

Interview with J. T.  
Interviewer: Deborah Altus  
August 6, 1996

**Q:** Okay, this is August 6th in an interview with J.T., and J.T, I'd love to hear a little about your background and some of the things that led up to you living communally. So was Brotherhood of the Spirit the first place you lived communally?

**A:** No, the first place I lived communally was up in the woods outside of Middlebury [?], Vermont. I went out there because a friend of mine in New York City -- I was living in New York City at the time -- had a group of people that were heading to a commune they were starting in Florida, Lakeland, or Lakewale, somewhere down there. So I went up to Vermont to pick up the group that was leaving for Florida, because I was sick and tired of New York City at the time, it was February, it was cold, it was gray, it was nasty. And they got side-tracked. The woman whose husband was running the commune decided to pull a major stunt, and proceeded to write bad checks all over town and take off for New York City. So that meant that we didn't get to go to Florida, we were stuck in Vermont, in a 9 x 12 uninsulated cabin, 14 of us. Oh, it was lovely. I proceeded to discover what a mish-mash the whole place was, and decided that since I was being the cook, I could make some rules -- because there were of course, no rules. So I started staying up all night tending the fires to keep everyone else warm while they slept, and sharpening the chain saws, while they went out cutting firewood during the day. Then I'd get up, cook supper, they'd go to bed, I'd sharpen chainsaws and sit up all night tending the fires, make breakfast, they'd get up, I'd go to bed. That was the only way I survived it. I then went into Middlebury and got a job working for Theta Chi fraternity and Middlebury village, and was the chef there.

**Q:** Now did this commune in the woods have a name?

**A:** No. But the man who ran it did, and his name was Irving Fiske.

**Q:** Oh, that was the guy that started Quarry Hill community. This wasn't where that was, was it?

**A:** Probably.

**Q:** Near Rochester?

**A:** Rochester, Vermont? Yeah.

**Q:** Yeah, I visited there.

**A:** And this was Irving's wife, Barbara, who proceeded to write bad checks all over the place.

**Q:** Yeah, they always used to go to Florida every winter, they would migrate down to Florida. Yeah, I went up there to interview people, it's still going.

**A:** Oh God. Is Irving still alive?

**Q:** No, Irving's dead, but Barbara's alive, and she's living in Florida.

**A:** Oh, I bet she had fun.

**Q:** But Irving's daughter, Ladybelle, still lives there.

**A:** Oh, great.

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**Q:** Well, that's really something. Now, what year was it that you lived there?

**A:** That would've been 1968. Because, no, it would've been '68, because I got out of -- they closed the entire fraternity at Middlebury college that summer, just the national just closed it down because of various fiduciary fiddlings of the powers that were in charge of the fraternity. So I went up to the media conference that they held in Gottard [?] College that summer, and coming back from that, heading to New York City, ran into the Brotherhood of the Spirit. Because I was going down to New York to see some friends and see if I could find me another job. I'd had it with communes at the time.

**Q:** Because of living with 14 people in a farmhouse all winter?

**A:** Well, you see, in order to try and stop the wind blowing through, they had proceeded to staple dry cleaning bags over the walls upstairs, and every time the wind blew, the bags would belly out, and the wind would shift and they'd go the other way.

**Q:** I'm curious what Brotherhood of the Spirit was like. I really don't know anything about it.

**A:** When I joined, there was a meeting house, it had a big dining room, and a living room, and maybe half a dozen bedrooms upstairs. Other people were starting to build places in the woods. I was camped out in the wood for awhile, and more and more people started to show up. I was the 96th person to join, and more and more people started showing up, and we were trying to do this in a kitchen that was set up with two regular, apartment-sized electric stoves, and hand dishwashers, and that was it. And there was a cutting board. So just about the time that the fall rains came, they decided to tear the backside off the building so that we could extend the building out and make a huge kitchen. We had gotten a donation of used restaurant equipment from a place down in Northfield. They decided they wanted to go out of business, and they wanted to use the restaurant equipment as a tax write-off, so they donated it to us. And we went down and hauled the restaurant equipment out, and there was a really nice wolf stove, an old one, and an old Hobart side throw dishwasher, where you slide the tray in, roll the thing over it, and wait until it got through wash, and open it up and slide it out the other side. So I set up the new kitchen. I finally actually had to go down and be doing dinner for 96 to 120 on Coleman camp stoves, because it had started to rain, and you couldn't use the electric stoves in the kitchen with your feet in the water. It just didn't work. You kept wanting to zap people. There's nothing like trying to cook rice for 120 people on a Coleman stove. It takes forever. One of the things I had them do, there's some guys there that were heavily into logging. So I had them drop me an oak tree. They set me up a preparation table that was 22 feet long. Cut the oak tree down, cut it in half, and cut it length wise in half, and lay it out on railroad ties, with 20 penny spikes. So I could have 14 people around the table chopping. It was fun.

**Q:** Now does Brotherhood of the Spirit have some sort of spiritual base?

**A:** Their spiritual base was a man whose name was Elwood Babbit [?], the sleeping prophet. He was a transmedian. He used to give us lectures in trance. I would imagine Elwood is no longer alive. I haven't talked with the Brotherhood in almost 30 years.

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**Q:** So did you have particular rituals that you'd follow every day? Did people meditate together, or go listen to Elwood Babbit talk?

**A:** Yeah, we'd go and listen to Elwood. He had taped a lot of interviews. He was doing a spiritual enlightenment thing with Dr. Charles Hapgood [?], who was doing a thing on the reverse polarity on the various layers of magnetism, claiming that the Earth kept flipping over, and that's why there are layers of magnetism that are this way, and the next layer is this way. So it was quite a thing. We had a band at the time. It was I, and Michael Mettalon [?]. The band was called Spirit and Flesh. And Metromedia Records had come up and heard the band, and thought they were the neatest thing since sliced bread, but once they got the master tapes done, they weren't going to do any promotion. So we set up on the third floor dormitory that we built, a silk-screen studio, and we put out thousands of silk screen posters for the band and the record, and then sent groups of people out around the country with a 5 lb bucket of wheat paste and a roll of silk screen posters, and tried to set up gigs for the band all across the country, see if we could get them a tour, because Metromedia wouldn't do anything like that. I wound up in Cleveland, Ohio, with my roll of posters and bucket of wheat paste, and stopped in at a restaurant that had been recommended to me, called Genesis 1:29, a vegetarian restaurant in Cleveland. And I worked in Cleveland for a week or 2 weeks for the restaurant, plastered posters all over Cleveland, Ohio. There was somebody who was interested in having the band come and play, so I went back, made my report, did all of that, and by that point, there were another 250 people there. This was turning into a zoo. At that point, I said, I've had it. I called up Cleveland, called the restaurant, and said, "Do you need any help?" "Sure, come on out." So I showed up at the restaurant in Cleveland, that must've been January of '71. And one of the things in Cleveland at the time was a newspaper called The Great Swamp Eerie Da Da Boom. And in that paper, I was reading through the want ads, and here was, "Wanted: readers for a paper on tape for the blind and functionally illiterate. Contact John Keith." And that was over on Cornell, as I remember. And so I went over and contacted John Keith, wound up running into John, Kitten, and Stephen, a whole bunch of people. At the same time, when I was down at the restaurant, I was talking to this guy who was looking to do a community trip out in Pamintuning [?], Ohio. Hanover -- well, Lake Pamintuning. The poorest farmland in the state of Ohio, almost nothing will grow. But we had fun. So Stephen and John and Stony, a whole bunch of people, all wound up out on the farm with Buddy, who was a medical photographer for the Cleveland hospitals. So he was going back and forth to work every day, in Cleveland. So it meant that those of us who were -- I was working at the restaurant at the time, and I don't think anybody else initially had started at the restaurant when we went out to the farm. But shortly thereafter, they guys that owned the restaurant wanted to sell the restaurant. John was one of the people who had enough money together to be able to buy into Genesis 1:29. So Frogge Hollow wound up taking over the restaurant. And that worked for a few years. We had a house in town, it was called Cat City, as opposed to Frogge Hollow, which was in the country. And we had a great big time sheet on the wall in the restaurant, and you'd go in and sign up for the number of shifts you wanted during the week, whether you wanted cook, waitress, or dishwasher. I didn't matter whether you were male or female, you could sign up for any of them. And you'd get paid the same rate, it didn't matter.

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**Q:** A dollar an hour, or 80 cents an hour?

**A:** Something like that, 80 cents an hour, plus all the food you could eat. Some of those people had big appetites! And then eventually, Stephen and Melissa and Stony left in the White, and came out here to California. Then, I suppose I left next, I think. John and Mary were heading out to California. I hitch hiked out to California, because Diane Spring, who had been a waitress at the restaurant, was getting married, and she sent me a wedding invitation. So I hitch hiked out to California, to miss her wedding by 6 hours. Stayed there 3 days till they got back. Said, "Hi, I came for the wedding, I missed it," then figured as long as I was in California anyhow, I'd come up here. Hitch hiked up here. Hunted around, finally found the White, and Stony. And then I -- Stephen and Melissa had bought the place down in Toban [?]. So I went down the visit them, thought it was real nice, but had to get back to Cleveland, because I was working a combination gig where I'd work in Cleveland in the summertime, and then go down to Wildflower on Siesta Key, in Florida, in the wintertime. Worked down there in the winter, and then back to Cleveland in the summer. But on the way back down, I ran into Truck, in Walnut Creek, a bunch of people that were from up here, that were heading down to Texas to deliver some clothes to a guy who was going to be getting out of jail, down in Texas. They were in that Truck, though it didn't look like it then. The adventures with Truck started by leaving Walnut Creek, and breaking down three times leaving Walnut Creek. Finally getting on the road, getting over the grapevine, and coming down the back side of the grapevine, we lost everything but first and the reverse on a four-speed automatic truck transmission. So we wound up stuck at the corner of 7th and Cherry in Long Beach, for a month. Finally got the transmission rebuilt, and pulled out of Long Beach New Years Eve, 1975. Finally got into Texas the end of January that year. The woman who owned the truck at that point was very, very sick of riding on in the truck, so she gave it to me and a guy named Rick, who was driving up. We decided we were going to make the grand tour: he had relatives in New Hampshire, I had relatives in Vermont, so we started to grand tour. We got to Cleveland, broke down again, with a hole in the #1 piston that was about this big. Spent a year rebuilding the truck. Got the whole engine rebuilt, put back together looking just absolutely beautiful, Thanksgiving Day, 1976. And started it, and there was a slight knock in the engine. Turned it off, went to Thanksgiving dinner. Came back, said, "We'll deal with this in the morning." That night, the temperature went from about 50 to 25 below zero. Of course we'd only put water in the engine, because we were only testing it -- no antifreeze. And I got up in the morning, and lifted the engine cowling, and it looked to be okay. Took the head cover off, and here's this tongue of ice sticking out of the head. I thought, "It shouldn't have done that -- there are freeze plugs in this engine, I know -- I've checked them all." And I looked down the side, and all the freeze plugs were still sitting there. I touched them, and as I touched each freeze plug, it fell out on the ground -- it had frozen so fast, it didn't do any good, because the freeze plugs didn't let go. And as it cracked the engine, all three water jackets, from front to back on the block, and it had put that tongue of ice through the head. So at that point we had \$1,000 worth of fishing sinker. Bought another engine for \$250 and jammed for Florida as fast as we could. Eventually drove it back out here, after we spent the winter in Florida while I worked the restaurant down there. It's been here ever since. Well, not right here. It's only been here for the last 12 years now, I guess, but it's been in Concal [?] for the rest of that time.

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**Q:** Did you do any sort of communal situation when you got out here?

**A:** Yes. Went out to live at Mountain Family, which is just out the road, because they were doing the communal thing. Their idea of community is as close as I can come to seeing something as functional anarchy. Just, nobody ever agrees with anyone about anything, and they have long, involved meetings, where they keep putting things off until the next meeting. Some things have been put off for as long as 5 or 6 years.

**Q:** I want to see if they're on our list. Had this group been around for awhile?

**A:** Yes. They had started out about '72, maybe '74.

**Q:** Huh. Mountain Family. They're not in here. Well that's good to know about.

**A:** That's because they aren't actually a commune.

**Q:** They're too anarchistic to be a commune?

**A:** Oh, much too anarchistic to be a commune. Way more anarchy than commune ever thought of being.

**Q:** But they're just up the canyon a ways?

**A:** No, they're up this road.

**Q:** Up the road we were just on?

**A:** Yep. Concal Road.

**Q:** Are they still here?

**A:** Oh, yeah.

**Q:** And you said they started in the early '70's?

**A:** I think so. Probably about '74. They all moved up to this piece of land out here, which was John Juard's [?] folks' place. They sold it, they all chipped in together, they were all living out at Miller's Corner, which is no longer in existence. He's married to Melissa now.

**Q:** So has she been part of Mountain Family, then?

**A:** No, neither was John. Mountain Family bought the land from John Juard's parents, because they wanted to move to warmer climes, like Grass Valley.

**Q:** So you didn't last at Mountain Family very long?

**A:** I was at Mountain Family, we had the truck parked there for probably 4 months. And then Ann and Jim Alberti [?] came out. They were parents of one of the people that were involved with Mountain Family. They had put up a good chunk of the money for buying the place, and they were supposed to get the main house as their summer residence. Of course, we'd all been using all the facilities at the main house while people were building their own little individual homes. Everything was community oriented as far as the kitchen and dining room and everything was concerned. And Jim and Ann came into this

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totally unaware of anything. Ann walks into what she assumes is her house, and here I am with 27 loaves of bread ready to go in the oven, and all these people running around chopping vegetables and stuff. She took one horrified look around, and said, "What are these people doing in my house?" I said, "Well, I'm baking bread for the community here." "Well, this is going to stop!" And I finished baking the bread off, set the loaves off to cool, went back to the truck, and said, "Rick, we're leaving." He said, "What?" I said, "We're leaving. Let's go. Pack it up." Twenty minutes later, we were on the road again. I'm still friends with everybody that lives over there, we're going to be doing a chili thing this weekend. One of the guys is having his annual barbecue. I've got probably 120 quarts of vegetarian chili to do.

**Q:** So can you tell me a little bit about what Mountain Family's like?

**A:** No. There are a whole bunch of people there that right at the moment aren't there because they're off doing other things, and they're got their houses rented out to other people. Sometimes you see them, sometimes you don't. A couple of them I haven't seen in probably 5 years. One girl was gone to Hawaii, and another one is down in San Francisco. One of the guys who was there is down in San Francisco working for a theatrical company, doing sets for various movies. Merv's an accountant and is working in Chico. Vita, I think, is still doing ralfing [?]. Her husband is a fiddle repairman. Elizabeth is in Phoenix, I think, taking care of her mom, who's elderly and very ill. I think Elizabeth daughter, Suzanne, is staying at her place right now. Anyhow, they're all in various stages of disarray.

**Q:** But basically an anarchist group, not really an intentional community.

**A:** Well, it was intentional when they started. And then everybody's intentions seemed to change. This one didn't want to talk to that one, and that one didn't want to talk to that one. This one was fighting with that one over this. It was just not my idea of communal community situation.

**Q:** So then, did you end up here after that situation?

**A:** Well, no, Truck went up to the end of the road, and parked up on the hill there for a couple years, because we were in the process of rebuilding. We had torn the old roof off without any prospects of putting a new rood on. But the old roof leaked and it was hot, tight, nasty in the summer, and cold, tight, and nasty in the winter, so we tore the roof off, and then lived under polyurethane for 2 years. It took a long time to get the arches made. So I was having to go to town and buy square stock, and come back and heat the square stock, and bend it on the front bumper of the truck, bend it into an arch, and then weld it up. And then the hardest job was putting the plywood skin over the top of that, because it takes approximately 300 handset screws to screw down one 4 x 8 sheet of plywood, get it to go with the curve. So it was a long process, I'm still not finished with it. I've got the piece -- you see the wood sitting over there? That's going to be the interior paneling, eventually, if Melvin ever gets his planer [?] fixed. It's not working right at the moment.

**Q:** If you don't mind back-tracking a little bit, I'd love to ask you some questions about Brotherhood of the Spirit. Since I don't know anything about it -- for example, was it an income sharing community? How did you deal with money.

**A:** Yes, it was. Everybody that had an income donated it to the community. A lot of the people were fairly well-to-do, children of well-to-do parents from New York City. We used to hit New York City about

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once a month, just going down and postering the entire city with the Spirit and Flesh posters, anywhere there was a poster standing next to "Post no bill" signs, we put up a row of Spirit and Flesh posters.

**Q:** So is that how you got a lot of your new members?

**A:** Yeah, well, it was proselytizing too. All that is, is spirit, and flesh is pretty much immaterial. We've got to work on getting our spirits aligned. It was, oh Lord, I can't even remember the -- there was a list of rules of regulations that I could have rattled off back 20 years ago.

**Q:** Do you remember any of them?

**A:** No. It was basically any time you see someone doing something that they shouldn't be doing, you get to call them on it. And if necessary, call a meeting to get a bunch of people who were "spiritually aware" to come and lay it down. I had a lot of trouble with some people for awhile, because they said that my food wasn't spiritual enough.

**Q:** No way. What did they mean by that?

**A:** I wasn't putting enough of myself into my cooking.

**Q:** I wonder how they could tell?

**A:** That was the thing.

**Q:** Was it a vegetarian community?

**A:** Yeah. Basically, because we couldn't afford meat. We had a big garden. In order to make enough money to keep us in rice and tamari, we used to go out and tear down old barns through New England. What we couldn't use for building material ourselves, we would stack onto a ten-wheeler that we had, and drive all the barn board to New York City and sell it to interior decorators. We were very careful taking the barns down. We'd lay out a layer of boards, and then a layer of straw, and another layer of boards, so we didn't louse up the grain on these antique barns that we were tearing down. Beautiful wood, just gorgeous. Heavily grooved, gray, with gold knots in it. Interior decorators just went crazy for it, for 5 or 6 years.

**Q:** So that's how you were able to make a little money, then.

**A:** We'd make enough money, and the truck would come back with 1,000 lbs of brown rice, 55 gallons of tamari, 55 gallons of honey, 55 gallons of molasses, 500 lbs of flour. Then we'd be able to eat for awhile. I remember one year, spending almost 3 weeks, we had somebody donate us a compressor so that we could build a walk-in freezer. And then nothing like 3 o'clock in the morning, and you're still blanching green beans. We had enough green beans and wax beans, corn and tomatoes, peas and okra - - we managed to live for the entire winter on what we had raised in the garden over the summer. There was a woman named Bert there, who was just an amazing gardener. She could coax things to grow. Every once in awhile we would have meat, because people would donate a meat for the cause. We'd off the pig, and have a giant barbecue. Of course there was one time we wanted to do the barbecue, everybody wanted potato salad, and we had plenty of potatoes, and not a drop of mayonnaise. If you want to try something fun sometime, try making mayonnaise by hand, for potato salad for 200 people. It

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takes an awful lot of wire whisk in a big bowl to make mayonnaise, but I did it. We had people in relays, taking over the whisking of the mayonnaise.

**Q:** Now, was this a celebrate community?

**A:** I never thought so.

**Q:** I'm just curious, because some of the spiritual communities I heard about were celebrate.

**A:** Well, they discouraged too much fraternization, unless you'd been there a year or two, so you were in with the higher-ups instead of in with the peons at the bottom of the ladder. And dormitory situations -- built this huge 300 foot long by 80 feet wide by 3 stories tall dormitory. And in a dormitory situation, there's not much room for getting it on. So that it was, you know, you didn't have people in the next bed going at it.

**Q:** Was there much of a drug scene there?

**A:** Oh, no drugs!

**Q:** That was one of the rules?

**A:** Oh yes, that was one of the rules. But lots of rock and roll.

**Q:** Did you dress in any particular way?

**A:** Anything the Goodwill had. But I did discover after awhile, we were doing logging to get our winter wood supply, and one of the women volunteered to do my laundry, because I was busy in between cooking and logging. I didn't have much time to do laundry. I said, "Okay, but I hope I get everything back." And she said, "Oh, no problem, no problem." I said, "Well, were you able to tell what was my stuff as opposed to what was somebody else's?" "Oh, yes," she said, "I didn't have any problem with that at all. Anything that was yours was softer than 90% of the other stuff I was washing." Basically because it was old.

**Q:** Did you guys have a work-sharing system?

**A:** Yeah, there was X amount of work that had to be done, and it was just getting a crew together to do it. And it was mostly volunteer.

**Q:** Did people pretty much do their fair share of the work?

**A:** Oh, yeah. I wouldn't say that there were too many slackers. Everybody was real eager to do it, because it was helping the community. Our community as opposed to the Warwick community, because Warwick hated us, especially once we had to put in enough toilets to deal with everybody.

**Q:** Now what was the Warwick community?

**A:** That was the town of Warwick.



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**Q:** Oh, I see. And they didn't like you guys?

**A:** Oh no. We were "those hippies on the hill." They said, "Well, you've got to have a legal septic system, and enough toilets for everybody." So we started putting in a septic system. And we started digging up the field to put in a septic tank. Right in the middle of the field, there was a boulder that was about as big around as this circle of chairs. And so we tied a chain to the boulder, tried to drag it out with a [unintelligible]. The treads on the cat kept digging down further and further into the ground, couldn't move the boulder. So we finally took the chain off the boulder, and we got 35 people around the boulder, and everybody put one hand on the boulder, and one hand on the person next to them. We proceeded to pick the boulder up, and walk it out of the field. Everybody was just, "You can't do that!" "Sure we can." We did it. There was a girl that was on the logging crew that had been working with the logging crew since its conception. She was real good. We were doing uphill logging instead of downhill logging -- that meant that we were logging the downhill side of the road, and we had to carry the logs uphill. So we built a huge furnace out of old fuel oil tanks to get us this big heating system. And it would take a 12 foot length of log. So we never cut anything that was shorter than 10 feet. It would take 3 - 5 people to haul one of those up the hill. Everybody would get under it, pick it up, put it under their shoulder, take the log up the hill. Well anyhow, this girl was out logging with us, pregnant, and her water broke. And she went into the hospital [tape ends] . . . should've seen where we left at first. Anyhow, she was back logging 2 weeks later.

**Q:** So were there many kids at this community?

**A:** Yeah, we had a school set up for them, we had licensed teachers for them. And everybody tended them. There were probably 45, 50 kids.

**Q:** Wow. Lots of kids, then.

**A:** Yeah. We had a regular nursery. Everything from newborns on through when they got into high school, they went to the local high school. But the town fathers, as I said, just hated us, to the point that they said, "You've got to set up all of these toilets." Because everybody had been using outhouses. "You can't have that -- you've got to put it all in one place." So we did, and we built 7 toilets in a semi-circle and shocked them. They were absolutely scandalized. Because we hadn't put up any partitions.

**Q:** Right. But they couldn't force you to do that.

**A:** Oh, yes they could! They did -- they forced us to put up partitions. So we put up partitions so that when you sat down on the toilet, the partition came up to your shoulder, so we could still carry on conversations. I remember one day walking into the bathroom, and there were 4 of the guys on the plumbing crew standing around this one toilet, looking at it, shaking their heads. I asked, "What's the problem?" They said, "Well, we've tried to snake this thing, this one won't flush. We tried the plunger, nothing." I said, "Well what is it?" Somebody, I don't know who it was, but somebody had laid something in there that was about that big around and about that long. And it stuck half-way in. And they didn't know what to do about it. I reached into the toilet with my hand, and went like this down the toilet, it all drained out, flushed the toilet, and I said, "There you are, no problem." No one wanted to put their hands in that nasty, you know. Hey, it's only shit -- it washes off. People that just -- their levels of reality were such that they were so used to hiring people to come in and do things. There were

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people there that, if the lights had gone out, wouldn't have known how to change a fuse. I'd had 3 uncles that were plumbers, so I was well familiar with the way things work.

**Q:** Well, can you describe the spiritual philosophy of Brotherhood of the Spirit?

**A:** Oh boy.

**Q:** Is that a tough one?

**A:** Yeah, sort of. It's, all the world is vibrating and creative energy. The only difference between you and the tree is the fact that the vibration is at a different rate. Therefore, you have to try to raise the rate of everything, to become more spiritual. It's a lot easier doing it from trance, and having these entities come in and tell you about it, than it is trying to translate it for yourself.

**Q:** Would you describe Babbit as a charismatic leader?

**A:** Nope. Babbit was a transmedium. He was not a charismatic leader, he was merely our spiritual advisor. The charismatic leader of the organization was named Michael Metallica, and he was the lead singer of the band, and was the one who initially set up the commune.

**Q:** So, Babbit came along later, then?

**A:** No, Babbit was around long before the Brotherhood, but the Brotherhood attached themselves to him, because it was the closest thing to nondenominational spiritual advice that anybody could come up with. That was about it. Elwood had been tested. There were people that knew Mass [?], that were into [unintelligible] transmedium [unintelligible]. And so they set him up on an EEG machine to see if there was a difference in his brain waves when he was speaking in trance than when he was being Elwood. And they discovered that indeed, there was -- the brainwaves changed totally for each entity that spoke through him. After doing this for 2 or 3 hours, whatever the entity was that was speaking at that time, said, "Well, we're going to increase the power now, we don't know what it's going to do." And they proceeded to increase the power of the transmission and blew up the EEG machine. It was very interesting.

**Q:** Do you know why the community changed its name to Renaissance?

**A:** I would imagine that it wound up with the band not going much of any place, and -- I don't know. I left, and I didn't have any contact with anybody there for years, because I'd gotten burnt out.

**Q:** Did you get burned out cooking for them, or were there other things that burned you out?

**A:** No, no, no, it was the attention to details of other people's lives. I was fairly well-grounded, spiritually before I got to the Brotherhood. I'd had it pounded into me as a child, as a Roman Catholic. I was an altar boy from age 5. I was well-grounded in spirituality and knew where mine lay, and what mine was about. Having been raised a Vermonter, it was "Do what you want, and don't pay attention to the neighbors, because your business is your business, and their business is their business. The two don't necessarily have to coincide." But it was wonderful, the man who lived next door to me when I was growing up as a child was named Gardner Cottle [?], and he was the minister of the United Church. He used to show up every evening after dinner, sit around and talk with the family, have coffee, because

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he had no family of his own. So he'd come over and sit and have coffee after dinner with the family, every evening. Marvelously well-read man. Had studied Greek and Aramaic so that he could do his own Biblical translations when necessary, because he wasn't happy with some of the translations that were out there. Used to take trips to the Holy Land, and Greece. Had a cottage on Martha's Vineyard that he would rent out to us, every summer. So I had a fairly good spiritual grounding before I got to the brotherhood. I saw that there was a tremendous amount of power that they could generate as a group, but it didn't seem to do anything but degenerate into squabbles. And they also hated people who smoked cigarettes.

**Q:** And you were a smoker?

**A:** I was a smoker when I got there, I quit for 2 and a half years, and decided that I really liked smoking, and that my smoking a cigarette didn't have anything to do with anyone else's spiritual development, or my spiritual development. "Oh, no, no, cigarettes are a crutch, they're a social crutch." I said, "If you think so, that's fine. You're stuck with that thought as long as you have it." And they didn't like that at all, the fact that I could take their own words on things, and read them back to them on areas where they were sure they were right. It didn't set well, particularly. So we had disagreement. And I left, since I had other options, and they were stuck there, as far as I was concerned -- "You want to be there, fine, be there. I'm not. See ya."

**Q:** Now how were decisions made at this community? Was it supposed to be democratic, or did Michael Metallica make decisions?

**A:** Well, it was supposed to be democratic. It wound up being, whatever Michael wanted, Michael got. It got very hierarchical. There were people who were there who knew accounting and knew cash transfers and how to deal with all of this stuff, so they were up there at the top of the list. The band was at the top of the list. Anything the band wanted, the band got. We built tons of sound equipment. We had a tractor trailer rigged to haul the sound equipment around for the band. We had enough sound equipment that we could fill Shay [?] Stadium with as much sound as you could ever want to hear. But we built all the speaker cabinets and everything ourselves.

**Q:** So a lot of money and time went into the band.

**A:** Yeah. Oh, it was great! I mean, we put on a concert at U. Conn, the University of Connecticut, and the band played for 2 hours. At the end of that time, the band left the stage, all the roadies picked the sound equipment up, mics and speakers and miles of wire and everything. And an hour and a half later, there were still over 200 people in the hall dancing. No music, nothing, just people dancing, wired and dancing from the energy that we'd produced. And it was noticeable, if you were in the community, as you came up the mountain, there was a weird space. Any road that you drove in. And it was a bubble that finally expanding to about 4 miles wide, of this beautiful energy. And it was there all the time, because everybody was focused on producing as high an energy level as they could. But it actually affected the surrounding country-side, so that you'd be driving along the road, and everything would be normal, and all of a sudden you'd realize, "Huh, what's that?" And then it would all seem normal again. But there was a definite line of demarcation, that as members of the community we could spot, coming in and out. It was definitely there. As I say, when I ran into them at first, I was hitch hiking back to New

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York City from the media conference at Goddard, and I was going down to see a couple of friends, see if I could get a job back at New York City, and I ran into these people. "Oh, come stay with us! Come help us put up this barn!" Everybody was your friend immediately. And all of them are very sincere. And I think if it hadn't gotten as big as it wound up being, it would've done a lot better. They finally wound up getting a house down in Greenfield. The more spiritually advanced people would stay down in Greenfield, while the rest of us were up on the top of this mountain. And of course, all the band members were so spiritually advanced that they had to be down there.

**Q:** Right. How big had the community gotten by the time you left?

**A:** Oh, it was over 600 people when I left.

**Q:** Wow. Now, you were there for how long?

**A:** Two and a half years.

**Q:** You were the 96th member. So it had expanded by hundreds by the time you left.

**A:** Yeah. There were people showing up every day.

**Q:** So there wasn't any membership policy? I mean, you didn't have to go through a trial period or anything like that?

**A:** Oh yeah, there was a 2 week trial period after you got there. You said, yes you wanted to be a member of the community, then there was a 2 week trial period.

**Q:** And did anybody vote on you? Or did Michael Metallica have to say you were okay?

**A:** Oh, you had an interview with Michael. He could tell whether you were okay or not.

**Q:** So it wasn't like the community got together and voted on new members or something.

**A:** Well, sometimes. It depended. But a lot of times it was people that they wanted. There were just heaps of really wonderful people there. Lord knows what's happened to all of them since.

**Q:** Have you kept in touch with any of those folks?

**A:** No. I kept in touch with Roberta for awhile, the gardener [?]. But I got busy doing other things. Life immediately in front of me became more important than keeping in contact with people who were going to castigate me for my lack of spirituality because I wasn't with them.

**Q:** Well, I'd like to hear some from you about Frogge Hollow now. Now, you went to Cleveland after Brotherhood of the Spirit?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** And then you went to the restaurant --

**A:** Right. I was working at the restaurant, and I met John, because he was starting to put together this tape called The Frogge Hollow Gazette.

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**Q:** Right, you saw the ad for readers.

**A:** And I knew that I could read fairly well, and could enunciate, and also knew a good bit about tape recorders, how to operate them. I started helping with the Frogge Hollow Gazette, silk screening the covers because I knew silk screening from the Brotherhood of the Spirit.

**Q:** That's right, from doing all the posters for the band. So then did you guys start a land search, or did you somehow find out about Buddy's place?

**A:** No, we'd been discussing maybe getting together, because trying to meet once or twice a week with everybody's schedule, and get this six hour tape done, and out, on any regular basis was pretty nigh unto impossible because if you got three people that were reading a particular piece, to get them all together in the same room to do the job was really difficult, because everybody had different schedules, this one was working here, that one was working there. Being commune-oriented coming out of the Brotherhood, I said, "Well, you know, we really ought to get some place where we could do this, set it up and be together with it." And at the same time, I was talking with Buddy at the restaurant, because he was a vegetarian and was working with the Light of Yoga Society in Cleveland, and wanted to set up a community type of organization on his farm. So I said, "Well, I know a bunch of people who I think might be looking for a place." So we got together, I think it was down at the restaurant. I introduced Buddy to Frogge Hollow.

**Q:** You guys were already calling yourselves Frogge Hollow at that point? Because of the gazette?

**A:** Right, it was Frogge Hollow Gazette.

**Q:** And that came from Stephen's business or something before that?

**A:** Galactic Cowboys in Dallas.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** So you've got all of that. The logo on the leathers of the Galactic Cowboys was Mickey Mouse. We would do things like get jobs to earn extra money, in Cleveland, putting flyers up. We'd get 100,000 flyers, and we'd have this area of Cleveland that we'd have to cover door-to-door, putting these flyers on doorknobs.

**Q:** And you'd get paid a little for doing that?

**A:** Yeah. And we did that until the old [unintelligible car name] died. We had this old [car] that had been Buddy's old [car]. He'd gotten himself a new [car]. So we had the old one, and we'd go out, and we would paper sections of Cleveland. And one day, as we were driving down the road, one of the hydraulic lines went in the [car], and had proceeded to settle down onto the road and die. When you've got a car that has hydraulic suspension, when the hydraulic lines go, it does nothing but settle right down onto the road and stay there. So we had to drag that. Then we had Stoney's truck, which was a Ford van. We'd painted "Frogge Hollow" in big letters on the side of the truck. And that was working fine, I was coming back from the restaurant one night, and pulled up to a stop sign, and the truck died. I turned the key to start it again, and at that point there was a "Clunk!" I lift up the engine cowing between the front seats, and the carburetors on fire, melting down onto the floor. So we had to drag that one back to the

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farm. Stoney decided that he was going to live in it for the winter out there. So we had the power company was busy cutting down all the trees that were in the way of their lines. And we decided we were going to use that for mulch. So we had them dump it next to the barn. It finally got almost as high as the barn. So Stoney built an entryway out of bails of straw, and then proceeded to shovel the wood chips over the van to insulate it for the winter. And it stayed nice and warm in there for a long time. But of course, we were also getting all of the garbage from the restaurant. Good vegetables, we'll take them out to the farm and compost them. So we had tons of it piled out there. There were heaps of it piled behind Cat City. Which was fine until it started to rain in the wintertime.

**Q:** And then it all molded, or stunk?

**A:** No, no, but the house in Cleveland, with the weight of the record collection that we had at the house at the time, proceeded to start moving the house down the hill. So we had to fill in the trench that had the compost, take the compost back out to the farm, and get rid of most of the record collection. Because the record collection -- this house had 12 ft ceilings. And we had two walls in the living room, 3 walls in the dining room, and 3 walls in what was called the den, floor to ceiling, records. I mean, if there was an album by anybody, no matter how obscure, that you wanted to find, it was there. In alphabetical order. The reason that we had so many records was because we had, at one point, every recording company that had an office in Cleveland was sending promo records, so that we could do a record section of the Frogge Hollow Gazette, what's new on records. So every company in Cleveland would send us promo records, anything that they came out with. That was one of the best schemes we came up with. We would put on a free-clinic night, once a month, for the benefit of the free clinic, at the restaurant. And any profit that we made that evening would go to the free clinic, which was right across the street from us. Because of that, radio stations in town would give us free advertising. God, some of those free clinic nights! We had people playing music, people doing poetry readings, and we were running, screaming at the back end. Just, pushing as much food out as fast as we possibly could. I remember one night I was running 3 twenty-four inch woks. And I looked up at all the bills I had up on the thing, and I looked down at the woks, and nothing in the woks matched anything that was up there. I thought, "Oh God, I've absolutely blown it." At that point, one of the waitresses came in, took down all the bills, put a whole new stack of bills, and the bills that she just put up matched all the stuff that I had in the woks. Much better than the dogs eating the goat.

**Q:** The dogs ate the goat? That's so sad?

**A:** Yeah. What is was is we had this old freezer that sat outside the barn that had the dogfood in it. And water got into it, so the dogfood started to mold, so the dogs didn't want to eat it. We didn't have any money to buy any more dogfood. And we had this group of high school kids out from one of the Cleveland high schools, to see what a working communal farm looked like. And we were sitting, talking to them, and one of them looked out the window and said, "Hey, you know, your dogs are eating the goat." And we went out, and sure enough! The goat had been staked out, the dogs had gotten the goat right out to the end of its tether, and then proceeded to kill the goat, or start to kill the goat, and started to eat its hind end out, while the front end of the goat is still alive, and the goat's bleeding away there. So we had to go get the gun and shoot the goat, bury the goat -- gave the kids a real idea of what was happening on a communal farm. Burying the horse was something else.

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**Q:** That's what I heard -- in the middle of the winter? When the ground was frozen?

**A:** Yeah, well, it was actually in the spring, but the ground was frozen. The reason the horse died was that the girl who was supposed to take care of the horse had moved the horse off the property to another pasture that she had found from somebody else, and she didn't bother to check the pasture to see if there were things like choke-cherry leaves around. And then she didn't go tend the horse for 3 or 4 days, because she was such a space-case. And the horse got hungry, and there wasn't anything to eat, so the horse proceeded to eat choke-cherry leaves and die. So then we had this dead horse on our hands, had to bury the horse. We managed to get Vern to get his big truck and tractor over to haul the horse back to the farm.

**Q:** Was he a neighbor?

**A:** He lived down the road. He was a guy that we worked for in the summertime, haying. He had the most antiquated equipment I have ever run across. The tractor was probably 25 years old, the bailer was probably 40 years old. And it was all not only old equipment, but very touchy equipment, so that if there was too much moisture in the hay, the bailer would break a sheer pin and stop. And I had been out haying with Vern -- it was the most incredible lesson in patience I have ever seen. We'd be stamping and fuming at the equipment, you know, but he'd say, "Equipment's old, can't help it." He'd stop the tractor, shut down the power take-off, wait for the bailer to stop, pull the sheer pin, put in a new sheer pin, get back on the tractor, start the tractor, start the bailer, drive 15 feet, and another sheer pin would go. He'd shut it all down, wouldn't say a word. Never swore at the machinery at all. I found out afterwards that the reason he never swore at the machinery was because while he was sitting up at the tractor, he had a little box under the seat of the tractor, and always had a bottle of Ricker's Wild Irish Rose in there, and any time he had to shut off the engine, he'd take a hit of it before he went back to put in the pin.

**Q:** So unlike Brotherhood of the Spirit, you guys got along pretty well with the surrounding community, at Frogge Hollow?

**A:** Oh, yeah, but we were a much smaller group. Let me tell you about Freewheeling [?] Franklin. He was our next-door neighbor. He lived diagonally across the main road from us. And Freewheeling Franklin didn't believe in government particularly. He was 45 or 50 at the time, or maybe older. Franklin probably weighed 350 pounds. He dressed in bib over-alls, plaid shirt, lined, long jeans jacket, and a cap. And to keep the taxes down on his property, he would go out with this 1924 Ford tractor, crank start at the front and had this flat bed that he'd haul along behind it, and he'd pick up people's old stoves and refrigerators, all this kind of stuff, load it onto his truck when they set them out there on trash day, bring them back and set them up in his front yard. Kept his property taxes down. Franklin believed in bathing once a year. First of January, every year, Franklin would take all his clothes off, burn them, take a bath, coat himself from head to foot in a mixture of turpentine and vaseline, put on 2 brand new sets of long underwear, 2 brand new plaid shirts, 2 brand new sets of bibbers, and a new jacket.

**Q:** What was the turpentine and the Vaseline for?

**A:** Kept disease away. And because of his propensity for hauling this heavy stuff back to his place, he had a hernia the size of a football that he was waiting for Jesus to heal.

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**Q:** But he wouldn't go to a doctor?

**A:** Oh no, didn't believe in doctors. Wouldn't go to a hospital -- "Kill ya quicker in a hospital than anywhere -- where do you think all the disease winds up? In the hospital!" Made us hippies look kind of normal. So when we decided to paint the buildings at the farm, it was just fine, Franklin thought it was wonderful. We painted one of them a nice, somber gray. And then we painted "Have a Nice Day," in letters this tall, on the side of the building, in bright blue and raspberry. And then we put blue spotlights on it. And the raspberry and the blue outlining on the letters gave enough of a red/blue shift, so that the letters just kind of vibrated there when the blue light was on it, all night long. You could see it for 3/4 of a mile away. It was wonderful. And then one of the other buildings we painted a 6 foot tall ohm, in a circle. That was much classier. We painted the side of that building white, and the ohm was in royal blue.

**Unknown:** I don't remember us ever being hassled by cops up there, or by redneck neighbors.

**A:** No, well that's because the girl from the farm next door used to come over and visit us. Remember, she was the one who gave us Fluffy? You don't remember Fluffy? Fluffy was a black and white Persian cat. Gorgeous cat, just incredibly affectionate -- you could not keep the cat out of your lap if you were sitting down. But Fluffy was underfoot so that everyone kept putting Fluffy outdoors. The girl couldn't keep Fluffy because she was allergic to him. And Fluffy discovered we had this huge compost pile, which was warm! And so Fluffy would go and burrow into the compost pile. And then he'd come back into the house anytime somebody opened the door, and anybody who was sitting down, he'd be up in your lap and right here in your face, "Purr, purr, purr." We finally named him "Mudshark." You remember Mudshark? Well Mudshark was originally "Fluffy." When Mudshark showed up at Frogge Hollow --

**Unknown:** I don't know if you noticed, but most of the animals were named after Frank Zappa songs. Uncle Meat . . .

**Q:** Now, who was Uncle Meat?

**A:** Uncle Meat was a little black and white terrier. And the other one, Willy the Pimp was another little black and white dog of questionable parentage, who was very big on playing ball. If you had a ball in your hand, you had Willy Pimp's complete attention.

**Unknown:** Otherwise she was "Willy the Bitch."

**A:** Right. You were her friend only as long as you had a ball in your hand. Of course my favorite story was Tom and the chicory. We had chicory that decided to grow wild around the place. Lovely stuff, but it grows fairly tall. Lovely blue flowers on it. And so we cultivated it, places like around the mailbox. And the mailman came by one day, and said, "Hey, you've got to get rid of all that stuff. There's too many weeds around that mailbox, and I can't get to it." So Tom -- Tom was shorter than I am, but very muscular -- Tom said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of it," and proceeded to take a hand sickle and go out and clear the chicory from around the mailbox. And this girl, Lynn, one who had moved the horse to the pasture where it got the choke-cherries.

**Q:** You said she was more of a Yoga person?

**A:** She was never a Frogge Hollow person, thank God. I've got a couple of Lynn stories, this is one if them. Lynn sees Tom out there, hacking down the chicory, and she goes running across the road, and starts beating on Tom. "How dare you cut down all those beautiful flowers!" And Tom's standing there,



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and I can see him turning whiter and whiter, and his knuckles were dead white, and he's got this sickle in his hand, and she's beating on his other arm. I kept expecting any minute that he was going to turn right around and just take care of her. And he didn't -- he controlled himself admirably.

**Unknown:** Do you want to tell the story of [unintelligible]

**A:** Oh yeah, I can. Every year, in Cleveland, the Cleveland clinic has a white elephant sale. And one year John had proceeded to acquire a stature of the Virgin Mary, almost 6 feet tall, which he then proceeded to paint in Day-Glo colors. It seemed to fit the apartment at the time. But when we got out to the farm, there was no place to put the Blessed Virgin. John said, "Well, she'll be Our Lady of the Swamp," and proceeded to drag the Blessed Virgin out into the swamp. Then we wanted to cut some paths through this area, clean it up so that we could get out to the rest of the property, rather than right there on the corner. So Buddy, one day, decides to take the old [car] out back to see how the property's looking. So he's driving along through the woods, he comes upon this Day-Glo apparition of the Blessed Virgin standing there like this, with her arms out. And he came racing back into the yard. Buddy was Black, and he was several shades lighter than when he had left. Just, "There's this thing in the woods!" And we'd forgotten that she was even out there, you know? That was a good one.

**Q:** Did you tell him what it was?

**A:** Oh yes. We explained it to him.

**Unknown:** He made us bury it.

**A:** Should've set her up as a marker over the horse.

**Unknown:** Also you might want to mention this building, the ugliest ashram in the history of the world.

**A:** All of these people, none of whom had very much use of tools before, we didn't have a plumb-bob, or -- Rama just wanted this little shack in the woods. Rama was the spiritual head of the Light of Yoga Society, his name was H. H. Shriswami Rama [?], and he came from Puni, India. Beautiful man, genuinely high spiritual. And so Buddy invited him to come out to the farm, and he just loved the piece of property, even though it was swampland and horrible, he thought it was wonderful. It was away from Cleveland, and it was away from the Light of Yoga Society. And Rama was having very definite problems with the Light of Yoga Society, because he was [tape ends] . . . the people at the Light of Yoga Society were very into being "Shaker Heights" [?] people in Cleveland, and were very into their Mercedes' and BMW's, and jewelry -- being spiritual when the mood struck them. And Rama could tell, while we weren't talking about it necessarily, we were busy doing it. So he wanted to have us join up with the Light of Yoga Society, and Frogge Hollow would be the working arm of the ashram. So we set up an opening tea to announce the Light of Yoga Society's -- Rama's new project, which was setting up an ashram on this piece of miserable land, in Ashtopilo [?], Ohio. Hanover was the only place that I had been in recent years that still had a telephone operator. When you picked up the phone, you didn't get a dial tone, you got, "Mert!"

**Q:** Was it a party line too?

**A:** No, no, it was a private line, but it went into this central office and you got Mert. Mertle was quite a character. Of course, she listened in on everybody's calls, so if you really wanted to know what was going on, you just picked up the phone, "Hi Mert. What's happening?" And she'd tell you everybody's business all across town.

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**Unknown:** It's also where Clarence Darrow [?] set up his first law office.

**Q:** Really? That's interesting.

**A:** Did Mert work for him?

**Q:** She wasn't that old, right?

**A:** No, she wasn't that old.

**Unknown:** So at my end, Kit and I put together this poster that had a map of the farm at the top, which showed where the houses were and so on, and then one big circle had an ohm on it, and said, "Cleveland Light of Yoga Society," the other head said, "Frogge Hollow Enterprises," and it has this frog sitting on a mushroom, holding a dope pipe with these glassy eyes, going like this. I wish I still had that poster.

**Q:** I'd love to see it.

**A:** The poster, I think, is in the archives of Cat City.

**Q:** Does Cat City, the house itself, have an archives?

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** Just some boxes in the basement or something?

**A:** No, it wouldn't be in the basement, it would be in Bobby's room.

**Q:** I'll have to go visit him.

**Unknown:** Bobby's an experience in and of himself.

**A:** 16706 Endora, Cleveland, Ohio, 44106.

**Q:** What's Bobby's last name?

**A:** Horstemuier. I believe.

**Q:** So, you were supposed to build a shack for Rama in the woods?

**A:** And that's what he got. And it was a shack.

**Q:** And was he happy with it?

**A:** He was happy with it. Everybody else, all the Light of Yoga Society members were absolutely appalled. But what he wanted was a shack in the woods where he could go out and sit there quietly by himself and meditate, and that was all he wanted. So we held the Opening Tea for the Light of Yoga Society, and all of their people were there. And we showed up at the Light of Yoga Society for the tea. And Rama announced the opening of the ashram, and three days later he died. And we were heartbroken; the Light of Yoga Society was inconsolable. It was fine with us for the most part, "Well, Rama died, these things happen, that's okay." But the Light of Yoga Society people who had been listening to Rama preach about how it was always better for the transition to another life, and the woman who headed up the Light of Yoga Society couldn't stop crying. She was draped in veils and

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weeping inconsolably for days and days and days. And then she got Buddy to one side, and, "Well, we have to put up a temple to Rama's memory." And the next thing those of us out at the farm knew, they were sending to India to hire an architect to build an Indian temple on this piece of no-good land in Ohio, in memory of Rama. At that point, I said, "I've had it." I moved into Cat City. And was followed quite quickly by --

**Unknown:** Remember the final straw when we all moved out?

**A:** No, I don't, because I wasn't there for it. I'd already moved into Cat City at that point.

**Q:** But it wasn't much longer after that?

**Unknown:** Well, we just started spending more and more time at Cat City, less and less of our time -- and fuel oil was such a major expense to come up with that it was probably getting close to [unintelligible] . . .

**Q:** So you didn't have a wood-burning heat system, then?

**A:** No. The farm took fuel oil, and it sucked up lots of it. And this place was not insulated.

**Q:** And the winters are fairly harsh, right?

**A:** Yeah. We used to describe it as snow ass-deep to a tall Indian. It was in the thing called the Snow Belt -- the winds come down from Canada, pick up all this moisture going across Lake Erie, and dumps it. So it was very bad. We went out there one weekend, I can remember, we all headed out to the farm. We got out there, and Tom had been staying out there by himself for 3 days. The electricity had gone off. Of course, once the electricity goes off, there's no way to get any heat in the building at all, because the fuel burner was electric. So we get out there, and walked into the house, and it was close to 60 below zero inside the house. So everybody was, "Oh, bummer, bummer." Coats, and extra blankets, pile them on the beds, get into bed, go to sleep. Stoney and I stayed up. And proceeded to take the pile of old newspapers that was next to the door getting ready to go out, and 2 inch wide rolls of masking tape. And we sealed every crack down stairs in that house. And when people started to wake up at 7 o'clock in the morning, the temperature was 34 degrees downstairs, because we had sealed every crack, all around all the walls, all around all the windows. And then Stoney and I went to bed, "Okay, you guy deal with it." Remember the guy that lived down the street on the other corner? Not Freewheeling Franklin's corner, but the other corner, there was an empty field, then there was his place down the way? He'd bought the place, and decided he'd come visit the neighbors. We're sitting around having a family meeting, and Kitten looks out the window, and she says, "You aren't going to believe this, but there's this car pulling in the driveway, and it's got three sets of antlers on it, and a bunch of old tires. And there's this guy getting out. And he looks sort of like Santa Claus, but he's wearing a cowboy hat and a poncho belt." And it was, our next door neighbor, and she had described it perfectly -- he had three sets of antlers on this Dodge stationwagon, and two sets of extra tires for the car up on the luggage rack on the top of the stationwagon. And we opened the door and invited him in, and he came and he stood in the doorway, and he started looking around, and all the people that he was looking at were weirder than he was. He turned around and walked back out. We never had any particular trouble with the police or the sheriff. They were out there, they knew we were there, we didn't have any particular trouble with them. I think mainly because we were friends with Franklin, and they'd known Franklin for

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years. Remember the day we helped Franklin move that cast-iron wood stove? It was me, John, and Tom. All of us are fairly hefty individuals. We got on one end of this cast-iron wood stove that Franklin was having to haul out from this house, and he got on the other end. We were grunting and straining to try and pick up this end of the wood stove, Franklin had the other end up -- the man was unbelievably strong.

**Unknown:** If you don't count the hernia.

**A:** Oh, this was with the hernia. But you didn't want -- other than driving his tractor around, Franklin hitch hiked everywhere. He had a friend in Philadelphia, who was blind. And who sold pencils on a street corner in Philadelphia for a living. And Franklin would go down to Philadelphia when the weather was good, and he'd stand there all day long, next to the guy selling pencils, and talk to him. Watch the people go by. Go to a couple of revival meetings, couple of tent meetings. Then he'd hitch hike home. Well, it was fine, unless it was a rainy summer afternoon in Ohio, and you were driving by and saw Franklin at the side of the road. Because no matter how hot it got inside the car, you wouldn't shut the windows. No matter how much rain came in, you wouldn't shut the windows. He had an aura about him. It was, I mean, there were times when I figured skunks would run from Franklin.

**Q:** Because it was the combination of turpentine and Vaseline and sweaty clothes?

**A:** Oh, yes, and rank. And it didn't matter if he was shoveling out the car barn today, that was okay, it just added to the aura. Or the goat pen. Or whatever it was that he happened to be doing.

**Unknown:** Didn't he live with his mom?

**A:** Yes. Never met his mom. I was over at Franklin's house once. Franklin came out in the yard and talked with us, but his mom didn't like to talk to people.

**Unknown:** She was probably like the mom in psycho.

**A:** So she stayed in the house, and I saw the curtains twitch a couple of times. That was it. He always came over to our house rather than have us subject his mom to any trauma. It's highly possible that she was not only old, but was probably agoraphobic.

**Q:** So tell me some about Cat City. What was the scene at Cat City like when you moved back to Cleveland?

**A:** Oh, I knew everybody that lived there, because we were back and forth between Cat City and the farm. The people that were at Cat City worked the restaurant along with us. So we were all, it was all sort of one big happy family, even though we were in two different places. And there were, let's see, downstairs, there was back porch, front porch, livingroom, diningroom, kitchen, den, stairs upstairs, then there was a sun porch on the second floor, one, two, three bedrooms, hall closet, bathroom, and a small service room at the back end that had a --

**Unknown:** We counted the sun porch and the service rooms as rooms.

**A:** Yeah, we used them as bedrooms, even though they weren't technically set up that way. The service room on the second floor was just barely big enough that you could fit a single mattress on the floor. And then there were 2 bedrooms, and a closet upstairs on the third floor. And the front bedroom upstairs on the third floor had french doors, and a walk out onto the roof of the sun porch. That was pretty nice. I was living up on the third floor, originally, with Stoney and Tom. John and Maryann had the

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other room. Eventually Stoney decided to move into the closet. And I moved down onto the service room on the second floor. Eventually I moved down to Lakeview.

**Unknown:** Actually, I started out in a room with Mary, and Mary moved to the front porch to what was Charlie's room, then she got own room. Musical people, musical beds.

**A:** Lot of musical beds.

**Q:** Was that a fun place to live?

**A:** Yeah. I loved having that record collection. No matter what kind of mood you were in, you could always find exactly the perfect piece of music to go along with it.

**Q:** Was there constant music going on there?

**A:** Oh yeah.

**Q:** Live as well as recorded?

**A:** Yeah. Because Grave's [?] band would practice in the cellar. And they eventually turned themselves into a real honest band, and built themselves a studio downtown, and turned out some of the best jazz I have ever heard. It was marvelous.

**Q:** What was the name of the band?

**A:** Moondreams. They never put out a record. They very seldom played outside the studio. But any night the band was playing at the studio, there was half a dozen hangers-on that would show up, just to hear them play.

**Unknown:** After a free clinic gig one night, they had left about \$4,000 of their equipment, some huge column speakers, amps, very good mics, it all got ripped off from the restaurant. We were robbed on a regular basis.

**Q:** Was it a bad part of town?

**A:** We were at the confluence of East Cleveland and Cleveland Heights. Cleveland Heights was all old Italian families. And East Cleveland was all Black. And the two communities did not get along. And here we were, this little restaurant right on the edge, and we didn't care what color the people were that were coming in. And the Blacks assumed that we were Italian-owned, and therefore we were legitimate to rob. And the Italians kept coming in and threatening us, because we allowed Black men to come in with White women.

**Q:** So you got it from both sides?

**A:** We got it from both sides.

**Unknown:** The landlady was a part of a well-known mafia family.

**A:** Not only was our landlady part of a well-known mafia family, the building had originally been a stone cutter's shop for the Lakeview Cemetery. And there were all kinds of headstones sitting at the back of the restaurant. And so finally it got to the point where we had the mafia coming in, threatening to burn us out if we didn't stop serving mixed couples in the restaurant. And fortunately, I think it was Jimmy, this was before he was going with Marge, but anyhow, he was going with Howard Metzinbaum's [?]

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daughter. And so he called Howard -- he was Senator Howard Metzinbaum -- and he called Howard and said, "Hey, the mafia's giving us a real hard time, and we're just trying to run a restaurant here." Howard made one phone call, and we never heard another thing. Didn't stop the Black robberies, but it did stop the mafia from bugging us. I always admired Howard having those contacts.

**Unknown:** Did you know Margie's now a well-known member of ACLU, an attorney in Sacramento?

**A:** Yeah. I don't know where she went to law school. I haven't heard anything about her in Sacramento in recent years either, she may have moved on from Sacramento.

**Unknown:** Towards the end, I was thinking of a gun and staying it all night, and just blowing them away, but I didn't want to do that, kill somebody.

**A:** I was cooking one night, and all of a sudden this Black teenager is in the kitchen with this big gun. "I want the money!" I said, "The money's out front in the cash register." He said, "I want to the money in the safe!" I said, "I don't have the combination to the safe. And you're in my kitchen, and you get out of my kitchen!" And I picked up a meat cleaver. The kid turned around, went out to the front and robbed the cash register, and left.

**Q:** Oh man. Now, in the '90's, you probably would've gotten blown away, right? This was still a more innocent time period, right?

**A:** Yeah, this was still in the '70's, and though they had guns, they tended not to use them.

**Q:** So did you mainly cook at the restaurant, then?

**A:** Yeah.

**Unknown:** Well, you ran the cookie shop at Heights.

**Q:** Oh, that's right, you told me there was someone who stayed and did the cookies -- you baked glorious chocolate chip cookies?

**A:** Yes, indeed, I did.

**Unknown:** J.T. is of the French cooking persuasion, he likes butter . . . sauces.

**A:** If it doesn't have butter, and cream, and cream cheese, then . . .

**Q:** Then it's not worth cooking?

**A:** "Low-cal" is not part of my cooking routine. This "no-fat" thing just drives me up the wall.

**Q:** Did you do the Alice B. Tocklas [?] cookies that they took to the radio show?

**A:** Yes. I did. That was something, that radio show. We were sitting there, eating cookies, talking to people calling in on the radio, just feeding them any line we would come up with, as off-the-wall as possible.

**Unknown:** But we didn't answer any medical questions. We said, "You've got to see your doctor. We're not doctors." That was cool. I know a lot of health food store people don't do that.

**A:** It was an awful lot of fun. Occasionally I would make batches of Frogge Hollow chocolate chip cookies. But only occasionally, because it was a legitimate cookie business, and the others were special occasion cookies. The problem that I had was keeping stock and supply.

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**Q:** So were these cookies for selling at your restaurant?

**A:** Yeah. They were 1/4 pound chocolate chip cookies. They were that big around, and that thick. And you'd get through eating one --

**Unknown:** -- and see a dentist.

**A:** -- no, you'd get through eating one, and they had this, "Well, gee, I really just want one more bite." No matter how many cookies you'd eaten, when you'd got to the last bite, you always wanted just one more bite, it was wonderful.

**Q:** So they were really good sellers then.

**Unknown:** What you might need is some insulin.

**A:** They were thick, but they were still crispy, because I used whole-wheat pastry flour and turpinato [?] sugar. And real butter, and raisins, and walnuts, and Hershey's chocolate chips.

**Unknown:** He also made the bread that we sold behind the counter.

**A:** Yeah, the bread we sold behind the counter, and the bread that we used at the restaurant as well.

**Q:** So did you stay there overnight then, to do the baking?

**A:** Yeah. Restaurant would close at 11, I'd be there at 11:30 starting the bread. Used to do 60 lbs of bread a night by hand.

**Q:** By yourself?

**A:** Usually. I'd have maybe one other person helping me. Different people different times.

**Q:** That would get tiring.

**A:** No. Not at all. Didn't have much time to get tired, because you'd start the bread -- I even had somebody come and do a film on how to do bread.

**Unknown:** But we did 8 three-pound loafs a day, so I don't think it was actually 60, not counting the ones you sold.

**A:** Well, the ones we sold to the co-op.

**Unknown:** Oh, the co-op, yes.

**Q:** So you sold bread to the food co-op?

**A:** Yeah. That's where we got all our flour, a lot of our vegetables and stuff.

**Q:** Now, you mentioned the co-op before, but you guys had some relationship to the co-op, like you helped it get started or something?

**A:** Well, we needed a source of cheap organics for the restaurant. So the easiest way to do it was to set up a co-op.

**Unknown:** Of course Barb was mostly the one doing that.

**A:** Barb was very co-op oriented.

**Unknown:** Barb was our Maoist radical feminist, doctrinaire communist. But I liked her.

**A:** Neat woman.

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**Q:** So was the co-op actually a retail store front?

**A:** Yes.

**Unknown:** It was about a block and a half away.

**Q:** Do you know if it still exists?

**Unknown:** Yes, I believe it does. It's moved, but it still exists.

**Q:** Does it have a name?

**Unknown:** I think it's Cleveland Food Co-op. And the person who was in charge was Barbara Rousch. I wouldn't be surprised if she were still there. I don't know what she thinks of Chairman Mao, now, though.

**Q:** Now, she wasn't part of the group that took over the restaurant, was she?

**Unknown:** No, she was a waitress. She took it over after we left, she and her group, but at the time, she was a waitress, and a cook, at times, but mostly a waitress. Very reliable, reliable to a fault. A little short on sense of humor. We used to do things called "checking the trash," which was going out back when the trash came, where we went to smoke our joints. She didn't approve of that.

**A:** Fortunately we owned the place. But I had a sandwich clock which was pretty close to infallible [?]. We were doing open-faced, toasted cheese sandwiches in a 500 degree oven. So we'd cut a thick slice of bread, and if it was for a supersandwich, it was a layer of tomatoes, a layer of mushrooms, and a layer of cheese. You put it in on a sheet pan. Once the cheese started melting, drag it back out, put on a layer of onions, a layer of green peppers, and another layer of cheese, stick it back in again until it all melted. For plates, we had gone to a pottery shop somewhere out in the country in Ohio, and gotten all the saucers that they used to put under their planters. They were a glazed pottery. The small ones were this big, and the dinner plates were that big. And a supersandwich, if you did it right, and pulled it out of the oven just right, just fit into the small plate, and was that tall.

**Unknown:** Not a "low-cal" item.

**A:** No, but certainly perfectly healthy.

**Unknown:** And our tables, which were all wood, were finished when they were still green, they weren't allowed to be cured, so they all warped, and they were curved like this.

**A:** Some of them curved one way, and some of them curved the other.

**Unknown:** You'd have to shake your plate as your sandwich started to fall toward the center of the table.

**A:** Yep. Well, some of them fell into the center, and some of the fell to the outside edge. You had to be careful, as a waitress, where you set the bowls of soup.

**Q:** You would learn the spots on each table.

**A:** Oh yeah. Well there were only 12 tables in the restaurant, so it was hard to not know. And then every once in a while, we'd flip a table top over, to get it so that it would curl back the other way.

**Q:** So what were you saying about a sandwich clock?

**A:** A sandwich clock in my head. We were hippies, we didn't believe in things like regular timers.



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**Q:** I'm curious what you thought was the best part of living communally, at any of the groups you lived in.

**A:** Other people. Doing things together. Group effort is always rewarding, because you can get things done at an exponential rate, when things are going right. But then, too, I used to be a clean fanatic. I'm not anymore. But I used to be, many years ago.

**Unknown:** I think it had something to do with a little bit of speed, didn't it?

**A:** No. I've always hated speed. It was acid.

**Q:** That turned you into a clean freak?

**A:** Oh yeah. I'd drop LSD and start cleaning. We had a cash register that when it had been gotten originally, came out of a Navy PX, and was battleship gray. And I looked at this battleship gray cash register, and thought, "There's got to be something under there." And I discovered that the thing that was under all things coats of battleship gray paint was a solid brass cash register. So I started taking the layers of paint off the cash register. Finally got down to the point where John came in one morning, and here I am with a toothbrush and a tube of simulchrome [?] polish, scrubbing out the details in the cash register. But we also had a glass case that sat next to the cash register. And it was glass-rimmed in clear plastic. So there was two sliding doors at the back, three shelves inside. Glass front, glass sides, glass top and bottom. And one of the hardest things to do was to get that completely clean and free of fingerprints. So I used to sit there some nights and, that was 20 surfaces. But it was so satisfying when you looked through that display case at whatever was sitting on the glass shelves, there wasn't a fingerprint anywhere on it. And it never lasted. When it was new, it was just marvelous.

**Unknown:** Stoney was making dope pipes, and as far as I know he's still doing it, except he moved into silk stone --

**Q:** And you'd sell them at the restaurant?

**A:** Yes.

**Unknown:** We had our work on commission, we'd put up displays of various local artists, some of them quite good.

**Q:** What about the flip-side, what was the worst part?

**A:** Oh, the people.

**Q:** Again? Okay.

**A:** Well, yeah, you always have to work around personality conflicts. And I try my best to get along with everybody. I generally succeed. Because that's just my nature. Some people are easier to get along with than others.

**Unknown:** She was asking about some of the colorful people at Cat City, and I mentioned a professor, I said I thought he was schizophrenic. Remember him?

**A:** I don't know, I never talked to him when he was straight enough to know whether he was schizophrenic or whether it was just the acid.

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**Q:** But he was strange?

**A:** Oh, very strange.

**Q:** Had he actually been a professor, or you just called him that?

**A:** Yeah, I think he had been a professor at John Carrol [?].

**Q:** That's a college in Cleveland?

**A:** A Catholic university. He used to take huge quantities of acid. If everybody else would take one, he had to take 5.

**Q:** Maybe that was the problem.

**A:** Yeah, well as I say, I never met him when he was straight, so.

**Unknown:** It was very strong acid. I don't remember any of it being cut with anything.

**A:** It was nice, it was clean. Back in the days when stuff on the street was not clean.

**Unknown:** I had a genuine out-of-body experience once where I was bouncing on the ceiling, looking down on my body sitting down on the couch in a lotus position. Won't forget that.

**A:** Gee, I did that the first time I smoked dope. That was 1963, when I smoked dope for the first time.

**Q:** Well, do you miss communal living at all?

**A:** Yes, and no. I miss a lot of the comraderie. I miss the cooperation among people. But I really relish my privacy now. But then, I was in my 30's, and now I'm in my 50's, and that makes a great deal of difference.

**Q:** Would you ever do it again?

**A:** Maybe. If conditions were right, and there was a good group of people that really needed the help, and appreciated me, maybe.

**Unknown:** Not me.

**Q:** It's over for you, huh?

**Unknown:** I like the quiet.

**A:** I first started into the communal movement, as such, years ago, living in New York City. We had a house on Staten Island, that was 9 apartment buildings. And most of the people in the various apartments all worked for WRL.

**Q:** What's that?

**A:** War Resistor's League. And Wind magazine.

**Q:** Oh yeah. Did this place have a name?

**A:** 30 Canal Street.

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**Q:** Yeah! Who did I meet that was from there? Jack and Kay Hayward? They had a commune over near Filo [?], called Rainbow, I think? They lived at 30 Canal St. I'm pretty sure it was them. And then wasn't Marty Jeezer part of that too?

**A:** Yeah, Marty Jeezer! I know Marty.

**Q:** I start finding connections every once in a while.

**A:** That was a lot of years ago.

**Q:** So you've been in a whole bunch of groups, haven't you?

**A:** Yeah. I was at 30 Canal St. when Paul and Becky were still running Wind magazine. That was back in the . . . that would've been '64, '65 maybe. I was at 30 Canal 3 years, before I left to go visit Irving.

**Q:** Well, did you find out about Irving Fiske in New York? That's how you went up to Vermont?

**A:** Yeah. A friend of mine who lived down the street from 30 Canal St. had run into Irving at one of his seminars in New York City, and thought Irving was the neatest thing since sliced bread. I got up to Vermont, and discovered that Irving was a wacko.

**Q:** I think that that place at Quarry [?] Hills has been going on since the '40's. Because I think they just celebrated their 50th anniversary.

**A:** Well, you see, Irving was originally good friend of L. Ron Hubbard.

**Q:** I didn't know that!

**A:** Yeah.

**Q:** So was he into Scientology then? Irving?

**A:** No, no. Irving and L. Ron had had a falling out when L. Ron wanted to start Scientology. Because Irving said, "This is something that should be free to everybody." And L. Ron said, "No, no, we can make a fortune!" And that's where they parted ways.

**Unknown:** I have a friend from Antioch, my roommate, who's been into Scientology for 30 some years, is now a high muckity-muck in Los Angeles. So I guess it works for him. Seem weird to me, but it works for him. I looked up both of my roommates, after I realized it had been 30 years since I talked to them, and he's a detective in Los Angeles, for this detective bureau. Full-time Scientology.

**A:** His name isn't Dirk Gently, is it?

**Unknown:** And the other one's a professor at Berkeley, in the philosophy department.

**Q:** Those are pretty different paths.

**Unknown:** It's weird, the 3 of us all ended up in California. The magnet state.

**Q:** Well, so you had some pretty different communal experiences then, 30 Canal St. to Irving Fiske's place, to Brotherhood of the Spirit, to Frogge Hollow and Cat City, then out here to Mountain Family. You pretty much ran the gambit, didn't you, of different types of communities?

**A:** Ran the gambit of emotions from A to A flat.

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**Unknown:** Skipping the one on Euclid Avenue, the Hindu . . .

**Q:** Is that in Berkeley?

**A:** No, Cleveland.

**Unknown:** They wore saffron robes -- Hari Krishna.

**A:** I opted out of the Hari Krishnas, didn't want to have much to do with them.

**Q:** They'd probably like your restaurant, though.

**A:** Yeah, and the fat kid.

**Unknown:** Oh, right. He was a guru.

**Q:** You guys called him the fat kid?

**A:** Yeah, he was the 12 year old perfect master.

**Unknown:** Nationally known.

**Q:** Oh, sure, he had some really long name. Sure.

**A:** His mother kicked him out of church when he married his secretary.

**Unknown:** He got into a rap with one of the women in the laundromat about the women doing all the dirty work in the Hari Krishna organization, and she said she wasn't allowed to talk [unintelligible], . . . couldn't understand such enlightened things.

**Q:** So this boy guru, did he hang out in Cleveland for awhile, then?

**Unknown:** No, but he had followers.

**A:** He had lots of followers there. They had an ashram in Cleveland.

**Unknown:** Who was the guy that Marsha followed in New York? He was related to the Mahabishu [?] Orchestra?

**A:** Oh, yeah, that was, the same guy that Carlos Santana got enamored with. I don't remember. My favorite of all of those spiritual leader type people was Dick Albert.

**Q:** Oh, Romdas [?].

**A:** Romdas used to come into the restaurant every time he was in Cleveland, loved my chocolate chip cookies. Claimed that they were the best chocolate chip cookies that he had ever eaten anywhere.

**Unknown:** Have you ever heard of Moon Dog?

**Q:** No, I don't think so.

**A:** He had a couple of albums out. He was, he dealt in rounds, like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"? And he wrote music in rounds. And he was blind. [tape ends] . . . Italian cigars. And he claimed that they kept them healthy.

**Unknown:** And a Viking helmet with horns.

**A:** Viking helmet with horns, and a big staff --

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**Q:** Did he have a commune, or was he just ---

**A:** No.

**Unknown:** He was itinerate, but he'd show up at a free clinic night and take over the stage, keep people mesmerized.

**A:** For hours. And Tom the Rainbow Man used to show up quite regularly. I still have a Tom the Rainbow Man rainbow in the truck.

**Unknown:** The only way we dealt with rats, which in Cleveland are the size of Basset hounds, were to get some really tough cats. There was one cat that had the habit of presenting a dead rat to customers by sitting it on their lap. Never broke the cat of the habit, so we had to watch for him coming up from the basement with a rat, and chase it back -- it was a present. Didn't think they should be vegetarian, maybe.

**A:** Part of the reason that we had the rat problem in the restaurant was because we were right next to the Lakeview Cemetery. And these rats would chew through six inches of concrete to try to get at our grain stores in the basement. We had to keep everything in galvanized trash cans, with the lids wired down so that the rats couldn't get in.

**Unknown:** It wasn't in Cleveland, it was in Philadelphia, but I had a rat run out of an alley and jump and bite me in the leg.

**Q:** Did you have to go get shots?

**Unknown:** I should've, but I didn't.

**Q:** How horrible!

**Unknown:** I tried to beat it off!

**Q:** Sounds like a nightmare!

**Unknown:** City rats are real mean.

**Q:** Is it getting too late?

**A:** No, it's not getting too late, it's quarter of seven, but Melissa should be home by now.

**Q:** Okay, well can I ask you one final question then? I'm just curious, you've lived in a whole bunch of different communes, and I've wondered if you've come to any conclusions about what you think makes communal living work or not work, or any lessons you've drawn from all of this about communal living?

**A:** Most of the time, I don't think it works, and I think it doesn't work because people don't have a commitment that is constant. No people have a commitment that is constant. No matter how high up or how low down they are, they don't have a constant commitment to anything other than themselves. I think it would be wonderful if more people were committed to other people, but it doesn't work that way. How philosophical.

**Unknown:** You won't be asked to do it again.

**A:** That's okay, I don't mind, I can do it for hours. And enjoy doing it.

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**Q:** Well, it's been a lot of fun in the receiving end. You're a great story teller.

**A:** It makes me want to holler, "I love the way they do my life!" I'm sure there's lots of stories I'm forgetting. I remember one day, what was that guy's name? The guy who lived the other side of Hanover, who used to come over because we had the best stereo in town?

**Unknown:** The high school kid?

**A:** Yeah. Brought over a copy of "Dark Side of the Moon." It was brand new, it had just been released that day. He comes over and sets it on our stereo -- we had a quad system. It was really good, and lots of power. And he turns it up and I start singing along with the songs. He said, "How can you be singing those songs? Those songs are brand new!"

**Q:** You had a promotional copy that came out earlier?

**A:** No, no! And I said, "Well, it's real simple." And proceeded to take out "Metal," which was the album before that, and every single song on Dark Side of the Moon was lifted out of "Metal."

**Q:** Oh. I didn't know that.

**A:** Well most people don't. And most people don't spot it, because "Metal" is not an album that's familiar to a lot of people.

**Q:** Yeah, I've never listened to "Metal," but I've listened to "Dark Side of the Moon."

**A:** Well, listen to "Metal." "Metal" makes "Dark Side of the Moon" pale by comparison. They still had Sid Barret [?] with them when they did "Metal." They checked Sid Barret out of the bin to do "Metal," and when they finished "Metal," Sid Barret checked himself back into the bin and hasn't been out since, I don't think. But "Metal" is a marvelous album. "Overhead the albatross hangs motionless upon the breeze/Deep beneath the fathom waves and labyrinths of coral caves." It's wonderful. Good poetry, good music.

**Q:** Should we go and try and find Melissa?

**A:** Sure.