

Interview with Pamela Hunt
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
October 19, 1995

Q: Alright, this is an interview with Pamela Hunt at the Farm on Thursday, October 19th. So, okay, well, how did can you tell me a little bit about your background and what led up to the events that caused you to join the Farm?

A: Well, I grew up in California. I went to college at University of Oregon for 2 years. Then, I went down to University of Guadalajara in Mexico. I was an art student and came back to San Francisco State in 1965 and, there, I met Stephen and was involved with his Experimental College class, before it was Monday night class, when it was still a very small class and it was I saw the class grow, you know. I was part of the class as it grew to 2,000 people and it was amazing when there were that many people that came to class. It was a real you felt a real community happening even though we were living in our own houses around San Francisco at that time and, way back when the class was small, actually, when it was 6 and 12 people, we talked about, well, it would be nice to live in a community. We were living in houses in San Francisco, going to school, going to the university, doing our various jobs, and we thought about, well, you know, started talking about a farm and, you know, and what it would be like to all do it together and, so, the seed started being planted way back then and we talked a lot about a lot things in those experimental college classes. We talked about religion and telepathy and God and spirit and what we're here for and environment and, then, of course, we, you know, we talked a lot about how we didn't like the Vietnam war and we also we are all child we were all in our 20s at that time, those of us that were meeting. Some of us were a little younger but we were, you know, starting to think about starting our families and so forth and, so, over the next 3 years, we grew to 2,000 people in Monday night class and that thought kept growing, you know. Well, we want to live together. Well, we want to do a community. Well, we want to live with people around us that we believe in the same ideals, you know. We want to grow our own food. We want to home grow our kids, you know. We want to teach our kids. We want to have our kids around us.

Q: Before you went to San Francisco State like when you were at University at Oregon and, then, did you say you went to Guadalajara?

A: Mmm-hmm.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Guadalajara.

Q: Did you get were you interested, then, in alternative ways of thinking?

A: Guadalajara was probably where well, actually, I started thinking alternatively in high school with the church group I was in. It was a very liberal church and we went down to the Bay area and had big meetings and talked about we talked about spirit and telepathy and, you know, that was in the '50s.

Q: What church was that?

A: It was a congregational church. It was a big youth group on the west coast and it was my first introduction to real beatniks. I went down to some of the state meetings and met people that were really thinking. They weren't just, I don't know, you don't remember the '50s but the '50s was Ozzie and Harriet and you were supposed to think like the kids, you know, and you were supposed to think like Ozzie and Harriet. Well, that didn't make sense and it was very boring and, so, with these meetings,

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these first meetings we had, we talked, you know. We were, you know, we were talking about real stuff, real spirit, real community. So, that was way back when I was in high school.

Q: Was there any beatnik culture at the University of Oregon at all?

A: There was and I found what there was because I was in the art department and it was at the time, it was mostly a fraternity/sorority school but there were a few beatniks in the art department that I got hooked up with because they were thinking people. They didn't just want to go along with the, you know, what the crowd was thinking.

Q: What was the time period you were in college?

A: I started college in 1961 and I quit in 1965.

Q: And, then, when did you start Stephen's, what was it called, Experimental College?

A: College. 1965. It was part of the San Francisco State where I was going to school at that time. I was finishing up my Bachelor of Arts and I started to go to the Experimental College because I was really interested in spirit and alternative ways of doing things. I didn't like the way that the country was I didn't like the war. I didn't like how, you know, things were being treated politically in the country at that time.

Q: Would you have identified yourself as a hippie at that point or any point?

A: At what point?

Q: At any point I suppose?

A: Probably by the time I got into the Experimental College I was definitely thinking I was probably a hippie.

Q: Okay.

A: And, I mean, that San Francisco was the hippie movement in San Francisco was just starting and was in, you know, getting to be really what was happening and I noticed that I was with them. I was, you know, I had thrown my bra away. I had, you know, let my hair down. I quit wearing nylons. I was, you know, smoking a little grass, considering taking some acid. However, I hadn't taken it, yet, but it was legal at the time.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: I didn't know that. Wow. So, did you join the first caravan?

A: I was on the first caravan, yes. And, then, I was pregnant and had my first baby on the caravan.

Q: Wow. Did you have a home birth?

A: I had a bus birth.

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Q: A bus birth. Okay.

A: You could call it a bus birth in Rock Springs, Wyoming and it was 23 degrees below zero and all the buses broke down. However, our bus didn't break down but Ina May was going to deliver my baby and her and Stephen's bus broke down and, so, we were parked in this place called Buck's garage to get the buses fixed and that's where I went into labor and Christopher was born there and I went to the local hospital in Rock Springs, Wyoming to get a birth certificate and, on the birth certificate, where it said place of birth, they put Buck's garage. So, my first born has that on his birth certificate for place of birth.

Q: Oh, that's really [unintelligible]. Wow. How did you feel about having a bus birth?

A: It didn't bother me at all. It was fine. I wouldn't have gone to a hospital. I was scared. At the time, I was very afraid of hospitals. I was not afraid of birth. I'd read Pearl Buck's books when I was in high school, *The Good Earth*, and several of her other books where she talks about the Chinese women squatting in the fields and having their babies and I thought, well, if Chinese women can do it in the fields, I should certainly be able to do it in my bus.

Q: Had there been a ...

A: Hospitals were very foreign to me. I'd never been in a hospital in my whole life. My mother was a Christian Scientist [unintelligible].

Q: Had there been other bus births up to this?

A: Yes. Yeah. We had on the caravan ...

Q: So, you weren't the first, then?

A: No, I wasn't the first. No, we had one in the first birth was in Northwestern University. I'm not sure. Ina May would know exactly where that is. We had had maybe 4 or 5 ... 1, 2, 3, 4, maybe 6 births. Christopher could have been the 7th or 8th, even, born on the caravan and we were see, we went around the country and back to San Francisco and, then, we came back to Tennessee and Christopher was born on the way back to Tennessee.

Q: Mmm-hmm. Okay. And that was like the second caravan, I guess, or no? That was still during the first one?

A: Well, it was still the caravan. It was still most of us, most of the same people. Some different but it was, yeah.

Q: Wow, so it was the middle of winter in Wyoming?

A: The middle of winter in Wyoming.

Q: God. Were you able to stay warm?

A: Yeah, we had a little pot belly stove. Well, actually, it was like this, you know, in our bus and it would, you know when we were driving down the road, it would get like cherry red on the sides. It was cast iron but the wind of going by the chimney that was going out of the top of the bus created a wonderful draft that just made the fire nice and warm. The heater in our bus worked, sort of, for the

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first 2 or 3 feet of the bus but, then, after that, you know, we had to depend we drove right down the road with our fires going and everything.

Q: So, what was it like when you got here? Can you describe a little bit about the early times?

A: Well, when we first got here, we were over on the Martin farm, which is just the next farm over and we pulled our buses into different parking places along this old logging road. We came in April we were here by April and started planting our gardens and we bought this farm in the middle of the summertime sometime and moved over here in late September, early October and, by the time we moved, we had big fields of tomatoes and big fields of greens and almost all of us had little gardens right outside of our buses. In fact, we had to drive over our garden to move our bus from that farm over to here and it broke our hearts, you know had a nice, little garden we had to drive right over but we had to get out of where we were and, then, come 'cause this was our farm. This is what we bought over there. We were just borrowing that one. So, but we had a couple acres of tomatoes and I think we had some greens and we had nice garden, nice big farm there was a big field down in that on that farm over there. So, we came over here and started doing the same thing over here. We didn't have any of course, we didn't have any way to do our laundry, so we had to take our laundry to town. So, we'd get a big flatbed truck and all this. By this time, there were about 20 of us that had little babies and or, at least, 10 or 15 and, then, we had about 5 or 6 older kids. So, we, you know, piled all the diapers and laundry and everything on this flatbed truck and went to town and did our laundry.

Q: So, were conditions pretty rustic would you say?

A: They were very rustic. We lived in our buses. We had one shower house. We hauled our diapers to town to wash them. We had outhouses. We had Kohler(?) lamps. We didn't have any electricity. Of course, we didn't have any television and VCRs or anything like that. So, we did a lot of sitting around meeting with each other and we told stories and we talked and we played music and got up with the sun and went to bed fairly early. We had a community store that we pooled all our money and bought what we needed and, then, you know, everybody would get a share and, at first, our store was quite juicy with raisins and nuts and all kinds of things and, then, as we really wanted to live, you know, support ourselves and live off the land, so, then, we had to start growing our own food and, so, we didn't always have all those raisins and nuts and everything. Instead, we had pumpkins and squash and tomatoes and cabbage and the things that grow in this area: okra.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Well, it was fine with me but I'm a good eater. So, it was hard on other people who some people that weren't real good eaters, you know, were fussy about their diet. It was a little harder on them but we had a lot of beans and we had a lot of whole grains, buckwheat grots, rice and our diet was very healthy even though it was a little it was the same all the time, you know. Like, we had soybeans just about everyday and soybeans and tortillas were our basic thing, what we ate and, then, we always had greens, I remember. We had greens almost through the winter and I guess the first winter was a good winter for growing because I remember eating greens a good part of the winter, collard greens.

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Q: Were you a midwife at that point?

A: I started going to birthings with Ina May on the caravan. So, yes, I was. I delivered my first baby on my own on this farm the first year we were here.

Q: What was that like?

A: That was good. It was a very nice delivery. It was the mother's second baby and she just had no problem and, you know, it was no problem. We didn't have any problems with our first babies.

Q: Did you have a feeling that this was a career you really wanted to pursue at that point?

A: I wasn't thinking career.

Q: Well, maybe career's the right word, but ...

A: I was thinking family.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, I was thinking family and raising my family and having my babies and it was something that the community women seemed to want me to do and I also ran the clinic at that time and I had no training in that but I had a good connection with a doctor that we had here. Ina May and I talked to Dr. Williams and the Health Department and we had good connections with those people and we started reading and studying and learning what we needed to know to keep ourselves healthy and that was, basically, how we got involved with the clinic. You know, how I got involved with the clinic was that, you know, I wanted to keep my kids healthy and I wanted to keep other peoples' kids healthy.

Q: So, you know a lot about health rather than just birthing?

A: Right. Right.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I'm a physician's assistant but I'm not certified. I'm a physician's assistant because I was taught by probably 10 different doctors and we, you know, we had the doctor would come out and do a clinic with us and he'd teach us the whole time he was doing the clinic and, then, every time we had a child who was sick, we'd take him into the hospital and talk to him, talk to the doctors and learn. You know, we learned like that.

Q: Did you practice any alternative medicine?

A: Mostly, at that time, we practiced allopathic medicine because our doctor was an allopathic doctor and he was a good, old country doctor and he taught us country doctor ways, which was which included penicillin and erythromycin and it was allopathic medicine but we practiced alternative medicines, not really putting a name on it like that, but just the way that we practiced healing was hands on a lot and feeling, you know, feeling how a person was by touching them and by talking to them and feelings. A lot of illnesses is due to how you think and we knew how that worked and we probably knew how that worked because we'd been studying spirit and how everything's all connected.

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Q: But you didn't use herbal medicine or homeopathy?

A: There were a few people that used Golden Seal with not very much luck on infections. No, we didn't use any homeopathy then and, at that time, we didn't use any herbal medicines. We really learned from our country doctor who taught us allopathic medicine and, now, as we've gone along over 25 years, we've learned a lot more about homeopathic medicine, herbal medicine but, as far as our healing, we'd get that with touch and talking to people and learning why they were sick, you know. Was it a cold or was it that they were, you know, upset psychically about something and, so, got a cold or, you know, how does it work or did they get a cold and that made them feel upset, you know? We figured out those kinds of things but the medicine we used was allopathic medicine penicillin.

Q: Can you describe what, I don't know if this is the right word, like your spiritual was like in the early days of the Farm? How spirituality was expressed?

A: Well, we meditated on Sunday mornings and we all got together and did that together. Some of us, a core few, would go out in the woods and meditate. We didn't have any formal things we did other than meditation on Sunday morning. Before meditation, we would all, or the men, would all blow their conch shells. So, you could here conch shells blowing in the wind on Sunday morning before services. That was a meditation in itself.

Q: Yeah. Just the men did that?

A: Usually. I wasn't too into blowing a conch shell, myself, but my husband liked to do it a lot.

Q: Sounds like it'd be really pretty.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, where did you guys live at first? Did you live in a bus?

A: We lived in a bus for, I guess, for about a year and a half, two years with another family and, between the two families, we had 4 kids by that time and we adopted a fifth kid, a kid who somebody had left and, so, we had 5 kids and, at that time, one of my friends who had built the first house on the Farm was leaving and going up to Wisconsin to one of our other farms. I guess that's about the second or third year. Let's see, Stephanie was born in a bus it was the second year. Peter, who was born in a bus, but right after he was born, that was the third. We were here. Then, by that time, we moved over to the little house and we lived in the house for, maybe, 6 or 8 months and, then, there was somebody else who needed the house more, who had more health problems and, so, we moved to a tent. Our family moved to a tent and lived in a big army tent. We lived in a big army tent for a couple years before we moved into a house that had tent sides. It was a house but it had canvas sides and we built on that until it was a big house.

Q: Is that where you live now?

A: No. Actually, we moved from that place to another smaller house. That house ended up having 60 people in it and, so, we had in that house, we had, well, maybe, 5 families and a handful of single folks and 23 kids, including 4 or 5 foster kids that we were taking care of. We had a big community household at that time. It was a big house.

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Q: How was it living with 60 people?

A: It was difficult. It was fun. There was things that were really, really, really nice about it in that we would get all the kids in their little bear suits and sing with them at night and that was really pretty and, then, we would all eat together and it was fun working, you know. A lot of whether you enjoy the community household you're living in is whether you get along with the people and, so, I think I must have lived with, oh, probably a total of 2 or 300 different people in the different households I lived in and, sometimes, those households work out real well and, sometimes, it was difficult and it really made a difference in how you agreed with the other women about how they raised kids and because I had 5 kids at that time I lived in that big household. So, at the time I lived in the big household I lived there about 2 years and different people would move through in and out of the house but I was there. There were a couple other mothers that were there and it really made a difference who lived in the household because sometimes the household could be going on real nice, real smooth and somebody would move in and didn't want to be telepathic or didn't want to do their share of the work or didn't like the standards. It would make it feel not good all of a sudden. So, I've been in households with 60 people that felt really, really nice and you move one person in that's the wrong person and it gets bad over night and it makes it harder. So, it really makes a big difference with who you live with in the community. That's real important. I think communal living is real nice 'cause you can if you're working out right, you can, you know, you can share your meals and share the jobs and it's economical. It's very economical financially. You can live from much, much, much less financially but it really a key point is who you're living with and some people, who you think you'll get along with, you move in with them and you don't get along with them at all and other people, who you don't think that you know that well, you end up living with them and it works out perfectly and that's happened several times to me where, you know, I had people move into a house where I thought, well, I hardly know this woman but we'll see how it works and it was just the right combination, you know, and it's just the right chemistry between us and our kids.

Q: In the early years like when you were living in the bus and in the army tents and you were having to take like loads of laundry to town to wash it and you were also birthing and working in the clinic, wasn't that exhausting?

A: Well, we didn't do everything all at once.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, like I would do clinic maybe 3 days a week and, then, another day I would take the laundry to town. It was actually fun to take the laundry to town because the crew that took the laundry to town got enough petty cash to buy candy and popcorn and sodas.

Q: So, it was a treat.

A: So, we'd haul our kids on our backs and go to town and do the laundry and we'd get a little, you know, 'cause we didn't really have enough money to buy candy and popcorn and, you know, sodas on the farm, so, but, as a midwife the midwives were really people took care of the midwives and I had help. As soon as we had a household that was big enough, I had women that were helping me with my kids and with the housework and with the laundry so that I could go deliver babies and some of the

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babies I delivered were their babies and, so, that it was sort of a trade. I mean, we were the first ones with the phones on the Farm. We were the first ones with transportation and people were real good to us. The Farm [unintelligible], you know, we're real you know, they'd let us sleep in if we were up all night at a birthing. So, it was more work but we were treated good.

Q: What did it take to become a midwife? A certain type of personality or ...?

A: Well, the women in the community who had babies would tend to want a certain woman to be there, you know, they'd come to us and say, "well, I would like you to deliver my baby." And there were certain women that seemed to be good at that and get along with the people, you know. It's I'm not sure, you know. It wasn't something that I said, well, I'm going to be a midwife. I can't ever remember saying that to myself. It was that I got called and the more I got called the more I realized, well, this is what I'm doing and it feels good. I think I'll keep doing it.

Q: So, how has life changed from the early times?

A: Well, that's sort of a loaded question. In terms of the community, our community has changed from being totally communal to being more of a co-op in that, now, we all live in nuclear families and we all put a certain amount into the community as a whole every month to finance it. We don't, you know, just give all our money to the community like we did for years and years and we pay for our food and our doctor. We pay for everything. So, it's changed financially. The community agreement has changed.

Q: Are you part of the Second Foundation?

A: Yes, and that's a group of about 20 of us who get together and we pool our money and it's a you really should talk to, probably, Leslie or Albert about how that works.

Q: Okay.

A: But how it's changed, it's, you know, my life has changed. I don't know if, you know, you know my kids have grown up. That all makes a difference.

Q: Are they all gone?

A: No, I have 3 kids at home. Yeah, they're in high school. One of them's working now but the other 2 are still in high school.

Q: Do they go to the Farm school?

A: No, they go in town. They used to go to the Farm school but, with as many children as I had, we couldn't really afford the Farm school when the financial agreement of the Farm changed over and the Farm school turned into a private school.

Q: Is that kind of disappointing? I mean, would you like to be able to send them there?

A: No, the local private or the local community school out here in Summertown is it's an okay school. It's nothing fancy but I've told my kids that they get what they put into it, you know, and 2 of my kids are in college, now, and there's a third there's a couple more that will be on the way and they got their

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educations mostly out here in Summertown. Now, Stephanie, she's graduating from college. She got some of her education here on the Farm because she grew up in the old Farm. So, she went to the some of the first Farm school. So, they're all doing good. A lot of what kids learn, though, is from their mother and I spent a lot of time with them. So, they learned some at school and they learned quite a bit from me, too.

Q: How was it raising the kids in a community?

A: That's one of the reasons I stayed here was because it was a good place to raise kids and, even with all the political changes that have gone on in the Farm, many of which I didn't agree with and didn't feel good with at all, it was always a good place to raise my kids and I had 6 of them. I had 6 kids and I wouldn't move from here because you know, that was one of the main reasons we stayed because it was a good place to raise kids and it was also we had friends around us that we liked. But, then, I think, wherever we would have moved, we would have made friends but it was just an excellent place. I mean, having 1700 acres for your kids to run around on. They weren't on the streets, you know, they were out in the woods. They weren't at the, you know, local movie theater, they were out in the woods. They weren't, you know, pickpocketing or stealing from stores. They were out in the woods and this was comforting to me. If they didn't come home at 7:00 at night, I thought, well, it's okay, they're out talking to some trees.

Q: Or at someone else's house.

A: Or at somebody else's house. They would call me. Usually, my kids were pretty much wood runners. They were out in the woods. You want to get a picture of Stephen? He's probably going to be leaving in a minute.

Q: Maybe when he comes out I'll get a picture of him. [unintelligible]

A: I think he's coming out.

Q: Can I get a photo? So, how did you feel about the changeover?

A: The changeover was one of the political moves that I didn't like. I didn't like how it went down but it was bigger than me at that point and there was at the very time that we had the meeting about the changeover, Stephen and Ina May weren't here and I was miscarrying and I was miscarrying between my fifth and sixth, or fourth and fifth babies, and I knew I was being lied to. I knew it didn't feel right but I wasn't quite sure. I think that it was one of the dangers of such a big community is you really have to take part in the community and we created a board of directors that felt like they could have meetings in secret from the rest of the community and I felt like I was made to feel like I wasn't smart enough to figure this out and, I mean, that's personally how I felt. I felt like the board of directors, at that time, was having closed meetings that didn't feel quite honest or, at least, I didn't know what was going on. Maybe they were completely honest but the information would not get out and [unintelligible], you know or the changeover, I mean, you could go on and on about the changeover. We did have to change something because we weren't paying our bills, you know, we weren't being able to pay our bills. So, we did have to change something but it was like there were a few people that were interested only in self gain at that time and, so, there was the fact that the Farm had to make some changes was real. We

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had to make some changes, you know, to be able to pay our bills and evolve but there were some people in there, some opportunistic people, that said, "oh, the Farm has to change. Well, I'll just take this business and this business and I'll go." And, so, there were several people that took some of the key businesses while they went out the gate and left the rest of us with a quarter million dollar debt. So, this was not right and I think if one of the things that we didn't have on our community, we didn't have our parents' generation and we left our parents' generation. We said we don't like what you're doing. We don't like what you're doing politically in the country. I was completely at odds with my parents, with how they believed about the Vietnam war and they weren't about to come live with us because we took off and lived in the woods but we missed their we missed the visions of that generation. It would have been good to have some people of that generation and I think if we had a few more older folks with us now, we had some real older folks, some people that were in the, you know, two generations. We had some 70 and 80 year old people but we needed the 40 and 50 year olds and that's what we didn't have and I think that would have made a difference. I think, if my father had been here and many other fathers and been involved in the community at that time and the changeover had happened, he'd say, "hey, wait a minute," you know, "this isn't right." But we were I mean, I was completely naive, taking care of 6 kids, miscarrying at the time and we were being kept in the dark by the board of directors at that time. This is how I see the changeover. Other people might see it differently. So, you know, but what I think a community has to I really believe in communities. I really believe that it's how people can live together in an economic way and help each other out but I think you have to, within the community, I think it's real important to have open meetings and rule yourselves by consensus instead of majority because, if you rule by majority, you split yourself down the middle because you can have I mean, as much as you say, well, it's nice to have a majority of 80 against 20 but a lot of times that doesn't happen. A lot of times the majority happens 52 against 39 or something, you know, so you split your community and you haven't talked enough. So, if you rule by consensus if it's making decisions by consensus, you get in a big room and you talk about it and you talk about it and you talk about it and takes a lot more time and a lot more work but you end up talking about the problems and figuring them out and figuring out ways to work them out that's just not with a vote. A vote doesn't always work things out. It just gets the job done in sort of a half-assed manner but, especially if it's a majority vote where you're leaving you know, if you have a 100 people in a community and you leave 49 of them who really don't like the way the 51 votes, then you've split your community. You've got serious problems where, if you rule yourselves by consensus, then, you talk it out and you might have a few little problems but you're working them out and you can keep working them out.

Q: Did you guys actually take a group vote about the change or was it just the board of directors making the decision?

A: The board of directors made the decision and came to the group and said this is how we have to do it and, in my opinion, they used scare tactics scare tactics in that they told us we would lose the land. Like I said, I felt like I was lied to or, at least, not told the full truth and it was just a few peoples' opinion that decided how to do it. It wasn't everybody's. It wasn't studied. It was a quick decision. It was made without Stephen and Ina May's input, without Peter Switzer's input, without Phillip's input. These are some of the people that founded the community. Nobody asked me what I thought about it. Nobody, you know, respected anything I would have said about it, you know, and, you know, nobody laid it on

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the table in front of me and said, "well, this is the problem and these are the solutions that we're thinking of. What do you think about this?" Nobody educated [unintelligible] at the problem at the time. They took care of all the board meetings and I was told, you know I was actually told how I should vote and I didn't vote that way but I was told that this is the way I really should vote without being educated. I was not educated to it and, when you have a really big community, you know, this is not a good way, you know closed meetings, making the decisions is not smart.

Q: Before that time, before the changeover, did you guys operate by consensus?

A: We operated by consensus, yes. We had big meetings and we talked about what we wanted to do and we would make we'd all say, yes, yay or nay and, now, sometimes we like when the meetings happened by consensus in the old Farm, I wouldn't always really agree with the decision, you know, I might want to do it another way but I understood what was happening. I understood all the ifs, ands and buts. I mean, everything was laid out on the table in front of me and I knew what was happening and, when I voted, yes, we'll go with this, I was sincere in my okay, I'll go with this. I might want to do it just a little different but let's go with this and see how it works and that's how consensus works. You can go with something and learn how it works for a while and, then, if it doesn't work, then, you can have another meeting and change and do it a little different. So, yeah, we did our thing by consensus before.

Q: So, do you think it was a big mistake to have a board of directors?

A: No, I think it was necessary for the size of community we had because we had so many little decisions and stuff that had to be made that that, you know, that had to work like that and, well, we, you know before the changeover, we had cable television that went in everybody's home, so we had newsletters and we had a phone you could pick up and get an all points for the day, you know, which was the announcements of the day, what was happening and, I think, a board of directors we definitely needed a board of directors.

Q: But they just took too much power?

A: The ones we had ended up taking too much power. There was some people on it with self-interests and I don't know how, you know this is all during this time that this was happening. I had 6 children. I was more busy with the community's health and the babies I was delivering, keeping my kids healthy and keeping my family together and I was trusting that the board of directors would keep the Farm together, you know.

Q: Sure.

A: I was very trusting, then. And, looking back on it, I think, boy, I was naive, you know, but, you know, you put your trust into a board of directors. You want them to do it and you expect them to do it right, you know.

Q: Yeah. Would it have helped at all to have bylaws or some sort of legal structure that would have limited their power?

A: Probably, it would have and ...

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Q: Plus, I was just asking you if there should have been legal structures in place to help prevent what the board did?

A: Oh, yeah, bylaws.

Q: Yeah.

A: They probably should have, then. I think that probably would have helped and the board see, Tennessee has a sunshine law. A sunshine law is that any board meeting that happens in Tennessee, state meetings or county meetings, that anybody can come to them and I think that one thing if we'd practiced that on the Farm, that could have made a difference. But the board meeting, having meetings that were closed made it very difficult to know what was happening or to educate yourself.

Q: So, you guys couldn't say, well, those meetings were illegal. Therefore, what you did is not going to happen.

A: No, we couldn't. They weren't, no. Well, I don't know, maybe we could've but I don't know. I mean, you're asking me something I don't know.

Q: Okay. Yeah. Are there still, now, are there rifts and factions that come from the changeover?

A: I don't know. There's factions. I don't know if they stem back to the changeover. You know, whenever you have a community of this size, you have different things that happen and different people can believe different ways and, so, there's, you know, there's sometimes, there's issues that come up in front of the community and they're discussed by the board and the membership committee and the community but we do our board meetings and our membership meetings are open. Anybody can go to them, now. You just have to call one of them and say, I'd like to come to the meeting tonight and educate myself as to what's going on so that those aren't closed meetings anymore. There are factions. One of the things, I think, that has really been obvious in our community is there's people that and this happens when you're in a household with a bunch of people, too raising kids is very sensitive to people and people are very sensitive about how they parent their kids and, within the community, there's people that think that this is one way to raise kids and people who think that this is another way to raise kids and some people are very disciplinary and some people are more of the mind that you explain and you talk to your kids and you teach your kids rather than discipline them so, that's one of the factions that's happened in our community is a difference in how to raise and how they believe kids should be raised and teenagers and how you handle teenagers and I think this happens all over the country. I don't think it's just something that happens here but I think it's important in a community to talk about this a lot, you know, just in even in my own marriage. One of the things that we stayed up late into the night more than anything else, me and my husband, was how to do the kids and we were raised slightly different but we talked about it. We never fought but we talked about it and came up with solutions that worked for both of us and a household, if there's a big household with more than one family, you have to do that, in a communal household or in the community and I think it's real important to start talking about your ideals, your hopes, your dreams, your, you know, how do you expect the kids to be, how do you expect the kids to be raised, how do you expect the kids to be treated, you know, and how do you expect the kids to treat you and talk about that almost constantly. I think it's something that needs to come up all the time and talk about it so you can come to an even place there because, if kids

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are if they hear one thing from one person and one thing from another person, then they'll do what they can to get what they want and, so, to be a solid base for the kids, you have to have the same thing. This person has to say the same thing as this person and has to be fair and has to be educational to the kids and has to be explained in a way that they understand it and, then, kids will pretty much do, you know, what, you know, the right thing, you know. Kids want to do the right thing. They want to have fun. They want to learn. They want to, you know, they want to be healthy but it's good to it's good for both parents to be in agreement. It's good for all the members in a household to be in agreement about the kids and it's good for all the members in the community and, when you have a community as big as our community, which is you have at least 100 adults here then, you have to talk a lot about how you want to do it with kids and we talk a lot that's one of the things we talk most about.

Q: Would you describe that as a benefit of living in community?

A: What?

Q: The fact that you're talking a lot about raising kids and maybe learning new ideas.

A: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. That's definitely a benefit. It's a good way to raise kids. It's a good way to raise kids but it's really important to talk about how you want to raise them.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, you shouldn't just sit over in your corner and raise your kids your way and, then, one day come out and realize that you're telling your kids one thing and, you know, 3 or 4 other people in the community are telling them something completely opposite. This is where you have to talk. The community has to talk about this stuff all the time.

Q: You said 2 of your kids are in college or 1 is finished and 1 is in college or something like that?

A: My girls she'll graduate from Knoxville University of Knoxville University of Tennessee in Knoxville in December.

Q: And, now that they've experienced living on the outside, what have their reactions been? Have they talked to you much about that?

A: They have my girl has very strong opinions about how the Farm runs and, so, what now, she's coming back here in December and she's very opinionated and she's at that age where she knows everything, you know. So, we'll, you know I think it's good. I think we need more of those kids to come back and, you know, say how they think and, you know.

Q: Sure.

A: And, I, you know, I think, you know, every time you get an older kid who goes away to college and, then, comes back, you have a resource, you know. That kid is smarter and knows some more stuff.

Q: Have you been involved in the birthing with the Amish people around here?

A: I've done a lot of Amish births. I've served that community through both primary health care and deliveries for the past 12 years.

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Q: What's that been like?

A: It's been really interesting working with an Amish community. The Amish are capitalists in that they all own their own farms and lend their own finances. They all have their own family checkbook but they're community minded and they help each other out and they're very simple people. They're very honest. They're real people and it's a pleasure to work with them.

Q: Do you think you've learned from working with them?

A: I've learned a lot from them. I think there's a part of me a little part of my heart that's probably Amish because I go out there and deliver so many of their babies.

Q: And do you think they've learned a lot from you, too?

A: Yeah, I hope so. I think they've learned they've learned they should nurse their babies for a year. They've learned about natural birth control. However, that's supposed to be a secret but they've learned, you know, about vegetarian diets and, which is important for them, because they eat a lot of meat and have a lot of heart disease and I do see more of them eating whole grain foods and less white flour and more whole wheat flour [unintelligible] because we've educated them, you know. We've done a lot of diet education out there.

Q: That's neat.

A: But, I mean, now their community, that's 6 or 700 years old and they have deep-bedded beliefs, you know. Not just generations but, you know, 6 or 700 years and some of things they practice here today is because of decisions they 6 to 800 years ago in Switzerland and this community is the old, old Amish community. It's one of the most fundamental communities in the country and they still don't wear buttons on their dresses because of the decisions they made in Switzerland in 13, 14, 1500s.

Q: Lifestyle-wise, would you say there's some similarities between you guys and the Amish folks?

A: I think some in some ways. Some people call us technicolor Amish and I think there is I think there was more in the old Farm than there is now because, when we changed over to the new Farm, we lost some of our country ways, some of our and, when we got television, you know, VCRs and, you know, well, we upgraded all that. You know, we lost some of our country ways, I think. We, you know, all of a sudden, there was all that in our living rooms.

Q: Do you guys have a TV in your house?

A: Yeah. We do.

Q: Is it just like you and your husband and your kids there still at home living together or ...?

A: Mmm-hmm.

Q: There's no one else in your house?

A: No.

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Q: Are most households like that?

A: Most households are like that, yeah.

Q: Has that all happened since the change that they've gotten more private?

A: Yeah. And that's good. I don't think that that's incorrect for a family to live in a nuclear household. I think the nuclear family is a real strong can be a real strong base and, in my family situation, with kids I had, I like living in a nuclear family with just my family and, however, I liked living in the communal situation at times. I think, you know, my kids get more of my attention in the nuclear family. Now, I'm not sure everyone I mean, that's just my personal preference but I had to work it out a lot with people who didn't agree with how I raised my kids and, when you have 6 kids in a household with 50 other adults or 50 other people and maybe, say, 20 other adults and they all have strong opinions on how you should raise your kids and I have my own strong opinion about how I should raise my kids, you know, and, quite frankly, I didn't really want their opinions. I wanted to raise my kids the way I wanted to raise my kids and my kids all turned out okay.

Q: Great.

A: They're smart. They go to college. They do good.

Q: You've known Stephen now for, what, about 30 years?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: And you've been involved with the Farm since it's beginning.

A: Uh-huh.

Q: So, that's almost 25 years, I guess.

A: Right.

Q: Looking back on that time, a good chunk of your life, how do you feel about it?

A: Most of my life.

Q: Okay.

A: I'm glad I did it. I've never been bored. I've learned a great deal.

Q: What are some of the things you've learned?

A: Well, I think I have to think about that. That's sort of a loaded question.

Q: Okay.

A: You know, I've learned how to get along with people but, then, I always, pretty much, got along with the people that I was around. I've learned how community works. I think I could go into a community that was just starting up and be an asset to them because of what I know about this community and, if they would listen, I could say like, if I went into a community that was built of 100 of our kids and they were starting their families, I think I could say, well, yeah, that's okay, that's okay, that's okay. No, don't

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do that one. That's not a good idea but there's things like that I've learned, you know. I've learned consensus is really the best way to govern yourself as a community and I feel that very strongly.

Q: How about some practical skills like your birthing or clinic work?

A: Oh, yeah, all of that I've learned. I mean, that's been wonderful, yeah. I've learned, you know if I'd put this much energy into going to college or going to school instead of into my family and the community, I'd probably be a doctor by now, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I chose to put that energy into my family and my community and doing it here but and I'm glad, you know. I wouldn't have given up my family for anything or my community and I feel very strong about this community.

Q: Do you see yourself growing old here?

A: I don't see anywhere else I would do it, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: However, I will want to spend a certain amount of time in the High Sierra mountains where I spent a lot of my time growing up. I went on a pilgrimage there with my husband last summer and we plan to go once a year.

Q: That's great.

A: Yeah. Backpack.

Q: This community's been really into home birth. How about the other end of the age spectrum and home death?

A: Well, I like how the Amish do that and we've done it like that, too. When somebody gets old and dies, it's nice that they can stay at home. I don't like to carry someone who's 85 years old, having a heart attack to the hospital and have them get, you know, stuck with needles and poked and prodded and all that on the deathbed and the Amish, when somebody's real old and dying, they just call the family in and everybody comes and talks and spends some time together and that's how we've done it with our folks that have died here. We've been around them and we've stayed with them when they're in their dying days and I think they like that. Now, if anybody wants to go to the hospital, they can. We took several of our old folks to the hospital when they were sick but, then, they came home and died here. So, and I think that's how my parents want to do it.

Q: Do you see any similarities between home birth and home death?

A: I think there's a lot of similarities in that you're allowed to feel that energy and, with home birth, you can actually feel the energy happening and it's a smooth passage and I think that's what you want with home death is you want a smooth passage. You want this person to be able to pass on in calm, nice surroundings and that's what I'd want for myself, you know. I'd want my friends around me. I want somebody holding my hand.

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Q: As a final question, a lot of the back-to-the-land movements and hippie communes from the late '60s, early '70s, didn't last very long but the Farm has lasted a real long time. Do you have any ideas why or what the glue that holds it together?

A: Well, I think a lot of the glue that holds it together comes from Stephen's teachings and a lot from Stephen and I think that's a lot what held our community is what Stephen taught and just the fact that he was willing to do it for all this time. He's stayed here and he's a lot of the glue, you know, that's held this community together and, then, you know, we I really think that's a lot of what held it together and, then, there's, you know, not only him but there's a group of us that were that came with him that believed in the same things he believed in, you know, and we, you know, we talk about that stuff. There's Peter Switzer and Phillip Switzer and Leslie, Elizabeth Barger.

Q: So, you have a shared spirituality or vision that helps keep things together?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that kind of what you mean?

A: Yeah. We have a shared we have something that we started way back in 1965 that we decided we wanted to do together and it was, you know, being communal with people, being helping people out and not being self-serving.

Q: Well, great, thank you.

A: Okay.

Q: I really appreciate your time.