

Interview with La Sara (Firefox) Allen

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

November 15, 1995

**Q:** So this is an interview with La Sara Firefox, on Wednesday, November 15th. Okay. At Greenfield Ranch. So, um, La Sara, can you tell me about your background in growing up on Greenfield. Just go.

**A:** Just go, huh? Okay, my parents moved up to the Ranch in 1972. 1972. Um, I believe that the buying of the whole ranch through the real-estate broker, who was Tim Baker, started in 1970, but I'm not absolutely positive on that. But my parents were the first, actually, to move up here. And they moved up to a very far point. Where we're at now is kind of the center of the Ranch. And where my parents bought land was out on one of the corners of the Ranch. They kind of wanted to get as far back as they could into the hills. They're extremists [laughs]. Wonder where I got it from?

**Q:** Why did they move up here?

**A:** They moved up here -- well, at the time, ... my mother and father got married in '71, April of '71, the month before I was born, and my mother had already had two children by her first marriage; my father was her second husband. Um, and they were nine and seven, I believe. And, um, they lived on a commune in La Honda, called Yin Palace, and that's where I was born, at home -- I was the first one of my mom's six kids that was born at home; I was the third child, but the first born at home. The other two were born back East, my older brother and sister were born back East, and my mother's doctor wasn't hip on the idea of home births. So um, ... uh, they had a pretty ideal living situation at the commune, although communal life was kind of difficult during that time period, is my impression, because, um, it was very much kind of a singles scene, is my impression of it, from some of the stories I've heard, and not so much even just a singles scene as much as, there was a lot of drug use involved in the expansion of minds that was happening at the time. My mother was not extremely comfortable with the idea of raising her children in that kind of environment; maybe she didn't feel like it was safe enough or controlled enough to raise children in. Not that my mind exerted extreme amounts of control, per se, in raising her children, but, the controlled climate, rather. And also, it was just a desire to get away from the cities, it was a desire to become self-sustained, self-dependent. And who knows what their impression of what it was going to be, was at the time. I certainly have no idea, and I would bet that they got more than they bargained for. But my mom, well both my parents have stuck with it, for 25 years. My mom just morning, I left this message on my mom's answering machine, she has an answering machine for the first time in, you know, quarter of a century. So, it's pretty incredible, my mom lived up here for the better part of 25 years, I guess.

**Q:** Were there other people that they were a part of, that moved up here together?

**A:** Well, the association of owners was, um, brought together by the land, for the most part. I mean, it was couples and families and single people, and single people with children, that all came together by way of the land purchase. Not to say that people-- there are parcels, like 220 acre parcels that are cut into like, four sub-parcels, that are owned by friends, or family, and, you know. So there were some sub-groups within the group that were acquainted with each other, or familial with each other. But for the most part, it was a organic, association process that happened just by way of interest in this land.

**Q:** But was it kind of a hippie thing?

**A:** It was the "back to land" movement. It was really the beginning of the "back to land" movement. I would say it was, yeah, definitely the beginning of the "back to land" movement. I mean, there weren't

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many rural communities at that point in time. And like I said, I think a lot of it was just a desire to get away from the city, and to get back to nature, you know.

**Q:** But rather than be part of a commune, your parents were, maybe retreating a bit more, or wanting to be by themselves?

**A:** Absolutely. And that's where this land, or this "community," because it's not a commune at all, um, it's a land association with common land as part of the deal that everyone bought into, and it's an association of owners that run by a board of directors that takes care of the business side of the functioning here: roads, assessments, budget, um, disputes, uh, overviews of the bylaws, CC&R's, and whatever else happens to come up, the yearly functions that we do as a community, just the basic nuts and bolts. So, it's not, the setting here is not as interactive as other communities you might have encountered. And not day-to-day interaction.

**Q:** Right, like no group meals or anything like that.

**A:** Right, well, within the subgroups, that could happen, it does some places, but not-- I mean, it's a large community, eight square miles of land, somewhere between 120 and 170 residents, don't even know the number on that. Actually it's funny, because my friend Kirsten Johnson, I don't know if you've met her--?

**Q:** Well, I've just seen her picture on Communities magazine --

**A:** Right. You should interview her as well. She's a very wonderful person. It's too bad you aren't going to be around this weekend, because a board meeting is going on this weekend, on Sunday, and my mom's going to be here, a bunch of people, and we're also going to have an architectural review committee formation meeting before the board meeting. I'm the president of the association at this point. The second year running. Um, which is an interesting situation. I'm the first second-generation owner to have that position in this community, and it's kind of interesting, because I'm actually sort of right around the age that a lot of people were when they moved up here. You know, so, and I'm 24, and a lot of people were about that age when they bought their land up here. I'm also buying land up here, so.

**Q:** Are buying the plot that this is on?

**A:** No actually, my brother, my older brother, my older sister, my mother and myself are buying out our land partner. We have, my family owned 40 acres, and our land partner owned 40 of the 80 acre parcel that we had in common, and so he wanted to, he wanted out of ownership, basically, so we're buying him out. We foreclosed on that last year.

**Q:** Do you plan to build a structure on it?

**A:** There are structures on the parcel, well, on the 80 acre parcel, pretty much all the structures within the uh, um, ... the, oh my God I can't think of the word right now because I'm a little sick. My brain isn't working; it's zoning. Um, the zoning qualifications, pretty much all of the buildings that are allowed on the 80 acre parcel are in existence now. And, it needs work, it needs work, my parcel, my family's parcel needs work. And my mom and my younger brother and myself have all talked about the possibility of

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having a more tight-knit intentional community, sub-community happening on our parcel at some point. That's really my, my hope for the future here is that that will happen at some point. A garden wall; we used to have a big garden. The thing about living on the land like this, I mean I grew up hauling water and splitting firewood and, you know, seven miles of dirt road before you hit the concrete to get to town, and hour and a half from the hospital, no phone, no television, a creek we had to drive through, certain months out of the year that it was totally impossible to get to town or back, especially before the roads were as good as they are now. You saw how good, or lack thereof, they are at this point, but they were nothing when my parents moved up here. They were logging tracks that had been out of use for 20-odd years. They were nothing. My parents and the other folks that moved up here built the roads. The only one that was really in existence was the main Ranch road. And that wasn't even up to the level it is now.

**Q:** Did they also build most of the dwellings?

**A:** Oh yeah. Yeah. Yep. Everything except, the only building that was on this land pretty much, when everyone moved up, was the Ranch House, which is on the common land, and that's the community center, and that was an actual--, before it was bought by the people that owned it now, the Greenfield Ranch Association, before it was bought by this incarnation of reality here, it was a cattle ranch, and before that, or maybe during the, it was owned by a woman named Anne Greenfield, and maybe during her ownership, I'm not sure, it was logged in the '50s, selectively cut in the '50s, and before that in the '20s, and it was a Native-American trading site. There are Native-American sites all over this land. There are a number of actual camps that have been, uh -- we've had digs up here, we have a lot of archaeologists living up here, well, a few: Mark and Deborah, Gary, or Nigteagle, and Deborah are both archaeologists and they've done digs in about three different places up here, found a lot. Actually they found a really old arrowhead at one of the digs. And there are chips and shards and arrowhead pieces all over the place, all over the Ranch. So yeah, this place has a lot of history to it. A lot of history.

**Q:** Would you say that most of the people that settle up here were kind of counter-culture types?

**A:** Yeah, I'd say so. I call Greenfield Ranch -- this is kind of a term that I've sort of coined, and I think it's a little funny, but it's kind of accurate -- I call it a "sovereign nation of outlaws, hippies, and anarchists." Which will give you kind of an idea of how it is facilitate a meeting up here. And I do that. I love this place. There's a certain sense of freedom here that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, as far as I can tell. I mean, I grew up with ...clothing optional being the way of life, like I didn't know anything else. I used to -- my mom had convince m--, my goodness, when I was like eight, even, we'd go to town, it'd be hot out, I'd be taking my clothes off. My mom would say, "You can't do that in town!" "Why not? It's hot! I don't understand. I don't get it, Mom."

**Q:** Were you schooled up here?

**A:** I was home schooled all the way through high school. But not many people were. I went to one private school for half a year and another private school for a year, when I was younger. Then I went to Yukiya High for five days and decided I did not like being treated like cattle, so I said, "Nyah, I don't think so."

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**Q:** And you had two older siblings, right?

**A:** Yeah, and they both--, my older sister was nine when we moved up here, uh, or almost, maybe ten, nine or ten. And she was already very city inculturated at that point, and she never got used to being up here. She really did not. She really did not um, she couldn't cope with the isolation, really, and she never got real comfortable here, I don't think. She moved out early, moved to town, started living with friends, and moved away when she was about 19. Uh, and my older brother started going school in town when he was, I think, 13. But I decided that I didn't want to do that. I had other things to do.

**Q:** Was it ever lonely?

**A:** Oh yeah, yeah. It was very isolatory. But I had a large family, I mean, my sense of family is very strong, still. And, I'm way more interactive with my family than a lot of people right now. And it definitely was, very, I mean it was extremely isolated. We used to, when I was a small child, we would go to town, you know ... depending on the season, we'd go to town once a month, once every two months. We have funny stories from the early days that I don't even remember, except by way of our own family folklore, of taking the pony and cart to town for commodities. We used to have, we had animals, livestock, and a garden, and we did farmer's market some, and my mom sold sets to the co-op in town, and we used to take our goats to auction and sell them to the Mexicans down in the valley.

**Q:** What are sets?

**A:** Starter sets. Plants. Yeah. And uh, you know, herbs, and she actually, we had a great garden. My mom was really into garlic for awhile, and she won prizes at the county fair for her garlic. We also did a lot of theatre, my mom was very into theatre, and uh, we used to do political theatre as a family. I was--, I became a political activist at the age of 12. I organized my first action at the age of 12, with my mom's help, and did a--, I started a chapter of Children's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and did a speaking tour of all the schools in this area, and got the students to write letters to President Reagan about nuclear disarmament, and then had a reading in the park and an art show, we threw an art show in town and sent letters off to President Reagan.

**Q:** So where did you get your political savviness -- did you read newspapers, or -? You didn't have TV, right? From your parents?

**A:** We didn't have TV. Did I read newspapers? You know what I remember the most is this: I know that since I was a very small child, I've had an irrational --it's better now, I'm over it -- but when I was younger, from the time when I was very small child, I had an irrational fear of the Holocaust. Now, maybe that came from my parents, I don't know. Could be the fact that my parents wanted to build a bomb shelter, I don't know, it could've been that. You know, those fanatical hippies. But, uh, and I remember conversations that -- I remember things from when I was a small child, things that stand out in my memory, like, I remember when I was about seven or eight, my mom and dad and a friend of theirs talking--, and they were having dinner or something, and their friend was talking about the earthquake that was going to, you know, tear California apart, and how we were going to fall into the ocean and stuff. I remember being mortified. And there was ... are you okay Seth? Um, what I was talking about was uh, the fact that I had an extreme and irrational fear of the Holocaust. Of nuclear holocaust . I used to have dreams, until I was about 19, probably, maybe 20, or nuclear war, of the blast,

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and of having to hide out, and wondering if we were all going to die, and all this stuff. And I remember when airplanes would fly over, I'd get scared, and I remember when the Iran-Iraq war was happening, when I was really little, uh... I used to shut the radio off, I didn't want to hear it. And when the test of the emergency broadcasting system thing, I'd shut that off too. And, I had this feeling that if it was the end of the world, I didn't want to know it. And that started changing when I started being politically active. And that's really an incredible thing, I think that that's a real, it was a real gift to be able to explore that option, of taking change in my own hands, and from that point on, I adopted, or created the saying, "If I'm doing something, at least I know someone is." That was kind of my attitude for a long time. I'm getting over that too. I figure everybody does something in their own way.

**Q:** How close were your closest neighbors?

**A:** We have a fairly close neighbor, but the interaction has not always been there. And then, uh... one of , well, my best friend when I was growing up, for the most part, most of my childhood, my best friend was Glen Rudell, and she lived about a mile away. And it was nothing to walk to her house, we did it all the time. Glen and Jenny, me and my next sister, Patience, Patience is a year and a half younger than me, and Jenny and Patience were the same age, and me and Glen were the same age, so we would hang out. A lot of the, actually, there was a pretty, ... all of the Ridge kids were pretty tight for awhile. And then when the other kids started going to school, and I wasn't going to school, and my little sister wasn't going to school -- my little sister started going to school in high school. She decided she wanted to do that -- uh, and I didn't, uh, she did independent study for awhile, and then out to the coast and went to a community school over there that's a great, you know, kind of alternative public school. Um, but when the other kids started going to school, and they were like gone, there was a certain gulf created between my family and the others who were living the Ranch more often. And that was really when people started, people were confronting their need for a little bit more financial -- security, maybe. And not having such an easy time creating it, and a lot of people started going off the hill to work, and trying to create a more sustainable lifestyle in that way. Although, it is an interesting thing, because at this point, we have a certain generational legacy. My generation of children that have grown up in community have a certain generational legacy of parents that will be old soon, but have no social security. That have been out of the system for 30-odd years, and therefore have no social security benefits, have no way to get into the system, or have the system take care of them now. So, uh, that will be an issue, at some point. And our parents know that too. Our parents are having to confront that as well. It's a very interesting time, as far as communities go, right now, I think, with the second wave trying to figure out where to go from here.

**Q:** How did your parents support themselves?

**A:** Well, in the early years, ... you know, I don't know exactly! I know that we were home a lot, and I think that for most of my growing up, my family was on welfare, or at least living off of commodities, and our garden. We definitely lived off of commodities. When we first moved up here, I mean, we--, I remember things that are just, so foreign to the condition of most of America, obviously. Hauling water and splitting firewood, is part of it. And I also know what it's like to be hungry, which is something that a lot of people have not experienced in our culture, I mean hungry not knowing when you're going to be

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able to eat again, and being stuck in the hill in the middle of winter and not knowing when you're going to be able to get off the hill.

**Q:** Does it snow up here?

**A:** It used to snow more actually. It doesn't snow a lot, but it does get real wet. And uh, there's a certain intensity to that, you know. My mom suffered many miscarriages, I would say due to malnourishment. And, we would get commodities, like I said, which is like white flour, butter, white bread, uh powdered eggs, ham, chicken, this is the old days, potatoes, canned fruit, some canned vegetables. And, when everything else was gone --oh , white sugar -- when everything else was gone, my father would make a pineapple upside-down cake: white flour, white sugar, powdered eggs, powdered fruit, water. And we would eat pineapple upside-down cake for days on end. Yep. If you ever want to scare me, make pineapple upside-down cake. Yeah, it's pretty intense. But also, I will say, there was hardness to it, there was definitely an austerity that is foreign to many, most of the people in our culture at this point in time. At the same time, I was raised with a certain sense of innocence that, ... that started disappearing by the time I was about nine, because my father had a drinking problem -- has a drinking problem -- and it got the best of him at a certain point. Um, and that's another story that I don't really feel like I need to go into, but, um... I, when I was young my most extreme fears ... um, my extreme day-to-day fears were, in the summer time: fire, because I knew how fast everything could burn up there on the hill, and I used to have nightmares about that, and rattlesnakes, in the summertime. I was not afraid of axe-murderers, I was not afraid of drug-dealers, I was not afraid of homicidal maniacs, you know. Although we knew a few of them, [laughs] actually we did have a homicidal maniac that lived on the Ranch, but we didn't know that until after he killed himself, so. Leonard Lake. Do you know who that is? Leonard Lake was a mass-murderer, and he committed suicide in, what? Eighty-three, maybe? After he'd moved off the Ranch and was living down in, uh, I don't know, outside of the Bay Area somewhere, and he had this torture chamber beneath his house and videos of all the people he'd tortured and killed. Yeah, yeah.

**Q:** Did he kill anybody who lives out here?

**A:** No. Yeah, but he was a pretty weird guy. We used to go to his house and hang out. I mean, it's like one of those things. My little brother goes, "Guess what I'm going to be for Halloween," and I said, "What?" And he goes "A homicidal maniac. They look like everyone else!" I was like, "Yep, they do!" I mean we used to go over to his house, and the only thing that was weird about--, I mean, he was not that, it's not like you can tell if somebody's a maniac. He played survival games, you know, and stuff, and had a real survivalist mentality, but, no, that's not too absurd for somebody who lives out in the middle of nowhere. He liked pyrotechnics a lot too. But those are the only two outstanding weirdnesses, really, about him. But yeah. But, I still didn't have any concept of that kind of thing, that's really a, the "city mentality" of being careful of people. I mean I can walk for miles and never see anybody. And I mean, I remember walking out in the fields by myself as a tiny little kid and going to sleep on hillsides and coming home hours later. You know, such a sense of idyllic freedom. And that's one of the sense of freedom that I have here still, that, it's a freedom to just be.

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**Q:** Was there also a sense of community?

**A:** There was a sense of community. We would have parties at the Ranch House. Uh, and like I said, you know, the Ridge Kids, we lived on Radical Ridge, which is that side of the Ranch, the Ridge Kids had a sense of community within our little, brat-pack or whatever. Uh, and then, also, when I was younger, too, there was much more communication between this side of the Ranch and that side of the Ranch, and people mingled a lot more. We had Christmas events that people-- , like, one of the houses that we passed on the way in is Phillis and Fetner Vines', they used have Christmas sing-a-longs every year. We had Halloween parties, summer solstice parties, a variety of things down at the common land, at the Ranch House and the pond. For awhile, one of the Ranch residents had a, a, kind of a tavern happening -unlicensed, of course-- tavern happening at the Ranch House, poker hall kind of atmosphere. That was kind of fun. I was very young, I was a barmaid. It was a good time. Um, and uh, yeah, so there was, you know, and, and the sense of community has kind of ebbed and flowed through the years, and it's definitely at an upswing right now.

**Q:** Why do you think that?

**A:** I think part of it, and I don't want to sound arrogant or, or, uh, self-congratulatory or anything, but I think part of it is because they're seeing the presence of the second generation coming back, and remembering that just because they're old and tired doesn't mean that it's over.

**Q:** So it's not just you that coming back, some others have come back?

**A:** Well, there's me and Kirsten. Yeah, Kirsten. I was on the Board last year, and became president, and this year again, and Kirsten is on the Board this year as well. So there's, out of eight board members, two out of eight are second generation. And the thing is that I know that I'll leave again, and, Kirsten is in, you know, is in graduate school right now, she's not living out here even, but she's coming up for the meetings, so it's a, I know I will leave again, but I know also that I'll come back. And, and I wasn't planning on taking on a second year at all, but people really, seemed to want me to. And I decided that I could make a commitment to a second year. And I feel good about it at this point. Kirsten and I had a few projects that we're really going to try and get the ball rolling on, and those are uh, we kind of want to do an informal Greenfield census, kind of a, you know, internal uh, getting to know where we're at right now, for a lot of reasons. One being that if we ever wanted to um, re-write the by-laws, we would need a, I think it's a 65% vote of the membership of the association, and since not all the members live on the Ranch, we'd have to find 65% of the association, or more, to get that to pass. That's part of it. Also we want to put sections in the questionnaire about how many kids do you have, you know, where do they live? Are they married? You know, kind of get a pulse on the second generation scene. Because we don't really know. And uh, and another thing that we're working on is actually, a second generation reunion. Second generation of Greenfielders reunion, which I think we're going to be doing during spring break, probably. Which I think will be cool. Um, or maybe in the early summer, when school's out. Um, and the third thing that we're working on is, um, because Kirsten and I have been out in the world-- I mean I left for six years and then came back, and took on this role -- um, or five years, and Kirsten's been in and out -- Kirsten's 28 -- and she's been in and out of the scene here over the years. And um, we're really the only two second generation people that have had any involvement in the govermentation. There are other second generation people that have bought land. One second

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generation person that I know of besides my brother and sister and myself, is buying land now. And then there are also second generation people that are on the deed by way of their parents putting them on the deed -- oh and another thing that we want to put on the census thing is, you know questionnaire to the first generation owners, you know, what do you think will happen to your land in the event of your death? You know, where's it going to go? Do you have kids? And if not, where is it, you know, what's your intention with it? Because Kirsten and I, or I can speak for myself at least, and I feel that there are more than myself that have this feeling as well, I really have the intention to keep this place going. It's really an important thing to me, and I don't think that that will change.

**Q:** Why do you have that thought?

**A:** Well, in the first place, family land is a sacred thing. I have a very strong sense of, of uh, connection to this place, to the land itself.

**Q:** By "family", are you talking about biological family, or family of a larger sense, or --?

**A:** Either way. Either way. I feel like this whole Ranch is in my blood. And I know that by maintaining ownership of the parcel that I grew up on, that, you know, that is there for me.

**Q:** Are you worried that if you get, like, subdivided more, --

**A:** It could, but that would take so much work, and I will tell you one thing: the first thing that it would take is widening the roads to county restriction, which is, I don't know, 16 feet with four feet either side clearance, ends up being something ridiculous, like 24, 26 feet, I don't know. And it would be impossible, practically, on the other end, which you haven't seen yet. It would be pretty near impossible to do that. And it would. If it were to be done, it would cost a fortune! And it's almost impossible, and I'm really glad. Because the temptation will be huge, the temptation to sell there, if things keep going the way they're going, and we don't have some apocalyptic miracle, that, you know, stops civilization in its tracks, then the temptation to sell, and subdivide will be huge at a certain point.

**Q:** Have land prices, [unintelligible]

**A:** Oh yeah. And you know, Yukiya is growing by leaps and bounds.

**Q:** Oh really? Lot of people moving up here from the city?

**A:** Oh yeah. And Yukiya was like in some national survey of "most desirable small town to live in," Yukiya was, like, third. I don't know why they decided that! Probably the chamber of commerce or something, I don't know, but it has grown a lot in the last two years. Yeah, so. But, and so, I think that one of things also that, just the, one of my personal messages since I got on the Board of Directors is, I am here to remind people that, you know, of the long view. And I don't want to make, I don't want to do stop-gap measures. I want to make it so that I don't have to come back in three years and do the work over. I want what I do now to be done, and done right, and have some kind of lasting effect. So the third thing that I was going to say was that, uh, weekend seminar on communication techniques, active listening, facilitation, consensus.



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**Q:** For the Board?

**A:** For the membership at large. Anybody who wants to be there, the more, the better. Because we have general meetings, also, every year. They've been annual, but this year we're doing two general meetings. And, uh, anybody who is a deeded owner, has a right to be on the Board, and it changes all the time, so.

**Q:** Does the Board operate by consensus?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Do you want it to?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** You think you'll get it to change?

**A:** Sooner or later, yes. It might take awhile.

**Q:** Have you ever gone through a consensus workshop or training?

**A:** I have extreme amounts of experience working on facilitation and consensus group process, nonviolence training, peace-keeper training stuff, through my political activism. I have just massive amounts of experience, actually. Which is what I was saying about Kirsten and myself, we've been out in the world. My mother as well. You know, we've been out in the world, collecting these, there tools, and uh, and actually since I've been facilitating the meetings, they've changed a lot, and it's kind of my own hybridized -- because if I said to the group, if I said to the Board, "We're going to run this meeting using consensus," they'd all probably stand up and walk out. You know, that's their level of, lack of knowledge around what the process is about. And, so, what I have been doing in the last year, is kind of a hybridized form of group process, using elements of Robert's Rules of Order, and consensual decision-making. Usually I go by consensus, and then if somebody gets really uptight about it, I'll call a vote. But, it's sort of an organic, hybridized process. As so many things in my reality.

**Q:** I'm curious about the architecture of the houses around here. How would you describe it? Are they unconventional?

**A:** They're very individualistic. Very.

**Q:** So are there a lot of dome houses, like this one?

**A:** Well this is a yerch. And we have a dome on our parcel that my parents brought up from Yin Palace, that they built down there, took apart, brought up. And we have a number of buildings, [our very own ?] A-frame that was the school-house and then became, called the playhouse, was kind of a cute thing. And we have little cabins, couple little detached bedrooms, and a cookhouse, which is just a little shack, and then we have the main house, which is a two story, huge, sprawling, you know, thing, with this rotunda on the end, and a witch's cap rotunda, you know, it's just, yeah, it's wild. There's not, none of those look anything like the next.

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**Q:** And they don't look like mainstream houses in town.

**A:** Oh no. No. Pretty much, I don't think there are really any houses that look a like a house in town, up here.

**Q:** Does anyone up here have electricity?

**A:** Some people have solar. Actually I have some solar here, but I -- and I could turn it on -- but I don't like it. I like kerosene, and candles. [laughs] I usually, when I come home I just turn on the overhead, but I was not feeling in the mood tonight because my eyes hurt anyway.

**Q:** And then you heat with wood, and cook with wood?

**A:** Yeah, there's propane too, here. Most people have propane and wood combo, and uh,

**Q:** How about for refrigeration?

**A:** Propane. I don't have a refrigerator here, but usually refrigerators are done with propane; cooking stove's done with propane; quite a few people have solar capacity for lights and whatever else, and generators, some people have generators for whatever energy needs that they might have. We used to have a hydro energy system for a little while up at our place, but not for long. Uh, it wasn't feasible. Uh, and, what else?

**Q:** You use some pit-privies, or composting privies, or --?

**A:** Pit privies mostly. Some composting privies.

**Q:** And then do you get your water from a spring, or -?

**A:** Well it depends on the parcel. Here, uh, there's a spring on the common land, and the water that I have is from that spring, but it's held by trough and stored in a tank. So, and some parcels have water sources, like my family's parcel, on Radical Ridge, we have a spring, a waterfall, and a creek. A creek that runs through it. The headwater's are two parcels over. But uh, and the waterfall, the headwaters are one parcel up, and the spring is like right near our living spaces. Beautiful water, too. It is so good.

**Q:** Growing up, what did you do for bathing?

**A:** Well, we had an outdoor stack, woodstack, that we heated water with, and, you know, we'd have a bath every week or two.

**Q:** You just had a big tub or something?

**A:** A bathtub. Outdoor bathtub, and shower.

**Q:** Was that cold in the winter time?

**A:** Well, you'd get the water really hot, before you'd got out, you'd heat the whole tub up, then you'd run down to the house, and stand by the fire until you were dry.

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**Q:** Okay. [laughs] Would you say that people's lifestyles have changed since the '70s? How have they changed?

**A:** Yes. Well, like I said, a lot of people started going off the hill in the '80s.

**Q:** To look for jobs, for money?

**A:** Work. And to give their children an opportunity for schooling, because a lot of people didn't feel capable of doing the home schooling thing. My mom was willing to do it, but a lot of people weren't. And I also think, like I said earlier, you know, I don't think people really knew exactly what they were getting into, you know, what they were biting off, with the isolation aspect, and the austerity, the hardness of it. So I think that people needed a certain amount of comfort that they couldn't find here. Or couldn't manifest.

**Q:** Do you think that people made more comfortable life-styles up here?

**A:** Yeah, lot of people have. People have succeeded in becoming more financially, uh, fluent. The people that speak money at this point have succeeded in making their lifestyles much more comfortable up here. And some people live part-time in town, and part-time on the hill.

**Q:** So when you went off the hill, you did a lot of consensus, and mediation training?

**A:** Well that began in '86, my mom and myself and my three younger siblings went on a Greenpeace march for global nuclear disarmament from California to D.C. And that's where my training in group process, facilitation, consensus, nonviolence, etcetera, started.

**Q:** So you walked all across the United States?

**A:** Yeah, and we did a lot of outreach and political theatre. That was just after my parents got divorced.

**Q:** How was that experience?

**A:** Life-affirming, totally revolutionary, uh.. . fairly undescrivable. I mean, I could, but it would take a really long time. It was huge, it was massive. It changed my life dramatically, and my mother, and all of us.

**Q:** In good ways?

**A:** Yeah. Yeah. It was a mobile community of 750 people, working with the goal of peace, and peaceful resolving of conflicts, and you know, taking peace very seriously. Very good.

**Q:** So, um, you've now [tape ends]...

**A:** Church of All Worlds... now that's a whole nother thing, which is also important. The Church of All Worlds has been around for over 30 years. It was founded by Overon, well actually it was Otter--, well actually he was Tim, he was Tim Zell back then, and he was very young, and he founded the Church of All Worlds based on Hindland's Stranger in a Strange Land. And that was in St. Louis, I think. And then, they moved from St. Louis, out here, in the early '70s, and Otter, he had become "Otter" at that point, from "Tim", Tim Zell to Otter Zell, Otter and Morning Glory moved up to Greenfield to a piece of land called Coidon Breath, which is a very beautiful piece of land, down on the other side of the common

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land. Um, and, uh, ... I--, some of my earliest memories, actually, that contained anyone--, I remember faces, but they aren't people that are still in my life anymore, except for Otter and Morning Glory. They are some of the only people besides my family that I remember from really, really, really a long time ago. Um, like when I was three, four, five, they used to come over, and we had holidays together and stuff, through, you know, many years. And um, they'd come over in the winter time, we'd all hang out. I remember Otter used to read my younger siblings, my older siblings too, and myself, out of the um, there's this comic book that chronicles the history of the world, and he's a great story-teller, fascinating man, totally intelligent, and learned, he's brilliant. Uh, and he used to, he's so much in the Church now that he's not as accessible on a lot of levels, because he's so unifocused, but he was one of, you know, definitely one of the people in my life from very early on, and Morning Glory as well, but I have, Otter and I have a very close relationship. And um, -- to this day, we have a very close relationship. And, my family, I remember, I remember when I was very small, and there were full moons, and on the Sabbots, my family used to go up to the Rise, we'd walk, we live in a valley on the other side of the hill. We'd walk up to the top of the hill, and watch the bonfires at Coiden Breath, and listen to their singing and their howling and their drumming, and we just thought they were so crazy! We're like, "Those crazy pagans, I don't know! Weird city people! Coming out to commune with nature and howling like wolves! I don't get it." At first there was definitely, even though we were close with Otter and Morning Glory, there was definitely some distance between my parents and the, not, it wasn't just the Church back then either, it was the larger pagan community that was up here. Um, and uh, Woody, and Quill, and uh, Alison, lot of different people had influence in the pagan scene, that was, these two parcels, Coiden Breath, and Onnovan. And uh, ... there was definitely a resistance on my parent's part to go to any of the functions that they held. Until I was about . . . ten, eleven, twelve, I don't know. I started calling myself a witch when I was really young. I don't know why I did that either, I don't know where that came from. You know, just ambient energy, I guess. But, um, I started adopting rituals that were... I don't even know how I found out about the rituals, somehow I knew you were only supposed to cut mistletoe with your left hand, or else it lost its magical properties, and all these weird little things that I have no idea how I knew them, but I did, and... um, uh, but that's kind of almost, to an extent it's almost a garnish to the underlying reality of spirituality, which I'll get to later. But, the Church of All Worlds, we started going, we started attending rituals when I was ten, eleven, twelve, I don't know, before my parents separated. My parents separated when I was 14. Um, and... and it was great. It was great, it was very -- I think one of the things that my mom was a little afraid of early on was the fact that they were so, kind of, pro-sexuality, very in their bodies, and my mom, I think, wasn't quite sure at that point how she felt about that. She's a lot more, uh, grounded about it now, but uh, I think that took some getting used to. She was raised Protestant. So uh, um, let's see, um, ... and then my mom and myself and my younger siblings became more and more involved in kind of a Wiccan, uh, spiritual reality, and later it became more eclectic pagan. Although it was never really, I don't know, it was never really constrictively anything. It was always fairly eclectic, my mom and I are both pretty eclectic people. But on the peace march, my mom and I and some friends of ours created many, many rituals, so that was '86, we were already actively priestessing at point, both my mom and I and our friends, we were creating all sorts of rituals at different points along the way, combining theatre, and liturgy, religion, symbology, etcetera. And, ... and we both continued to do so, throughout the years. And my involvement in the Church of All Worlds has been ... mostly on, since I was uh, of my own volition, since I was probably... in my teens. Probably 15, I

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became a dedicated member of the Church then. And since then, I've laced in and out, from time to time, because the politics get a little heavy sometimes, as with anything. But as I was saying about spirituality, that those, you know, the images that I've always felt, my description of religion has been for many years, that religion is symbology. It's metaphor for underlying truths that we assume to be true. And you use the metaphors that work for you. You know, and the metaphor that works for me, the basic metaphor, is that we are dependent on the planet. So, if you want to say that the earth is our Mother, and that we're her children, that's one way you can say it. The basis of that in reality is, I don't care what symbol you want to use, we are dependent on this planet for our survival. And the better we treat this planet, ultimately, the better we're treating ourselves. And um, recently, I've had my own sort of personal spiritual awarenesses that have taken me other places as well. That have kind of increased my spiritual awareness, but that is still the basic and underlying truth as far as I'm concerned, although I feel like at this point in my life, there are three, um, ... three spheres of regeneration, this is part of the book that I was, that I outlined today. Three spheres of spiritual regeneration. One is the earth, which is nourishment, and nurturance. And then there's humanity, which is the mirror of self. And then there's spirit, which you can see as whatever you want, you can call it heaven, or God, or Love, or the Sun, or the Sky, or Air, you know, whatever you want to call it. But there is that, the Pnuma, the life-breath. So there's the three spheres of regeneration that, which is where we get our energy, from the earth, from our interactions with other people, and from spirit. And still, basically, on the physical level, our bodies are dependent on this planet for survival. So, and that's it. But, Church of All Worlds, I'm still, actually, I just had a meeting with Otter, who's now "Oberon", Oberon, yesterday. He's my uncle, I call him my uncle. That's the relationship that he and I have, even though we're not blood related, but I'm his niece, and he's my uncle, and that was something that I, growing up in a pro-sexual community is an interesting experience. I cannot say it was an easy thing at times, uh, there was a lot of stress for me around turning 18. I felt like the wolf was at the door! You know, like, "Oh, she's legal!" And I actually had some people, names will remain unspoken, I had some people say things like, "Oh, you're going to be 18 soon!" I remember telling, it was like jokes like, "Yep, they're all lined up and waiting!" You know, the whole thing. And I remember saying to somebody, because I had a rite of passage in the Church, my mom created a rite of passage for me when I was 18 within the Church, that happened at a Beltane festival, I was just about to turn 18. And it was beautiful and wonderful, and really a great experience. At any rate, I said to somebody when they said that, they said, "Well, you're going to be 18 soon," you know, some sexual innuendo, and I said to this guy, "Do you think," no I said, "Just so you know, if I'd wanted to sleep with you, I would have by now." I was kind of a smart ass.

**Q:** Sounds like he deserved it though.

**A:** My phone's ringing... [tape cut]... and that wasn't--, for clarification, the prosexual community that I'm talking about is not Greenfield. It's Church of All Worlds. And uh, so yeah, I was just saying how much a smart ass I was, that was it. And it's been a real interesting learning experience for all of us. Because to me, there's a certain sense, maybe I--, I don't know. Generally speaking, I do not sleep with people in the Church of All Worlds, because it feels incestuous and confused to me. Because many of the people in the Church of All Worlds are people that I grew up having in my life as family. And, the people that were not in my life growing up as family are sleeping with the people that were in my life as family. So, you know, I mean, ... yeah. It's just a little bit confused and incestuous for me, and I try to keep my life sane.

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So, it's just too much, and also, there's more to it than that. But, that's sufficient, I think. And I think also, part of it is just being so nonconformist that I can't really justify doing what everybody else does, just because everybody else does it! I would say that I hope that that trait is one that I learn to temper with age. I'm sure it will happen.

**Q:** Was there much of a drug culture here when you were growing up?

**A:** That's a funny question! Ha ha! Was there much of a drug culture? Um, [laughing]... um, let's see, well, yes and no. And this is an area that I'm not sure how vague I should be in, and how clear I can be in. I will say that I grew up with marijuana production being a part of the normal reality. Um, and I will also say that, uh, at many of the Ranch parties, there was, I would say, a lot of drug use and overt openness around a lot of things. Like I remember witnessing a guy going down on a woman at a party when I was probably, I don't know, a little kid, just like, "Whoa!" you know. And of course my mom was not really comfortable with that, and probably told them to stop or something, I don't know, 'cause it was in the common space at the party, you know. But there were, you know there were a lot of grey lines, a lot of grey area that, that um, ... that will take a long time to sort out, as far as where are the boundaries of permissiveness, and where does parental control--, because, I mean, I'm confronting the issue, in my own life, of knowing that I want to raise children in community. I'm not sure, I figure that I'll have kids, I'm not 100% sure, I'm fairly sure that I'll have kids, and at least I will want to do that with involvement from Kirsten and my other [unintelligible], and hopefully that will happen at some point, that we will be raising kids around the same time, on the same land. You know, whether it be on Greenfield in general and having a school at the Ranch House, like in the old days -- we did have a school at the Ranch House in the old days, although we didn't, I didn't go much. We were really much more isolated than a lot of the people on the Ranch. Um, so, it, you know, and I have a very permissive attitude around a lot of stuff. I was a safer sex educator when I was younger, out in the big world, you know, learned a lot about a lot of stuff. And, brought that back with me when I came, and I taught my younger -- I remember having a conversation with my little brother and sister when th--, actually I remember the first time I confronted the issue with my little brother and sister was in '88, they were little, little kids. And they, we were at a campsite, we were on the California State Peace March that my mom and I have to organize, and all the little kids had run into the bathroom and ran out giggling, and I walked up to this whole pack of little kids, you know, who were in their pre-teens, and I was like, "What's so funny, you guys?" And my little brother goes, "Um... there's a condom dispenser in the bathroom." And I said, "Oh... why is that funny?" And they said, "Ha ha ha hee hee." And I was like, "What's so funny?" And they said, "Uh... " And I said, "Do you guys know what condoms are for?" And they said, "Yeah." And I said, "You do?" And they said, "Yeah." And I said, "What are condoms for?" And they said, "So you don't get pregnant when you're having sex." And I said, "Well, that's part of what condoms are for, and it's also for preventing sexually transmitted diseases." That was the first conversation I had with my younger siblings about safer sex, and that was a long time ago, and since then, you know, my relationship with them is very open around that, around sexuality in general. And they have a much more sex positive attitude than I do. And, well, in some ways, in a lot of ways. Like their issues around monogamy and stuff are way, well my brother anyway. My brother's really severely non-monogamous, and very, uh, caring about it, very loving and communicative about it. Not, he's not an asshole about it, he doesn't just sleep with a lot of girls, he's very caring in his relationships. And my

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little sister is different, she's a little more private, but she's just getting into it, so we'll see how she evolves. But that's another thing about the Church of All Worlds, is it's very non-monogamous. Or poly-amorous. Polygamous. Yeah, how many other words can we come up with? Um, at any rate, uh, ... so, and then I've also had the opportunity of, of uh, or to see how my actions create realities in the lives of people who look up to me, because I have to raise my younger siblings, and they and their friends have an enormous amount of respect and love for me, and awe, and I have... I will say I have a following, actually, of quite a few young people in this area, maybe it's because I was gone for awhile and I came back, you know, world-wise and all that. And uh, and it's been very interesting over the last year since I got back from being out in the world to um, see how watching their reactions to my actions changes my actions. It's a lot of responsibility. So that's the issue, you know, what's the right way to raise kids. We all want to do it better than our parents did, but, you know, everybody does. My parents did it better than their parents did, and I say about my mom, if I did it just as well as my mom raised me, I'd be happy. My mom did a great job. But we do have things that we want to change from generation to generation, and it's necessary, and each generation stands on the shoulders of the one before. We create evolution and growth by that. Um, so, you know, around drugs and sex and permissiveness, and control, and uh, boundaries, uh, there's a lot to learn about creating a sustainable lifestyle. Um, but back to the drug culture question... I would say there was a good amount of drug use up here. My parents were not involved in it. Thankfully. I know some people whose parents were involved in drug use to an extent, greater or lesser. Uh, my parents have smoked pot open--, well my mom smokes pot openly. My mom's the first one who ever got me stoned. I said--, and before I ever did any drugs at all, my mom said, I was like 12, no I was like, I was 14, it was just after my parents separated, I think, and my mom said, "La Sara, if you ever want to do any kind of drug, talk to me first, because I want you to know what you're getting into, and I don't want you to be doing street drugs that might not be safe and clean. So, if you want to do a drug, I will get it for you, just to make sure that's it's good." My mom didn't do any hallucinogens after she got pregnant with me, she hasn't still. Um, but she smokes pot, like I said. And my little brother and my mom and my older brother, it's a very open, it's like, you know, drinking alcohol, in my family is very open as well. Although I will say as far as drug culture goes, the most destructive drug that I saw come into play in my family life is alcohol. Um, ... yeah. And that can be a very destructive drug. It's too bad it's so socially acceptable. I'd prefer that pot was more socially acceptable.

**Q:** How about one final question, this is kind of general, you've already alluded to it somewhat, but, how do you think intentional community will play in life in the future?

**A:** What is life without community? I think that it's our saving grace. I think if humanity is going to survive, uh, into the next century, that we're going to have to learn how to get along. We're going to have to learn how to be kind to each other and how to communicate and how to work toward the common good. And I really respect the people -- see and a lot people slag on the '60s, you know, a lot of people say, "Oh yeah, you know, these people had this idealism, and now look, they all sold out." But the fact the matter is, I personally know people who didn't. My mom is on of those people. A lot of the people up here didn't sell out. They might've sold out in certain arenas, but they are still here. They still love this place, they're committed, they're still living the dream. And ... I, my generation of children that grew up in communities, I feel has been given a huge legacy, that includes a lot of responsibility and an incredible and vast amount of wealth that can't be measured monetarily. You know, it's so multi-

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dimensional, multi-level, that it can't even be, it's all-encompassing, the wealth that we were given by merit of the fact that we were taught a different way to survive, and that we had a certain connection to-- especially land-based community, I feel, is a very incredible, an incredible thing to have been given. And it's an interesting thing, because it means that I have a tie to this place, that I probably will never live anywhere else for any extended amount of time. And I can't say that that's an easy thought sometimes, because the surrounding area, I mean, this is one of the most physically beautiful places I've ever seen in my life, and I've travelled quite a bit. I'm partial, of course. But the social climate of the area is not --outside of the confines of our little hippie res here, those of you unfamiliar with the term "res", would be "reservation"; a lot of Indian reservations around here, Native American reservations, this is the hippie res -- so uh, beyond the confines of this here plot of land, um , the social climate not exactly inclusive and can be extremely hostile. And hopefully that will change as well in the future, who knows what will happen.

**Q:** Hostile to outsiders?

**A:** Well, it's, you know, it's logging, cow ranching, generations of ignorance. Really, you know, and my parents are -- the back-to-land movement, the environmental movement, the political movement, has only existed here, in this area, for one generation, you know? So it's new here, it's not the easiest thing to confront all the time. I love this place, and I'm very committed to it.

**Q:** You mentioned before about a vision you had with some of your woman friends, about having kids at the same time and living near each other?

**A:** Yeah we talked about that a lot. We talked about that a lot, and at times it's been, you know it fluctuates. Because my most lasting and strong bonds have come to be with my female friends. Um, and maybe that's because there's so much unconditional love for me, in those relationships. And who knows that there are a lot of reasons for that. Some of it is that the sexual tension isn't an issue, and the need thing isn't an issue, and the jealousies aren't a issue, because we aren't sleeping together. So, you know, those issues of ownership and all don't come up in those relationships. And actually Kirsten is now involved with a guy named David, and they've been involved in awhile now, and they're extremely committed to one another, and I think it's great. Whereas if that was my lover, and my lover became massively involved with someone, I would probably be having issues around it. So, I think that that's part of the feeling of, um, commitment, everlasting commitment in those relationships, and one of the reasons that it's so easy to make that kind of plan or promise. And also it's a sense of nonattachment to an extent: who knows what will actually happen or what the outcome of the situation will be. But, um, yeah, we've all talked about that, that we would like to raise kids around the same time. Whether it's in one nucleus community, or spread out around the Ranch, and having involvement in each other's lives. Yeah, but I would. My hope is to have an intentional sub-community, on my family's parcel at some point. That's something that would have to go by family first. But I would love to see that come to pass.

**Q:** So tell me about the other intentional communities you've lived in.

**A:** I've lived in an anarchist squat in Berlin.



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**Q:** Wow!

**A:** During the political reunification. That was in 1990. That was short-term. I lived in a martial arts school, a Dojo, that was a live-in, my and five other people in Oakland, for um about a year. And that's still in existence. My ex-husband lives there, and ... my ex- [laughs], my ex-teacher, who's also my ex-lover, who's also my ex-husband's mentor, you know, one of those confused non-monogamy things, um, but Mike is the instructor, head instructor of that school, and he's one of my dearest male friends in the world, who's not blood. And, uh, ... Mike's partner, Rebecca, my ex-husband, Brent, our roommate, Jorin, and a few other people that I don't know actually, now live there. Um, and that's a, it's an anarchist, political, martial arts school, in Oakland. It's called Sui-Getsu-Kan [?], means "moon over water" in Japanese. It's Japanese martial arts. Three different arts, jujitsu, aikido, and shin-tan-do. Japanese swordsmanship. Those were basically, let's see, those were basically it, although I've also lived in other, um, household situations, but not quite to the extent that those were like intentional communities with a stated purpose. Yeah, so those two. So when I was gone, those two experiences were the most that I was involved with intentional community. I also lived, I spent a month in Seattle, a year and a half ago, and I hung out around the anarchist scene up there, and there was a squat up there that I visited a lot, but I didn't live there.

**Q:** What was the squat like in Berlin?

**A:** It was astounding, it was totally astounding. It was incredible. Um, ... it was the first time, I was nineteen when I was there, and it was the first time in my life that I'd been in a community of people that were like kind of within my age range, that were actively pursuing political ideals and living their dream. And to me it was amazing because I grew up in America, and by the time you're 19 in America, you don't know shit if you're in the public schooling system! And that's kind of a rude and overbearing statement, but, it's kind of true, to an extent. The MTV culture, our whole reality is based in denial and avoidance, and people are real comfortable with that and don't want to shake it. So they're all going to die. Only the people that are in communities are going to survive. [laughs] It could happen, that's the thing, and that's another thing, like I see that there are many tasks for my generation. There are many tasks before us to be dealt with, as far as survival goes, and if humanity is going to have a place on this planet, which I have no idea if it is or not. That's another thing, a very interesting thing about my generation, is that we were raised with our parents telling us that we might not survive! You know' we've, since we were born, we've known, that there's a chance that we could die, at any moment, you know, with the whole nuclear threat, and the whole environmental threat, and the ozone hole depletion, and all these things, you know, that I am so family--, I mean, I've worked on these issues all my life. It's astounding when you think of how overwhelming the problems are, without even going into the social problems that we have to deal with. But the fact of the matter is that I've gotten to the point of knowing that, if we don't start dealing with them on the social level, person to person interactions, learning how to get along, learning how to take responsibility, learning how to constantly be striving for the highest good, then we aren't going to survive, because you can't change it on the political level, it's not going to happen. Politics are an illusion, it's all a game. It's all words, and money doesn't mean anything, it doesn't exist, it's ghost money, you know. It's all such an illusion. And the fact of the matter is that the only way that we're going to survive is person to person communication, and people deciding to make a change in their own lives, and in their own communities, and taking the ultimate

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responsibility for their own actions. Because the government is not a thing, it's a bunch of people, so if we can change it at a level of one person at a time, then maybe we'll be enough. So living in the anarchist squat was, I don't know, definitely watching people make a change. Or being part of people making a change. It was definitely a, you know, there was the sense of unity by way of an external opponent, you know, the police, the threat of the police coming and kicking people out of the squat, and there were riots, and it was totally exciting. Totally vital. And --

**Q:** What year was this?

**A:** 1990. It was during the political reunification. The Wall came down in 1989, and the political reunification was in '90. I was only there for a few months, and it was not long enough at all. It was definitely one of those life-changing things though. There was a certain sense of, to use the term of the word, angst, to it. There was definitely a certain sense of anger and resentment and the us-them mentality, which has been present in my life as well since I was very young. Another fear was "them", you know. We had a big huge bust up here in '84, it was one of the most fright--, I mean it was like, being invaded by the militia, it was insane.

**Q:** Here at Greenfield Ranch, you had a bust?

**A:** Yeah, marijuana bust. That was the beginning of the huge marijuana eradication program in Mendocino County, which I don't know if you know much about that, but it was big.

**Q:** So was the bust scary?

**A:** Oh yeah. I'm serious. It was like being invaded, I mean it was like a third world country being taken over by the militia.

**Q:** So there were helicopters, and all sorts of things happening?

**A:** Yeah. It was crazy. It was totally crazy. And there was that sense of, you know, struggling for survival in Berlin as well. Um, and my goal at this point in time -- and that kind of, I'd been a nonviolent activist for years and years and years, and that kind of pushed me in the direction of becoming a more, radical revolutionary, fighting the fight, you know, and that was a trend that I am, that I've been recovering from in the last year, because I see that animosity breeds animosity. And if we can each take it in our hands, our own hands to create positive interactions, then we're creating a more positive world, is my belief system at the moment. Ask me in a couple weeks. But that's what my book is about, so it better be real! [laughing]

**Q:** Well I hope you decide to write it.

**A:** I hope so too. I hope I do.

**Q:** You need to get your computer, and some cots...

**A:** There you go! Well if you hear of any, you know, loose powerbooks floating around, send it my way! I don't know, do you have any questions?