Q:** Were there crazy stories about a group of people tripping on drugs together?

**A:** Probably, I was never really into marijuana – I'm still not – but I think there were occasions where half of the house would show up to the house meeting on LSD. But I think the house meetings where most of the people were on hallucinogens were the best and the smoothest running!

**Q:** When someone was tripping, was this a public experience?

**A:** Yes.

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Interviewer: Jason Paul Kingman  
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**Q:** ...because I know that many hallucinogens will really mess you up, and many times you need someone to watch over you when you are on those drugs.

**A:** Yeah, that was the nice thing about the house, that there was always a babysitter – a friend – who would help you out.