

Interview with Jean Mountaingrove

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

March 27, 1997

Q: This is March 27th and an interview with Jean Mountaingrove. Well Jean, I'd just love to hear some of your background and maybe what led up to you living communally.

A: How many hours do you have? I'm 71 years old, and all my stories are long.

Q: Well, I'd like to focus on the communal part.

A: Okay. In 1969, I left my social work job in Los Angeles, very dissatisfied with what the state was doing to poor people. I went to a Quaker retreat center near Philadelphia, called Pendle Hill, and took my children, who were 11 and 14, with me. Divorced my husband, and spend the next 9 months in a semi-communal situation. Which is what Pendle Hill was. It is indeed, they have staff and classes and so on. But there is a great emphasis on working together and developing a sense of community.

Q: Did you grow up Quaker?

A: No. I grew up Methodist, and became a pacifist at about the age of 21. That led me into Quakerism. So at time, I must've been attending the Quaker meetings for about 20 years. And so while I was at Pendle Hill, I was in recovery from the stress of this social work job in the ghettos of LA, and trying to find my sense of direction, and what I discovered among other things, is that living in the country is very much a spiritual resource for me. Therefore, I wanted to live in the country. And that having my young children with me in a group, where they had many other adults to relate to, was much preferable to having them focus on their adolescence with just me. So I ended the nine months at Pendle Hill, having met Ruth at a single parent's conference at Pendle Hill, just about 2 weeks before we left, but not forming much of a friendship with her yet. And this was the spring of, June of 1970. Earth Day had happened. I had been to my first women's conference in Philadelphia in January. Had been to the Women's Center in Philadelphia, and become quite a feminist. Met my first out lesbians. One of whom was Rita May Brown. Decided that, let's see, how can I say this? That what I wanted was a great friendship, and that could be with a man or a woman. And then, at that women's conference, Rita May Brown organized a circle, workshop, something or other. And I went to it. And when she asked us to all speak, as we were doing, consciousness raising circles, about women we had loved, whether it was our grandmothers or somebody else, I, for the first time in my life, put together the sequence of my romantic attractions to my third grade music teacher, my childcare supervisor, my graduate advisor, all of whom were women. And I said, "Oh." I'd never put it together. I had never known what to make of this relationship, this attraction I had to women. But of course, I was still attracted to men, so it was just an option for me. So I could've gone anywhere in the world, not that I had a lot of money, but I had some money, and an education. And I wasn't strong enough to just launch out that far. But I wanted to avoid drugs, because that was one of the reasons that I left my husband. I did not want to raise my children in an atmosphere with drugs. So, I decided to come across the country visiting communes. And I went to CNVA -- Community for Nonviolent Action, Connecticut, I think, somewhere there. And then I went to the one in Virginia, not Twin Oaks, had it just started right then?

Q: Twin Oaks had started in '67 I think.

A: Okay, I'd read the book then, about it. There's one that's just over the border -- Heathcoate [?]. I visited Heathcoate, they had a flood, and we all got sick from the poor sanitation in the kitchen. But then I went to Ohio and visited some Quakers there, who were promoting community. But we were all

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sick. And then, I went and visited in Des Moines with my brother, and the next stop was Golden, Colorado, where there was another commune. Oh, I forgot, one of the first ones was a Quaker commune in northern New York, somewhere near Albany.

Q: New Swarthmore? Does that ring a bell?

A: I don't know, it might have been New Swarthmore. They were all Quaker young people.

Q: Yes, and they were picking apples or something like that to get by?

A: Probably, yes, right, I think so. That's probably it. And of course, I was about 45, and I looked like an old woman to those young people. CNVA, she would've loved to have had me stayed, because she was a middle aged woman too, and she wanted children to be with her children. But that was the first place I visited, and not way was I making up my mind at that moment. So after Colorado, then I got to LA, and I had corresponded with Oregon, with Mountaingrove. And they sounded good, they were into education, spirituality, ecology, all that good stuff. So I came up to visit them, and it was probably in August or September when I got here, and I fell in love with the land. I just had a very strong, if you want to call it spiritual, emotional response to the land. But it was hard for me to decide, and I went back and stayed with my mother in LA for awhile. Then she said, "You've got to get it together," and of course, she had 2 teenage kids plus me in the house, I'm sure she was tired of it. So it's what you call forced choice, I had to do something quick. So I called them up and said, "Can I come back?" And they said, "We'll call you back after we have our meeting," and they said yes. And so I came up and there wasn't any room on the land, but there was a place right across the main highway, the freeway, that I could rent a little bungalow there. So we came up, and joined the community. I had, at the time of the divorce, I think I got \$30,000. I spent about \$10,000 to do the Pendle Hill trip. So I had more money than any of the other people, at this point, all these young kids that were in and out of college. So I made financial contributions that I thought were substantial. And lived across the road, across the freeway. And then my divorced husband showed up. He followed me to Philadelphia and hung around awhile. And then he showed up and asked if he could stay with us in the cabin there. I said, "No way." And so he visited the commune, and decided that he was in love with one of women there. And she wouldn't go to bed with him unless he married her. So they were married in January or February, that winter. Since she had been there longer than I, and had two kids, she was living in the A-frame. So he moved into the A-frame. And he was into drugs, and there were no drugs on this land. But he said that he wouldn't use drugs while he was there. So they walked across the edge of the border where the land became other land, and used their drugs, and then walked back. Then when they went up to Eugene, he gave, I don't know, it wasn't marijuana, something, to my kids, which made me very upset. Anyhow, of course he's a very interior person, and so he didn't fit into the commune at all. He had just needed a home. So, in June of that year, they moved into Wolf Creek, and vacated the A-frame, and I moved into it. And then, when -- then that summer, Ruth, who had been corresponding with me, came out to visit, with her daughter. I was -- David and I, well, Roy was there too, Roy and David and I were the old people in the place. And I was very lonesome. And Ruth was very friendly. And, we won't go into the romantic aspects of it, it was full moon and so on. But anyway, I became a lesbian that night. Full moon in July of 1971. And then Ruth wanted to come and live with me, but we didn't come out to the community. She went back to get permission to bring her daughter out here, because she was divorced, and wrote a letter applying, and

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they said, "Well, that would be fine," but they didn't have any space, and we said we'd share space. So she came out in October to live with me, in '71, and then we were evicted 2 years later. So, what shall I say about life there? Well, David and I -- Roy was kind of a strange person. Nice, genial fellow, but a little disconnected. So David and I, we were sort of a team. His wife was there, but she didn't like being in commune, and really didn't want to participate. Finally, we built a house for her across the creek, so she could have her own place, which was built quite nicely, they had money and know-how. Ruth and I did have a couples' group with Brian and Margo, in which we talked about our couple/relationship things. And, oh I know, and of course Ruth had just come from Philadelphia where I'd sent her to the Women's Center, and she'd become a feminist also. So when she arrived, she said, "Well, where are the lesbians? We've got to go find lesbians. We've got to find feminists. Where are they?" Well, I was attending Quaker meetings. We went to Quaker meetings in Eugene, and in Portland, and in San Francisco. And when we went up to Portland, being a social worker, I got on a telephone, and I found the lesbians. And that felt really good. And we invited them to come visit us at the commune. And so some of them did come down and visit us. Gay men, who owned land in Wolf Creek, came to teach folk dancing to the community. So they were all very supportive. Some of the women from Portland -- next door to the gay men in Wolf Creek was some land that had been bought by a gay man and some of his friends. So when the women came from Portland, they went over there and visited there. The place is called Cabbage Lane, and it's now -- have you heard of it?

Q: No.

A: And it's owned by land trust, of lesbians, we're going to make out last payment in June, and we will own 80 acres of land. At the time, it was divided up -- in the course of events, it was divided up so 20 acres were for gay men, on the top, where the water was, and 60 acres, the rest of it, was for lesbians. And the gay men decided they wanted to sell out, and so we started buying them out, and our final payment will be this June.

Q: Now, that's this land?

A: No, no, this land is Root Works. Cabbage Lane is in Wolf Creek. It's next to Golden, which is where the gay men lived. They had started out as a commune, Golden had started out as a commune of fellows from San Francisco. There's now a strong gay presence outside of Wolf Creek, of a group called Nominis, that's been there for 20 something years. All of it's very interesting, of course. At one time there were 3 publications coming out of Wolf Creek -- a gay men's publication called RFD, which is still happening, Womanspirit, which went for 10 years, but is no longer happening, which is what Ruth and I did, and one called Older Woman's Network, which was started by the gay aunt that came to live with her gay nephew at Golden. Anyhow, it's been quite a creative center. So, we're back at meeting lesbians in Portland, and inviting them down to visit us, and of course we had a good time. We weren't outrageous, but obviously we'd developed into a clip sort of thing, we had our friends that would come and see us, and instead of mingling with the greater commune, we would entertain them in our living room at the A-frame. I don't think this made us very popular. I think it didn't feel good. Meanwhile, young people were coming and going. It was a pretty ragged outfit. I learned to cook rice for the first time that wasn't Minute Rice. Everybody was experimenting with cooking, and we put everything together in strange combinations and all, and sometimes the food would burn, because the main house was just being built.

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The other buildings were just coming along. My belief is that David had his Krishna Merdi [?] belief system. And he saw himself as a guru from Krishna Merdi, and he wanted to establish this new education foundation, which was, in his mind, to be a private school for young people whose parents would send them up there to have this fine Krishna Merdi education. Meaning pretty well-to-do people. So he recruited -- his plan was that these young hippies would come and build the buildings and get the place developed, and it would then evolve into this special school. And he needed to keep control of it, because it was not to become what the young hippies wanted, it was to become the new education foundation. And there was a lot of transience, young people are looking for this, that, and the other thing, and they come and take a taste and a look, and they move on. So with a lot of people, that was just fine, they just enjoyed what they were doing. But for more settled people, such as Roy and Ruth and me, we were not -- we'd been looking around, and we weren't looking anymore. We were wanting to make something where we were. There came to be some, it must've been the fall of '72, when it began to become clear that, yes this was a commune, it was a corporation, it had a form and so on, and we had our meetings, but they had no power except over our daily life. And the real votes were those of David and his friends, who gave him proxies. They were scattered around, somewhere, not even in the United States. But they had been the ones who funded the getting started, to pay for the land and getting started. And the vision was David's, and they were supporting David, so he voted for them. So in the fall of '72, there was some move toward having some of the residents on the board, as well as just David's absent friends. And he said that he would do that, and he would do that by Christmas. And Christmas came, and he didn't do it. He denied that he had ever said it, but everyone remembered him saying it. But to the young people, it wasn't as crucial an issue as it was to me and Ruth. They were planning, most of them left by the next summer anyhow. They had had enough of this, except for David's son, but he wanted to go back to the city too. But he wasn't giving up his position. But even so, I don't think he even put Brian or Margo on the board. So Ruth and I felt that this was a crisis line, or dividing line, or moment of truth. It became a major issue. He had lied to us, he had said he would give up some of his power and control, and he wouldn't do it. So, we quit paying our rent, which was \$50 a month. And we did not take this graciously. So, I'm not quite sure how the sequence of things went, because that would've been into January and February and stuff. And it wasn't until August that we were evicted. Supposedly, we were all members of the community. So the eviction happened at a meeting in which we were not informed. I think that's called kangaroo court or something. Anyhow, we had our contacts with other lesbians, and we were going to a women's conference in Mendocino. We were packed up and ready to leave, and Heidi or somebody said, "There's going to be a meeting before you go," and we went over to their place. They said, "We had a meeting, and you were evicted, it's all settled, we won't tell you why, we're not discussing it, that's how it is. You have to be out in 2 weeks, and anything that's yours that's here after 2 weeks belongs to the community. That's all there is to it." So we got up and left and cried half the way to Mendocino. Luckily, we were there with women who -- I mean, we weren't left all alone, we had friends. And we came back, and considered whether to try to fight it or not. And the gay men who lived in Wolf Creek said they would come and lay down on the road to prevent it if we wanted them to. And then we thought, "Is that where we want to put our energy for the next five years, fighting this thing in court and living with all this dissent?" We didn't really think we wanted to do that. So we decided to look for a new home. We drove up to Seattle and back visiting lesbians, and then we came back here -- we stored all our stuff. We moved out during that 2 weeks. We stored all our stuff in a woman's barn in Wolf

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Creek, and then took off on these trips. We went down as far as San Diego, visiting women along the way, which turned out to be a very important part of our lives. And on the way back, right after Christmas in '74, we stayed to work on a magazine called Country Women, in Mendocino, you've heard of that?

Q: Yeah, Lizalata Glozer [?], was she part of that? Does that ring a bell? She had a little commune there in Mendocino, Equitable Farm. I know she was involved in the magazine, but it might not have been the time you were there.

A: Or she might have had a different name.

Q: Lizalata, she's actually German.

A: Oh, I think I have met her, yes I have met her. Okay, so that issue was going to be on spirituality. So Ruth and I stayed to work on that, and I then had the inspiration, I really feel it was an inspiration -- we picked up some mail, and I put it next to the bed. In the morning, looking at it, I thought, "We get so much mail on this topic, there should be a magazine just about this." And later, about six months later, we met the woman who had written that letter, and she was the one who was thinking of starting a magazine on feminist spirituality. So who knows. We came back then, after that, came back here so we could be with our kids at Easter. The men said that we could live in a little tiny cabin 10 ft square up at the top of the hill of Golden, if we wanted to. It would be rent-free, and we could stay there. Because we were, to them, we were motherly types. See, we had kids, and they were estranged from their families because they were gay, and they felt sorry for us, and they had feminist consciousness, they should support feminists. And they had the gay women that lived on a land next door, sort of, so it was all very happy and cheerful. So we moved into this little cabin up on the hill and started this magazine called Womanspirit. I think maybe that's enough, from that point on, we're not in a commune.

Q: But you are sort of consciously part of a community, it sounds like, of women.

A: Well, at that time, we were in a local community, including these gay men. We became more separatists, and that led to us being evicted from there. We lived there 5 years. When we came, of course, we were just these motherly, destitute feminist lesbians. But we rapidly became the center of a great deal of lesbian feminist focus. Four times a year, women came to work on the magazine. They were not interested in these men, and they were pretty separatist and pretty political. While we were gracious to them, our guests walked right by the door, ignoring them. This got to be a little bit hard. Unfortunate events, and so we were evicted from there, and that's when we came here. And that's been a great blessing. I've been here 18 years.

Q: And can you tell me a little bit about what "here" is? I don't know really know.

A: Root Works. It's 7 acres. When we came, it consisted of 2 run-down cabins. And this is a map of it that I drew. This is where we are. You parked out here. This is the big building. We built this the first summer to be the production room for Womanspirit. And we lived in this cabin up here, which was in pretty bad shape. There was no water supply. So therefore there were no gardens, and now, three gardens. This cabin up here was, well, I guess it was pretty well done. It didn't have any porch or steps, but it was there. This was the outhouse. Only it wasn't an outhouse then, it was a pit. So we got through

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the winter one way or another. This is the woodshed. This was here, but it was open on both sides. We stored our magazines in there, so we had wet wood the first winter. The choice between getting the magazines wet or the wood wet, the wood got wet. So then the first spring we built this little cabin up here. And then in the summer we built this. This is the outhouse you visited.

Q: What's that?

A: This is my circle garden, and these are my compost piles, important things. This is the outdoor water-bed. This is the swing under the tree, and up here, are hammocks.

Q: What's an outdoor water-bed?

A: Well, it's a waterbed in a frame, outdoors. So in the summer, you watch the stars. So this is 7 acres, Kiemont [?] Trail goes on up there, the creek is down here, and this is county land, federal land, county land, state land, all around us. The nearest neighbor is 2 miles up the road, and they're moving out. The next neighbor is one mile down the road, where that terrible road is, potholes. There are people who live around the creek, they're probably about a quarter of a mile down. I don't even hear dogs barking anymore.

Q: And are you the only person on the land?

A: At present. During the summer -- well, I have had so many visitors already, and it's March! Of course, lots of them are friends. I've only had a couple of what I call "travellers." Women looking for utopia, or their next part of their lives. Somebody said this is the most uninstitutional institution she knows. Because it really is -- it's no nationwide, not everywhere, but it's listed in, I don't know if you know Maize, a country lesbian magazine.

Q: I'm aware of it, yeah.

A: So it's listed there, it's listed in Lesbian Connection, maybe, I don't know if it is or not. Anyhow, I have women come from anywhere and all over. I was real tickled -- somebody flew in from Germany to go to Los Angeles and Wolf Creek. Isn't that cute? I thought that was funny. So where am I in the story? This is Root Works. It was owned by a straight woman, so she could be close to her lover, who lives two miles up the hill. But she went back to LA, so she rented it to lesbians. Fifty dollars a month for the two cabins. She wanted her money eventually, while she was in LA, and decided to sell, and the women who were living here, who had had kind of open, women who were coming by, anyone who needed could camp out, you'd have to haul your own water, but you could camp, and it was lesbian land, so to speak. They were young, and they were not ready to settle down. And this came at the exact time that we were evicted from Golden. I didn't really like the land. I called it a rag tag scrap of land. I mean, there was junk around, and the buildings were not in good shape, and it was not very appealing. But it was \$7800. And we had been saving up for a land fund. So we were able, with the help of my mother, to pay for it outright, \$7800. And then with the production of the magazine, we were able to make enough money to pay women to build the barn, and later to build this house. And so over the last 18 years, I built up the soil, and put up the garden fences. We planted trees the first spring, fruit trees. Gradually just added on. I've lived here long enough I've had to replace the roofs.

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Q: Now did you form some sort of corporation to buy the land?

A: No, just Ruth and I as a partnership. And now, Saturday, I'm going to a meeting in Roseburg to meet with maybe 15 or more lesbians who are considering how can we keep this land for lesbian use, women's use, into the future? My children know that they are not going to inherit this land. And a lot of the lesbians do not have children. So what do you do about passing the land on? To who, and how?

Q: So you want it to be a land trust or something?

A: Yeah. But we have two lands that are in land trusts already, the one will be paid off this summer, nobody lives there, and another one called OWL, which you've probably heard of, Oregon Women's Land Trust. I think there's two women there now, and one is going to leave, because she can't get along with the other one, who is really impossible. Having the land is great, but you need the energy. You need a committed person. So, sure you can put it in land trust, what good is that? Somebody has to pay the taxes, somebody has to maintain the road. Somebody has to put new roofs on. Somebody has to care. So, we will be meeting on Saturday from noon to five, to discuss, which we've had meetings before, about land trusts. We've had lawyers come and talk to us and prepare materials for us. But the women are getting -- I mean, I'm 71 -- but a lot of women in our group are 55 and 53 and 57, and they're getting to where they're beginning to think about, "We got to plan for the future." So the women who were here just before you, who left at 11:30, one of them is a corporate lawyer from Philadelphia. So at breakfast I talked with her about, could she look into creative ways to use the corporate form that could give -- the issue is, for me, the commitment relies on power, control, and responsibility. You usually don't take much responsibility unless you feel you have some control. You need to feel powerful in order to make a commitment. So all those things all get tied up together, and how can we -- but today we talked about, I think the basic thing is commitment. If a woman would come here, such as Ruth and I, we came and we committed ourselves to this land. Then we would build buildings, we would work hard, we would do this, we would see that things got done. Women who are just passing through don't know how to plan. Last summer I had three women living here, one of whom is a master's degree candidate and was doing her thesis on lesbian land. So she wanted to fix the roads, she wanted to take the hump out of the road here so it wouldn't drag her car. The project I gave her was digging a ditch, so that it would not flood here. Now, in July and August, that does not seem like a high priority. And that's what I'm saying -- when you live with a piece of land, then you know what needs to be done. So I was interested to find out what a person who just coming in -- of course, they come in on the road, they think the road is the priority, that's all they know. But I thought firewood was priority, August is the time to be out getting the firewood, now I have all this dry firewood, you see. So, what we're talking today, this morning, she's going to talk with a friend of hers, again, the two of them are going to brainstorm about what would be the best legal protections, the most flexible, and least invasive and involving with the government. Not, I mean, we want to be responsible, but you don't have to have endless jobs of paperworking and stuff. So I feel that was very rewarding this morning, to find that I have a resource to do some legal stuff. Now, where am I? We're going to have this meeting of women in this network, about how to protect the land into the future. And yes, we can have a legal form, but we need to find out how to find committed women.

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Q: Now, what's the network?

A: Well, it's informal. It's what I call an affinity group. And I like to speak a little condescendingly about "intentional" communities, because those are head trips. That's what an intent is, a head trip. And so you can sit a lot of people in a room, and "Oh, we all want to do ecology, we all want our kids to have this education," but they don't like each other. This one annoys that one, and this one can't get along with that one, and they disagree on all these other things. So, until we evolve enough skill in interpersonal relationships, I think intentional communities have a lot of problems. I'm now in correspondence with a woman in Twin Oaks who says it's been a wonderful experience for her, but there are a lot of the same problems that we're facing in our communities, about participation, and people getting along together, and meetings being fruitful, and on and on and on. So when I get a chance, I'll write back to her. I have met her, and we have something of an extended friendship, I haven't seen her in about 8 or 10 years, but anyhow. It was just interesting to know that Twin Oaks, which I consider to be a very successful intentional community, and now they have, how many did she say?

Q: One hundred or so people.

A: Yeah, 15 kids, I don't know, I have the numbers in the letter. And they're financially doing very well. Which is important. But I think we're on some other track, as a lesbian community, and this community means network. But we don't have any formal organization of who's in, who's out. It's sort of, if you fit in, you come, if you don't fit in, you probably stay away, and there are all kinds of subgroups -- the women who live in Roseburg who have similar interests have social groups. You can call them cliques if you want -- people you enjoy being with socially. And then people that you have in common issues about land, or people, many of us know each other for 20 years. So it's a level of trust, and understanding, accepting of each other. Some people irritate me, but I don't think ill of them. I've watched them change over 20 years. I couldn't think ill of them. And if they do something I don't like, I don't think they're being mean on purpose. So it's a friendship or affinity group, or whatever you might call it. We're not so huge that people are expendable. I see, I've never been in a city lesbian -- I went to a bar once, in Portland, 20 or so years ago, and it was plenty enough for me. And I really feel that here in the country, we've invented our own lesbian culture, so that bar culture, city culture, it isn't my culture, isn't much of our culture. And I have the impression that in the city, there are very distinct groups, because 500 women, or 150 women even is a lot of women to be intimate with, or close friends. So you can divide up a lot. And if you don't get along with this woman, you just cut her out of your life, and that's that. But if the group is 20 or 30, you just don't cut somebody out. I think I like that part of it. It fits with my feelings of there's worthwhile in everybody, and we all make mistakes, but none of us are monsters.

Q: I'm curious about Rootworks. Do you hope that more people will move onto the land, or is that the plan?

A: I would like one or two additional committed caretakers. If compatible women in larger numbers than that came, that's fine with me. How Rootworks has operated is while Ruth and I were here, we were the hostesses, and we welcomed and enjoyed the companionship and the visitors, and this was really quite a center for awhile, because we had the magazine here, which was in production for 3

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weeks every 3 months. It was a quarterly, and we did the production, the typing, the layout, the graphics, everything was done here in the barn, and then we sent it to Portland where it was printed, came back, I addressed all 1200 copies, we took them to the post office and mailed them out. And then we recovered for 2 months and did houses and gardens and whatever else. But anyhow, because all those women contributed, and we had contributions from outside the United States, but all over the United States too, women would come to visit. And so most of my friends, other than the ones who live here, and some of the ones who live in this area came because of Womanspirit, are creative women, but they would want to come and visit. And I am still in correspondence with some of the women, when the magazine quit 13 years ago. So women came and visited, stayed a week, some of them stayed 2 or 3 months, one of them stayed a year and a half. Did you read that thing in the Outhouse that I said "Please read?"

Q: Yes.

A: Okay, so that's the letter we developed 15 years ago or so, which I send out, and I still get -- well right now, I'm only getting one every two or three weeks, a letter inquiry. Come in the summer, I get at least one a week. Somebody wants to come visit. So, they come and I expect them to pay \$5 a day -- the outdoor kitchen, which is right over here, is rather recent, so there's only one place to cook, so we had to eat together. Now, we've developed a kitchen up in the cabin where Ruth and I used to live. We just used a propane stove inside and a sink. There was only one source, so we always ate together. Now, I have rented those cabins for anywhere from one to 6 or 8 months, though I said one woman stayed a little over a year, and another lived with us a year and a half. So those cabins are for rent. And then I have to negotiate what to do about rent. I have, I've been renting it -- if it's a fairly long-term arrangement, I'll rent it for \$3 a day. And then they take care of their own wood, their own propane, their own trash. I said, "I'm not your Momma. I'll be your neighbor, I'll be your friend, but I'm not taking care of you, I'm not rescuing you." Well, it's easy to say. But women who are happy, content, and settled in their lives are not out travelling the road looking for a new place to live. So it's women who are in transition. And they can be transition for lots of different reasons, some of them quite healthy, and some of them not so healthy. So I have had a woman doing what would probably be called a nervous breakdown. And in the last year and a half, two women who were quite disturbed, post traumatic stress syndrome. So twice in 18 years I've had to ask women to leave. One of them was an intern, I made arrangements with Antioch College to intern. I had 3 interns one summer, and one of them stayed in the community and is a dear friend. One of them I had to ask to leave, and I haven't heard from her since, but her lover is now back here, complaining about her. And the third one has become a lesbian, though she wasn't at the time, and has served in India doing Peace Corp type work. I found it took a lot of my time and energy, and I just haven't gotten back -- I think it's something I could do. I would suggest students in ecology, perhaps. This one who was doing her master's thesis, was in sociology, I forget. She's supposed to send me a copy of her thesis too. So that's, so it's served that purpose. But before that, Ruth was a photographer, and she, "Oh, here I am out in the woods. I should be in the city where the photographers are." And I said, "We'll invite the photographers to come here!" So we had ovulars [?], instead of seminars.

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Q: Ovulars?

A: Well, what is semen, and what are ova? So we had ovulars here, for a week, here in the summer, and feminist photographers came from as far as New York, to live here without a water supply. Our drip system in plastic jugs, and we take showers by pouring over our heads or sitting in the creek. So they did photography in very primitive circumstances. And then the idea, of course, we knew how to do a magazine, we'd done Womanspirit. So we decided to do a feminist photography magazine. And so for 3 years we produced, in addition to this quarterly magazine, an annual feminist photography magazine called The Blatant Image. Are we getting tired? Yes. Was I having my second Saturn return? Yes. Had Ruth had hers? Yes. It was very stressful. So we did that, so I was saying we had workshops here as well as magazine production. [tape ends] . . . 1974 to 1975, we decided to do a women's gathering, because we didn't have enough to do, of course. And so we reserved a place in the Siscue [?] National Forest, told them we were having a religious group meeting, and sent out mimeographed announcements with anybody that came passing through, with the magazine. And over 100 women came, paid \$6 a piece, and started taking off their clothes. It upset the forest service people terribly. It was July or August, it was appropriate, but it upset them. Anyway, and so I'm just saying that we organized this large gathering. And we did it, again, the way we did the magazine, was in a very simple way. We had a large meeting, all the women, we had everyone introduce herself, and then we said, "Now, pick the people who have similar interests with you, and form a little family tribal group, and set up your tents together, and prepare your food and do whatever you need to do. And here's this plywood sheet, and some thumbtacks, and you can organize any workshops you want, announce them on this plywood sheet, and say which tree you're going to meet under or whatever, and go for it!" And so some of the women wanted to be with us, and we had a little group, and everybody in the group took the word "mountain" in their name. I don't know if you've heard of Hally [?] Mountainwing, but she's Hally Eglehart [?] now, and she's written several books on women's spirituality. Anyhow, this was 1975, and we were pretty experimental.

Q: So was that when you took the name "Mountaingrove"?

A: No, we took Mountaingrove from the commune. We were tired of our patriarchal last names, neither of us were willing to sign our ex-husbands name to things. So Ruth took it first, and then people just -- and I thought I'd be Jean Exmountaingrove, before we were evicted, that came out of Mountaingrove, but they just dropped that, so we both became Mountaingroves. And since that was associated with the magazine, we've each wanted to keep it through these years. So I'm trying to tell you all the things we've done. So we did that gathering, and perhaps that -- then, after Ruth and I separated, in 1987, I did another one, and that was at Aloe Farm. That was called Womanspirit, Tribal Gathering, I think that's what I called it. And 90 women came to that. Again, it was rather simply done. We did have a cook, and she cooked outdoors for us. Whereas the other one, you had to prepare your own food. And meanwhile, I was going to a lot of women's gatherings. I was going through menopause, I started menopause. So I became very interested in the topic, and started having, going to women's gatherings, and doing workshops on menstruation and menopause. I had huge length of red velvet, which I hung from tree to tree to tree, to make a menstrual hut. And this evolved, for awhile. Then I wasn't so interested in menstruation, I did menopause for awhile. And then I did aging for awhile. At different gatherings. And now I don't do any of those. Some of the -- I don't know, I'm just kind of tired of doing it,

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and I don't think I have any special talent for doing workshops, I don't get a lot of satisfaction out of it, so I'm not doing it anymore. So that's how come Rootworks has its place in the world, is 'cause all of these sorts of things have been associated with Mountaingrove and Rootworks.

Q: What has your relationship been like with the men at Golden and the people at Mountaingrove?

A: Well, the men at Golden left, one of them died of AIDS later. Part of our being evicted was their own mid-life crisis. And they moved back East and sold Golden to a group of women who couldn't make the payments. So it was lost to them. Then the guy died of AIDS, who was our friend, who evicted us. So his aunt and his ex-lover decided to try to sell it again. But he was interested in folkdancing, as I'd said, and so they wanted to sell it to someone who'd do folkdancing there. And they got some people from San Francisco to buy it. And they reduced the price a great deal, and they have a conservancy limit on the deed, they can't cut the trees and stuff like that. So there are now only 2 people living on that land. I think, I'm not sure whether he's bisexual, gay, or just strange. I haven't been able to figure him out. But I work with him on a committee through the local community. Everything's so complicated. I didn't have anything more to do with Mountaingrove until just recently. Did you meet Twila?

Q: No I didn't, but I heard her name.

A: Yeah, Twila Jacobson. Very nice person. Feminist. She is part of a group from Glendale, and I'm part of a group from Sunny Valley/Wolf Creek that are going to a federally sponsored leadership training workshops, there's a series of four. We've been to 2, we're going to the third one in a week, and there will be a fourth one. And I like Twila very much. Okay, sidenote: my connection to Mountaingrove, as I told you, was very much with the land. I had, what was for me, probably the first major spiritual experience of my life there, in a small grove of trees. That's one reason my name is so appropriate. And I would like to go back and visit those trees again. I keep thinking as I drive up and down the freeway past there, "Do I have time on the way up? Do I have time on the way back? Is this the right time?" But I feel a little easier about it, now knowing Twila. But there have been -- have they told you how many changes there have been at Mountaingrove over the past 20 years? They've had numerous groups in and out of there. And this new group, through Twila, I feel very positive about them. I guess Ruth and I did visit there while the celebrations were there, we had some connections with them. I forget her name, but she was doing couple counseling, so she did couple counseling with Ruth and I while we were breaking up. So we were there every week for awhile, and I went to several events there. I'm not sure, I think -- did I go up and see the trees again? I probably did. That's a long time ago, I don't remember too well. I asked Twila, I tried to figure out if the trees were still there, I hope they hadn't been cut. It was just a small grove of trees, maybe about twice the size of this room. I just felt such a presence there. So, that's the only reason I need to go back, there's nothing else. I don't have -- it's just, it's not negative, it's just irrelevant.

Q: What happened to the Young's?

A: You mean Brian and Margo?

Q: Is that David's son and daughter-in-law?

A: Yes.

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Q: Actually, I meant David and his wife.

A: Well, what I heard about David was that he got sick and decided to fast, and he starved to death.

Q: On the land?

A: I think so. And Betty never wanted to live there, particularly. I assume she went back to Ohi, but I really don't know.

Q: When did he die?

A: It was probably four or five or six years after we left. I don't know exactly.

Q: Oh, like early '80's.

A: Yeah, I think so. So that's why there were many changes of other patriarchs having to come in and try to, self-appointed gurus to arrive and so on. That was my version of it. Now Boyd will know more about it, because he kept in more close contact. He wasn't evicted, and we were not particularly close. He and Pan got together when she was about 18. I think Boyd is an exceptional man. There aren't many, but there are a few exceptions. He has a lot of feminist appreciation, and he does a great deal of the laundry and cooking and dishes and child care and all that sort of thing. My own feeling is that he still takes priority over Pan, but not super stuff. I think push comes to shove, he's still male, but aside from that, he's pretty liberated. But when he got together with Pan, I think he saw me as opposing the relationship. So he tried to sow discontent between us. Mother-in-law stuff, stereotype mother-in-law. So he didn't feel upset, I don't know how he felt about our being evicted. Maybe he'd already left, I don't recall. He maintained more contact with Mountaingrove. So he could tell you more about what went on during that period of time. And maybe Pan too. I don't know. So, while we were at Mountaingrove, Ruth and I, the new feminists, we were into women's liberation, and we thought that involved children's liberation also. Now, our idea of children's liberation was to liberate ourselves from the children, to a large extent. We wanted them to take some responsibilities around the house. When we insisted on that, my son moved over to the main house, 50 feet away, and took on responsibilities, but not at my house. Pan needed companionship with children her age, and so she went, did I tell you about the Quaker school?

Q: Yeah, John Mulmon [?] school?

A: Yes, John Mulmon school. Tane is dyslexic, and he didn't fit into the Glendale school system at all. And I thought he was better off, since school had always been terribly difficult to him, bring a lot of feelings of inferiority and anger, I thought he'd probably be better outside of the school and since they didn't have services for him, they didn't pursue the fact that he wasn't going to school, and so he worked with the young men on the land. Doing the tractor and working in the trees, and whatever they did, digging and whatever. And the fact that he couldn't read wasn't an issue with anybody. So when he was about 15 -- we moved there when he was 12. It must've been 14 or so, this folk dancing, which was the social event at Mountaingrove, which was taught by this gay man from Wolf Creek, required him to learn to skip, in order to do the dance steps, in order to participate in the major social event. And I believe that in doing that, he had to coordinate the two halves of his body, which is what was one of the treatments for dyslexia, crawling and moving, things like this. And he had trouble learning that step, but he did learn it. And after that, he learned to read, on his own. Now he had been taught to read, probably

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about 15 times, but he didn't retain it. You know, his father would work with him, and he would be able to do it, and the next day he wouldn't be able to do it. So he started at 15, and he could read, he started out on the Tolkien trilogy. And I didn't believe he could read it, but his sister came home from John Mulmon, and they were arguing about how the plot went, and he was right. So I knew he could read, because he could figure this all out. So what I did, somewhere along the line, was I divided up what money I had left, equally between the three of us, and put them in charge of their money, said, "You can spend it how you want to, but you should make it last until you're 18." And so they each bought something frivolous, and then they started taking care of their money. And they were to pay \$50 a month to Mountaingrove for staying there, that was their responsibility. Other than that, I forget what they bought. I think one of them bought a waterbed. Some kind of bicycle, motorcycle, something, typical, I mean it was fine. But anyhow, that was what I thought was being liberating. But my attention shifted a great deal to Ruth and feminism. And I think that was much harder on them than I understood. And I'm awfully glad they were in a community. Pan had a Quaker school, and Tane had the Mountaingrove people. But since it was kind of an unpopular position -- to be a feminist is challenging almost anywhere, even to this day -- it made their mother not the pillar of the community, but some of the challenging outsider sort of thing. So that must've been somewhat difficult for them. But I was so busy being who I was and doing what I was doing and all that stuff. And then when we moved to Golden, well the whole community broke up. When my ex-husband married the woman there, and then they moved out into Wolf Creek, then the kids could go back and forth. And she was really a nice woman. And she taught my daughter how to do canning, and Tane worked there remodeling the building they were in and doing some stuff with them. So they had connections, both places. I think they maybe moved out before we were evicted. Anyhow, when we settled down, we lived in a 10 ft square cabin, so there's no way my kids can move in on me. We hardly had room ourselves. And so Tane then went to live in some other communes in Wolf Creek. There were other communes. And he was a strong young man, and he was a very person to have on the communes. And Pan and Boyd went to a commune out in Williams or somewhere, and stayed there for awhile, and then I believe Boyd got an inheritance from his grandfather, and he bought a bus, and they lived in a bus for a few years. And then he bought the land where they now live and have a house. So in a lot of ways, it was difficult for them, I'm sure. It was difficult for me, but I'm an adult, and I was choosing. But I believe it had meant that we were all still here, within 10 miles of each other. And that our lifestyles are somewhat different, but they're still pretty close, our value system. I mean, they have TV's and new computers and a fax machine and all that stuff, but the way I live is not shocking to them. Whereas it might be for someone who --

Q: And you're off the grid here, right?

A: Yeah, but they're not, either of them. In fact, you know I have a CB, and I get messages, so on, so I call on the CB, and then the telephones ring over there, they get that settled, and so we're in touch. I'm just saying that while I think that way of life was hard on them in some ways -- my son once said, "Mom, I'm glad you got me out of LA, or I'd be dead by now." I don't know why. I guess he was pretty angry with the fact that he was dyslexic and people treated him as dumb, and so on. So he might have gotten into a lot of trouble if he'd stayed in the city. I think Pan probably regrets that she doesn't have a college education. Their father never contributed anything to their upkeep or education after the divorce. The final straw was when he quit his job. He had a masters degree, and I have a masters degree. And when

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he came home and told me that he didn't like his job and he was quitting, I correctly predicted that what he wanted to do was lie on the couch and smoke marijuana for the rest of his life, a little LSD once in a while. And he has not been employed in the last number of years it's been, since '69.

Q: Does he still live in Wolf Creek?

A: He lives on the same land with my son. I think they smoke marijuana together at night, and my son is taking after his father. I just watch this pattern unfold. I don't know how to intervene in it. I've tried to rescue several times, and I've come to the place where I think my rescue is ineffectual, and I'm stopping it. I decided my job is to love him, and not to rescue him. And I realize that the path I took was not the one that my mother wanted me to take. "It's okay, Jean, to drop out and get over the divorce for awhile. Now let's get back to work." I've never been back to work, in my profession. I can say I haven't had a paycheck since 1969. I've been self-employed, and a very busy retirement. So, I try not to be judgmental about the fact that he isn't finding what he wants to do, but I do feel that it's terribly difficult for his wife to carry all the responsibility for three kids, and him. The timing is getting awfully close to how old I was when I got the divorce, and how old his kids are when I left with my kids. I don't know if he's going to have to repeat the pattern. It's looking very obvious. So, anyhow, we're all still here, and I have grandchildren, and I'm taking the oldest one to town tomorrow, to spend the day with him, which is my Christmas present to each of them. We just hadn't gotten around to doing the Christmas present until Easter. It's been wonderful to be with the grandchildren, but they're all getting very busy, and they're all doing well. So their lives are with their friends. And they like to come up and eat the strawberries out of the garden, and see grandma once in a while, but I'm not the center of their lives by a great distance, and that's okay. I think that these, Pan and Boyd's children, have role models of very much community involved people, very principled, acting in a larger sense for the good of the world sort of thing. And I'm also involved in this community -- I don't know if you know anything about the Enterprise Zone, and the grant that we received?

Q: A little bit. Pan talked about that a little.

A: Okay. Boyd and I are very active at the meetings. Pan can't go, usually. She's too tired and she has a little one at home that doesn't sit in meetings very well. But she also is a person who is not just domestic. So I think these children are getting the idea that you just are involved in your community, you just do good things with other people, and that's just the way people are. They always think that whatever the parents are is the way that everybody is. So I think they're getting a wonderful education. This group is a 501C3, nonprofit corporation, that receives this money, and we have a board of directors, and I'm on the board of directors, and so are my two grandchildren. They have youth members, and Miranda and Javen are youth members from Wolf Creek. They both are going to need scholarships to go to college, so I said it would great and their applications. And they're absorbing it, and they're both 4.0 students.

Q: Now is Javen Tane's kid?

A: Yes, Tane's oldest kid. He's now 15, he's taller than Tane, and he's going out for track. So tomorrow I will pick him up at 11:00 at the high school, where he has been doing track for 2 hours.

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Q: Good for him!

A: And he's a computer expert, and I may get to check my e-mail while I'm at his house. The library had a free e-mail service, but it's gone down and it's not available. But he does e-mail, he does his computer stuff, so when I take him home I may get to e-mail and see if there's any messages for me. Because for awhile, well, a friend of mine was here, and decided that Womanspirit should have an anthology. So she put it on the internet to see if anybody wanted to help. We got about 6 replies. I contacted two of them -- one of them contacted me, and I contacted another -- and they're supposedly working on this anthology. One's in Tennessee, and the other's in Philadelphia. So I was contacting them with the internet. Now the e-mail thing has gone down, so I'm struggling, "Is it going to come back? Do I have to start writing letters again?" So if I can check with Javen, I can see if there's anything on the e-mail about this sort of thing. Other than that, I write letters by hand. I do have an antique computer that was given to me, over in the barn. And I use WordPerfect just for writing articles. And my project in the community -- I've had 3 projects. The first one, I said, "We shouldn't spend all this money without surveying people to find out what they want." Because the 25 of us who show up for meetings are not representative of the whole community. So I initiated a survey, and we did a survey of Sunny Valley. The second project was to start a newsletter. How are people going to know what the opportunities are if we don't get something out to let them know about it. and because I had this experience with Womanspirit, I was not daunted by doing a 4 page newsletter. So that's, it's a monthly newsletter, and it's delivered free to everybody in the zip code area. I refuse to take advertising, because I don't like it. And so the community organization supports it. We're sponsored by them. They pay the costs of it, and the mailing. And so I have a really nice friend, we get along really well, we're the co-editors of this monthly newsletter. And then the 3rd one was, what we call BASIC, Building a Safe Inclusive Community, to deal with hate crimes. And so those are my 3 projects. And I get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing my values and my projects work. I hope I have enough time to do that and my garden. Because the touch of the earth is very important to me. I get very uncentered if I don't get out and -- I was a social worker, papers, telephones -- it's so nice to touch real things. And yet the papers are piled up.

Q: Do you grow a lot of your own food?

A: Yes. I like to grow my own food. It's not like I'm trying to become self-sufficient with food. But I have enough raisins to get me through until there are more raisins. I have canned tomatoes and canned plums and canned pears. I'm eating kale from the garden, I have parsley and green onions and beats currently in the garden.

Q: Are you vegetarian?

A: Well, I have been for a long time. Pan is very much a vegetarian, she'd let you know that. Since she was 3.

Q: She said that.

A: Did she tell you that she asked Momma what this was, and Momma said, "Pig." And she said, "Do they have to kill it?" She asked me that three times on 3 different pieces of meat, and she was a vegetarian. I was a vegetarian for a very long time, and I have recently given into my desires for chicken.

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Q: Do you raise chickens?

A: No. A lot of people say, "Why not?" And one reason is I don't want anymore dependency. You have to be home to feed the chickens. And the other is you have to fight with raccoons, skunks, foxes -- I don't want to do that. So, I don't have chickens. I just, it's wonderful to be at the place where I can feel like I can do what pleases me. And I didn't really feel that for a long time, still running on what I ought to do, and what I should do, and what mother would think is best. I guess at 70 I somehow emancipated myself, and said, "Okay, enough already." It ain't all that easy, but I'm heading that direction. Like telling these people, "I'm not going to rescue you. I'll be your friend or your neighbor, but I have my limits." I'm getting more comfortable with "Okay, it's alright, Jean, to take a rest in the middle of the afternoon." I used to figure I had to work from 8 in the morning to 5, and then I was off duty. And of course I worked Sundays and all those other days too. So have we covered everything?

Q: There's one thing I'd love to get you to talk about if you don't mind, and that's a little bit about the nuts and bolts of Mountaingrove, how the work was done, things like that?

A: I think the materials I'm giving you will cover a lot. Because, it's been a long time. I'm not sure that I have a very clear picture of how it was decided that we would use the tractor, or, I don't know.

Q: Well, what about gender relations? I'm curious, here you were, this emerging feminist, and you had this patriarch who was trying to run everything. Did he expect women to be in the kitchen making meals?

A: I don't think it was quite -- I don't think so, particularly. Everybody just had to pitch in and do everything, that sort of thing. There were women who wore long dresses and had little kids, and if they wanted to cook, that was fine, and if I wanted to drive the tractor, that was okay. I'm thinking, the patriarch just wanted everything to get done. I'm trying to think - I don't think that the young men there, from 23 to 33 or so, [tape interrupted] . . . a strong way, "Women have to do this, or women have to do that." I think there was a small number, and we just pitched in and did whatever. We did help out in the kitchen. I don't remember resenting it. I think --

Q: --Did living there provide you with the opportunities to learn new skills, like driving the tractor?

A: Like learning how to cook rice? Yes, I think so. But I had taken a shop course when I was married, and built climbing equipment for my kids, and ran a little daycare thing at home, very small. So I knew how to run a saw, sort of thing. There's a picture of me doing it on the porch, at the barn. I think, for me, it was living in the country, living what I would call an authentic life, aside from city life and bureaucracy, and becoming myself. I was free from marriage. And there was all this feminism in the air, of thing to learn about. And then becoming a lesbian the year after I was there, that was a whole new thing. And I had this association with the Quakers, which gradually diminished, because of my deepest -- I've come to hate the word "spiritual," it's so used -- this deepest experience that I had with the trees seemed a lot weird to me. I didn't know why I was feeling this way. This was before anybody talked about hugging trees. I didn't have anybody to talk about it with, until Ruth came. And Ruth had been a Jungian. She didn't think it was very strange. She encouraged me, and supported me in honoring what I felt. And of course, feminism says "Trust yourself, believe in yourself." So when I went to Quaker Meeting, -- the Christianity's not real heavy, but it is Christian. And I didn't identify what I was experiencing as Goddess.

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That came along a little later. Other people put that name on it. And now I use the term "Goddess." But it's not really basically how I feel, that there's a Goddess. What I feel is the nurturance that we like to associate with female. Beneficence and nurturance, is how I experience this, total acceptance. So when I sat through a lot of Quaker meetings, they didn't seem to be on the same wavelength I was. And yet I respected them, and I felt accepted by them as a person. They were a little uncomfortable with the lesbian stuff, but they handled it pretty well. So I asked finally for a clearness meeting. And I don't think Caroline Estess [?] was on that committee. There were two women and a man. And I spoke about my feelings about this grove of trees, and the man said, "It's not places that are spiritual." And he may have said some other things. And probably it was not -- the women, I didn't think were that judgmental about it all. But somehow, that was enough for me to feel my home is really with lesbians and feminists. I don't think we had gotten into Goddess stuff yet. So I kind of just gave up on the Quaker thing. I'm very pleased that Pan has stayed with it. I'm now, I told her the other day, that I'd kind of like to go to one of those Quaker gatherings again. Because there's a Quaker lesbian group that meets down near Santa Cruz once a year, at a Quaker center. I went to that for 3 or 4 years, but it's such a struggle to get down to Santa Cruz and back, that I just decided that I can't do it. But I love the quality of the women. Just being with them. The workshops don't mean that much to me, I don't really care. But of their quality of being, the way they carry themselves, the way they are, I don't know. I mean, I suppose other religious groups exude some of that same kind of centered, acceptant . . . serious value. Some of those things. So that's why I was thinking that I might like to go to Quaker gathering, and just experience that without having to drive through San Francisco and down to Santa Cruz. And Pan would like me to go with her, but we've already scheduled one of these Southern Oregon Women's Land Network meetings for April 26th, and we're going to have a lesbian expert, one of our group has skills in communication. She says, I have a little card somewhere, we're going to learn trust building, . . . I don't know what I did with my little green card. Well, anyhow, nice things we're going to study together, to increase our ability to get along, figure out our common future. So there's sort of been a lapse of a lot of years when we've sort of just gone our own way and taken care of things, you know, friendly things, and occasionally a birthday party, we'd all go too. But not self-consciously dealing with community issues. And so Billy and I decided, there's a yearly gathering of women, called the Fall Gathering. The last Fall Gathering, we talked together about why aren't there women? Her land is empty, my land is going to be empty -- why is this? And we decided to -- we didn't have time then, so we called a meeting of all the women who've had experience on land, fairly long experience, not naive experience. And so we did, for January. And we met at Womanshare. And it was like a family reunion. That was when we'd come together consciously to talk about our lands, our feelings about the community, how we were going to go on into the future, what was this all about? And instead of just meeting as a social group. So it's been a kind of, maybe a rebirth of our self-conscious community awareness. And I don't know whether we'll go on beyond this. I don't know whether there will be another meeting or not. We'll see. The other events that help hold the community together, we have a writers' group and an artists' group. And those have both been going on for quite some time. And sometimes they're small, and sometimes they're larger. So we don't meet only in a social way. As I say, the writers' group helps me to know women on a deeper level, because of hearing their writing. Three of them have written of that meeting at Womanshare, about the land issues for the magazine Maize, country lesbian magazine. So three of their articles were printed in it this last issue.

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Q: Now why does Oregon seem to be such a center for women's land? Or maybe it isn't?

A: I get asked this question. I was asked this question yesterday, "Why is it so special here?" she said. She's doing, the woman who is here, and is now over at Womanshare, is a photographer, and she's done a slide show on women's communities, all across the country, and some nuns and so on, other kinds of women's communities. She says, "What is it about Oregon that's so special?" I said, I don't know, because I don't know all those other communities. But I do think that, for one thing, we got started quite a long time ago, 1972, '73. The other one is, Ruth and I really started it by going and saying, "Where are the lesbians? We went to Portland, which was a city, there was not very much land owned by lesbians in 1972. And then, what we had was a project, a creative project that women could come and share. And we met four times a year. And we were quite open. And I think that was based on my Quaker values. We did not go seeking big names. And my feminist belief, that women's experiences are important. And it was a time of beginning to explore feminism on a wide scale. So women were developing new imagery, and they were reporting on their awakening experiences. And they were sharing their truths about having mastectomies, and about incest, about feelings on the death of their mother. And this was done in a -- have you ever seen the magazine?

Q: No, I haven't.

A: It was done in a -- well, we were very low-cost. I wanted the magazine to be accessible, that's one of my words, so that when she picked up the magazine, she could say, "Gee, my stuff could be in that." And I still had problems, and I've been publishing this magazine for 10 years, and I would pick up Woman of Power, and say, "Oh, no way. Slick paper, so fancy, that's not me." I wanted not to have that feeling about Womanspirit. And so it was very open, it was very welcoming and supportive. It was 64 pages. So I think that we had a project that welcomed women's creativity, you didn't have to be famous, you didn't have to be really great or good. And a lot of those women who are now living on women's land, made their contacts through Womanspirit. And it was not -- I mean we could've had gardens, and then everyone around here would be gardeners and farmers. But it was creative, and so it's become a creative center. And one way to get a reputation is to get published. And I have written a poem to women who don't write poems. Because, if you write, you get a name. If you just garden, or just do good community work, or just are a kind wonderful person, you don't get famous. I think it seems undeserved that people get famous by writing, because I'm no better or more important than all those women around who don't have people saying, "Oh, your name's Mountaingrove? I've heard of you." And it's just because of the writing. But because of that, it makes a woman visible. When she sees her name -- I mean I cried the first time I saw my name in print. It was Eugene Women's Press, and Ruth told me I was a writer and I should write -- she's a writer. And I sent it in, and it was published, and I cried. Because I was visible in the world, it made a difference what I thought. And I want to give that experience to other women. And that's what the magazine did. And so I think that's the basis for a community -- it's not like softball, which is fine. And there's a softball team in Grant's Pass -- they're not famous. Anyhow, famous isn't the point, but what I'm saying is I think it has created ambience, atmosphere, attitude -- the creativity is valued, that creative women should be here, they'll be compatible, if you come I'll take you to the writers' group, if you come, you can go artists' group, you don't have to be a famous artist to go to artists' group, anybody can come. And then these workshops on photography, and I didn't even mention -- for the last 7 years, my friend Gem and I have been doing

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dyke art camp here for a week. It's really Dyke Art Retreat Encampment -- it's called DARE. Anyhow, we've now stabilized it on the first week of July. And we have usually 12 to 13 women who come, and we hire a cook, and we just do art and enjoy each other for a week. And we have a lot of women who come back. There's one woman who's come every single time, and several others who've come almost every time. It's a very cheap -- again, all we go for [tape ends] . . . \$165 for the week, and that includes camping, housing, and food. You bring your own art supplies, and if you have things you want to share, you can bring supplies to share, if you don't, you don't. We don't schedule any workshops. Again, the women create their own. I know how to do etching, I know how to do block printing, I know how to do -- so then they share it. So we don't have to pay famous people. You'll raise the price a lot, to pay a famous person. We share. So, to me it's that sister aspect again. And whether you're scared to put your pencil to paper, or you've been in three galleries, we're all equal, in importance. We have different skills. And we like life-drawing. So those of us who like to do it, including Gem and me and anybody who wants to, usually after breakfast, we go out, there's a big oak tree and a little level space there, and we do life drawing in the morning. But anybody -- you can't be wrong, except if you don't do your kitchen duty. Because if all you want to do is like on the hammock for a whole week, that's fine. If you want to set up your easel in the woods and stick to yourself and do your own work, that's fine. Whatever, this is your time to do whatever you want. So if they don't want to come and do life drawing, then Gem and I pose for each other, and that's it. But then, wonderful jokes and conversation goes on, and sometimes people just come to sit and listen as we all joke around about whatever, or talk about whatever. And then in the evenings, we have slide shows, people bring slides that they want to show, because we have electricity in the barn. Then one night -- there's no TV, no telephone, we have to do our own entertainment -- one night they spontaneously had a big circle up under the tree, and they all told coming out stories. And another night, while we were waiting for dinner for about an hour, they sat and tried to throw gravel into a tin can. It's the kind of thing you did as a kid. But I love it. I think it's so wonderful to just be entertained in simple ways, and just with each other. And it's so --if the road were nice, you could jump in your car and run off somewhere, but the road isn't much fun, so you just stay here and make do with whatever it is. So that's what Rootworks is. I think it's very fulfilling.

Q: Now I know about Womanshare, and are there a lot of other women's groups?

A: Yes.

Q: Longstanding ones?

A: Next door to Womanshare is Fishpond, because Pisces bought that one. There's three women living there. Within a quarter of a mile, Connie, Amara, and Stacy live. Just up the street from them, Theresa and Holly live. And a little bit the other direction, Billy has bought a piece of land that her lover Amy lives on. They're even talking about a sort of a -- don't take it too seriously -- village concept. Closely associated lands. And they're exploring that together, and Billy can talk with you more about that. There's some other women's lands, with women who don't really relate to this community. We know each other, and they can be a social friend, but they don't have a sense of mutual goals or mutual interests sort of thing. Then here's Rootworks. Tee and Bev live in Sunny Valley, and that place is called Poppyseed. Then there's Cabbage Lane in Wolf Creek. Fly Away Home in Murtle Creek. Wood Song outside of Roseburg. Rainbows End, Rainbows, and Raven Song, are outside of Roseburg, they're all

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contiguous. Liz owns 500 acres that's called -- I don't think it's Whispering Pines, I don't remember. There are other lesbians and gay men living in Sunny Valley. I think I counted up 14 in Wolf Creek and Sunny Valley aside from the gay commune. But they don't really participate, except in a social level with each other. I'm invited to their birthday party or things like that, but not going -- what would you call it? It's sort of an acquaintance thing more than friendship. And let's see, there must be 3 or 4 more places in this area. And then down toward Ashland -- I don't relate as closely to the Ashland community. They're, I don't know what. But they established their community probably in 1970, even.

Q: In Ashland?

A: Well, the women in Ashland started what's now Fall Gathering, that's been going on for 20 something years. And they have friendship built up over that period of time. So what do they call -- a lesbian owns land. Bethard [?] has a definition of lesbian land as being land that will not be given or sold to members of the family or put on the market, but is expected to remain in lesbian hands. This is her definition, and it fits in a way. Because a lot of lesbians own a house on a lot or something, and that's lesbian land. But it doesn't have quite the same sense of a continuing community.

Q: What has your relationship been like over the years to the outside community, neighbors?

A: Well, I wrote an article for Maize, called "On the Importance of Being Neighbors," because if I'm a mile from the nearest phone, my car breaks down or something, I need help. Luckily, when we first moved here, a woman down the road identified us as lesbians, her mother's lesbian. And she let us know, eventually, her mother was lesbian, and so then we felt quite comfortable with that neighbor. I get along with all the neighbors. Ruth and I made a special point when we first moved here, since we were being called "man-haters," we didn't think it very safe to move into a neighborhood, "Here are two man-haters." So, it was just before Christmas, and I had Deborah, Tane's wife, cook some pies, and we took a pie to each of the neighbors and introduced ourselves. And they offer us beer, "Well, no thanks." Cigarette? "No thanks." Well, but we could talk about my children, and so on. So I think they decided that we were retired school teachers who were okay, but very boring and uninteresting people, which was just fine. So, we initiated that contact, in a positive way, with all of the neighbors up and down the road. And since then, it's stayed pleasantly distant. I wave to them, we're friendly, but I don't go into their homes to visit. And there's new neighbors, so I went and introduced myself, and talked to them a little bit. I don't expect to hang out with them unless I find we have some great interest in common. But just, we're all human beings, and things happen, and we may need help and we may not. But you're in a friendly environment. Then I didn't really put much energy into the straight community until this matter came up about the Enterprise Grant. And I think that came about -- well, you can either go cosmic or practical -- I had had a little conversation, I'd say with the Goddess, I say, "Well, universe, I'm not really terribly busy right now, things are in pretty good shape, do you have a new assignment for me? If so, please don't make it too hard." And then I found doors opening into the community, and doors closing into some of the other things I'd been doing. And I just said, "I don't know quite why I'm going to all these meetings, I don't know, what am I doing here?" But I keep going. And then I had these projects, and then they implemented, and then I got to know more of the straight people in the community, and got some satisfaction out of it. And my grandchildren are there, and Boyd is there, and then all my Quaker values about helping people and being fair, and not judging people by the amount of education

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or not saying -- my experience as a social worker, it doesn't mean that you're poor, it means that you're dumb, or that you're lazy, instead of the stereotypes about people, I wanted to be fair, and so I got interested in seeing that I could make a difference. So I've made a lot more friends. Again, they're not people I drop in on -- my life is full, busy already. I'm not lonesome. And if I am alone for three days and feel lonesome, there are plenty of places I can visit for a day, for a little while, but it doesn't happen very often at all. So, but it's nice. I feel, I've met some nice people and they're good to me, and pleasant with me in the straight community, and that's fine, that's enough. But I wasn't really interested and didn't participate very much unless it involved my grandchildren. I would visit my grandchildren at school and talk to their teacher, and enjoy that, and go to the Easter parade and watch them hump the Easter eggs. I can't remember I did much else, because I was very busy with all these other things you've heard about. And it's shifting, and it's interesting to me to watch it shift. I just, my life has evolved in such an interesting way, that I kind of trust that it will keep on. I don't know that I feel guided or protected or -- I don't know anything about those words. But as I look back, I've never had any big disasters, I don't have any tragedies in my life. It hasn't all been fun and games. Being evicted was painful, and so on. But basically, I feel really richly rewarded. I was requested -- usually now, I wait for a request -- I was requested to write an article for a newsletter called Women of a Like Mind, and they said they're going to do one on creativity and the written word, and would I like to write for it. And they gave me a bunch of questions. It was easy, so I wrote for it. And I said that doing this Womanspirit magazine, which I think, in a way I was guided to, and inspired, or whatever, and it was the right time -- I didn't make a lot of money, I didn't get rich, but I have been rewarded in so many ways I never dreamed of. I mean, here you are, sitting here listening to me going on like this. And women have been so generous and so kind to me. That blue truck out there is loaned to me by a woman, for 10 months out of the year while she's in Tokyo. I was given the computer that's in the other room. That's just the smallest part of it. The friendship, the women -- one woman sends me \$30 every spring to put into my garden, I've never met this woman. But she was in the magazine, we published two of her poems, long time ago. Just so many nice things happen to me all the time, that of course it gives me confidence, I haven't ever had any terrible thing happen, so I just keep believing it's going to be good. And I did not start the magazine so that I could be famous, or so I could get rich, or live in a nice house or whatever it is -- I don't really want a nice house, because then I feel worse about not doing the housekeeping! I feel low about it now, but it would be much worse if there was more carpets and more lamps and more all that stuff. I really think I would be uncomfortable in that kind of a circumstance. Now, I had a 4 bedroom house with a dishwasher and a refrigerator and all that stuff before I quit my job. So I don't long for it, because I've had it. I don't mind the outhouse. I think in fact there's a little sign that I took down because it was getting wet in the winter, that says, "The ultimate contemplative moment." So, these things were not hardships for me. They're chosen, because for me, they're more rich. I can go to my friends' houses and enjoy their lovely carpets and their nice furniture. But I'm happier at home. I don't have to measure up to a lot of stuff or take care of a lot of stuff. And I just feel very, very blessed. And so in this article, I said, one of my bumper stickers says, "When the universe calls, don't hang up." So I think that the rewards are not what you expect, you can't predict -- I didn't have any idea that any of these nice things would happen to me. And yet they just keep happening. So, I encourage other women to trust -- when the universe calls, go for it. And then sit back -- well, don't sit back, you get worn out. But anyhow, then you'd be surprised at the good things that happen. Is that a good place to stop?

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Q: That's a wonderful place to stop, it's so positive!