

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** ... August 22nd, and an interview with Jim Fowler. Jim, I'd love to hear something about your background and how you got involved in communal living.

**A:** My first contact with anything that smacked of communal or alternative lifestyle living was in Austin. I went to art school at the University of Texas, in Austin. I moved back there and I think in about '65, I was living in Terrace before that. London, before that. My father was in the Air Force, we were always moving around. But in those days I was in college. There's a communal house down the road -- there's just very few people in Austin that were like that. They didn't even call themselves "hippies" back then, we were just "the freaks." Among the freaks was Gilbert Sheldon who later went on to write the Furry Freakbrother comic books.

**Q:** Oh, I've heard of them!

**A:** Houston White, who was instrumental in forming the very first psychedelic rock and roll joint in Austin, called The Vulcan Gas [unintelligible] -- these were some of my neighbors. We had very much a communal place. I'd just never seen anything like it before. Hetty was Houston's girlfriend. I think she was also Russel Green's girlfriend. These are all people that were a part of the Austin scene. Various bands were happening then. The Shiva Head band, the Concoroo [?]. Various blues players were playing in Austin before they had any national popularity, they were playing the black blues circuit, Muddy Waters, and Lightening [unintelligible]. Who are some of the other bands? The Thirteenth Floor Elevators, Bubble Puppy, Johnny Winter. Johnny Winter was a teenager. I remember before one show he and his brother were just in this empty psychedelic dance hall -- my function then, I was a part of the light show. I did a lot of art slides for the art show, I did the bubble machines, and all kinds of stuff for the light show. We had overhead projectors and slide projectors. I remember the Johnny Winter show, beforehand, he and his brothers were sitting there singing a capella in this empty hall, it was just so otherworldly. They were teenagers, they were sleeping on the floor. They'd come up from San Antonio, they were total unknowns. Young kids. First time they played the Vulcan Gas Company [?], they were given a bunch of mesquine, they were just, Johnny Winter just totally went off on the guitar and we were just totally lost, we were just overpowered by it. It was real hit-and-miss, the music back then, sometimes it was really incredible, and sometimes it failed incredibly. And usually it was a mixture of the two, which was a real trademark of the music at that time. People weren't afraid to go out with their instruments to these psychedelics sites to see if something weird would happen. Often it did. Often the music became really amazing. That was the first time I saw them. The second time I saw them, he opened for Muddy Waters, and Muddy Waters were so impressed with them that they got him a recording contract later. They stayed up all night jamming afterwards. It was a great little place. It was at the end of Congress Avenue, which is, you know, the state capitol sits on this little hill, and Congress Ave goes down to the river, and we were right by the river. At the end of the street that takes us to the state capitol. Very loose, and there was no security, we were always tripping into the state capitol. It was open, you could wander in and out. There were even some of the crew, the people I knew, they would take the doorknobs off and turn them into contraband water pipes and stuff. Some of that went on. There were not very many people in that scene, 100 freaks all over town really. We didn't really even know each other entirely. That was my first introduction to the whole scene. We'd get together, make mesquine, not for profit, but just because it was magic. It had this magic quality to it. And Ozly would bring acid to town, everybody would get stoned. Kim Casey would come to town. It was just such a

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

different thing. It had this real gypsy feeling to it. And there wasn't much, there wasn't AIDS then, you know, so people weren't really worried about disease or anything like that. There was the birth control pill, it was brand new, it made a big difference in the attitude of young women. They were not afraid, they were very sexually open. That was part of it. Certainly the birth control pill was a strong factor in the way the youth started rebelling against the way society was, the rigid structure of it was, uniformly appalling to all, and that's where the whole idea of counter-culture came from. "We don't really want to be a part of this as we perceive it. It's stifling." So people went into alternative lifestyles. And they were often looking to bohemian and gypsy role models, which were few and far between, they really were. I ran into bohemians and gypsies in Paris, but you usually don't see very many of them in Texas. Music was a big part of the life too. Get a record, and it seemed like a gift from God or something. Bob Dylan put out something like "Bringing it all back home," and we'd play it five hundred times. The Beatles too were of course big. Music was a lot of how ideas were communicated back then. Music has become so compartmentalized now that, it's lost a lot of the power that it had back in the '60's. I'm sure it still has quite a bit of power for different people, but it's so broken into special interest groups now that it's different. There wasn't too much of that back then. People sort of still fell into categories. You had the really hard-core political people, like the SDS who were into violent overthrow of the government, and of course one felt some distance from them if you didn't belong to that group. And then the speed freaks were real different. And the people who were into psychedelics felt some kind of bond, and became hippies more than anything. And it was, when I look at it in retrospect, it wasn't even so much the drugs as the motivation when we took the drugs. It was like, one would say, "I'm going to take this substance because I believe it will help me to have some kind of spiritual experience," or something. "It will take me to some kind of blissful state that I have never experienced before," something like that. In effect, it was more because you decided out front that you were going to have a good time or that you were going to have a spiritual experience, that it happened. The drug was sort of a catalyst, but it certainly didn't really cause anything to happen, because if you took the exact same drug and you were all bummed out about your girlfriend, of course you would not have a good time. If you were bummed out about life in general, you would even have a very bad time. Buddhism is helping me to figure out that what you decide out front you want to do is even much more important than the means that you try to accomplish it by. And people were genuinely concerned with changing the world in some positive way. They didn't really know how they were going to do it, they just really wanted to. And they went about it all the wrong ways. Sex, drugs, and rock and roll, I mean that's not exactly the correct formula for political action or anything. But in spite of the means, the desired end was accomplished, society was changed. A lot of the really rigid, Victorian kind of social frameworks, often seemed like the only possibilities in society to many people. Often those were just totally rejected, and a new thing was attempted. Some people kept messing with it and got some good parts out of it too. I think in spite of this flailing, we did have some effect on society. When I look at young people today, I remember just how totally untogether I was. When I look at my own children, I'm not saying my children are totally untogether, they're much more together than I was. There's a certain quality to youth. It's like youthful folly. An enormous success sometimes. That's how the hippie movement was. Somehow it was a successful application of youthful folly.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** So did you come to Libre after Austin?

**A:** No. I thought I was going to San Francisco, actually. But I only made it as far as Taos[?], and I ended up staying in Taos a couple of years. At that point New Buffalo was newly formed, and Reality Construction Company was forming. A place in Questa [?] called Lorien [?], ... and innumerable little groups. I can't even remember the name of the coffeehouse that was there that winter, but there was a communal coffeehouse. It was real open. None of them smacked of any commercialism or anything like that. It was just groups of people trying to get it together to make things work. They didn't always work. Communal movements had a huge amount of ego-clashing, and people were always stepping on each other's toes, and sleeping with each other's girlfriends. Husbands and wives, marriages were always falling apart. There were some bugs. I'm sure there was a very negative side to the whole open sexuality too. People were often hurt by it too. Nonetheless, it was a ... something else. That was a large part of it, just the open sexuality, something else that's not been experienced in modern society very often. You find it in some primitive societies, like the Eskimos certainly have that kind of societies, some of the Asian societies did too. For the most part, it never existed in the Christian Western society. So that was a real different program.

**Q:** Did you live at any of these communal groups?

**A:** No, I had my own place there, but a whole band of people moved in with me too, so --

**Q:** You had kind of a communal household?

**A:** Yeah. Very much so. There was also Drop City, I didn't mention them. People would go back and forth and check out this one and that one. You'd never think of staying anywhere but one of these communal groups when you were travelling. A lot of society was pretty unfriendly toward it.

**Q:** The rancher types?

**A:** Yeah, especially. Here, let me show you something. The Walsenburg newspaper [unintelligible] named it the "humpmobile", and the name stuck.

**Q:** What was it?

**A:** It's a '47 Plymouth two-door sedan with a '40's Chevy panel truck welded on it at an angle.

**Q:** Did you put it together?

**A:** Yeah. I put it together in Taos.

**Q:** And did you do the paint job?

**A:** Yeah. And my wife, her name is Sody [?], my first wife, she did the interior. I welded coat hangers everywhere in the inside in a grid, and she sewed paisley fabric over it all. And it was all covered with Moroccan blankets.

**Q:** Oh, it's beautiful!

**A:** It was a beautiful car. And that's how we arrived at Libre. One of my friends, Dave Gordon, he was part of one of the early settlers at New Buffalo, at Reality. Known as "Daddy Dave" Gordon. He told me

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

about Libre, he said, "You've got to go up and meet these guys, they're all artists, you'd really like them." And so he took me up here. When we came up here, they were all gone! Most of them were gone, I met a few people. A lot of them were on the road. In those days they were doing something similar to what Wavy Gravy and the Hog Farm was doing. They were going around creating happenings and doing lectures at colleges and stuff. Just trying to influence people in college scenes, and trying to make a few bucks too.

**Q:** So how did you find out about Libre?

**A:** Through Daddy Dave. He was my neighbor there while I was building that house-car. So we cruised up in that car when we finished it. I just ended up giving my house over to the people who were staying there. They got this wild communal scene going there. Their names were Saul and Quanu [?]. They were from California, and they had a whole huge family that settled the Taos area. Lama Foundation was happening then. It just had its beginnings. The Magic Tortoise. Actually, the Magic Tortoise hadn't begun yet. My neighbor in Taos where I lived, was Bill Gursh, who came on, later became one of the better known artists in that group in the Santa Fe and Taos area. He died not a few years back. Now he lived at the bottom of the hill, and I lived at the top of the hill, over-looking Ranchos de Taos. One day Ed the Fed, from Drop City, came up. He was towing a Volkswagen up to Saul, because it was dead, and Saul wanted it. He had this old truck that belonged to Drop City, and he towed this Volkswagen over from Drop City to Taos. It was in my front yard there, the hill was like, I don't know, a 300 foot hill, real steep, overlooking the Ranchos valley. He was sort of in a hurry, and everyone else was just chatting and stuff. He went out and he disconnected the Volkswagen from the truck, and the Volkswagen just started rolling backward. He had sort of parked it on a big ant hill or something between it. He went back to jump in the Volkswagen to keep it from rolling, and he looked up just in time to see his truck go over the cliff. And it landed right next to Gursh's house, where his girlfriend, Big Linda, was meditating. She was meditating and a truck landed right next to her. Fortunately nothing was hurt or anything.

**Q:** Except the car.

**A:** Actually, Saul went and pulled it back up. Got out his torches, and he put it back together for him. Replaced the radiator and stuff. He put it back together. It took about two weeks or something. It's typical of how things worked. So it took two weeks, so he just lived with us for two weeks. Trying to remember the little stories, incidences like that. We'd go for firewood runs and they'd turn into just -- everything was, we'd go for firewood down along the Rio Grande River, and we'd end up taking all the logs that were downriver where people couldn't get them, and floating them up river with ropes and stuff, and we got some incredible ancient cedar logs and stuff that way. That would take us two or three days to do that. Ten households would end up with wood. Nobody had any money in those days. It didn't really seem to matter. When I moved to Libre, I probably had \$20 in my pocket, and some food stamps. They would give you \$15 a month per person, food stamps then. And you could live on it. It was really good. I mean, it was ... I think it must have been some time in the early '70's, we went off the gold standard, and the money would be devalued by a factor of ten, but before that, \$15, a poor person could live on that.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** And you guys were probably eating pretty simple food too.

**A:** Oh yeah, it was a lot of beans and rice, and all the zucchini you could eat in season, stuff like that.

**Q:** So when did you arrive at Libre?

**A:** Sixty-nine.

**Q:** So it had only been here a year?

**A:** Yeah. Dean had his big dome up, but none of the other structures. It was painted in primaries, red and yellow and blue. Triangles were all painted in primaries. He had a big bed in the middle of the dome that he'd made for the birth of his daughter, Leah. It was made with logs for posts on the corner, and they were painted bright yellow. Real special place. The wild man at the time at Libre, and previously before Libre at Drop City, was Peter Rabbit. He was our resident wild man. He's the one that had all the drug contacts with Osley [?] and everything like that. He would make sure that everybody had plenty of everything. In fact, he usually had a big bowl of acid just right on his kitchen table, like hundreds of tabs of acid, jars of stuff. He was really our drug shaman. Which is also his downfall. He started making -- his real downfall was "Cottontail Ale." He actually made labels for this beer. He would usually bottle it in quarts. This Cottontail Ale, the label said, "The Ale with the Hip Hops." The hip hops, it was marijuana.

**Q:** He put that in a beer?

**A:** He made a real strong marijuana beer. It was a wonderful beer, actually. Except that it was way too strong. The label had a jackrabbit masturbating on it. Unfortunately, he started drinking beer for breakfast every day, though. It led to a lot of domestic violence and stuff. Sort of lost the support of the community through all of that. I think the alcohol more than anything was his downfall, because it led to a lot of just general violence in his life. He eventually got run off by the community. He was also a major dope grower and stuff. Which is well-documented, because he got arrested for it. It probably wouldn't of even happened -- the local community was very tolerant of us at that point. I mean, they entirely knew what we were up to. People had huge marijuana plants in their front yards and stuff. It was fairly wild and outrageous, right up to the point where the big bust came down.

**Q:** Why did the bust happen? The locals got fed up or something?

**A:** Peter was putting on a kitchen edition, he was going to put on a new kitchen on his house, and they had just started enforcing building codes, which previously, I mean, this place wouldn't have happened if there were building codes in this county when we first started. But at that point they were starting to try to enforce building codes. The building inspector came up, and he wasn't looking for trouble or anything. But he got a lot of trouble from Peter. Peter was just drunk and abusive, and yelled -- he actually ran him off, told him he would shoot him if he saw him again, stuff like that. And so the building inspector, Nogo [?] was his name, he actually had his family with him and stuff. He was totally offended. He went back to town and rounded up this major posse. And it was entirely because of Peter's bad behavior. Ill manners, and unwarranted anger. Why don't you just pay the guy his \$30 permit, he wouldn't have had any trouble at all if he had just had been pleasant to him. But instead I woke up at 5 in the morning with a quarter mile of deputies and their vehicles, and hundreds of guns pointed at this

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

house. I mean, I wasn't a grower or anything. But I was the first house here and stuff. They went to all the communes and arrested all the people who were growing marijuana.

**Q:** At the same time?

**A:** Yeah, well at least they started very early, and they made a whole day of it.

**Q:** So Peter had started off this whole thing of busts?

**A:** Yeah, he, there was like 20 people that were arrested or something in the end.

**Q:** Wow. There must have been some people pretty angry at him.

**A:** There were. And it was really a horrible time. It was almost 20 years ago that it happened. At that point, -- has anyone told you stories about this particular part of Libre?

**Q:** Well, Dean just mentioned a little bit yesterday about Peter's bust, because he gave me a newspaper article that Peter wrote when he was in prison, and he also mentioned something about Peter's girlfriend, them committing suicide. Is that, did I get that right?

**A:** No. No that was my wife. She killed herself shortly before then. She was, not Peter's girlfriend. Oh, he must be talking about Strider's girlfriend. Strider's girlfriend -- there were a couple of suicides about that time. Oh, Peter's -- he was talking about Peter's ex-girlfriend. That was somewhat later -- no, it was about the same time. Her story, yeah, that was Alex he was talking about. Those were the three suicides that happened at that time.

**Q:** Oh, that must've been hard.

**A:** Yeah. The one he was talking about, Peter's girlfriend Alex, ... yeah, that was part of the domestic violence and stuff that really alienated the community to him, the way he treated Alex. And the woman who was living with him after, I mean, you couldn't entirely blame Alex's death on Peter. Her father was a medical doctor up in Denver, and she had had a history of mental problems and stuff. He'd given her electroshock and stuff when she was a teenager. She talked about suicide for a long time. He was prescribing Quaaludes to her, which was probably the cause of her death, the Quaaludes. I mean there was a real downside to the drug thing too. I don't think my wife's suicide was drug related. If anything, it was like, ... I don't know why she killed herself, except that she really didn't like herself very much. I had a young daughter, Electra, and she was a year and a half old when Christine killed herself. Yeah, it wasn't all great. There were plenty of bad times too. It's easy to start just remembering the good things, but there were rough times too. There were times when we were just really poor too. I think that was ... I think I was never so poor as when Christine and I were together, it was really hard to get work of any kind in the early '70's. In fact none of the people here had their own individual vehicles. We had one big Chevy panel truck, a '54 Chevy panel truck that we would all go everywhere together in.

**Q:** What happened to that great thing?

**A:** It's gone. It was a free store for a long time. After it stopped running, the community would bring all the clothes that they'd outgrown and stuff and put it in there, and all the other people would come and pick through it.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** Dean said you've been the community mechanic. Is that right?

**A:** Yeah. I still am. It's what I do, repair cars and other things. I do welding. It'd be more romantic to say I was an artist, which I am, I am an artist, a good artist. But that's not primarily how I make my living.

**Q:** What kind of artwork do you do?

**A:** I do marble carving, painting, welded sculpture.

**Q:** Are any of these things that I see around here yours?

**A:** Uh, actually, these on this wall are my father's.

**Q:** Your father's? Wow. They look pretty modern.

**A:** Yeah. He was a -- that's where I learned marble carving, is from him.

**Q:** What are those things, I don't even know what they're made out of?

**A:** That's Italian marble. The one on the right is Colorado marble. The gold one is Texas limestone, covered in gold leaf.

**Q:** They're just gorgeous!

**A:** Some of my marble carvings are outside. There's a few of them inside. There's a couple of small pieces behind you that are mine.

**Q:** Like that thing?

**A:** Yeah, those two pink ones I did. Mostly my better stuff I end up selling it just to get a little bit ahead.

**Q:** That must be kind of hard.

**A:** I've got some larger pieces outside.

**Q:** I'd like to see them later. Wow, so you grew up in a very artistic family then, or at least your dad was.

**A:** My dad was a painter when I was growing up. He was a real odd ball in the Air Force. He was an artist, and he liked classical music, and the opera and stuff. He didn't exactly fit into a fighter pilot stereotype, he was a jet fighter pilot. When he retired he started doing marble carving full-time. He did it for about 20 years before he died. That's where I learned it. We'd been quite estranged, my father and I, by the Vietnam War. He was a pilot in Vietnam, and I was an anti-war activist in Austin. When he came back, we tried to be polite, but we didn't end up really succeeding. He was showing me slides of all the people he'd killed in Vietnam. By his own count he killed over 400 people with napalm and phosphorous bombs and stuff. And he was showing us the slides, he had just gotten back from Vietnam. My wife and I ended up getting in a horrible argument with him over it. I still remember my mom standing on the front porch of the house, just like in a movie or something, she chanted like three times, "America, love it or leave it!" My mom has become quite a bit more liberal in her old age. She's still alive, she's like 76, and real healthy. She's an herbalist, quite politically correct these days. My father and I were much more estranged by the Vietnam War. It was actually my second wife's death that started us communicating again. He came up for the funeral, and I decided that I would start communicating with him after that.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

And then it was, I went down and learned some stone carving from him, and the kids and stuff -- we finally worked our way through it quite a bit and got to be friend again, which I was glad that we did, because then he was dead before I knew it. He died in an accident. That would've, it wouldn't have been very good for him to die with just a lot of bad feelings between us. So I'm glad we -- the last evening I actually spent with him, we dusted a bottle of wine together, and he talked about all his misgivings about the war and everything.

**Q:** Were you drafted, or were you in school?

**A:** They wanted to draft me, but I felt like I should be allowed to be a conscientious objector, because that was my moral position. I felt that any killing was wrong, and killing for a profit was abhorrent. But I didn't, I wasn't a Quaker, and virtually that was the only group that was allowed to be a conscientious objector. I just went down there really pissed off with a draft-dodger friend of mine, and we pretended to be gay, and we went in. Everyone else was walking around in their underwear, and we were buck naked. It was a draft induction in San Antonio, Texas. We were holding hands and playing harmonica. You had to do outrageous stuff like that, otherwise they would not even pay attention to you. That was just in order to see the shrink. I had to list every drug I had ever even heard of. I said I was a total drug addict, and I listed every drug I had ever heard of. And that was really my only option other than to just go along with their program, was to totally defy them, and say, "I'm everything you hate." When I finally did get to go into the psychiatrist to be evaluated, he said, "You're not really all this stuff, are you?" I said, "No, I'm not really, but," I said, I grew up in the Air Force, and I knew how I could get away with this stuff, I said, "You'll be really sorry if you draft me. I'm not on your side in any form or fashion." I levelled with him. They gave me a 4F on mental grounds. It's nothing I'm particularly proud of. I would've been much prouder of going to jail because they wouldn't let me be a conscientious objector, but that's the way it was back then. I didn't particularly want to go to jail. And I didn't want to go to Vietnam. It wasn't even because I was afraid of dying or anything. That wasn't really -- I was too stupid to be afraid to die. I just didn't want to kill people. It was out of moral indignation more than anything. I said, "You can't do that to me! It's not right!" My father was actually responsible for me being an idealist, although his ideals were 180 degrees from mine. He was a very right-wing idealist. Nonetheless he instilled the idea in my head that one should be an idealist, so, I have him to thank for that, even though I ended up totally opposing his ideals. He was very idealistic about keeping communism from over-running the world and stuff.

**Q:** So were you idealistic when you came to Libre? Did you want to start a new society?

**A:** Yeah, that was part of it. Part of it is that I, a lot of people just needed a family to belong to too, because [tape ends] ... we very much did that for each other. We were very much family for each other. In spite of whatever kind of egotistic power-trips and stuff that might have happened in the community, it was still family. And all the other groups were other families, that we felt related to. We didn't really look to the outside society very much for anything, except for food stamps. And we cooked stuff like that. We were parasites on society on that level, for sure. But -- and scavengers. We built out of recycled stuff whenever we could.



Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** Well can you tell me a little bit about the building of this house, I'm kind of curious.

**A:** Well, that room, the kitchen, was the original room in the house. But it was just a rude shack. In fact I came here -- this stuff might be interesting to you for your files if you want to copy it maybe. That part of the house, I arrived here in the Humpmobile. Here's some pages you can look through. I spent the summer getting stoned, people ... here's some more related articles. Anyway, getting back to that part of the house, I just messed around all summer, I didn't really have any money. I probably didn't \$100 in that part of the house when I moved into it. And that was like stove pipe, and nails, and tar paper. We had an electric pole here, though, so I had electricity here from the beginning, but I didn't have any money to wire the house, so I gathered scraps from wire left over from the dome, from the various building projects around here, and I twisted them together. I didn't even have electrical tape, I buried them in mud. And I hooked it up and I had electricity in the house. The first time I turned it on, the mud was still too wet, and it was hot. I had to wait another week until it dried enough where I could turn it on without it going, "ZZZZ." The electric company was just as funky as I was back then. There were no inspections or anything. Of course, I've since upgraded the electricity to modern standards. It had dirt floors. It really had a cave-like feeling to it. Do you have a copy of Shelter magazine?

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

**A:** It's got a picture of it in there. This one?

**Q:** Yeah, Dean did get that out and show it to me. Yeah, my copier wasn't big enough to make that size copies. But I did look through it.

**A:** Everybody was building these shacks and stuff back then and trying to make them beautiful.

**Q:** That's one thing that strikes me about Libre, compared to other communes, is that the dwellings here are so beautiful.

**A:** Well, a lot of places are beautiful, it's not just here.

**Q:** I guess some of the other places I've been to have not been quite as ascetically pleasing as this one.

**A:** Some of the house cars -- there was a lot of cars back then, people, not commerce, just communication, people were travelling from Black Bear in California, they'd come out in these house cars and gypsy wagons. This gypsy wagon's still here by my house. My wife, when she was up in New Mexico, she lived in it in New Mexico before we got together. It's because people were totally -- "poor" didn't mean that they didn't try to make their houses interesting and nice. It was just a shack back then, it was really crude. In fact we moved in it because it started snowing, and the triangle up there wasn't even closed in, we had to put blankets up there. My first wife left it, it was just too harsh, ran off with somebody with more money and a more comfortable place to live. That was often the place, why people left, because the poverty part of it is really hard. We had fun together, we were an entertaining group. I have certainly more fun here. We would always get together for any kind of major holiday. Since there wasn't any TV or other entertainment, we would put on elaborate plays and dances and music. It was all homespun stuff, but it was great. We would do cabarets -- has anyone talked about the cabarets and the theater and stuff we'd do over at the Red Rocks? That was some of the really beautiful part of it. We'd do cabarets, and people would do acts sometimes. Like Peter Rabbit would do stuff just to be as

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

outrageous as possible. He'd just come out and get all his friends to participate, I was certainly part of those groups. Just to go out there and be as outrageous as possible. Overtly gross sexual things like women dressed up as giant penises, and himself dressed up as a bloody Kotex, and having sex on stage between these objects, these costumes. Meanwhile, people are dancing up and down, some with clothes on, some not. We even got one woman to defecate on stage. I mean, the stuff that you would not see on TV ever. Because it was all family, and we could do it, just because you could. Some of the comedy was much more mainstream. Particularly Izzy was the master of comedy. He would always put together these elaborate skits. One I remember was The First Poet. Stage lights were down, and he's laying down there just with some burr rags on, around a camp fire with rocks and stuff, that's his whole set. And he woke up and he started making these "ooga-booga" rhymes and stuff, and he started writing them on rocks. You can tell it, but it's not nearly as funny as the way he did it. He performed it well. Izzy was a great performer of comedy back in those days. He put some quite elaborate skits together. Oh, Samurai Food Stamp Appointment was one of his. Dean was the first food stamp interviewee, and he was in a gorilla suit, right? They're telling him to get a hair cut. And then Izzy was the Samurai who came in, not speaking English, for food stamps. They were just spoofing the food stamp office to the max. He did a Disco Brain Surgeon back when John Travolta was doing his thing. To "Staying Alive," he did a disco brain surgeon. His wife Cary did some deodorant ads and stuff with Val Corete [?] kind of costume on, hair about two feet long under her arm pits and stuff. I mean it was just silly stuff, but it was fun. And then we'd end up having a dance, and the party would go on, sometimes for days. Our last big party up there at Libre was for our 25th anniversary. It went on for 4 or 5 days. At one point we had 7 or 800 people here. On the music day we had 12 or 14 hours of live music. I don't know how many bands. I got to open for that.

**Q:** Oh, do you play in a band?

**A:** I haven't played in a band for years. Back in the early '70's I played in the Dog Brother's band, which was our Libre band. The first Libre band was the Dog Brothers. We played all over too. Izzy and David --

**Q:** Do you sing?

**A:** Yeah. I didn't sing in that band though, I was bass player in that band. Izzy and David Henry wrote all kinds of songs. Some of them were pretty special. It was sort of a country-rock sound, that's what was happening back then. We would play a lot in New Mexico, Taos, Old Martinez Hall, communal parties at New Buffalo, and weddings and things like that. We'd get various gigs in Santa Fe, like we'd play the Le Fonda. They let us use some of their banquet rooms and stuff in the Le Fonda hotel in Santa Fe, in the plaza. Bourbon and Blues was another club in Santa Fe we played. The wildest place ever was Rosa's Cantina in Agadones. It was a communally run bar. They all lived nearby. Agadones is just north of Albuquerque, on the outskirts of town. That was such a wild place. And then we'd play in Colorado too some, get into various gigs. We'd play locally. There was a band before us called The AAA. That was the first band that came to the [unintelligible], they came to us from San Francisco and formed a commune here called AAA Commune, just the Anonymous Artists of America.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** So a lot of artists settled in this valley.

**A:** Yeah, a lot of musicians. Still, too, we still have a great bunch of musicians and artists. A lot of them settled and stayed. The Dog Brothers sort of disintegrated for awhile, they were the Bionic Dog, and then they became The 'Roids after that. And they still play occasionally, when they can all get together.

**Q:** Do you play with them?

**A:** No, I haven't played with the 'Roids. We had another band called High Altitude. The current band names are Felicity, Rough House is a band, Bone Rocker, some of the various band names. I think those are the main bands that played around here. Oh, I left out the Armeho Brothers. They played here for years. Salsa and heavy-metal group.

**Q:** That's an interesting combination.

**A:** Well, that's what the Chicanos listen to, salsa and heavy-metal. Play Rancheros, and Santana, and Metallica. Stuff like that.

**Q:** I'd love to hear a little bit about kind of what daily life was like here in the beginning, in the first few years. Like, your meals, and what you did for work and stuff.

**A:** I actually, the first years I was here, I didn't work for wages at all, I was against it even. I thought we should just work for trade, to help each other out. That's probably why my first wife left me, because I just gave up the idea of money entirely. I decided -- a lot of people did, to see how little we could have money in our lives and stuff.

**Q:** Did you guys eat together as a group?

**A:** No. Uh-uh. The Red Rockers did, and I did live there for awhile. The Red Rockers did everything together. They lived in this huge 60 foot dome together. They were absolutely the wildest bunch of us. Fact, Libre had a reputation of being sort of suburban. Because we weren't very communal at all. All the other communes thought we were pretty flaky, actually, because we didn't do everything together.

**Q:** Was that pretty deliberate?

**A:** I think so. And I think that's one of the reasons we survived too, is that one does need some kind of personal space. And this place did provide that, very few stipulations about the way this place runs. One is that we have to agree on any kind of major changes concerning the land, or disposal of community funds, or new members.

**Q:** Does that mean consensus?

**A:** Yeah, it does mean consensus on the major things. On the minor things we can put it to a vote. We use democracy to simplify our business stuff. But any major thing, that one person doesn't agree to, can be stopped by that one person. Like a new member. But that doesn't mean you can't keep trying, like Leon had a lot of opposition to becoming a member here. I don't know exactly why, just because he's such an outrageous character maybe. He just kept trying, and eventually, he got, everyone agreed that he would be a member.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** Now in the early years --

**A:** He just kept having more councils and more councils. He just persevered. Other people come to a council, and they'd be run off by the whole process. But if somebody really persevered they could live here. Whether they wanted to be agreeable or not. If they wanted to be disagreeable and live here, they still could do so. It just took longer.

**Q:** Now when you showed up in '69, was there anything as formal as that?

**A:** Yeah, I had to go through a formal council. They told me I couldn't bring my dog.

**Q:** Oh, how sad! So you had to rid of your dogs?

**A:** Yeah, that was the only compromise I had to make was that I had a couple of dogs I had to find homes for.

**Q:** So was there a "no dog" policy on the land?

**A:** Yeah, but everyone ignored it.

**Q:** Yeah, I saw a dog here yesterday, so I figured you must have dogs.

**A:** Right. I think the "no dog" policy was because when the first wave of people arrived, they all arrived from the city, and they all arrived with these huge dogs, which immediately formed a pack, and started harassing the neighbors' cattle and stuff. Eventually they all got shot by the cattlemen around here too. It was out of hand, so. Only one dog survived, and it was this female German Shepherd that was pretty nice, she didn't get into any trouble and stuff, that's why she survived. So we just had one dog here for awhile, we had a "one dog" rule, but Dean would ignore it, and when his son wanted a dog, he'd get him a dog without going through the thing. Never came to any kind of head. We never actually, we might have written down the rules, but then when somebody would forget where they were written, they'd get lost. And so our early bylaws were pretty much by consensus too. Not everybody would remember decisions we'd make and stuff. Some of our council processes were very much like psychodrama, and not very pleasant. In fact, a lot of people got to hate the whole idea of getting together to hash things out that way. But we did it so many times that we finally got good enough at it where we, anymore, it's a pretty pleasant process. We're all friends, you know.

**Q:** Would you have regular councils, like weekly councils?

**A:** No. Maybe we would if we had a crisis or something like Peter Rabbit threatening to run us off with guns and take over the land or something. Then we'd be --

**Q:** Did he actually do that?

**A:** Yeah, he did. He came out and threatened us with violence, and he was actually trying to manipulate the legal documents so he could have us all evicted and stuff. At that point we got together and said, "What can we do?" We decided that it would be awful hard for him to do that if he didn't have a house, so we went over and took his house down. It was the only way we could deal with his threats of fire arms and ... he totally lost it. Like I said, that Cottontail Ale was his downfall. A lot of people got wrecked

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

by that. A lot of the community just stopped going over to see him and stuff, he got really alienated. It was just too weird.

**Q:** Is Libre incorporated?

**A:** Yeah, we are.

**Q:** So that's how you own the land, as a corporation?

**A:** Yeah, we don't individually own our houses; however, if we want to sell our houses, we can, with the approval of the council, and it has happened a few times where, like people get a divorce was the first time. Muffin bought out Tony's interest in the house, so he had some money to go build another house. Another time, Brent stopped living here, and he sold his house to his sister-in-law. Ex-sister-in-law. So if the council approves of the transaction, it can occur.

**Q:** Do you have any leadership positions?

**A:** Not actually. We do have president, and we have corporate officers and stuff. We have to have that. But no one's required to do anything in those offices, particularly. For the last 15 years we've had all female officers, we feel that it's much more peaceful that way, to be ruled by females.

**Q:** Does each household or each person have to pay a tax to the community?

**A:** Yeah, it's not very much. It's like \$20 a month per person. And we use that money for improving our roads and water and stuff. And it's barely enough to keep things up.

**Q:** Do you guys have a community water system?

**A:** Yeah, it's never been entirely completely or anything, but it works.

**Q:** Do you have a spring or a well?

**A:** Both.

**Q:** Do you guys have any sort of work-sharing system, where you have to contribute a certain amount of work to the community?

**A:** No, people sort of do that on a volunteer basis. Just because, when things fall apart, somebody's got to fix them. And some people, when they come into some stuff, will make major improvements. There have been various contributions that went beyond what was required. I ended up fixing this yard myself because it had turned into a communal junkyard on me. At one point I was retired by the local government to get rid of 25 cars and buses that were out there.

**Q:** Because new people would come and just leave their cars in your yard?

**A:** Yeah. And there was also a huge [unintelligible] down the middle of this two or three acre piece that's visually connected with my house. We filled that in, and got rid of all the cars and stuff, most of them. I still have way too many, but it's a lot neater than it used to be. There was more trash in here. So that was one thing that I had to do. And the community put up half the money for the bulldozer work, and I put up the other half. It's often like that. Just whatever we can scrape together sometimes.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** Now you said in the early years you guys shared a truck. But now people have their own vehicles. So has the community gotten more prosperous over the years?

**A:** I think society in general has. In the '70's, there was a real rock-bottom economic thing. There was no money, no jobs in the early '70's.

**Q:** So has the prosperity led to more individualism?

**A:** Sure. Yeah, we're much less communal than we used to be. Although, ... we still get together as artists to do things. Put on group shows, music bands, poetry readings, stuff like that. We function in our local society as artists. We do it as a communal thing. It doesn't exactly just stop with members of Libre either, it's members of the community at large around here. Because there's a lot of artists who have their own places too.

**Q:** Well, how have you guys gotten along with the outside community over the years?

**A:** I would say good to excellent, with an occasional dismal failure. Some of the dismal failures were actually horrendous, like we'd have a Thanksgiving up in Dean's dome, and Peter Rabbit would bring over a bunch of DMT and just get totally ripped in front of people, and start having sex in the middle of the floor with someone else's wife, and stuff like that, and start a whole orgy and stuff. Sometimes, -- and with the Chicano community there, I actually walked out on that one myself, because it was just too outrageous.

**Q:** And the neighbors were kind of freaked?

**A:** Yeah, it gave us a real bad reputation. Some of our youthful folly was really abysmal. There were some orgies and stuff, ended up in all kinds of marriages breaking up. The whole community that cared to participate would just have open sex with each other. I myself only participated in one such event. It was quite loving and open. There really wasn't too much of that. I mean, it happened probably two or three times, and maybe it happened a few more times on a smaller scale. But it was just an outrageous thing, we couldn't handle it. Breaking all the taboos. Well probably not all of them, because it was ... it was certainly a caring thing, it wasn't ... I couldn't imagine something happening like that in this day and age, without it becoming really weird and kinky and sadistic and strange. But it wasn't, it was the same kind of feeling that one had between husband and wife. It really was.

**Q:** Have the lifestyles up here, have they become more sort of conservative, regarding things like drugs and sex and stuff like that?

**A:** Oh, definitely. Those were strong lessons. They were strong and painful lessons. Everybody's marriages broke up because of that kind of stuff.

**Q:** Now, you raised kids here, right?

**A:** Four.

**Q:** Four kids! Wow. Did they go out to school, or did you guys start a school here at Libre?

**A:** Originally, the Gardener school was so abysmally backwards that we would send our kids, and we started the Rainbow Alternative School at Ortivy's [?] Farm. In response to that, they got rid of their

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

really backward teacher and replaced him with a totally wonderful principal, Julia Marchant [?]. She turned it into an utterly award-winning school. She got Educator of the Year one year, and several years in a row she got Best Rural School in the State. They ended up having a wonderful elementary school in Gardener, up to the eighth grade. As good as any private school could be, except that it was totally integrated, it was all poor kids for the most part. Not all poor kids, there were rich kids in it too, but they were like, all kinds of different cultures mixed in there in that school, and the kids all grew up together. It couldn't have been a better elementary school. And in the beginning, it wasn't, it was awful. It was like this really backwards little thing. A lot of people did try home schooling and stuff in the early days. Our kids pretty much went through the program though. It was just the oldest kids that had to deal with that first system. A lot of the kids have turned out to be totally exceptional too, have gone on to --

**Q:** Do any of them live here?

**A:** Yeah, some of them do.

**Q:** Do any of your kids?

**A:** Only my youngest is still at home. They all love it here though, and come back fairly often. The youngest is 16 now, Star.

**Q:** That's who I woke up this morning?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** Does she go to high school in Walsenburg?

**A:** Yeah. She's real bright, she's a straight-A student.

**Q:** So was this a good setting to raise kids?

**A:** Excellent.

**Q:** And why was that?

**A:** They all rebelled against us too.

**Q:** Did they really? Did they become conservative?

**A:** Exactly. They would change -- they wouldn't use their hippie names at school and stuff. Our kids names are Tala, is the oldest, and she was born in a tepee in the mountains of New Mexico, up near Truchas [?], in a commune up there called La Jolla. My wife, Sesame, who is my third wife, was single at the time. She had Tala in a tepee with just eight of her girlfriends in attendance, no doctor, no midwife.

**Q:** No midwife even!

**A:** You couldn't get it back then. It was just not available.

**Q:** And where was the La Jolla commune?

**A:** Near Truchas, New Mexico. That's in the high peak above Santa Fe. Then her second son, John, we called him, his name is Waska Curly Arrow Hawk Archiletta John Lamb. John Lamb being his

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

grandfather's name, who was an Indian, a Sioux Indian. Until he started going to school, he was Waska. And when he started going to preschool -- his name is White Snow in Sioux, and all the kids started calling him Snow White. So he changed it to John. And all through high school he was John, and now he's up in the Boulder School of Massage, and his girlfriend made him change it back to Waska. So he's Waska again. He's soon to graduate from the Boulder School of Massage, which is what his mother does, she's a massage therapist, Sesame. So he's following in his mother's footsteps as an alternate healer. My daughter with my second wife, the one who killed herself when her daughter was a year and a half old, her name was Electra. I think she's growing up to be an artist. She definitely an artist. She worked as a model for about five years, and so she's been all around the world working as a model. She's lived in Australia three different times, and Tokyo, and all over Europe. Last winter in Paris she quit modelling, she said she couldn't do it anymore. She found a boyfriend that's really suited to her, very much like here. They're moving to Boulder, they're probably going to try to start some kind of business up there or something, I don't know exactly. Something involving desktop publishing. And then Star - so, I have four kids, and people accuse me of overpopulating the world, and I said, "Well, I had help from a couple other guys." We have three different fathers and two different mothers in our family. But, basically, we did raise all four children. A great deal of the time. Waska's dad was the only one who helped out a whole lot. He tried to do equal time with Waska.

**Q:** So did the kids get to kind experience having other households where they could go hang out?

**A:** Oh sure, they had a whole little -- in fact our house is set up so they have their whole wing out there. That trailer is their's, and they were always able to have their friends over when they wanted. We didn't have to listen to them, they could do whatever they wanted.

**Q:** So they had a lot of independence, then?

**A:** Yeah. And if we didn't give it to them, they would've just taken it anyway. We thought John was a great kid, never gave us any trouble. He said, "Mom, I just always lied to you." He just never, "Let me tell you about all the things I just did," you know. Our girls didn't want to do that, though, they didn't want to lie to us, they wanted to flaunt it in our face. They gave us a hard time. They managed to pick some pretty awful boyfriends in high school.

**Q:** So Bill said that a pack of kids used to always come over to her house to eat, she said she was always cooking for kids. Well I'm curious about what has been the best part about living at Libre, for you.

**A:** On the subject of kids, the way the kids grew up, has been outstanding. Seeing the kids, it's been a wonderful place to raise kids. It's also been a wonderful place for spiritual evolution. We've had so many different spiritual people of different disciplines come here and influence us. Myself, I'm particularly interested in Buddhism. From the very beginning we had a Japanese man named Nanao Sakaki [?], he's a Japanese beat poet, but he's also very much a Buddhist yogi adept. He came here and was a very strong influence on people. He stayed a couple of winters off and on. He's an associate of Gary Snyder's, from that California group. And then we had the good fortune of Trinpaio Repushe [?] from Bashuadatu [?], in Boulder, acquiring all the land to the east of this. So, for many years now we've had a Buddhist retreat as our neighbor. And so a lot of the Trinpaio Repushe and Solinas Carmapa [?] have come here and blessed the land.



Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** Now which direction is east, I'm a little turned around.

**A:** It's right there. This land you see out this window here is all Buddhist retreat for 500 acres. And it's surrounded by national forest. So there's this wonderful buffer zone around here of like-minded neighbors. There's no hunting access or public national forest access for 15 miles along the national forest here, and so it's not like we're overrun like in many parts of the state where there's hunters and tourists and everything everywhere. That's just not happening here. It's very peaceful as a result.

**Q:** The land here is just gorgeous. Is that part of the appeal of living here?

**A:** The peacefulness of the land is indeed one of the many blessings of living here. It's a wonderfully quiet place. We're currently battling with the military about increasing their military operations area here. They want to start flying planes all over and do whatever they want. We've been battling that for several years now. Because it is wonderfully peaceful here. They would, this Buddhist retreat could no longer exist if they started flying planes every day like they want to. And our friend Maggie Cress has a small galupa [?] center.

**Q:** What kind of center?

**A:** Galupa is the sect that the Dali Lama belongs to. So Gardner's got two bars, a Methodist church, a Catholic church, and two sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Q:** Don't you love it? Well, it's kind of like Cresthome in a way too. Have you been over there?

**A:** Yeah, I was recently over there for the consecration of his [unintelligible]. I see your t-shirt.

**Q:** Yeah, I went to the Roadkill Cafe and I couldn't resist buying one of these t-shirts. But they have that Baptist church, and then they have the Carmelite monastery, Zen Center and all.

**A:** And they have a very active Kagu [?] center that recently completed a stupa [?] up there. Did you see the stupa?

**Q:** No I didn't. What is that?

**A:** The Tashigomang [?] stupa. It's wonderful, it's all the way at the end of the road. In fact you have to walk the last half a mile or so to get to it. Where the road stops at Cottonwood Creek, you can on foot go to it. We went over there for the ceremony, 2 or 300 Buddhists came from all over. His Holiness, Vocar Rempushe [?], the meditation master of the cogute [?] came over, and the carmacagis [?] came over from India to consecrate the stupa. The stupa enthrones the remains of the last carmapa [?], who died in Cresthome, who was re-incarnated in Tibet. The Chinese allowed them to rebuild the monastery at Surpu [?], and it's fairly radical changes for Tibet, that they actually are allowing [tape ends] ... Tibetans in any way, the followers of the Dali Lama are victims of genocide still, totally. The particular school of Tibetan Buddhism that I have a hard connection with is His Holiness the Dali Lama. Who I had the good fortune to hear speak in Santa Fe in '91. I had the good fortune to have various seeds into me to be receptive to that when I did go there. My wife and I were both essentially converted to Buddhism by the Dali Lama. In public meeting. The first group was about 600 people at the stupa in Santa Fe. The stupa being somewhat of an equivalent of a shrine or a church. Stupas can be buildings or they can just be monuments that don't have an interior. There's quite a few of them in the South West now. The one

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

in Cresthome, recently completed. Red Feather Lakes on the Colorado border nearing completion is the great stupa of Damakaya [?], or Trenparempushe [?], which is a fabulous building, it's one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. They put millions of dollars in it. Fifteen or more years into the making. It's getting into an utterly fabulous stage, if you want to see how Buddhism has flourished in the Rocky Mountains, it's been a major flowering. The one in Santa Fe, is a gorgeous stupa. You can go inside of it, and it's all painted with the deities and stuff. It's a cogua [?] also, a cogua stupa. Recently one was completed near Taos, near the Rio Grande Gorge, and another, and a place that started out as a commune, Lorien, and Questa, now has a stupa too. So, we as Buddhas feel that these physical manifestations of the dharma [?] are incredibly positive influences on the Southwest.

**Q:** Well, I'm curious about the flip side of the question I asked you earlier about what's the best part of living at Libre: what's been the hardest or the worst part?

**A:** The financial struggle is always something that leaps to mind. I've never had any kind of financial security in my life since I've moved here. But on the other hand, I feel real wealthy in other ways. I don't feel like I would have such a gentele life, I don't think my children would be so happy. I mean, I think there's a lot of stuff that balances that out is what I'm saying. Otherwise I would've left and gotten a job a long time ago. It's not because I don't work hard that I'm not financially successful. I do work hard. Most days. Even though I'm working for myself, I manage to stay quite busy. I'm glad I'm just talking today, though. I had a really hard day yesterday.

**Q:** Well did you go to Denver yesterday?

**A:** Yeah, I drove to Denver and back yesterday. We drove all over Denver looking for cars with my friend and stuff. It's like such a maniacal thing to do, but I'm good at it.

**Q:** That's like a four, five hour drive one way?

**A:** Well, the speed limit's 75 now. So you can go faster than that. Yeah, the best I've done that is 3 hours.

**Q:** Well I guess as kind of a final, sort of overall question, I'm curious, what you think might be some of the reasons why Libre has survived as long as it has? Because a lot of communes of this era kind of crashed and burned fairly quickly.

**A:** Well, we do have a family situation here, a tribal situation where we feel like we're a family, and we have respect for individual family privacy. We're not in each other's face 24 hours a day like some of the more urban communes. I think that's why they failed, is that people do need a certain amount of space in their life, that's why they live the way they do. But I think our agreement to agree out front that we would do things be consensus, has been really a valuable thing. Our agreement to agree is also an agreement to allow each other to disagree too. It's made us a little more conservative than some of the other groups. Maybe that's not always such a horrible thing. We have people involved with very different things; I think diversity helps too. I have several people deeply involved with the Native American spiritual movement. We have Buddhists. We have our pagan party people. We all respect each other's rights to do what we want to do. It's not like we all have to fit into this mold or anything.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

**Q:** Now one thing I didn't ask about earlier was, did somebody buy the land for you, or --?

**A:** Part of the money was put up by the original core group. But the bulk of it was donated by Rick Klein, who's been a great benefactor, not only for this commune, but also for New Buffalo, Reality, ... he really helped a bunch of other groups get off the ground and stuff.

**Q:** So that was probably a big help in the beginning that you didn't have a big mortgage payment or something?

**A:** The land was \$35 an acre, for 360 acres. And they thought that they were really robbing us blind, because they'd already logged off the Ponderosa -- they thought it was only worth \$15, and they thought they were really pulling some wool over our eyes to sell it to us for \$35, because they felt like it was useless land, because it couldn't be grazed, it didn't have any grass of it. They'd already taken of the Ponderosa for the most part. It's still beautiful forest, I mean, it doesn't look like it's been logged or anything, but that was their feeling, that they had taken out the big timber. There wasn't that much to begin with. So they felt like it was totally useless land, and they thought they would not only get us to pay double what they felt it was worth, but that they would also be able to run us off and get it back. Which they did try. There was some real hostile stuff from the people who sold us the land in the early days. Bulldozing our roads over and stuff. But they utterly failed in their efforts.

**Q:** One question we always ask everybody, is that do you consider the commune a success or a failure?

**A:** I think that it's been pretty much a success. It's been, whether it's an actual commune or not might be open to debate, but as an experiment in alternative living, it's been for the most part a large success. As an alternative to suburban living, or whatever kind of other ways we could be living now, it's -- there's no comparison. I could never live in suburbia after having lived here. I could never be satisfied with that kind of walled-off kind of thing, where you don't even want to know your neighbors.

**Q:** Well, that's all I have.

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

My name is Jim Fowler, I moved here in 1969 to Libre, I came from Taos, I was living in Taos before that, and Austin, Texas before that I was part of the early, it was pre-hippie scene, we called ourselves 'freaks' there, in fact, one of my neighbors wrote a comic book, Gilbert Shelton wrote the Furry Freak Brothers about our neighborhood, we didn't even call ourselves hippies, we were just the freaks, and it was a rather small community. I worked in the first psychedelic rock joint in Austin, the Vulcan Gas Company, Houston White was the person who started that, later it evolved into the Armadillo. It was just a fabulous scene there, just, and before that I lived in Paris, my first wife I met her there on her 21st birthday and I was like 19 and 20 when I lived in Paris I went to the American college in Paris, it's now called the American University in Paris, and before that I went to the Art School in London, the Sir John Cass School of Art in London, and before that I was at Texas A & M in military school, corps of the cadets, until I knocked up my girlfriend or so I thought, she turned out not to be pregnant. My dad was in the Air Force, which sort of explains all my moving around I went to all these different Air Force schools, 12 of them in all, 13, I don't remember exactly, before I graduated from high school, we were moving continuously, eight years in Germany, and a year each in France, Germany, Holland, and England. So I've got family in Texas, that's where my family is from, but I didn't spend a lot of time there in Texas. My mom, the Swedish farm people from north of Austin, Georgetown area, but, my dad was part American Indian Choctaw, and we were never quite sure how much, because after World War I my grandfather moved from Alabama to Texas so he could be a white person instead of a half breed, and he was a real hell-raiser, he made whiskey and ran a bar during Prohibition, he liked to fight in bar rooms and stuff. My dad was a fighter pilot in the Air Force. I was sort of born into a warrior cast, as the Indians say, but it didn't take on me. One thing that affected me was in 1948 we moved to post-war Germany, right off of a really mellow farm in Texas, where I had spent my first years, and they stationed us in Dachau, that's where the officer's quarters were, and I remember taking a tour, maybe it was in '50 or '51 when I was a little older, of Dachau with my mom, and I remember being in the gas ovens, I think it forever made me a pacifist, to realize what human beings can do to each other, and I just grew up most of my really young years in Germany, and all the German festivals and stuff. When I come back to America, it was just like another foreign country, it was still pretty weird to me. I graduated from high school in Clovis, New Mexico, and my mother says of that, when people ask her, what was the most foreign country you ever lived in, she says, Clovis, New Mexico! For good reason, too, the West Texas cattle culture was pretty backwards then, and I never felt like I fit in anywhere until I arrived here and this is my family, and that's why I've been here for so many years. I left Austin, partially because my dad came back from Vietnam, he was a fighter pilot in Vietnam, he was a good dad, I never had any doubts that my dad loved me or anything, and our politics had gone about 180 degrees. It was like, **AMERICA: Love it or Leave it** kind of thing. In fact, my wife and I, we went down there, we'd been anti-war activists, but we had to be polite to my dad when he came back, we were happy to see him alive and all! But he'd even been shot down over there, but he hadn't been captured or anything, and so he's showing us all this footage of dropping napalm on all these Vietnamese villages and phosphorus bombs and explained how they killed a person by metal that you couldn't extinguish being on fire and just burning its way through your vital organs and stuff, we lost it and we all started screaming at each other and my wife and I left and there was this great scene of my mom's front porch, and we're all yelling at each other, and she's got her fist in the air and it's like a chant or a curse or something, and she's like, **AMERICA! LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT!** She did it three times, and I never entirely quit communicating with my

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

parents, but I didn't want to talk to them a whole lot after that. For about seven years, and you know, when you're young you need to go off and find yourself anyway, so. Azaudi and I decided to move to San Francisco, but we never made it that far. We got to Taos, we had friends in Taos, and it was a fabulous scene, and back in, ah, that was, what, '67, or something. We got a free house in Taos, and there were lots of people coming and going in those days, and there was like this nomadic freak population that was just like, everywhere. And Buffalo, and Lorian, was another commune, a guy named Chet had a commune called Lorian up by Questa, or by El Rito, just north of Questa, and there was the Reality Construction company was in full, thing, and it was just all these wonderful characters and somebody started a coffeehouse in the winter of '67 or '68, I don't even remember his name, he had a coffee house right near the Mavel Dodge House in Taos, we went there, and there weren't many people there so we all took acid together, and that kind of thing. And there was peyote meetings with, I think it was Little Joe, wasn't it, who was doing the peyote meetings in the early days, yeah, up in the Taos canyon, and there was a five star commune over in Jano Quemado at the hot springs which was basically just naked hippies living in tents and teepees around this hot spring they just occupied, people shooting at 'em and just crazy stuff and we had some people move in with us from California, Zaul and Quanu, my first wife's name was Sandy, she's in Roberta's book, there's a picture of her standing next to my car, the Hump Mobile, and that came out of that era, it Zaul taught me how to weld, we went and found a bunch of old cars and chopped up my '47 Plymouth and made it into a camping car, and painted it up, and that happened down there, that one of the things that got me into Libre was the outrageous car I arrived in. But the reason I even found out about Libre was one of my neighbors' daddy Dave Gordon, and he said, he'd been up to Libre, he was a former New Buffalo person, he was no longer living at New Buffalo, and he hadn't moved to reality yet with Jan, his wife, then. And she was then pregnant with her first child, Chamisa, and he said, oh, man you got to go up to this place, this is right up your alley. I was an artist; I did psychedelic art, that's what I considered myself, as a painter in those days. My neighbor down the hill was Bill Gershew, who later turned out to be one of the prominent artists of the era, Taos, and Santa Fe; he was a big influence on me, too, with his found objects, junk art, and just this outrageous view on how to put things together. There was just a lot of traveling then, too, we went up to check out Drop City, I'd been to Drop City before, just in passing, and we went and stayed at Drop City, and met a few people there, but it was a lot of just kind of coming and going. Finally Daddy Dave took me up to Libre, he said, you gotta be here! And we went up there and first person who jumps in my car is this eleven year old runaway, Vince Montez, and he's going to show me how to get to Libre, instead he just gets me totally stuck. He's eleven! You know! Or something, maybe he's twelve, but you know, he's a runaway to join the hippies and he's living up there, until he got caught for truancy and stuff, as he later put it, "when I was in college" it was actually he was locked up in a reform school up in Denver and they taught him engraving and later he came up, a really excellent silversmith, and artist for a while before his drug habits brought him down to jail, now. He was a great guy for a while though, I mean, one of the non-success stories you know, totally losing it in our neighborhood. I think we have more success stories than we have failure stories, when it comes right down to it. Certainly lost a lot of people along the way, but a lot of people made it and had families and the kids grew up to be great, this is something that is real important about why we survived this, that we were a tribe and a family, that was there for all these kids, and it's an awful good thing to focus on. And most of the kids totally appreciate it and speak fondly of their unique upbringing. Even the poverty part of it. When my

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

daughter Electra, has told me not once, but many times, she's like, Dad, I'm really happy that you just gave me dirt to play with because it made me really creative, it made me think about what I was doing. Anyways, Zaudi and I had met, to backtrack a little, I didn't mention my first wife Zaudi, we'd met in Paris, she was like, my, like my fourth or fifth girlfriend ever, and she followed me back to Texas and married me and stuff. She was also military. Before we ended up at Libre, we hitchhiked around Europe some, we even made it down to Morocco, Morocco, and Spain and France and England, Luxemburg and had some wild experiences up there. Being stuck in the Luxemburg airport was one of the highlights of my life, we were stuck there for about ten days once, trying to get back, and I met my first Buddhist, who was a South African surfer, missing a finger, the police had cut off as a warning not to fraternize with the blacks, and he had a bowl of Congolese Hash and he was turning on everybody who came in the airport doors, a tiny little airport back in those days, no security or anything, he was such an outrageous person I had to paint his surfboard for him, took me about a week, I had my paints with me, and I'm sure it didn't last very long in the ocean but it was really cool for a look, you know, but the TV station from Luxemburg that came out to document the whole thing, probably in '67 or something, or the hippie invasion of the airport. First because the rates changed, the off season rates were affordable and tourist season rates weren't. All these people were ascending to Luxemburg trying to get a flight out of there all at once. Tony was absolutely outrageous, he was the first vegetarian I met, I am vegetarian now, for quite a while, but Tony was one of my first influences and there wasn't anything to eat there except a hot dog stand and he'd buy a hot dog, and hand you the meat and eat the bun and then tell you why you shouldn't eat meat! But in a totally charming way, just disarming, and as I say there was nothing subtle about the guy, he had this two or three feet long like, Kickapoo kind of American Indian fake peace pipe made out of logs with feathers, bright, dyed feathers on it, you know, and that was his hash pipe that he was passing around the lobby of the airport and all these people crashed out and sleeping in the lobby, and even when we got on the plane, he was just so outrageous, I think he slept with both of the stewardesses, on the flight to Iceland, and we were supposed to stay on the same plane, but we jumped the plane in Iceland and he actually even went surfing in the middle of winter, almost froze, bought a purple sheepskin, straightened sheepskin, made a hat and a cape out of it, and he had these big red and gold Moroccan shoes, which he stuffed this huge lump of hash in, his shoe, I didn't mess with that hash, it was the most psychedelic stuff I'd ever seen, hadn't seen anything like that, it was quite the experience in itself, which could explain the stewardesses cause we were passing the pipe up and down the airplane and everything, one of the formative experiences of the sixties was people like him. And at four in the morning we landed and idled a while in New York City and painted surfboard, and red and gold Moroccan shoes obviously with something in one of them, just clumping, even, and I'm like, oh God, we're really screwed! You know! Things were so lax back there was just a couple of nicely dressed state immigration people, they just waved him through and it was no problem at all, and the last memory I have of him was being down in Manhattan somewhere and we're ah, in a sandwich, in a deli somewhere in Manhattan and these two guys are arguing while they are making the sandwich, some kind of heated argument, in New York accents. They slapped the sandwich down in front of him on the counter, and he says, I can't eat that! That's a hate sandwich! Would you make me another one and not yell while you're doing it? He was a beautiful man, Tony the South African surfer. And then we had to hitchhike from Texas there, that was quite the trip. I remember Pittsburg, in particular, coming through on that hitch because the river was just so black and the steel

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

mills had sort of shut down but everything was still black, in fact, Europe was still black then, from the war, when we lived there. Anyway, we got involved with the psychedelic scene down there in Austin and their music was just fabulous, 13th Floor elevators, Johnny Winter was just a teenager then, it was already fully formed as a musician even though he was totally unknown, and Muddy Waters, our favorite local band, didn't make it at all, they were called the Conqueroo, and then one that managed to succeed for years as a local band was the Shiva Head Band, we just had some fabulous music, my wife Zaudi and I were some of the original 'Take acid and dance in the park' freaks and stuff, and that's where we really got into the psychedelics was in the Austin scene, when mescaline was easily available, just fabulous mescaline made from peyote which wasn't even illegal yet. We had even met with the state legislature as a group of freaks because there was a young legislator that was interested in making the drug laws just, and he wanted to hear our side of it, so we sat down with him and just told it how it is, how it still is, and how it always has been about recreational drugs, and addictive drugs, and stuff that the government continues not to listen to, much to their own detriment. My drug experience was that I became addicted to tobacco which almost killed me by the time I was thirty eight, I'm sixty-two now, but I quit when I was thirty-eight, I was nearly dead from legal drugs, I had a serious tobacco habit and that was the worst thing I ever did in the drug world. I have no regrets about anything that happened with psychedelics, even the occasional bad psychedelic that we would get, and the experiences were interesting. Azaudi, however, didn't stay with me that long at Libre, we were just dirt poor, we built this little mud shack to live in with no plumbing, and she wanted more, she took off with Bill Crosby, who had money, he had an inheritance, she's regretted that ever since, because he wasn't real nice to her, and neither were the subsequent husbands. Anyway, Azaudi didn't leave because Crosby had money and stuff, things were just wild and chaotic, we were having, we were sleeping around, you know, there was a lot going on, she was lovers with Nanalis Lacocky who was here living in a cave, he was just, really my very first genuine Buddhist teacher, he came here and you know it wasn't upsetting in any way, it wasn't jealousy or anything when she was sleeping with him, and now, I was like, hey, if I was a girl, I'd be sleeping with him too, because he's just too cool! And oh, there was some, couple of orgies, and we went to one of them, and we walked out of the next one because the person we walked out, the couple that also walked out with us was David Ganeiston and Emily and later David and I were talking about it and David said it the way it really was, he said, 'well, it wasn't spiritual! That's why we left!' It was Peter Rabbit, started it right in front of everybody, smoking DMT and it was terrible, and we walked out, but most of us thought the other one was pretty loving and stuff, but none of the marriages lasted through any of that, and not a lot of people's marriages lasted through their twenties in those days, anyway, so, not a lot of regrets about that. Azaudi and I are still friends, we keep in touch and still talk to each other. I sent her the Huerfano book and it brought up all kinds of feelings, you know, she's like, in fact she got on my case about the first time that I cheated on our marriage, and stuff, and she was like, you know, that was really what messed it up. And it was, it was totally out of hand, young drunk girls that I had no business being with, in Austin on one of our many trips, that was after we lived in Libre. Anyway we arrived at Libre in the Hump Mobile, decked out, painted, upholstered in paisley and Moroccan blankets, it was quite the thing, and we lived in that for most the summer, building this house and this little mud shack and barely moved into it in the fall, and it was just so fabulous here, I did a bunch of psychedelic paintings and fantasy paintings during that era, and I thoroughly enjoyed my mud shack, and I was 24 years old and I had my own house and I still think that's pretty special, even though it

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

wasn't much, it was still pretty far out to think that you have a place in the universe, and a tribe and a family, which we were in those days, there were other communes around, and we'd all go over there as a group and party, and that's one of the really important things about Libre is the tribal aspect. People try to recreate that with rainbow gatherings, and it's a special experience that's lacking in American society in particular, and it's necessary, you have to have that to raise your children properly, and if you end up that the only tribe you belong to is something on TV it just doesn't cut it, you know. Well, you know what, when I moved to Libre they asked me what I did and I told them I thought I was a mechanic, but I hadn't done it very much, but I wasn't afraid to try, which was the truth, I'd leapt into it and just had to do it, and so on some level, I offered to be the commune mechanic in the early days, and I did I pretty good job of fulfilling it, I screwed up plenty, but I also kept vehicles running for us on low budget, and painted everything, even take apart the dash gages and psychedelize them and then put 'em back together. Oh God, we had some cars, we had this '40 Plymouth that Linda took all the seats out and did this fabulous canvas paintings and stuff on them, and sewed it back into seat covers, and we did depend on communal transportation for quite a while, were we were building every dime we got would go into some more nails and boards and stuff, my house went up for 100 bucks in salvage materials, and I arrived here with no money whatsoever, and somehow we made it, we had to get food stamps, but that was 15 bucks each a month! And that would buy us some brown rice and some beans, but somehow it all worked out, and we'd get jobs and trade for this and that, and for a long time I prided myself on not being part of the economy, I didn't, I liked working for free and for the group and I drove a logging truck for about three or four seasons, I drove this '40 Chevy flatbed up the mountain, and got logs for people to build houses and stuff, and they were basically just covering the gas, and we were all having a grand time, and there'd be people up on the mountain, living in a teepee illegally in a national forest, and eating venison that they'd poached, and we got by, there was just such fabulous people coming through, not just the ones that lived here, but there was just this continuous stream of nomadic people that we were on their route from coast to coast and they would come through like hoards of commune people from Blackbear in California, and hoards of New York City people and I remember Frosty Meyers showing up here in this hot rod Model-T or something, and his mod girlfriend and her go-go boots and stuff, Stewart Brand showed up and stayed here in an air stream while he was doing the whole earth catalog, Nanalis Lacocky and later on, Alan Ginsberg and Gregory Corso and it was just a analyst stream of interesting people. The unknown ones were probably even more interesting than the known ones, it was not boring, even after my wife Azaudi left me it was like this fabulous, promiscuous part of my life and stuff that is full of fond memories and rock and roll, and Libre formed a rock and roll band, the Dog Brothers, and I was recruited as the bass player, even though all I'd ever played was a little bit of folk guitar and stuff, I had to teach myself how to fake it on the bass, so I had to make a bass, I couldn't afford to buy one, I made a bass so I could play, I modified a guitar and made it into a bass, before I actually got a bass, and we made some gorgeous music, the Dog Brothers band. David Perkins, who went by Izzy Zane was one of the songwriters, and David Henry was the other one, he was the lead guitarist, I would say David Perkins was the more prolific of the two songwriters, it was basically retro-rock, 50s rock, some of our favorite dance music from the 50s, blues, shuffles, and country rock was what was happening then, it had something of a country element to it, it made us fit into the southwest, and we toured all over from oh, northern Colorado ski resorts all the way down to Albuquerque. I think we had more gigs in New Mexico than anywhere. And Santa Fe, more than anywhere. We played



Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

LaFonda, which is a big hotel in Santa Fe, we did that numerous times in Bourbon and Blues out on the road. My favorite was down in Albuquerque was Rosa's Cantina which was a communally operated bar north of town in Acadonis, it was such an outrageous place, they also had a run-down motel near by, it was called a No-Tell Motel, you can just imagine what kind of outrageous place it was, and we had a fabulous time touring around a bus that was given to us that had previously belonged to a hog farm, and they blew the engine and we put another engine in it, in fact, somebody donated the engine out of their pickup, and we put it in the bus, you know, I put it in the bus. It was previously known as the New Jano Bomber, we renamed it Doctor Gonzo, after Hunter S Thompson. So we're driving around. We had a piano player who was classically trained at Julliard, Peggy Abbot was her name then, and one of the original Drop City people, she was already a fabulous keyboardist, but she acquired a Fender Roads electric piano which is basically like an electrified thumb piano or something, has a unique sound and Daddy Dave Gordon, who had brought me here, was the second drummer, Tony Magar was the first drummer, but he was deaf, so he didn't last too long. Besides, he was an artist, and a painter, and when his wife, Marilyn left him, he really went into retreat and wouldn't talk to anyone, so he couldn't play drums anymore. So later these fabulous musicians from LA joined us, Brent and Carey Sewell, and she was just right up there with Janis Joplin, and Brent, who just turned 70 the other day, still a fabulous musician, he plays everything, and the band really took off with having real musicians in it, eventually, I dropped out and Brent continued in the band for a while and then he went off with a Triple A band, and we went in different directions and stuff but we had some great times in the beginning you know. But the thing about Libre was the kids, I didn't really have kids until I was with my second wife, Christine, had Electra, and that ended in tragedy with Christine and becoming schizophrenic and killing herself before she was 21, and leaving me with a year and a half old child, who actually turned out to be a great person, she's working on her master's in architecture now, and is quite the good artist. After that, eventually I became with Sesame, and I've lived here at Libre for 25 years and we raised our family together. That's what really made Libre work, is the family thing, the tribal thing, the kids. That was the focus that kept us from going under like a lot of the other communes did. All the people in their 20s doing sexual experimentation and social change and stuff, that was pretty important, but it wasn't enough to keep the places happening, places that didn't have the family focus and did end up falling apart. Sesame and I have been married 25 years now and as I usually tell people, we've got four children, that's three fathers, and two mothers, four children, but we got to mostly raise them, the father of my son, his name is Tinker and he is still involved wavy-gravy in the hog farm, he still works at Camp Winarainbow and California and the other three are girls, the youngest is 27, her name is Stars, she's a second year med student, Wascas is the one with the most hippie roots, he's a yoga instructor and a fitness guide for the Ashram in Santa Monica and he's really good at what he does, he's also a total world traveler and nomad, I think he's just been all around, much like we did in the 60s and 70s, he continues the lifestyle on many levels, of course things have changed a lot, he made me go to Burning Man with him, which opened my eyes to a whole different world of music and youth culture, which is maybe one of the places where our culture really continues successfully amongst the burners. In 1990 our neighbor Maggie Crest bought us all kinds of late 80s and 90s really cool Tibetan Buddhists and we had also in the early 70s had Shambala International and his Holiness the Karmapa, head of the Cogues, it was the very first monks that I met here was Gandan....was head of head of the Galupaset, the Dalai Lama is also his sect of Buddhism, all these young people and monks came and we listened to them and

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

they were fabulous and we started trying to learn about their stuff, Roger Monroe and Paula Chychester, he was from Australia, from Perth, and she was from Berkeley. This couple stayed for a couple of years and their enthusiasm for Buddhism led us to go down to Santa Fe to hear His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaking. And my wife Sesame have been increasingly involved ever since, it was what we were looking for all along, it was why we were taking psychedelics and seeking, you know, it was with the motivation to find spirituality, and eventually we did find it in the form of Tibetan Buddhism, and she became involved in Tartaric Buddhism, which is not what people think, it's not a sexual thing, it's a think of recreating yourself as a deity in your own mind, becoming a deity in your own mind, and she's taken a lot of retreats and mostly in Bolder Creek near Santa Cruz, she goes out there as often as she can, he main guru is Lama Zepalrempeshe[?] and I consider my main guru to be His Holiness the Dalai Lama, less accessible on a personal level, but we have a Nanarenchenpumsat[?] from Katmandu and Igmatpa[?], a teacher who comes here often, I consider him to be my most personal teacher, my refuge teacher is in Long Beach, Gesasultrumgialsun[?], I hope you're getting all of this, it's fun to get Tibetan names! Let's see, if the transcriber has any questions, my number is 719-746-2200, I'll give you the correct spellings of these teachers, because this is some of the most important things that happened to me here, in '91, we also became vegetarian, we'd sort of been in that direction for many years, and we started turning our lives around, I quit drinking and stuff, cleaned up my remaining small drug habits and stuff, started turning my life around and letting light fill it up like I always wanted to. I'm also a stone carver, my father was a marble carver and I learned it from him, and I was involved in the Marble Symposiums in Marble, Colorado for many years so, that's the kind of art I do these days, I still play music, but not professionally. My oldest daughter is Talla, you'll hear more about her on my wife's tape, she was born in a teepee in another commune near Truchester New Mexico. I still continue to paint and play music, and my house ended up being an art project, more of a collage than a house, I often describe it as a mud shack that the only structure that keeps it from falling down is the love by so many people, and the outside is just a fairly crude mud shack, but it's warm and comfortable, don't get me wrong, but the inside is the collage part, it's encrusted in sculpture and art. Politics at Libre have always been a scene, Libre meetings have always been infamous because sometimes they would get so out of hand, especially before we forbade the consumption of alcohol at meetings! People could get really crazy and angry and mad and stuff, but recently, in recent years, we've really mellowed out, we've been able to have business meetings, just as regular business people do. There aren't exactly a lot of job opportunities here in Huerfano county, it's a poor county, so I've had to fake it all my life, sometimes I make it as an artist, sometimes I've worked as musician, tree planter, a lot with mechanics, but I've never had a real job as a mechanic. Carpenter, whatever it took to live here, it was worth it, and I'm proud to say that I have my own house here, how many unemployed artists can say that? It's a real testimonial to being able to build and live communally, which they won't let you do anymore, they won't let you start a humble building, you have to start out with something up to code, I guess there's something to be said for that, but there's also something to be said for the ghetto style building that none of us would be here if we had to build that way, only rich people can build that way, and we banded together as a bunch of poor people, that's why it was called a commune, we wouldn't have made it as individuals if we hadn't worked together, and helped each other. That's what makes us a commune is the fact that we came together with nothing and built up something here, we built up a place for our children to grow up and not only grow up but to grow up in a really unique and beautiful

Interview with Jim Fowler  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 22, 1996

way that has benefited them in their adult lives in the city. So this tape is about to run out and I haven't told you any of the really fun stories, so somebody's going to have to come by and talk to me and the next tape I make for you is just going to be stories, such as the time I tried to see what acid really did if you took as much as you could get your hands on, which, in those days, was really a lot, and that's a good story because the car caught on fire, and I could tell you that, and the costumes were really good, the parties were just fabulous, people went all out for anything, and you didn't just go to a party, you spent weeks making a costume to go to party in! And people would get together and dress each other up, you'd spend all day getting ready to go to a party together, and I remember like when Halloween when I had to dress Lainya up, who at the time, she was gay, but she wanted to dress as a penis, so I made her a huge penis costume with balls that bounced around and stuff, and we used to do theater that way, and we did cabarets, we had so much fun entertaining each other that I can go on for a whole tape just about the cabarets that we did in our late twenties and stuff, and we just had so much fun, putting on our own entertainment.