

Interview with Arthur Cohen

Interviewer: Tim Miller

October 22, 1996

AC = Arthur Cohen, MC = Mrs. Cohen

Q: Here we are, and this is Arthur Cohen, it is October 22nd, 1996. I guess the place I'd like to begin just kind of as a frame of reference, could you just describe where you lived communally and when? Just kind of places and dates? Basic outline?

AC: Best as I can recall. There was really two places. The first place was Fifth and [unintelligible], past Brookfield [??], [unintelligible], ninety seven Georgia Avenue past The Colony [??], past Brookfield. Go up a ways. Back there was this road called Greg [??] Road. It was basically farmland out there at the time, it might be developed now, but.... And the years were 1970 to '71 or '72 or '73 maybe, and then I lived in another communal place in Virginia called Skyfields, which you may have....

Q: Did the first one have a name?

AC: Yeah, Martindale. And the other place, called Skyfields. You might have even talked to some people from Skyfields.

Q: Yeah, I think Aaron Bass [??] was there.

AC: Yeah. I was part of that off and on from '72 to '75, somewhere there. So my communal life was from '70 to '74 or so. '70 to '74, I would say. Definitely not after....

Q: Well, can you describe how it all came about? Were you a founder?

AC: Of Martindale, yeah. I graduated from law school in 1970, from GW. And a bunch of others of us also graduated at that time. None of us wanted to do any lawyering [??], and we all had shared political interest. The war was going and we all fought the battles while we were students in law school. The girlfriend of one of the people there, her family had land out that way. So, we decided we would all move out there, and with the idea that we would live communally and somehow participate in politics that we shared. So we did. We went out there, and none of us were particularly handy, but we were determined to learn, and it's kind of funny, we were so naive in so many ways. We wanted to build a house, and we knew we needed to get a permit to do that, but we didn't have a clue.

Q: You didn't have any buildings or anything there?

AC: No, it was just....

Q: Just bare land?

AC: Land, half open, half wood, about fifteen acres as I recall. Half open, half wood. Beautiful piece of land and the woods went down to a beautiful clear brook, or stream. We camped out there and it was great. We were going to build a house, but none of us really knew how to do that. We knew we needed a permit, and none of us really knew how to do that. I forgot how we ran into this guy, but we ran into this guy named Marty. And Marty was just going to take care of it. So he just wanted, it would cost fifteen hundred dollars to get a permit. Someone scraped up this money to give him, and of course, it cost, like, fifty dollars to get a permit, but he was just the pure hustler. After we found this out we got our money back from him, but we named the place after him. That's how Martindale came about.

Q: Geez....

AC: Well, he was good. He was very good. We admired that. Then we all basically attempted to learn the building trades, and built the house. What we did was we decided we were going to farm the land. We raised a lot of food, mainly when I was there we grew tomatoes and peppers and a few other things. We farmed the land and what we did was, we provided that food free to D.C. organizations like WRAP [??], for example. They became the distributors. We actually produced quite a bit of food. We also, as I recall, sold a little bit of it locally to stores to get a little bit of money. As I recall, there were a few people who had outside jobs, but their money was thrown into the operations jar. Also...what else did we do? I'm sure we did lots of other things. We involved ourselves in political kinds of stuff, and that was the main focus. However, there was a lot of personal tension there. As I recall, [unintelligible] was a part of it. Eventually, I left after I'm not sure how long. Maybe a year or two. Originally there was maybe four or five founders of it and then there were people that moved in. The place kept going for, I guess, at least five or six years. I think that later on there were problems with the land and the family that owned the land, etcetera, etcetera, all that kind of stuff. I went off to Boston and lived up there for a little while and then I came back down. That's when I got involved with the second communal situation, which was Skyfields, which I remember more about Martindale. If you have any specific questions that might help me think about it.

Q: What were these personal tensions?

AC: Personal tensions?

Q: Yeah, where did all that come from?

AC: Mostly it was girlfriend/boyfriend kinds of stuff. It was really a lack of any emotional maturity, to a large extent, probably. It was just people with fragile egos...it wasn't political stuff, it wasn't that we were fighting about ideology or anything. It was mostly personal, emotional. Somebody splitting up with their girlfriend, or somebody angry with somebody for something created a lot of tension [unintelligible]. In my case, I had a girlfriend, and she went off -- she wasn't there much because she went off and worked as a reporter for Associated Press in West Virginia, and I think some of the people were angry that she was sort of deserting our fold. That created a lot of tension. It was really, quite a remarkable group. At least three of us were law school graduates from GW, and we were very close. I really lost contact with one of them. He was my closest friend at the time. I can't even really remember the details of the tension. It was just a bunch of things, but he went off, I heard that he got involved with the [unintelligible].

Q: Oh really?

AC: Yeah. I don't have a clue what's happened to him. This other friend of mine went off, and I ran into him later in 1975 or 1976 on the way home, which is an amazing story because he left after a couple of years. Then he was working out in Wyoming during the [unintelligible] and timber thing, stuff like that. I just ran into him by freak accident. I went across the country in '75 and stopped in a gas station in [unintelligible] and he was there. He called my name. I wound up staying that summer there in this trailer. [unintelligible] stuff and [unintelligible] national forest. He went on, subsequently, to become

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an iron worker, then I heard he had an accident, I don't know, again, exactly what happened. But he was [unintelligible]. Anything else you want to know about Martindale?

Q: Did you ever get your building built?

AC: Yeah, we got the house built. It was a lovely house.

Q: One house you all lived in?

AC: We lived in the house. It was a great house. We had a lot of people living there. Some of the people slept on the roof. Again, the focus was raising this food, at least it was while I was there, it might've changed after I left. We would support a lot of political things.

Q: And half a dozen people typically or so? Is that...?

AC: More than that, I'd say more like a dozen people.

Q: That must've been a little bit tight, then, if you were all living in one building.

AC: Uh, actually it was fairly big.

Q: Oh, was it?

AC: Yeah, it was fairly big.

Q: So people had bedrooms and things?

AC: Yeah, but some people camped out. I think there was even a trailer on the property or something like that.

Q: Were there any kids there?

AC: No. Not while I was there. [unintelligible] a lot of people were married with kids [unintelligible].

Q: This whole thing with personal tension -- what I've found over and over is kids were a big focus on that.

AC: That's interesting. In this case it was more girlfriend/boyfriend/emotional. I think it was a lack of emotional maturity.

Q: One of the prevailing stereotypes, of course, is that the '60s communes were loaded with sex and drugs. Would you say that was generally true?

AC: I would say that, no, there was a little sex, there was a little drugs, but it wasn't blatant. It certainly wasn't the focus. It wasn't the focus of this particular commune.

Q: So there weren't certain rules or

AC: I think there was more sex and drugs going on in the non-communal world. I knew a lot of people that were doing a lot of that, but mostly they weren't communal.

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Q: So did people tend to couple off?

AC: There was some coupling, but then again there was, I think, also some other stuff happening. Again, it wasn't really the focus. Mostly it was coupling off, although the couples would change around.

Q: Yeah.

AC: I guess that's what was happening.

Q: Which probably had something to do with some tension.

AC: It did, actually, some tension, yeah.

Q: Were there any explicit drug rules? A lot of places had a "Marijuana and LSD are fine, but heroin is firmly forbidden" sorts of policies.

AC: No, there weren't any rules, but while I was there, there was nobody doing heroin. But there weren't any rules. And everybody had done some hallucinogens. Mushrooms and stuff like that. But nobody was doing any heroin, as far as I know. But we didn't have any specific rules about it either. At least while I was there.

Q: I want us to shift for a minute, then, how did you get involved in Skyfields? Was that already going when...?

AC: Yeah, Skyfields had been going for a while, I think it started back in '67 or '68. [unintelligible]. But, I got to know about Skyfields from Howard, because when I came back in '72 to D.C., Howard was living in a house that I had a friend at. So through this mutual friend of ours I met him. He was hanging out at Skyfields. He was living out there and then he came in here because he was [unintelligible]. So I would start going out there, and Skyfields was really [unintelligible].

Q: Where was that?

AC: It was in Virginia.

Q: But not too far from D.C.?

AC: Right. Bluemont [??], which is on the other side of Leesburg [??] maybe twenty miles or so. And the whole focus and aura of it was entirely different from Martindale. For one thing, it was apolitical. People just didn't have interest in politics at all. Definitely, the focus was on artistic things. Musicians and woodworkers, artisans of different sorts. Very little drugs. Hardly any. Most people didn't do them, but then again, definitely no rules. I mean, no rules. Skyfields existed of a main house. That was [unintelligible]. It sits on the top of the mountain. If you go out to the foot of the foothills, they were beautiful [unintelligible]. You would go up the 601 which is real winding and long. It's like going along the Appalachian Trail. It's sitting at the top. It's called Skyfields, I guess, because you can get a really amazing view of the valley. There was the main house, there were other log cabins that people had built, three or four of them. It had been going on for four or five years before I was there. The focus of that was, there was a [unintelligible] that was buying land. People put money in the land, promised to try to make it happen. It never did. Today Skyfields still exists, there might be one person there.

Q: It's still running?

AC: It's still [unintelligible]. I mean, the communal thing there has probably been dead for ten or twelve years. It's interesting, though, now that I think about it, even as late as 1979, I went out west to Montana with a couple of people from Skyfields, taking the land [unintelligible] money and building houses in Montana in the hopes of getting enough money to buy land, which we looked at in British Columbia. There was this piece that we actually came close to buying. Anyway, [unintelligible] didn't make anything out of it. Unfortunately, because everybody got paid off but it was an awful experience.

Q: Oh, that's too bad.

AC: Yeah. So, but even as late as that there were still, I guess, some hope that land might be purchased and [unintelligible]. But by that point there were people that were ground-lapsed [??], people were scared, but there was still this hope. That's Skyfields. There was a kid. We had one kid. And it did cause problems. Excuse me, I have a cold. Umm...I'm not sure....

Q: Well, different theories about child raising, I'm sure, came into play.

AC: Yeah. Well, when I was there, most of the time I was there this couple wasn't there because they were traveling. I was told that that was a source of problems there. While I was there I mostly lived in a cabin. Those cabins just had a wood stove. One room deal. What did I do? I think I actually tried to do some woodwork and some violin making and stuff like that.

Q: Really?

AC: It's not me. I couldn't really do it. There were other very talented people that could, there was an instrument maker there that was excellent. Made wonderful things. I have one upstairs [??] that's beautiful. There were some really talented people at Skyfields. Howard was an excellent musician [??].

Q: Is that right?

AC: Oh, terrific. And so, it was very attractive to talented people. Totally apolitical which was hard to get used to.

Q: Yeah?

AC: But there was the usual tensions that developed there as well. A lot of it was generated by relationships and switching partners, same kind of stuff, fragile egos. Really, the same kinds of things.

Q: I think everyone had that.

AC: Yeah, I guess everyone had that.

Q: As far as I can tell.

AC: I think that's probably the reason why people leave, or left. My thinking is that probably the most successful communal experiences or the longer lasting ones probably had a religious angle to them that allowed them to cope with that kind of stuff. But if you didn't have that kind of framework, it was hard for people to cope with.

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Q: What about work? Did you have any system of requiring people to participate in anything?

Domestic work?

AC: Well, at Martindale there were some people that worked out that they would contribute all their money, and basically it was more of a, if you weren't working raising the food, then you would be working on the outside. And everybody just threw their money in. At Skyfields, most people had outside jobs. Mostly we were either doing carpentry or woodworking or playing music...most people were actually working. I'm trying to remember how the money worked there, but I think everybody contributed a certain amount of money. Dinners were communal, of course. And I think, I forget exactly how their dinners were, how we organized and who did the cooking and stuff like that, but a lot of people really enjoyed more of the gourmet than, you know, Martindale was never... we never grabbed and stuffed food in our mouth, but at Skyfields, there was a sort of a... we flourished in everything, including cooking and eating, everything was done with flourish.

Q: It sounds like fun.

AC: Yeah, well, I mean, to me it was fun.

Q: Did everyone participate in that? Did you have a schedule or rotations when people would cook, or...?

AC: I'm trying to remember. I don't know if there was a rotation, but you helped with the meal or either you cleaned up or washed dishes or cooked. I don't remember any rules. Occasionally there might be problems, but mostly there was a strong sense that you don't want to slack off from your responsibilities. I don't know exactly why that sense was there, but it wasn't like there was direct peer pressure, it was just the way it was there. Everybody contributed a lot [unintelligible].

Q: What about gender roles in that regard? Did women tend to do women's traditional work or did you actually have an effort to mix it up?

AC: Well, actually, there was no stated politics at Skyfields, but women there also worked outside. They didn't do most of the cooking or, no, they weren't these regular roles at all, as I recall. Of course, if you ask one of the women living there they might give you a different story, but I don't recall that. Although, clearly, consciousness of that wasn't cutting edge. Discussions of women's roles publicly weren't....
[tape interrupted]

Q: I was going to ask you -- one thing I'm really curious about is this whole deal of why it happened. Why suddenly did a generation rise up and hundreds and thousands of people decide to live communally? And, just in trying to figure that out, something I'm trying to ask everyone is what in your background might have prompted you in that direction, if anything. What I've found so far is a surprising number of people have parents who were Communists or Socialists or there's some kind of cooperation -- farmers' co-ops or somehow there's something in their background. I just wonder if you have anything and of the people who you lived with if you know anything that might have informed them and helped make this happen?

AC: Well, I would say that, in my experience, it might just be the way that the demographics worked. There were a lot of Jewish people and Catholics that seemed to be attracted to it.

Hmm. Yeah.

AC: As far as my parents, my parents were liberal, my grandfather was a Socialist from Russia.

Q: Oh is that right? Part of the great late nineteenth to early twentieth century?

AC: Korinsky[??]. Yeah. And fled.

Q: He was a Korinsky adherent?

AC: Yeah. And they have this whole tradition -- they get together these study groups every weekend. So there's that whole tradition in my family. My parents and grandmother [??] are liberal. But the people that I was with, they were mostly Catholic and Jewish, and so I really think that that has a lot to do with it. I think a lot of it had to do with people seeing a lot of problems [unintelligible] and they just somehow busted through that. It would be a way to do that in some ways. In a lot of ways it was great, but while people were on a level to where they could see through it, they weren't at a level to deal with an alternative [unintelligible]. It had the seeds of its own destruction in the sense that, to them, there was intellectual recognition that there could be something better, but for the most part, people didn't have the emotional [unintelligible] to make [unintelligible]. And that's my reading of it off the top of my head.

Q: That's interesting. Almost everyone I've talked to who's Jewish had grandparents who were from Russia and had had radical connections. Of course, that was in Jewish America, that was a big deal. There were a lot of Socialists.

AC: Oh yeah. And this was a movement of intellectuals, for the most part. At least, that's in my experience. These were bright people who intellectually rejected what was going on and tried to make that happen, but again, we keep on coming back to this -- while the intellectual capacity to deal with it was there, the emotional maturity level or whatever it was couldn't make it happen, maybe. The other thing was I had some experience also in the food co-op in Washington which lasted eight or nine years in 1970's stolen soup [??] [unintelligible] food federation. Interested in being an alternative to the capitalism system, but....

Q: And a lot of that is still going.

AC: A lot of it is still going, a lot of it has gone away, but at the end people just decided en masse that it was impossible to do within a culture, with the economy. Impossible to do. So it is almost impossible to succeed culturally, too, I think, in a culture like this. I don't know, it just seems like so many things are working against success. I think it was a special time but there were problems too. My bet is, when I think about it in terms of analyzing what the problems were, there were too many barriers.

Q: If you had the opportunity, would you do it again?

AC: In a heartbeat.

Q: Yeah? Is that right? Yeah?

AC: Oh sure.

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Q: You've got some pretty positive memories there.

AC: Oh yeah, yeah, but I also don't underestimate [unintelligible].

Q: I kinda have a vision that if those of us who are in our forties and fifties went back and tried again maybe we'd have enough maturity that we could make some things work....

AC: I like to think it. There'd be a different set of problems. But I feel that it was the right thing to do, I felt comfortable about it, I live now and I don't feel comfortable about it [??] and, I mean, I have a family and my wife, but the thing is I go to work and a job that I don't care about.

Q: What do you do?

AC: Computers. But I know I have to provide [??]. But I feel like the processes have slowed down. But I would turn back to a communal style of living. And we try to do some of that around here.

Q: Yeah, you're way ahead of the average American.

AC: Yeah, we do a lot of... [tape interrupted]

Q: Were there any dominant people in either one of these situations? Was there someone who was the leader, who was driving the whole thing?

AC: In Martindale initially, there was three of us out of law school.

Q: Did that include Marty?

AC: No. Martin was a fifty-year-old guy at the time. I don't know how we met Marty. But I would say the three of us out of law school were the people who made that happen, initially. At Skyfields, people just did their own...it was less land-share oriented type of matter. Certainly no one there dominated.

Q: Was there any part in politics, any kind of central idea? I don't even know what I'm asking, in a way, but, was there a book everyone was reading and was inspired by or any school of thought for either one of them?

AC: Certainly not Skyfields. At Martindale, there were the political writings of the time, Reiser [??], Marcuzzi [??], I mean the standard literature of the left at that time, but, no, there wasn't any conscious effort to read something, as I recall.

Q: Were there any really unforgettable characters?

AC: Oh, there were a lot of them. A lot of unforgettable characters. At Skyfields, everybody was unforgettable there. Do you want me to tell you who these are or...?

Q: Tell me a good anecdote, if you would.

AC: Oh, there was this guy, Bo Laden [??], he was just an incredibly talented guy. He was the kind of guy that we would be working out in Montana, for example, and he could just put something together -- a bench, or he could just eyeball. He could just eyeball it and make the appropriate...put it together without measuring anything...that kind of thing, he just had a way of viewing things that, you know, a very gifted person. In fact, most of the people out of Skyfields were Ivy League graduates. There was

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this one guy, Albert, who was at his third year of Harvard Law School, and one day he just got up and walked away. Just kept walking and ended up at Skyfields. He was a [unintelligible]. Now he lives up in an island [??] up in Maine. He doesn't live in a communal situation, but he has maintained a simple lifestyle. And then this guy Bo and this guy Ken, they were either Yalies or Princetonites or one of those. They graduated as Art History majors or something. Howard was a guitar major at American, and the second semester of his last year, he just up and left. They all just said adios to that world and created their own little worlds. Quite impressive.

Q: How did all these males dropping out deal with the draft?

AC: They all beat it in one way or another!

Q: I mean, yeah, you haven't mentioned one going into the draft or....

AC: I'm trying to remember. Mostly it was beaten before this communal stuff, for me, because I guess I was like most people in the mid- to late-60's if they hadn't beaten the draft. So in the early 70's everybody had sort of beaten it one way or another. It's probably not much of a discussion, because I can't really remember directly. I don't know how Howard beat it, or Bo beat it, or the guys from Martindale beat it, I mean, there was lots of ways to beat it. Everybody managed to do it.

Q: Yeah, most everyone...I didn't do it [??], but it was an issue. It certainly....

AC: Oh, it was an issue, absolutely. They made it an issue in '68. [unintelligible] little story [unintelligible].

Q: Well, let me see if I...so, well, we're trying to ask everyone the same question. Can you in one brief characterization say what was the best thing and what was the worst thing about it? I mean, that's rather open and....

AC: I guess the best thing about it and the worst thing about it were the same thing. I really felt that I was actually making a difference. But the worst thing about it was that I really wasn't making a difference at all.

Q: I don't think we changed the course of the world, but found [unintelligible]?

AC: That one iota.

Q: That's still very much in the air today, all these groups going today, that's still, to my mind, the driving thing. We were going to change the world. But yeah, you look back and it doesn't look like we shifted it a whole lot.

AC: Yeah, it didn't change it much. So, that was the best and the worst thing about it.

Q: Oh, and one other basic matter. What did the neighbors think? How did you get along with the people who lived in the area? Did they think you were just totally hopeless?

AC: Okay. At Martindale, there was a farm community. And we got along really great with the local farm folk. It was politically important to do so. They didn't have a clue what we were about or anything like that. I think it was a much more learning experience for us than it was for them. [tape ends] ...old

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beat up cars if there was a problem it took them about eight seconds to figure it out and about another three or four seconds to fix it. Even with no tools.

Q: You know, farmers do know mechanical stuff.

AC: I mean, it's just amazing. It was incredible. And their strength, just their physical strength was...we'd go out and help bale their hay on hot summer days and they could go on and on and on and on until it was dark out. It was an awesome display. Just of being physically strong and understanding how to survive out of a mechanical world.

Q: So if you were interacting like that, you really were getting along pretty well.

AC: Oh, we got along well. Now, there were some neighbors that we never even saw. But the few that we did, we interacted a lot. In Skyfields we were a leader of the community, in a sense, because they would go out and get jobs and do the woodwork in everybody's houses. We were really interacting with the community quite a bit. While on the one hand they might've thought it was a strange living condition, I think they really looked up at Skyfields. Skyfields organized a lot of things, there was a Bluemont [??] fair, anything that was artistic and stuff that went on in the area, and Skyfields would [unintelligible]. So yeah, there was a lot of community interaction in a very positive way.

Q: That's good, that's happy to hear. That wasn't always the case.

AC: Yeah, I'm sure that wasn't the case at a lot of the situations. We were, I guess, fortunate to not have problems and all.

Q: Was there any dietary rules? Like, were you vegetarian, specifically, or...?

AC: I don't recall that being the case. I know at Skyfields we raised chickens to eat them, or eat a goose at Thanksgiving.

Q: And slaughtered your own animals?

AC: Yeah, even butchered pigs.

Q: Is that right? Did that go well? People weren't squeamish?

AC: I was probably the most squeamish. Most people weren't, no, it was just part of the...Skyfields was also very animal-oriented, too. That was another big thing about Skyfields. The animals. There were cows, there were pigs, there were chickens, there were goats. Martindale, on the other hand, I don't know of any dietary rules, but there weren't any animals, except for pets, dogs and cats.

Q: What did people dress like?

AC: Suits and ties. Formal. Formal wear.

Q: I was gonna say, at some places, even if there were not explicit rules, there were expectations of appearance, like at The Farm in Tennessee, I don't think it was written, but it was essentially a rule you couldn't cut your hair.

AC: Oh, is that right?

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Q: And there were just other...I just wondered if there was anything distinctive about it, was it kind of like a 60's grunge clothing?

AC: Is that right? Um, I would say, yeah, I would say...there weren't any rules, it was basically just garden clothing. I don't know about any rules about hair. Some people had long hair, some people had short hair. No rules.

Q: It sounds pretty open, then.

AC: Yeah, I'm surprised there would be places that would have rules.

Q: I don't think it was written rules, typically, but it was strong peer pressure to do this or that. In some cases you couldn't [unintelligible].

AC: No, we never had any of that stuff.

Q: Well, I don't know, that's really pretty much what I wanted to cover. Do you have any other...?

AC: Let's see. Unless I have a question it's hard for me to....

Q: Were you swarmed over with visitors, or how did you cope with the flow of people that wanted to live there?

AC: There was some of that at Skyfields. Most of the time if people wanted to come it was fine, Skyfields was really a laissez-faire place. People could do whatever they wanted to do, and that was fine. But it did get to the point where it did get somewhat overcrowded and there would be these meetings, and there would be decisions made. Most of the meetings at Skyfields dealt with the land fund. Sometimes chores, but also when it got too crowded. When there was a problem. That's as organized as Skyfields would get. Martindale, I think there were meetings, I can't remember very well. There was just so much tension in that place. There probably weren't any meetings.

Q: So you left there in about '72 and you said Skyfields is still there, right?

AC: Actually, Skyfields lasted quite a bit of time, like I said, even Martindale...

Q: Five or six years, did you say?

AC: Martindale, maybe that long. Skyfields lasted for a long time, even as late as the late seventies. Like I said, even when it went out it had the land fund money and hopes that they could still acquire land, and that was in the late 70's, '78, '79. Even today if you go out to Bluemont, there are some remnants of Skyfields people scattered around, but mostly they're living out in the country everywhere. I don't think anybody has any hopes of reemerging as Skyfields, the same cast of characters. Probably if you talk to anybody from there, [unintelligible], but most people probably [unintelligible]. To get a better sense of Skyfields you probably should talk to someone like Howard, for example, who was there from the beginning and had a sense of how the place developed.

Q: Well, I don't know, that's...unless something else comes to mind.

AC: [To his wife] Is there anything else that you...?

Q: Yeah, what would you want to know about?

AC: It gives you a chance....

Q: Yeah.

MC: Well, I was just thinking about Skyfields and wondering whether it made a difference, it does seem to me that, you know, there's the Bluemont Culture Series [??], and it's made a difference in [unintelligible], so, maybe not "change the world," but....

AC: But that was done by someone who wasn't even part of [unintelligible].

MS: But weren't they sort of [unintelligible] in some way?

AC: [unintelligible] it wouldn't have happened....

MS: [unintelligible] if it hadn't been for Skyfields, so, [unintelligible]. And it's also [unintelligible].

Q: Well, communes have changed communities in a lot of cases, I think. And music and stuff [??]. Probably a typical example, really, I think the best example, I think is Woodstock, New York. Communes started there back in 1902 or '03, something like that. Totally transformed the place and to this day it remains an art center.

AC: In 1902? Is that right?

Q: Yeah. The buildings are still there. It was a big thriving community for several decades and then the communal part of it kind of collapsed, but the people all stuck around, and it's been an art center ever since.

AC: Yeah, you might be right. It might be a little more artsy out that way, than it would've been for [unintelligible], but....

MC: That's not quite the change you were...?

AC: It's not quite the change.

Q: It didn't stop the war, for example.

AC: It didn't make the cities any better. Modern life [??] today is....

Q: One thing, I don't know if this is a result or not, but something that's been, I think, striking the farther I go at this the more striking it is, I have hardly run into anyone who has absolutely turned his or her back on the whole thing and gone in a different direction, that is to say, there's hardly anyone who has become a big corporate executive or stock broker. I mean, everyone still seems to have some alternative values intact, which is [unintelligible], which is kind of amazing. So even if it didn't change the world it seems to have made an impact on people.

AC: Yeah. How clearly an impact [unintelligible]. Who knows? Clearly, that impact stays on people. Yeah, when I look back on my life, I would have to say that was one of the most intense.... I would, if I had to do it again, I would do it again. But I would do it with my eyes open, is all. With more wisdom. Not so naive.

Q: Sounds like good times, though.

AC: Oh, man. Yeah. Like I said, if I could happen again, I'd do it.

Interview with Arthur Cohen

Interviewer: Tim Miller

October 22, 1996

AC = Arthur Cohen, MC = Mrs. Cohen

Q: Well, maybe you can. At The Farm in Tennessee, Steven Gaskin has bought eighty acres adjacent, just right next to The Farm. He is developing a retirement hippie commune.

MC: That's so funny.

AC: That's great.

Q: He's building these funky structures that this time are gonna have ramps. Yeah, it's really, it's going on right now. He's selling lots. So maybe that's where we'll all end up.

AC: That's a great idea.

Q: Well, anyway, thank you very much. [tape ends]