Interview with Rich Appelbaum
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
January 8, 1996

Q: This is Monday, January 8th, and this is an interview with Rich Appelbaum, at UC Santa Barbara. So can you tell me what events led up to you coming to UCSB, Isla Vista, and living communally?
A: Sure. I'll try not to go into too much autobiographical detail. I got a Bachelor's degree from Columbia in government, 1964. Then I went to the Woodrow Wilson school in Princeton, '64-'66, got a masters in public affairs, which was to prepare me as a career as a foreign service officer, something like that. During the summer of '65, I spent the summer with my first wife in an Indian village in Guatemala as part of the program -- not being in an Indian village, but being overseas for the summer, and that was my first exposure really to third world poverty, which opened my eyes a lot. In '66, when I got my masters in public affairs, I went to Peru, I spent a year and a half as a technical consultant to the Peruvian government, to the national planning agency. I was this sort of token social scientist in an office of architects and engineers. I hung out with a lot of Marxist radicals from other Latin American countries. The whole mystique that I came down to Peru with, which was the Kennedy Esocolias [?] for progress -- "Knowledge will solve all of our problems." That set of beliefs pretty much evaporated living in a third world country with enormous disparities of wealth and poverty. Among the things I studied were the Bajiadas [?] outside of Lima, which are in the squatter settlements. So at that time, I decided to come back and go to graduate school in sociology, ask big questions. I wanted actually to learn specific demographic techniques, because I did a lot of surveys and studies of migration and things of that sort. I thought I would learn to do the studies better. I was in Chicago from 1968 to '71, which was a good time to be in Chicago. My wife and I were both politically active in everything that was going on there. And, like everybody else -- not everybody else, because all the conservatives of those days are now running the country, but anyhow -- everybody certainly among my cohort, at the University of Chicago, the graduate school in sociology, I became radicalized. My sort of frame shifted. I no longer saw myself as becoming an expert and going to Latin America to solve problems. I came to Santa Barbara in '71 for a number of reasons which sort of reflect who I was in the temper of the times. One was that Santa Barbara had the largest number of sunny days per years of any place that offered me a job, and after having lived all my life on the East Coast and Chicago, that was important. And the other was that they burned the Bank of America down here the year before. I still remember, I was in Mandel Hall at student striker's meeting with about 1,000 people debating whether or not to shut the university down because of something that Nixon had done at the time, I can't remember if it was the mining of Hi Fong [?] or whatever it was at the time, I guess it was the year before that. But in any event, they announced that the Bank of America had been burnt down in Isla Vista, and I thought that that was just great. I didn't know where Isla Vista was or anything, but it seemed important at the time, a great symbolic thing. The fact that Dick Flacks [?] was here was not really a consideration, I didn't know Dick as a grad student.

Q: Were you an SDS member?
A: I was never a member of SDS, or really any organization. I mean, I founded something called The Southside Labor Committee at the University of Chicago, which was a student worker type of thing, we did some work with the steel workers, and the Fraternal Order of Steel Haulers, which was a union of private truckers who owned their own trucks. We tried to get involved. I was very involved in the Chicago conspiracy trial defense, sort of as a gopher. I was very involved in the demonstration over Marlin [?] Dixon, she was fired, she was a popular professor, the administration building was occupied, I was one of the people who occupied it. Fortunately, I hadn't been there long enough for anyone to

know how I was, so I wasn't thrown out of school, although a lot of the kids who were turned out, became the Weatherman, the Weather Underground. So there was all this political stuff going on. My wife at the time was active in the Chicago Peace Council, which turned out to be a commie front organization that basically got the permits for all the demonstrations and stuff. Diane also worked on the Chicago C, which was Chicago's underground newspaper.

Q: Were you involved in anti-war activities?
A: Oh yeah, went to a lot of demonstrations and stuff. I was never a leader. I was never a leader of SDS or anything else, but I organized locally. I went to Washington May Day, 1970, which was intended to shut down the nations capital. The Chicago people, all 500 of us, were targeted at DuPont Circle. We were routed by the police within about 15 seconds. It was quite an interesting experience. But I was sort of like shock troops, that's all, I was never in the leadership in any way.

Q: Were you drafted?
A: No, I sort of rode the wave of that. I had a student deferment when they existed, and then I had a marital deferment when they existed, and then by time I was in Chicago, I had two children. That got me a deferment, and then the war ended. So I just sort of squeaked through that way, actual deferments. Being just a tad older than my cohort, I'm 53 years old, so at the time I was in my late 20's. Anyhow, I came to Santa Barbara because, it was a lovely place, and it was a happening place. I had no interest in any normal professional criteria by which faculty are supposed to select their venues. I was in the top of my graduating cohort, I got honors on prelims, which is the top award they give in Chicago, although they stripped if of its incentive -- they used to give away a complete set of some offprints, and the year I got it, they no longer gave those away, because they weren't too happy that I got it. I was sort of an enemy of the department at the time. They graded the prelims blind, so they had no idea -- prelims were the qualifying exams. They gave it to 30, 40 students who took it. The faculty didn't know who the students were, because they were graded anonymously. Anyhow, I did very well there. I published a book by the time I graduated, and a lot of stuff, and I had a number of job offers, but this was the place I wanted to come to.

Q: What was your research focus?
A: It was ridiculous. I was a graduate student in Chicago for 3 years and one quarter. I had a wife, I had 2 kids, we were politically active, I didn't want to be a grad student. So about a year and a half into the program, I was offered a job on an existing research project, which was basically a number crunching thing. It studied class and race differences in child rearing practices in Chicago. That was what my dissertation was, I tried to look at class, race, and social mobility. It had nothing to do with anything I was interested in. And the woman who ran the projects was a wonderful woman, but I never got any publications out of it, because I no longer -- by the time I finished, I did not believe in the research methodology.

Q: So what was your book on?
A: The book was called Theories of Social Change, and it was an area exam that I had written which I then expanded it to a book, it was published by Rand McNally -- actually published by a company called

Markent [?] which was a new start-up company. And Bill Hodge, who was my advisor on this area exam was the sociology editor, and he said, "Why don't you add an introduction and a conclusion. The book actually sold a lot of copies at the time, probably the best selling book I'd ever written. I've just written a text book actually, which hopefully will do better than that. It was just a sort of throw away thing, I never intended it to be -- if I had intended it to be a book, I probably would've gotten writer's block, but anyhow. I was young and had a lot of energy. So I came here, and immediately got involved in political stuff. I just sort of saw that as something you did. And of course, the time in the early '70's -- the sixties sort of started in the late sixties for most of us, ended in the mid seventies -- for Dick Flecks, they started in the early sixties, because he was the founder of SDS and came from that family tradition, but I didn't come from that kind of tradition. I lived with my wife for the first 3 months I was here. But we had agreed before we came out to split up for a lot of reasons. She helped found the Santa Barbara News and Review, which then became The Independent. And she also helped found the West Side Medical Clinic, which still exists. And she lived in the Hot Springs Road House, which is with Becka [?] Wilson, and John Sealy [?], and all the people who started the News and Review.

Q: Was that kind of a communal household?
A: That was a big communal household.

Q: And where did you say it was?
A: Hot Springs Rd.

Q: Out in Montecido [?] kind of?
A: Yeah, it was a huge mansion. One of my great regrets is it was for sale for $90,000. If I had bought it, my life's circumstance would be different now, but I didn't believe in private property at the time. So I did not buy it. Anyhow, Diane lived there, along with lots of people, it's just a huge place. I lived on Arbolita St., with about 5 or 6 other people. All of us were political activists, but it was just a communal living arrangement. We didn't use the houses as a basis for anything political. And I lived communally because I believed in it. It was just something that was in the air. We wanted to sort of prefigure a way of living which was not competitive, capitalist, all that sort of stuff. That meant somehow living communally. We wanted to break down the distinction between the public and private. Go back to your home, and that's your private sphere, and then go out in the world and do something. So living communally was a way to do that. But that didn't last too long. We just broke up amicably, the lease expired or something like that.

Q: Where's Arbolita St? I've forgotten?
A: Are you from Santa Barbara?

Q: Yeah.
A: It's off of Modock [?] Rd, actually, it's south of Hollister [?], just after Modock goes off, the area called Hope Ranch annex.

Q: Right, it's close to Via Valley School, and that area?
A: I think so. I remember it was zoned for horses, because one way we paid the rent was that we quartered some people's horses there.

Q: Yeah, there's a stable just down the road from there, I know where that is.
A: So, now the first year I was here, I wanted to start an alternative university. I mean, actually, what I first wanted to do was start an alternative program within UCSB somehow, which would be Marxist critical studies, critical theory, that sort of thing. I remember having a meeting about it, Dick Flack [?] saying, "You're wasting your time. The University of California is the enemy," well, he didn't say that, but he said ,"It's a huge bureaucratic structure, you'll never do it, why don't you try starting something else?" So a group of graduate students and I met, and tried to plan what kind of a thing we would start, which would provide an alternative to conventional education, be participatory, it would be action-oriented, it would involve practice, diffusion of theory and practice. And at the time, my closest friends were two graduate students in the department, Jeff Henderson, who is now co-editor with me of a journal I started, he's at the University of Manchester business school, he's British, he was about 2 years on our graduate program, and Jerry Trockel [?], who's now a professor of sociology at the University of Delaware. I was a young assistant professor, I was much closer to the grad students than any of the faculty. And they introduced me to critical theory. Which I really had never been exposed to. In Chicago, I was exposed to Marxism and all. Any Marx I'd got, I'd gotten from study groups with graduate students. So some time in the spring of the year, we found that there was a fraternity in Isla Vista which would be available -- it's, if you go onto Isla Vista, the first street that goes down, which is Embarcadero del Sur, I guess, the first or second stop sign is a big, brick fraternity house on the right, I think it's Phi Sigma Epsilon or something like that. The fraternity had gone defunct, and was available to be rented for virtually nothing. It had 18 rooms, plus a huge meeting room. It was built like an "H," one wing was the kitchen and the meeting room, and the other wing was all these sort of dormitory-like places. And so the grad students who were interested and I got together who ran The Home Front Bookstore, which is a radical book shop in Isla Vista headed by Phil Seymore, who is now a notable attorney who works with the environmental defense center, I think, and has done some great stuff in the city of Santa Barbara. So Phil and I pulled 18 people together, and we met, and eventually, took out the lease on this, and we all moved in there in the Fall of 1972. It was called Das Institut, for, well, sort of again, it reflects the spirit of the times. When I arrived here in 1971, I noticed that a lot of the faculty had signs outside their doors like "Socio-linguistic Institute." So I wanted to have an institute, but I wanted it to be an in-your-face kind of thing. So I said, I'll call it The Institute for Critical Studies. I think called this professor in the German department, and said, "How do you say 'Institute for Critical Studies' in German?" He said, "Das Institute der [says it in German] ... " so I got old German press-type and made up a sign, put it outside my office. And it was just like a joke, because there was no institute. But thereafter we just began talking about Das Institute, short of the Institute for Critical Studies. Institute for Critical Studies is Institute for Critical Theory. Once we actually got a place to live in, we'd meet and try and come up with a real name for it. We came up with things like The Little Red School House, or something that was clever. But ultimately, Das Institut had become such a reality in people's minds that we just left it there. Where the fraternity sign now hangs, it stills hangs there, we had a big black and red sign that said "Das Institut." I lived there for an entire year. And after that I lived alone for 6 years, which was quite an

experience. The running joke was that private life was dead at Das Institut. There were 9 people associated with the university -- myself, and 8 grad students -- and 9 people associated with The Home Front bookstore who were not students. They were former students, or, I don't think any of them were undergraduates at the time, I don't recall, but they were really dedicated community activists who ran a book shop. The way we conceived of Das Institut was as a theory practice collective, which provided an alternative to what the university did. We ran courses, for example, not courses for course credit, or some people were probably able to get credit by combining it with independent studies courses at the university, on everything from critical theory to self-defense, to communism at the turn of the century -- anything anyone wanted to do that was interesting. We would arrange a venue for it. We were also very involved in all sorts of community activism stuff in Santa Barbara, and Isla Vista. Lot of it anti-war associated, a lot of the education had to do with anti-war stuff. Because that was sort of the last -- well the war was in its Nixon phase at that time, the Vietnam War. We cooked communally. That is, we sort of rotated cooking responsibilities. We met twice a week as a commune, at least one to deal with external affairs, and one internal affairs. The great learning experience for me anyhow, and I think some of the other guys, had to do with gender issues. Basically, we were all pigs. I don't mean generically, that might have been true also, I just mean in terms of our living habits, for which we were constantly being criticized by the women in the commune. I also learned that winning an argument didn't always mean you were right, there was a lot of criticism of the articulate males, that kind of linking of verbal ability and power and all those things, which was very Fucolian [?], although this was many years before anyone had ever heard of Fucoh [?]. And I really learned about the intersection of everyday life and power. It was a great experience. Plus, I liked the people, it was a very social thing also, to put it mildly. It was very sort of "yippie" in it's politics. There was a lot of lifestyle politics, as well as politics in the more conventional political sense. After living there for one year, I wanted to live alone. It's not that I couldn't stand the sight of another person, but it was very difficult. It was like 24 hour type of stuff. Nothing you did would go uncriticized or unnoticed by somebody. Although I thought it was all very positive, I was quite ready to live alone, not only for the negative reasons, but I'd never been alone in my life. I'd lived with roommates, or my parents, or my wife and kids. And then girlfriends that I had after my marriage broke up, and I was just ready to live completely alone, and to learn about that aspect of myself. That lasted 6 years, until I met my current wife. I had 2 children, and Diane, my first wife, and I had joint custody, and the kids went back and forth between her house and mine. After the Hot Springs road house broke up, Diane lived with a man she was involved with in various places in Santa Barbara. I would say Sarah and Jason were with her probably 4 days a week and with me 3 days a week. The rooms at Das Institut were these kind of small rooms which had sort of a bed on each side of the room, and I would be in one bed, and Sarah and Jason would be on the other bed. Sarah was born in 1967, Jason in '68. So Sarah at that time was 5 or 6, and Jason was young.

Q: Does she remember it then?
A: The kids remember for sure, I think, yeah.

Q: Do you know what they think about it?
A: Yeah, I -- they had a rather unconventional lifestyle in a lot of ways. I don't know how long those memories are. Diane had moved to Wisconsin to the kind of back to the land thing, and they lived on a

farm, and were part of a whole community, and that's a whole other story.

Q: Were you guys familiar with the Sunburst Farms people?
A: We shopped there.

Q: Did they have a store in IV?
A: I don't think so. They had a store.

Q: I know they had one on Hollister, by the Arbolita House, there was one there.
A: It became Hope and Hock [?], and I think they had one on Milta [?] St. also. When I first arrived here, that spring I went up to their farm, up at Flores Flats, up on Gibraltar Rd, with Diane. We were separated by then, but I took Diane, Sarah, and Jason, and some people from the Hot Springs road house. It just sort of blew me away. The whole scene. Part of me thought it was neat, part of me thought it was ridiculous. These absolutely gorgeous White people playing God or something like that. I just remember Norm Paulson [?] sitting there, flanked by the most beautiful man and the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen, on either side of him, wearing kind of peasant outfits. And part of me, looking at it as a sociologist, just seeing the whole thing as quintessential Californian, that's the only way I can put it. I remember writing a letter to a friend back East about this experience. But they were not political. Then, of course, they turned ugly, as you know.

Q: Well, they stored arms, didn't they?
A: They stored arms, because they were preparing for Armageddon. They had a farm back --

Q: --Gaveoda [?].
A: Well they eventually went up there, yeah. They also had a place at La Muria Ranch, which is back beyond Mono Hot Springs. It's up in the mountains. And then they left for Nevada, I think, eventually. But I have no real contact with them. Just to buy food there, used to stop up there periodically.

Q: So did you guys think the back to the land movement was sort of silly?
A: No, it wasn't that, in fact, I became a part of the back to the land movement, and my current wife, Karen, was part of it in rural Wisconsin. She and her husband were part of a whole community of people who lived on places called Karma Farm, and Black River Falls -- in fact, you should probably talk to her. I thought the back to the land movement was great, I really believed in it, I just happened to live in the city. I didn't connect up with Sunburst Farms because of their religion and all that sort of stuff. I've always been open to that. When I came to California, I did it all. I took transcendental meditation, I got a mantra, I tried every type of therapy known. I figured, go for broke. This was, it was a very exciting time. I was from Rochester, New York, I'd basically grown up in East Coast culture. One of the reasons Diane and I came to California, apart from the sunny days and all that, was that it was where everything was happening. It was really a lifestyle, much more than Dick Flecks, who came from a long history of political activism. Both of his parents were blacklisted, I don't know how much he talked about that, but he came from a family tradition. My parents were liberal Democrats, but they were -- my father's a music teacher, my mother a dance teacher. They were middle-class people. I was much more interested

in the lifestyle stuff than Dick was. I really did believe at the time that by living the life of the world you wanted to create, you would sort of prefigure that world. "The alternative institution" was a big part of our vocabulary. We would work out all these bourgeois problems that we had by living together communally, and we would create the new society, the seeds of the new society in the old one. I do think I believed that. There was this whole apocalyptic millennial feeling. It's hard to capture it now, but at least for White middle-class kids like us, who were involved in it, it just seemed like the whole world was changing. The music, drugs, sex, rock and roll, all that kind of stuff, all seemed to be part of something that was happening. Obviously it turned out to be another commodity form or something like that, it turned out to be good for business. It probably had a lot to do with Baby Boom demographics, things like that also. But it was an exciting time to be a political activist. And for me, political activism and living your politics sort of went hand in hand.

Q: I'm curious about some of the particulars at Das Institut. Did you guys pool your money? Or did you keep private money?
A: No, we didn't do that. I know that we pooled money for certain purposes, but we didn't pool all our income.

Q: And how did you eat? Were you vegetarians?
A: No.

Q: Did you take turns cooking?
A: Yeah, we rotated on a weekly basis in teams, cooking and cleaning. It was a big thing to feed 18 people plus guests and stuff like that.

Q: How did you rotate the work? Did you have sign-up sheets?
A: Yeah, that's right. We would have weekly meetings to go over the sign-up sheets. There were certain chores, clean the bathroom, clean the halls, cook, clean up after cooking. There are the internal things, and there was the external stuff, which had to do with political things we were doing, which we would also meet on to coordinate. Another thing was the Isla Vista food co-op at that time was a real populist organization. A truck would come in from somewhere, and people in the community would go down and place their orders off the truck. We would go down and get all of our food from the co-op. Isla Vista was full of alternative institutions. The Isla Vista Medical Clinic was one example. Isla Vista Community Council -- one of the things I was very involved in at this time was self governance for Isla Vista. There were several attempts for Isla Vista to become an incorporated city. The first one I was involved in. I was involved in two of them. I gave a huge class with hundreds and hundreds of students. Sociology, and I involved about 100 students in putting together an incorporation proposal, which we submitted to the county board of supervisors. The idea was that Isla Vista would become a free territory somehow. So that was all part of the stuff that was going on also. Although I think that might have been the year after -- well that could have been the year of Das Institut. It was 20 years ago, I can't entirely remember if that was going on at that time or not.

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Q: What were your relations like with the people in IV?
A: We were community centered. In fact, after my group left, which were the more political people, Isla Vista became much more of a community center. There was an Isla Vista theater group, in fact, which did a lot of street theater, which took it over, and I think lived there for a number of years, until the fraternity reactivated and reclaimed its property.

Q: So you guys rented it from the fraternity?
A: Yes. Unless I'm mistaken I think it was $400 a month or something. I paid something like $50 a month in rent. I mean, rents were cheaper then, but that was ridiculous. But after I left, I never actually went back to it. I totally disengaged, my life sort of entered a different phase at that point.

Q: Was there a lot of drug use going on?
A: Ah, now we get to the sensitive questions! This obviously, I do want off the record, anything I tell you.

Q: Okay.
A: Yeah, there was a lot of drug use going on, a lot of dope, other drugs, when they were available. A lot of -- we weren't like druggies. It was sort of like a fraternity might have been in those -- well, that's probably not correct also. We had parties where we drank, and we used drugs, some people more than others. I can't say that everybody used drugs, but it was part of life in those days. So yeah, there was drug use. Are you going to ask me what specific drugs?

Q: No. How about attitudes towards sexuality? Were relationships pretty open?
A: They were open. Within Das Institut, there were some relationships. Although, -- there were some. I sort of made it a point myself not to be involved in a relationship with anyone at Das Institut, I just thought that that would make life far too complicated.

Q: What was the gender balance like there?
A: It was even, 9 and 9. But other people, like Phil Seymore, as I recall, had a girlfriend who lived at Das Institut, who was active with him in the bookstore. I think her name was Lynn Goldfarb. I've lost touch with pretty much all these people who moved away, except for Phil Seymore, Jeff Henderson, who lived there who is now a colleague of mine, we do research and publish together.

Q: He's a soc prof?
A: He's actually a prof of business administration.

Q: Here at UCSB?
A: No, University of Manchester.

Q: Oh, that's the one in England.
A: Another woman who was there was Candice West, who is a professor of sociology at Santa Cruz. Stanch feminist. But anyhow, yeah, things were pretty open about sex. Those were the days when the worst thing that could happen could be cured by penicillin, it was pre-AIDS. There was just a more open

attitude about it.

Q: Also toward homosexuality as well as --?
A: Oh, that's a different issue. No, there was like -- I mean I don't know what went on in people's rooms, although the walls were paper-thin. But it was all heterosexual, I'm pretty sure. Homosexuality was not one of the issues at the time. I don't think we were homophobic or anything, but it was heterosexual, as far as I can reconstruct it.

Q: Were there any rules, written rules, bylaws, social agreements, anything like that?
A: I'm sure there were. Because we had endless meetings where we were always spelling things out, evaluating our performance and doing self-criticism and stuff like that.

Q: I wonder if any of the papers have been archived anywhere?
A: I may at home have some stuff. I'd have to look through. Anything that I'm not too embarrassed about, I'd be glad to share with you. I haven't looked at it in 20 years, I'll see what I can find.

Q: It's always exciting to see things from the actual era.
A: I think I have a folder where I collected some of the pamphlets we produced, things like that. Plus, I also kept a journal at the time. But that was more personal -- but there was some political. I'll look through it.

Q: What would you say was the best part of that period for you?
A: The best part of that particular year? I just think the energy. I'm sure I'm refracting it through years -- all the bad memories fade. But it was just a sort of a sense of purpose and mission. Plus, things seemed to be more fun, speaking from my own perspective. Things seemed both more and less serious at the same time. More serious in the sense that we believed we were part of some social movement that was really going to make the world a better place. And less serious because it wasn't nose to the grindstone -- we were able to kind of combine being active and working hard, putting in long hours on things we believed in, with an iconoclastic attitude towards things. It was time for great experimentation, and all the rules collapsing, the sense that you were re-inventing the rules of the game, and any rules you inherited were screwed by definition because they came from a culture that is somehow screwed up. That sort of young, naive, set of beliefs, which I should have know better as a sociologist.

Q: Now did you come here as an assistant professor?
A: Yeah.

Q: Tenure track assistant professor?
A: Yes.

Q: How did you have time for that and all the stuff you were doing at Das Institut?
A: I, actually, the interesting question is why did I do that as an assistant professor, apart from the time issue. I've always been a work-a-holic, to tell you the truth. So even when I was doing all that stuff, I still

managed to write. I still managed to do a lot of work. I think, more amazing to me in retrospect, is that I would live that kind of a life, which was obviously looked at as bizarre by my colleagues. In defense, my department accepted me. They looked at the work I did, and the teaching I did, and even the most conservative among them figured this was my choice. And then I had some good friends -- I can't say everybody there, there was always a few people who voted against me on various things, although they've long left the department. But our department itself is sort of a radical department. I was very active in department stuff. We had huge numbers of students taking all of our courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. We brought Yerkon [?] Harbermaas [?] here, he was the world famous critical theorist at one point. People came from all over the West Coast to be in residence here, to kind of attend seminars that we offered in preparation for this. So there's a lot of academic stuff going on. It's just that the stuff I was doing was scandalous, I would imagine. I didn't see it that way, I just saw it as the way I was living. But from the point of view of the senior faculty in my department, it must've been scandalous. You would want to ask people like Dick or Harvey how the department viewed it. I have no idea, since under our voting procedures in those days, as an assistant professor, I had no idea what went on at faculty meetings where they voted on my case, because only the more senior people voted on the less senior. On the other hand, the apartment kept recommending me for merit increases and things like that. Das Institut occurred in my second year here. My third year here I lived alone and began to refocus my life. So it wasn't like I spent my whole assistant professor-hood doing all this stuff. I came here very highly recommended. As I said, I had publications to my credit. I had excellent credentials. And I came here as an assistant professor step 3, which is, the next rung is 4, and then you go up for tenure. And after a year or so, the department recommended that I be advanced to step 4, and I was turned down by the administration. I'll never forget, I went to see the vice-chancellor at the time, Alec Alexander, an economist. And he had my file on his desk, which was this little piddley file. And he looked at me as if to say, "Who the hell is this kid who's coming into my office." He said, "You came here with a lot of momentum, but you've run out of steam." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You've only published one article since you've been here." That was an article in Volume 1, Issue 1 of Working Papers for a New Society, which was this new journal started by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, it was a left-wing journal, which is supposed to contain ideas for the new society. The article, by the way, was on Isla Vista, and how it was a land grant between the county board of supervisors, the chancellor of the university, the Galeta [?] Savings and Loan, it was kind of a muckraking political economy piece, not exactly designed to endear the administration to me. And so he sort of gave me a message, which was that if I wanted to get tenure, I'd better start publishing, and all that sort of stuff. And I did refocus a lot, and -- I mean I won't go into the next phase of my life, but after I moved out of Das Institut, I became involved in growth stuff in Santa Barbara, as part of a group, called the Santa Barbara Planning Task Force, which did a growth study. It studied the impacts of population growth on the environment, and the quality of life, the costs of services. We did this study in 1974, '75, Harvey Molluch [?] and I and three other people were involved in it, plus hundreds of people from the community. It was really a participatory research project, which was designed to train a coppery [?] of community activists, while doing research. That study became the basis for the city's growth limitation programs, including a city charter amendment, which down-zoned the city to limit the growth capacity to 85,000 people, which of course the city has long since surpassed, but that's another story. So I began doing more academic type research. But I would say, coming here with a dissertation that I didn't believe in, so I couldn't publish out of it, and devoting 2 years of my life to being an activist, and teaching 6, 8 courses a year -- I just loved teaching, and I thought it was my holy duty to teach -- so, nobody told me. Seriously, nobody told me that you don't get credit for teaching extra courses. You get credit for publishing articles in refereed journals. I just didn't know that, I just thought I'd be active, and people would love me, and I'd get tenure. So anyhow, that didn't happen. It took me a long time to get tenure. And eventually, it took a change in administration. I was denied tenure the first time I was put up. I actually developed job offers elsewhere, on the East Coast, and then the university reversed its decision, actually, it cancelled its initial tenure decision, on the grounds that the university had now filed new policies which had been set in place for the first time which had to do with disclosing to people in a review process negative stuff about them so they could respond. I was never informed, it was the first year these policies were in place. So the university lawyers told them, "You'd better nullify this and do the whole thing over again." The second time through, the Cheatle [?] Administration was out, which was very much against our department, I think, because our department was a hotbed of radicals. Something like a third of our faculty was arrested in 1970 in the spring during the third burning of the Bank of America. There was a curfew in Isla Vista, and something like a third of our department, including our chair at the time, Tom Chef, violated the curfew. So our department had its own history with the administration.

Q: And the new administration was a lot friendlier?
A: The new administration was a lot of friendlier.

Q: Who was the chancellor after Cheatle?
A: Bob Huttonbeck [?], of fame and glory. But he was more favorable, certainly to my case, so I eventually did get tenure here. I wasn't thinking in careerist terms. I didn't even buy a house here until 1980, sort of the height of the real estate market, I just didn't think about those things.

Q: What was the downside, or the worst part about Das Institut, or Arbolita St. too, just communal living in general.
A: I think the worst part was just the sheer exhaustion of having no privacy.

Q: Did you have your own room?
A: Yeah, I had my own room, which I shared with my children when they were with me. But you know, 18 people crammed on to one floor, or two floors actually, 9 rooms to a floor, plus 2 communal bathrooms, with paper-thin walls, it was like, there was no privacy. Anyone who came our went, everybody knew about it. But even more to the point, we felt that our lives should be public lives, so stuff we did was constantly being examined. We held these criticism sessions, stuff like that. It was sort of like 24 hour a day, whatever happened -- if something happened in the Vietnam War, then we would be out there trying to organize demonstrations or whatever. So , it was sort of exhausting, to tell you the truth. And there was no psychic space, there was no - which was why I wanted to live alone, to figure out if I could live with myself, which I had never done, really.

Interview with Rich Appelbaum
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
January 8, 1996

Q: Were there books you were reading that year that influenced you a lot.
A: Sure. Das Kapital. We had a capital reading group, organized by myself and Bill Chamblis [?], who was an associate professor in the department at the time. Bill long since left the department, although he and I just came out with an introductory sociology text book together, so we're still buddies. He and I organized a year-long discussion group reading all three volumes of Capital. Dick Flecks was involved in that also. I think probably Knowledge and Human Interest by Yerkon Harbermaas was one of the most influential books I read at that time or since. That actually might have been the year after that, to tell you the truth. I could be combining -- but that was definitely important. Oh, and another book that was important, probably changed my life more than anything else, was Francis Lapay's [?] book, Diet for a Small Planet. A book which, by the way, I considered one of the most perfect books ever written. It was three parts -- the first part was political economy. It was sort of an analysis of the political economy of protein. It was a large theoretical examination of the world's distribution of protein, and what it means to devote land to grazing cattle. The second part was sort of a micro-analysis about health issues, what it means to eat high off the food chain. The third part was recipes. So it was the perfect combination of theory and practice. I read it at a time when I was pretty unhealthy in my lifestyle, and it took a couple of years actually for the message of that book to sink in, for me to be ready for it. But then I changed my diet, lost a lot of weight, took up running and bicycling, all sorts of stuff like that. Went through a lot of changes which have stayed with me ever since. So in a way, I would say that book has had the most long-lasting personal influence on me of any book. But certainly the whole literature around Marx -- I became a Marxist, I read books about Marx, articles, not on critical Marxist, but that sort of became the framework through which I viewed the world. And it's still in a lot of ways is, I would say.

Q: Are there things from living communally that you feel you've brought into your life now, other than what you just said about Diet for a Small Planet?
A: Yeah, I think that the main thing I learned had to do with gender relations. It was often difficult -- there were 9 women in the house, and that gave them a great deal of solidarity ... we spent a lot of time talking about those things. I can't claim that I listened to them or anything like that. There was a lot of fighting going on. And then of course, I was a faculty member, so I didn't feel any different, because our age wasn't that different, but I'm sure that was a status difference that they were conscious of. And I was an intellectual, they weren't intellectuals. In other words, I dealt with ideas and arguments and so on. And my first wife was a good educator also. We used to have arguments, and something I said earlier in this interview, I learned that winning an argument by force of logic and reason doesn't necessarily mean that you're right. And it took me a lot of living with women who would make that point for me to learn a lot about gender relations, both in terms of interpersonal interaction, and also how men are slobs. Just standards of cleanliness and hygiene. I'm still probably a slob, I don't know. I would say that that really was -- I got to see myself through other people's eyes, for an entire year. That's probably the hardest thing about living there, but probably the greatest learning.

Q: Would you ever do it again?
A: Live communally?

Q: Yeah.
A: I -- not that way. Actually, after that I thought, the model for me would be not the kibbutz, which was true communal living, but the Israeli mosha [?], the moshaveme [?] were places where people kind of lived independently, but had centralized kitchens and facilities that they used in common. I mean, I could -- I don't know, I've become more of a loner as I've grown up, more of a recluse, and I don't think I'd want to be surrounded by people unless it was on a lot of land, and afforded a lot of privacy. I wouldn't live in an urban commune again. Unless it were a good, middle-class, bourgeois commune, in which we all had plenty of private space.

Q: Are you familiar with cohousing?
A: Cohousing?

Q: It's kind of a new movement, it sort of sounds like the mosha that you just described, where people have some common areas, like maybe a big common kitchen and a common living room or dining room, but each person has their own private place, either an apartment or a house, something like that, that's all theirs. So there's a lot of privacy.
A: See, I could see having a -- at various times, we've fantasized once we became more middle class, and property owners, of buying some block of Santa Barbara. They had a bunch of little places. I could conceive of that, although I don't know who I would do it with, since my friends are now spread out all over the planet.

Q: Some people say it sounds appealing to them maybe when they get really old, like when they're retired.
A: I'll tell you something, my parents live on Cape Cod. My parents are in their mid-eighties, they're very healthy and active, and in the winter they come out for three months when the weather's cold there, and they sublet a place in Leisure World, in Laguna Hills. You know about Leisure World. At one time in my life, I would have po-poed it. My father still says, "There's too many old people here, there's people dying all the time." But the truth is, they have great athletic facilities, they have an extremely rich program of things, but people live alone. Leisure World is just a little too Republican for me, but I think that's not a bad model for people who can live independently, and enjoy things that they share in common. I could see that. That's not really cohousing, because the houses there are completely -- it's more like townhouses. But they do have a whole bunch of satellite athletic facilities, which have rich programs of talks, nature walks, and anything you could want, rock climbing, anything you'd want to do there, pretty much. And I'm going to be that as my generation, because there are so many of us, fades into the sunset, that'll become the next kind of bulge as the Baby Boom bubbles its way through. There'll be an increased demand for that kind of thing.

Q: Well, for radicals as they get older, do you know Steven Gaskin, from the farm in Tennessee? He's starting a retirement community for older people.
A: Bruce Springsteen, I'm told, is on the cover of Modern Maturity this spring.

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Interviewer: Deborah Altus
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Q: I have a particular interest in behaviorism and B. F. Skinner, and I was wondering if you ever read Walden Two, and if that influenced you at all, or what you thought of it.
A: I was very anti-Skinner. In fact, one of the first seminars I organized here, probably around the Das Institut period, was with John Baldwin, who was a faculty member in our department, who at the time was a Skinnerian, he's a behaviorist. Behaviorism was completely antithetical, probably still is, to my whole way of thinking. Because the whole Marxist critical theory argument is that the way we think about things is important. And the way to affect social change is first to understand the reasons you do things, and to kind of break through reification, break through structures of thought, which are our prisons, and then you can act in the world. While behaviorism basically said, give somebody a shock, and they'll stop smoking. And consciousness, the way people think about things, at least at that time, certainly in B. F. Skinner's Walden Two, was not considered to be important. Consciousness was considered by behaviorists, by Skinner, to be rationalizations rather than reason. We can give ourselves accounts of things after we do things, but the important thing is the stimulus and the response. And I'll never forget during the seminar that Baldwin and co-taught, all the Marxists were in there, grad students, and all of Baldwin's behaviorists were in there. They had all given up smoking. And we were sitting their chain smoking. And they were all eating sesame seeds. In retrospect, I would say there's obviously a lot to behavior modification that makes sense -- but token economies, things like that I thought didn't really get at the root understandings, which to me were necessary for social change to occur. I also -- didn't Skinner raise his daughter in a black box, or do something weird like that?

Q: Yeah, they had this thing called an air crib, that is commonly called a Skinner Box, and yeah, I think at least one of his daughters, they used that when she was growing up.
A: And how did she turn out?

Q: I think she turned out fine. One of them is a professor, and one of them is an artist, so I think they're fine. Did you ever visit any other communes besides Sunburst Farm?
A: Local communes?

Q: It doesn't have to be local.
A: Well, sure. When I was in Chicago, we used to go up to Wisconsin where all the radicalists and lifestyle hippies had moved. The two communes I mentioned there were Karma Farm and Black River Falls. Black River Falls was named for the town in which it was located. Karma Farm was -- you know. Actually, one of the people from, I think Black River Falls, is a guy named Steve Stookey [?], who is now very active in the Zen community up in San Francisco. So we used to go up there and visit. It was very wonderful and liberating. In Chicago, my current wife, Karen Shapiro, before she moved to the country, she lived in the Dover St. commune, which was another commune of various people. I had connections with The Other Cheek commune on [unintelligible] Chicago. The Other Cheek was so called because "turn the other cheek," it was started, believe it or not, by radical Mennonites. There's a whole community of radical Mennonites.

Q: There's Rheba [?] Place Fellowship, that's a Mennonite commune in Chicago.
A: Right, that was another one. I didn't know as much about Rheba Place, because I knew more people

at The Other Cheek. Once those people moved out, they were mainly guys, it became a radical lesbian commune. I have many connections with those. The guy who became my ex-wife's lover for a period of time was a member of The Other Cheek commune, he was a radical Mennonite, SDS-'er from Chicago, a guy named Mark Waggler [?], who now teaches middle school in Madison, Wisconsin.

Q: Did your first wife, Diane, did she moved to a back to the land commune in Wisconsin?
A: She did something a little bit different, actually. She became involved with Mark as soon as we moved to California. And then when she and I broke up, she began going back to be with him, and then he moved out here for a number of years. And then eventually, she bought a farm in Richland County, in a little township called Gillingham [?], which was 15 miles from Ricksland [?] Center, which is also 60 miles from Madison. It was just basically a crossroads. It was an old abandoned farm. She bought it for nothing, and through the dint of her labor and communal labor, fixed it up, and lived there for a number of years. And then when Sarah and Jason went into high school, she moved to Madison so they could go to better schools. And for other reasons. Actually Diane now lives in Madison, Wisconsin about half the year. She's a nurse practitioner, and very involved in feminist health issues. The other half of the year she lives in Costa Rica, where she's also involved in health issues.

Q: And then your wife, Karen, lived in some urban communes, but also back to the land?
A: Karen and Brian lived in Chicago, it wasn't The Other Cheek, but it's on the tape, I mentioned the name of it. They're both artists, they both went to the Art Institute in Chicago. They, to earn a living, well, Karen had kids in 1970, identical twin girls, so she was raising the kids, and they had a rehab company that basically rehabed buildings, they both did construction, Karen and Brian. And then they bought land in Wisconsin around this time, in the same community that my ex-wife moved into, and that her lover, Mark Waggler, had also moved to from Chicago. In fact, the people moved into houses that Brian and Karen built. So I -- this was in the early 1970's. And when Diane moved to Wisconsin -- they didn't live communally, they had their own houses they built themselves -- and Karen herself started with another woman a monthly journal called the Okooch [?] Mountain News, which is a real period piece. It was a back to the land journal which combined communal living with handicrafts, with stuff that was rooted in the farm community into which they moved. It kind of created an identity for the place. They started their own fair, in opposition to the 4H Fair, they had the Okooch Fair. A lot of the people from this community actually became -- a lot of the people who were anything but hippies -- got involved in it. So Karen was involved with the Okooch Mountain News for many years. I moved out there -- I started going out there as soon as Diane started going out there so I could be with my children, and then I took a leave of absence when Diane finally moved out there and I met Karen. She and her husband had an open marriage, so she and I were going out, but then we fell in love. That ended her marriage, open or closed. Eventually, she moved to Santa Barbara, and he ex-husband, Brian, also lives here now. Karen and I raised her kids pretty much.

Q: Do you think she'd be willing to talk to me at some point? I'm only going to be in town -- I'm actually leaving today, coming back briefly tomorrow night. My mother lives here, so I come back a lot. So maybe sometime when I come back, give her a call.
A: For sure I'll mention it to her.

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Q: Karen Shapiro, that's her name?
A: Yeah, and we live together.

Q: Right, so I have your number. Wait, I don't have your home phone.
A: It's 965-3213.

Q: Does she work regular hours or anything like that?
A: She's a graphic designer, she has her own business, she works out of our house, so she's available. But I tell you, her schedule is probably crazier than mine, because unlike professors, she works on real time, when things have to be done.