Interview with David Haenke, David Lakish, and Nancy Williamson
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
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DH = David Haenke, DL = David Lakish, NW = Nancy Williamson

Q: This is Thursday, March 21st, 1996, and this is an interview with David Haenke, David Lakish, and Nancy Williamson at the Ozark Resource Center, near Brooksy [?], Missouri. The very first part of the interview got cut off, so you might want to starts speaking.

DL: Since I'm going to be a disappointment, maybe I should start first. This is David Lakish speaking. You said something in your literature something about '60's people who live in communes, and I really didn't actually live in a commune, I sort of saw them spring up like mushrooms around me a little bit, and thought that maybe that was for me, and sort of put my toe in the water a few times. But after having things kind of like unfold that really were disappointing and kind of unpleasant, I sort of thought, "No, I don't think so." So I struck off on my own. But I could tell you what happened with that. It really, for me, the break with this world, two worlds, three worlds? The break happened for me with the Vietnam War. I was in the Army, got drafted when I was 27. And the break really didn't happen till I had orders for Vietnam. I was trained as a military policeman. Basically, my number really came up. I could feel my heart beat, it sunk, [unintelligible] . . . from that time I knew my life was going to be on the line if I were sent over there. So a whole bunch of stuff happened in my life. This happened out in Northern California, on the coast, that's where I was living when I got drafted. I had a lot of very dear friends. My mother was part of the thing. I don't know how much I need to get into all this, but basically, what it amounted to is I had to set myself free. It was like I -- when I made that realization, that it was, I could decide whether I would kill somebody else or not, or whether I would allow myself to be put in that position, when I made the decision that I was going to take control of my own life, it was very liberating. It's really hard explain this whole Army thing and how it ties in with everything else, except for me, it was like a personal, devastating experience that I was like -- I just ripped myself out of this culture, because all this culture was doing was killing people, stupidly, or sending them into prison if they wouldn't get involved in that trip. So it was like, basically, I just turned my back on the country and the people and everything, and slipped off to the woods in Northern California, which wasn't hard for me to do, because my whole lifestyle as I was growing up had always been on the edge of an urban area, and the city was like my enemy. I was out in the country. After a few years there, with a lot of people doing a lot of things -- some people were getting into home birthing, having their babies at home, they were trying to reclaim various significant things in their life that seems like the culture at large had ripped away from them. A few of those people were really just even tired of doing that there, and they made an exodus to British Columbia. And that was kind of my first communal experience, is I went up there with my first wife to British Columbia, and we lived on a farm at Londe [?], a 40 or 80 acre farm, something like that. Didn't have any electricity or anything, it was way out at the end of Highway 1 on the coast. Altogether there got to be a dozen of us people living there. We were there for about six months. And I don't think anybody really knew why they were there. We didn't have any agenda. We just were there. So things kind of happened that were interesting, like anybody could do what they wanted to, they could come or go however they wanted to. It was a magnificent place to be. The climate, temperature, the proximity to the ocean, all those things were very nice. The Canadian people were very warm, helpful. One time a mountie, the Canadian Royal Police Force, whatever they're called, came into our yard, and we were way out in the boonies, and we didn't know what this was about, but he was looking for somebody who got lost, and somebody at the post office said, "Maybe they'll know." I thought they were coming to throw us out, because we said we were going to be there 2 months or something like that. Time went on, we lost track of time. We were there longer than we needed to be. But it wasn't for that, it was just [unintelligible] . . . a very interesting thing happened for

me, one of the basic principles, one of the most important things I've learned from the community experience came from that situation. And after we'd been there for 4 or 5 months, something happened where somebody wanted to live on the farm, but 2 or 3 other people didn't want them to live on the farm, and this problem started coming up. A lot of us didn't even know that it existed. So what happened from that, was, we had one main farmhouse with no electricity, and we wound up eating our dinner -- oftentimes we would eat together, because we didn't have little separate residences, there was one guy who sort of was the main person, and he had his own little house. But we ate together, and we would be eating at midnight because it was so late, we had no clocks or anything like that. So the whole time thing was really different. One time we were up way late just after dinner, and this problem came up, and it seemed the way to deal with it was to bring everybody who was there into the main big room of the house. So we all sat in a circle on the floor, including this guy who was up there to raise strawberries, he was looking for his lost brother who he hadn't seen in 40 years, and the post office had sent him there. So he was sitting in this circle, along with all the rest of us. So what happened was it was like this purging of our souls and our characters. The problem was aired, whatever it was, and everybody made some kind of a comment. It just kept going around and around in a circle. And it got very heated, and very unpleasant part of the time. And this kept just going on and on and on. I think somebody came in and said, "Do you realize what time it is?" It was like 2 in the morning or something. And finally one of the things we had realized is that when there were problems on this place, it wasn't that anybody found a way to solve them, but it seemed like if everybody knew there was a problem, it would kind of magically go away. It was like just paying attention, being awake and alert took care a lot of the dynamics of living at the place. We didn't have to have rules. All we had to do was be kind, be humanitarian human beings, and things went along. This circular thing went around and around until -- there was this guy from Vietnam there who was a Vietnam killer, and there was me, and it was like - we called him "Killer," in fact, that was his nickname. He had these really weird, heavy vibes. I was ready to take him on, man. We were going to -- somebody was going to wipe somebody out in that room that night. Because I had been trained how to kill people. I'd never gotten my chance, and this is still an issue with me. It's like a big personal scar for me -- for several days on end, practice crashing somebody's head with your boot! You're going to go to 'nam? You'd better learn how to do it, because somebody's going to die, it's either going to be you or somebody else. That's where it was, the line was there. It was like, I don't know, totally character changing to be run through that and realize, "Yeah." And if you get sent over there thinking, you keep putting it off, "No, this isn't going to happen to me, it's not going to happen to me," when it does start happening, you become this machine zombie. People wonder about the crime and stuff going on in this country, and second or third question that comes up is, "Was this guy a Vietnam vet?" Yeah, right. It's going to go on for a long time, because, hey man, we got screwed royally. Okay, so we're up there, and I'm like pounding the floor, and I think everybody thought the two of us were really going to jump on each other's necks. But that didn't happen. Somehow, it kind of got out, and simmered down, and a few other people said something, one thing or another, and it kept getting mellower and mellower, and nicer, and then one of these guys was a French fellow from Quebec or some place, and he could play the harmonica. It sort of started feeling better. And so he started playing his harmonica, and the next thing you know, somebody was doing a little percussion to it, somebody else was doing something like that. This went on for a long time until the whole place was like some kind of heart beat throb from some other planet. It as magnificent. One of the most magnificent experiences I've ever had in my life. And it was because we

all got our insides out in front of everybody else. That was, to me, an extremely important lesson. Number two, what I got out of all of this was another place I'd lived at, in Northern California, the same area, probably before I went up to British Columbia, and that was we could all have a good time, as long as the guy who didn't own the place, as long as he wasn't there. Because he wanted to be a part of us and everything, and he was a really neat guy, but when push came to shove, and building code laws or this or that, or taxes came up, it always fell down on him. It was his responsibility. So the second lesson I got out of the communal experience was, who owns the place is very important. Because you can do all these nice little cutesy things, but if you want to be there for awhile, somehow that person's -- it has to be everybody or something. So my realization was, I need to own the land myself, even though I wasn't really into owning land, it's kind of like an American Indian trip or something, this land is just here for all of us to use. But I realized that wasn't going to work, I'm an organic gardener, I needed to be some place for awhile, so I went looking for cheap land. I wound up here in the Ozarks.

Q: So is this where you came after British Columbia?
DL: Pretty much, yeah, we went back to California to have a home birthing experience, which was -- ecstatic is not a good enough word for it. Joyous, the most fantastic thing you could possibly imagine is not good enough for it. I mean, it was absolutely terrific, you know.

Q: Did you do that at a community?
DL: No, we had a good friend who was a midwife, who's brother was a doctor, and this guy had delivered about 30 babies, and he was getting a little bit burnt out on it, and so between him and my wife's gynecologist and myself, we did a lot of reading and got coaching and stuff. So I wound up being the midwife, with the fellow's wife in attendance, but she really hadn't had too much experience. I got to be the midwife, and it was very interesting. I delivered 3 more babies after that.

Q: So you delivered your own baby?
DL: Right.

Q: I've never heard of anyone doing that. That's great.
DL: Let me give you a good one out of that -- when my first son was about 3 days old, we were pretty spaced out. My wife had been in labor for about 24 hours, because she wasn't really dilated. She thought she was into the final contractions, but she wasn't. So she got worn out two or three times. About the third day -- we did diapers by hand, we had no electricity, kerosene, he was born by kerosene light in the middle of the night or something. Washing diapers and Ivory soap in the water looks like brain tissue because it makes all these churning things, and this little bug lands in the water, and I think, "Oh, my goodness, it looks like it's going to drown." So I pick the bug up, and I'm thinking, "I need to save this bug." And so I'm thinking, "What do you do with a bug that's been under water?" You give it artificial respiration. How do you do that? You blow against it and change the air pressure, and you try to match air pressure changing with what bug breathing could be. So I do that awhile, and it doesn't wiggle, a little bit more. Finally he starts wiggling a little bit, then he crawls up on the finger, does whatever he needs to do -- cleaned him off with some fresh water. And eventually he takes off and flies away. I think he had one leg missing. A few days later, I'm out there doing that again, and this big

comes along, and it lands on my hand, and does a hop and flies off. Am I imagining this or not? I don't know, that was like 24 years ago. Okay, 3 days after the birthing, my son is over there in the corner, and he gets into this sobbing, like primordial sob cry. I can't duplicate it myself, I don't want to, because it's very embarrassing. So he does this, and we're just like, "Holy cow, this is like overwhelming." And pretty soon I start crying the same way, and it takes me back to my circumcision experience, and it's like I'm really, really in pain, agony, that's the cry I had been crying after I'd been circumcised, and all I can think is, "This hurts awful, stop it, stop it, stop it, somebody stop it." It was like, "Holy cow." Now I don't think that would've happened in the average hospital experience. Okay, did I cover everything that I needed to cover?

Q: Well tell me a little bit about coming to the Ozarks? Did you come here in the '70's?
DL: It was about '73. We came to live in a small communal thing.

Q: Was that Long Run or something?
DL: That's where I lived, that's where we wound up. But we actually came with some friends from California, we kind of did one of those dust bowl exodus kinds of things. We had rabbits, and barrels of canning jars, and hand tools.

Q: And VW buses?
DL: No, they had some kind of truck. We had gotten smart enough by then to realize that VW's were not up to America. I had a '48 Chevy truck with a home made camper on the back, with a nice wood cook stove in it. A roof that lifted up to the stars at night. And we had two rabbits with us, our house plants, canned goods -- everything. We lived in that thing for a year, and had all the tools and stuff we needed. So we were going to come and live up by Birch Tree, Missouri, but things evolved, and we realized that the people we were going to be with -- they were really into animals, we were really into plants and gardening, we didn't know about this stuff ahead of time. We knew about each other's lives, but we didn't really know where this push comes to shove thing again, and where it became clear was in how we were going to use the pond water. It turned out, "Oh, if times get hard, we have to have the water for the animals." And we were thinking, "Oh, if times get hard, we have to have the water for the garden." So we could see that, once again the communal life thing wasn't going to work. So we went to another place that really wasn't a community then, New Life Farm, which was not far from here. I don't think it really exists anymore. We lived there for another 6 or 9 months, without electricity, down on the bottom land, by a creek.

Q: And is that group of households sort of put together?
DL: Well, it was one family who wanted -- they didn't know what they wanted together, they thought they wanted community. I think what was happening here was this was like the beginning of a '70's community thing, which kind of grew -- like later '70's. Which maybe grew out of what you're dealing with. And people had heard these stories, and then were like wondering about it. But we came from a pretty -- our background is what we grew up with. It usually isn't that, it's something else. It's like you have a job 40 hours a week, a good education. Most of us really have good educations, who are doing this. But anyway, the group New Life Farm that I was talking about, they knew they wanted something,

they weren't quite sure what it was, so it took a lot of people kind of coming through, and eventually it kind of found its own existence. Because a lot of these places, they're still going. Like maybe people had ideas in the beginning, but they keep changing, and they kind of become a certain kind of mushroom or something. Well that one wasn't for us either. We wound up then going to Long Run [?], which is where I live now, which was two family deal, and what united us mostly was kids, family, and home schooling. And even that turned out to be a whole lot more separate than I thought it was going to be. We wound up living -- we still shared the land in common, but there's been a whole progression of kind of separate family-ness on that place, until where now, it's really separate. It's like we don't hardly see each other any more. I'm not sure why that all happened that way, really. From the outside world, the environment we live in, the people called "locals," who lived there for 100 years, and all their ancestors and everything, they look at us as outsiders, and we will probably never really be a part of them. And so they might think of us as sort of a community or commune. But -- if our other members that we share the place with, the first thing in an emergency, they are the first people we go to for help, we help each other out when we can, but it's like we don't really -- it's like having a really good neighbor. Like my whole commune thing is not really a commune.

Q: It does seem like there are a lot of communal groups in this area. What do you think drew people here? Was it because it was beautiful, or the land was cheap, or a combination, or what?
DL: And a lot of the people were into gardening, and when you start checking weather tables and things like that, climate and all that, you can grow almost anything. There aren't too many things that do really well, a few do really well, but you can grow almost anything here, and it's got the seasonal thing that a whole lot of us experienced in our youth. Another principle that I see from this is that what people -- if they had a pretty good childhood, and they liked it, they seem to tend to gravitate back to that as they get older, they go back. Like my wife now is in a desert climate, somewhat like what she was familiar with in Texas. She's in Southern Colorado. Whereas I grew up in Michigan, and I really like this cold weather kind of thing, the seasons, the thunderstorms, and all that. I see people who had the urban thing, if they were in New York City, they wind up being back in an urban area, even the pond thing, one group was into the animals, we were into the garden. They both had an urban youth experience, and now one of the pair for sure is in the middle of urban living, even though he looked very woodsy at the time.

Q: Did you grow up on a farm?
DL: I grew up on the edge of a city. The city took my dad's land away from him, because it raised the taxes, so I was going to go somewhere where that couldn't happen, where there were too many hills for the bulldozers to even do anything about it. Not straighten out the roads, never! Never, never, never!

Q: Do you think there are also things in people's childhoods that predispose them to wanting to live communally and having that work for them?
DL: Yes! I really do, because my ex-wife had a really big Texas family with a lot of cousins and stuff like that. I had my brother when I was growing up, we really didn't do much at all, the rest of the family was like alien beings as far as we were concerned, we hardly ever saw them. My brother and I learned to be very independent, very alone, even from each other, as we were growing up. But my ex-wife, on the

other hand, they would have dozens of people for these family reunions, and the first reunion I went to blew my mind. Aunt whatever her name is, why drive 50 miles out of the way to see her? I didn't want to do that. But she kept dragging me out there to visit all these relatives, all these places. Finally I kind of got into it, they were neat people, okay, people are okay. For me, people were the enemy. When I was growing up, they took the things away from us that were important, like they took the garden away because we couldn't afford the taxes because they put in sidewalks and cement streets. For me, I didn't want to have anything to do with people. I'm very rare. Most people want to have something to do with people, I've come to realize.

Q: So do you think that's one reason why you've not ended up living communally?
DL: I think that really is. Plus, along with all that baggage, I had training as an artist at the university, became an artist, so I really covet a lot of quiet, alone time. In fact, when we had that big blow up over the use of the water, what I did was take a pad of paper and go off to the woods and sketch some piece of junk. To me, that was my salvation.

Q: Did you go to the University of Michigan?
DL: Yes.

Q: Did you live in a co-op when you were there?
DL: No, I lived in a dormitory for a couple of years, and even there I was reclusive. In fact, I used to have my door closed all the time. I was going to make up for all this by being a research physicist, and give the world an anti-gravity machine. That's how I was going to pay my dues. Well, I kept my door closed and everything like that, but then scientific German really did me in, and differential equations. The two of those were a mix that were fatal to me, practically. I was my high school valedictorian. Bad to put on anybody's shoulders. I was thought I was hot stuff. Not so, not so. I know I can get along with people, I know how to get along, but I'm not that smart, and in college it was devastating to me. So anyway, I was like getting my first D, ever in my whole life in college. This to me meant I had to do something . I don't know how this happened, but it started out with the red and blue pencil, I started doing the sketching thing, which led to a watercolor set, which led to an oil set, and it kept getting worse and worse, you know. The differential equations, the German, was worse and worse. The sketching was happier and better and better. And I would leave my door open in the dormitory once in awhile, and people would walk by and they'd see these very unusual things on the wall, like a painting of a red and a black ant fighting over a big steering wheel with an atomic bomb blast going up in the background. And a guy walking down the middle of a road, exactly split in half down the middle of him, one side being a city person with a brief case, the other side with a fishing pole and a plaid shirt looking over to the woods, and the city on the other side. So they would look at these things, and I didn't almost have to be there in the room, but yet I was, because they would see this art work, and suddenly it was like this connection -- I actually was sort of a human being. And we could talk about the art work. I wound up switching into the art school. Probably the best single thing I've ever done in my life.

Q: Now when you were at U of M., was the hippie thing going on at all at that point, or was this before that?
DL: This was kind of pre-hippie -- the word "hippie" didn't even exist then. But there was a lot of Vietnam stuff in the air. I had been deferred for 5 and a half years, a college deferment, so I figured that was long enough, and grad school wasn't really doing it for me. It was a lot of b.s. after awhile, I realized if I was going to be anything as an artist, I just needed to get away from all that. So I took the plunge, jumped out, and the draft board sure saw that. I was married and everything, but they grabbed me up real fast.

Q: Now does the name John St. Claire ring a bell?
DL: Yes!

Q: Was he the White Panther Party? I'm trying to remember. He was pretty active in the Ann Arbor, Detroit area in Civil Right, sort of counter culture activities, and I was just wondering if --
DL: --It rings a bell, but not much more right now. He might even have come to some of my art shows, I still go back up there to do art shows once in awhile.

Q: So when you went out to San Francisco, was a lot of the counter cultural stuff happening then?
DL: How do you know I went to San Francisco?

Q: Oh, that's right, you said Northern California, you didn't say San Francisco.
DL: You know about me than I've told you! I did go to San Francisco.

Q: I'm sorry. I guess when I think of Northern California, I think of San Francisco, which isn't fair, because there's a lot more of it than that .
DL: No, San Francisco is the northern part, Haight/Ashbury. My first wife, actually, the wife with the child was my second wife, my first wife lived in Haight/Ashbury for awhile. About that time, "hippie" started coming into prominence. The first time I saw it in the newspaper, I thought it was really kind of funny, "What is this word, what does this mean?"

Q: So did you visit any of the sort of classic, hip era communes, like Morning Star Ranch, or any of the?
DL: --No, there was one in San Diego that I was at for a few days. I didn't go to Morning Star. Those place were around me, but I wasn't really personally infatuated with them.

Q: Or was Steven Gaskin doing his Monday night class in the Bay Area at that time?
DL: Yeah, he was. We were so far north, I hardly ever got -- by then, I was living in Mendocino, which was 132 miles away, and we were in another world, really. Steven was doing that. I think we found out about it probably from the Whole Earth Catalog as much as anything. And the Hog Farmers came to stay at the same place where my first son was born, Wavy Gravy and the Hog Farmers.

Q: Yeah, I visited the Black Oak Ranch when I was up there.
DL: Was recently?

Q: Yes.
DL: They got a place? Good for them. They were living in a school bus way back in 1971. They spent a winter in Germany. They lived in their bus, and then in a department store. It took them 2 or 3 months in the department store to figure out these people were actually living in the department store.

Q: Was this in San Francisco?
DL: No, they visited us in Mendocino. Is Wavy Gravy still alive?

Q: Oh, yeah, he sort of spends part of his time -- the Hog Farm has a house in Berkeley, and then they have this ranch near Latenville [?], that's kind of north of Ukiah [?]. Near Ukiah. And he also, he and his partner run a camp for kids, Camp Winnerainbow [?] or something like that. I think it's for poor city kids. He does good stuff.
DL: Yeah, he does lots of good stuff. I think he got beat up one time because he was doing voter registration or something, somebody really messed up his back. He was recuperating when he visited us.

Q: Well he ran for like Berkeley mayor or something a while back. I just remember him in the news.
DL: So I actually am not your "in the middle of the commune" thing. I'm sort of like the paint on the outside of the building. I admire that kind of thing, but it really isn't me. Consensus decisions just take too much time, and that was what was neat about the British Columbia thing, was it just kind of happened. We didn't have to do anything. We were just there.

Q: And those were mainly expatriate Americans that were trying to get out of the draft?
DL: No, this is already -- let's see, the draft thing was kind of winding down by then. No, it actually - the reason we left, I think the reason most of the people left, they were just fed up with the whole political system in the country -- it just didn't seem like it was doing any good to be here. We were unhappy about everything, so we just thought we'd try a new life. What my ex-wife and I, the realization we came to was that we were kind of way out on a limb some place, and if our lives were going to make any difference, being in Canada wasn't going to do it. We needed to be back here, in the main artery of change. You hardly ever hear much about Canada at all in the news. It's just like it doesn't even exist. Pretty quiet up there.

Q: Yeah, in school, you don't even learn the names of the provinces or anything. It's too bad.
DL: That was one of the reasons we came back, plus to have the baby at home, because we had a lot of support back there. I would go back, it was a very fine place to live. It was much more supportive of individual kinds of differences, bizarre lifestyles, that didn't matter.

Q: Would you at that time have described yourself as being counter-culture or a flower child or a hippie or anything like that?
DL: I wouldn't have called myself a hippie or a flower child, because I've never really been that dingy. I think I was brought up with some sort of a work ethic. I do things the hard way, generally. Actually, kind of what happened in my life, was almost like within my own life, going from preindustrialization, before

electricity, before machines -- we did everything by hand. We cut wood by hand, we ground flour by hand, we washed our clothes by hand, we heated with wood, we carried water from the spring. All we used the technology for was I had a truck, once in a while we would go to town and buy some milk, once in awhile I think we would use a laundromat, but hardly ever. Didn't have a radio. The whole years my girlfriend now says, do I know this music? The whole space of time from about, when I was in the Army, '66, to '75, '79, I mean, when Nixon was going out and the war was ending, I sort of like would get this by osmosis. But we didn't -- I think we had a radio in there about '74. But I was totally out of it. I could've lived in New Zealand or something. So for me, in my own personal existence, I know what it's like to be poor, I know what it's like to not have a chain saw. I know what it's like to not have any money. I detest and deplore food stamps and government handouts, I was on food stamps for awhile, it's very degrading. I can do this myself, but it is so difficult to do in one generation, to take yourself from nothing to some kind of comfort. And I have the whole culture behind me. If I get sick, they will probably help me, even though I don't have medical insurance. I broke an ankle once -- they did mend that, it was nice, I traded a painting for that. But it is so difficult to get windows in our house. There's no way to get loans. I pay all of my bills, I should have incredible credit references, but it doesn't exist on paper, so there's no way to get ahead. There's no way to get even. I am so far below poverty --if I made $8,000 a year, I'd be really happy. I get by on $4,000 a year, and about $1200 of that is for child support. I live on almost nothing. If I can go to a movie is nice. What I'm trying to say here is that -- I don't know what I'm trying to say! We take so much of this stuff for granted, but we are not very far away from not having it. We're about 2 weeks away from not having it. If our truck stopped running and stuff like that. We came here expecting the Third World War to happen We came to a place where we could survive if the whole world blew up. We didn't know that there were all these MX missile silos all around us, and we were actually in ground zero.

Q: So did a lot of people who came here at the same time you did, have they stayed? What are they doing? What's happened to some of the communities around here? I mean, East Wind has a very public profile, and you can find out a lot about that, but I don't really know much about other groups.
DL: It seems like a lot of my experiences with smaller units, maybe Seven Springs had 7 family units in it, but there wasn't any core. Economic core is really very important, which is what East Wind has. If I have a common ground with any of these people that might have lived in communal things, the economic common ground would be artisans or artists. We'd go to art shows, it's kind of almost being a gypsy tribe. We will see each other at these events when we are doing that. We don't really live together, it's like our togetherness is our job. It doesn't happen real often. But we are extremely supportive, because we really know what this is all about. We know our passion for it .

Q: Well it seems like the people in this area are pretty tight, because each person I call up, they say, "Who else have you talked to?" and I'll list off the names, and they'll know everybody on my list. Even though you don't necessarily live that close together.
DL: Yeah, it's almost like we're –

Q: --Well, you're kindred spirits I guess.
DL: Well, like we're also -- what's the word for it, if you've been through a war and survived it? It's like we've been through the concentration camps, and we somehow made it out of there, but boy, talk about bonding, you know?

Q: So, David, do you want to tell me some about your background and what brought you to the Ozarks?
DH: Okay, let's see. Should I run a tape or think of something original? Why did we come here? It's not easy for me to make it simple.

Q: Well, where did you grow up?
DH: Michigan.

Q: Oh, just like the other David. In a rural area, or a city?
DH: In a small town. And I had -- the main reason I'm here has to do with ecology, with what's involved with ecology, which for me is everything. That word encompasses anything that has any meaning to me. So when I was a kid, I had direct experiences with the natural world, which were -- it just summarized my existence in some way. It wasn't until I'd lived in the Ozarks for about 7 or 8 years -- I got to the Ozarks in 1971, just about 25 years ago. I'm 50 now, so I've lived half of my life here. And it wasn't until I was about -- I got here when I was 25, and it wasn't until 10 years later that I remembered my childhood experiences, these sort of direct experiences with the natural world. And that put everything in context for me. And then I realized that my whole life had been somehow moving this direction, just to live in the woods. Because I have absolutely no use for civilization. There's nothing in Western civilization that I believe in at all, absolutely nothing.

Q: But do you have use for civilization in the sense that you've sought out living communally, or wanting to be with other people?
DH: Well, I lived communally for awhile, but then I decided I didn't want to do it anymore. I'm not that friendly. I mean, I'm pretty friendly, but I don't like to see the same people every morning, get up and have to say something to them. I'm not into small talk. After you see the same people every morning, you start running out of meaningful things to say to them, and you start saying stupid thing. I just can't do it. So -- I have things of technology around me, I have computers, and I use technology, and I drive around too much, do all that, but I don't believe in it. It's just my way of coping. I was meant to be a peasant. Live in the woods. I don't like living anywhere near a town. This is too much urban to me.

Q: You're too close to the road?
DH: Too close to the road, too close to Brooksy [?].

Q: Brooksy's such a metropolis! Two houses, three houses.
DH: This is South Brooksy. I don't have any use for anything that many people do. I just cope with it. My life being in the woods.

Interview with David Haenke, David Lakish, and Nancy Williamson
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
March 21, 1996
DH = David Haenke, DL = David Lakish, NW = Nancy Williamson

Q: So did you come here initially just to get back to the land and be in the woods, or did you come here to join a community?
DH: Well, we had a communal group in Ann Arbor.

Q: Okay. Did you go to the University of Michigan or something?
DH: No. But the people that we lived with in our communal group in Ann Arbor in 1970 were people who were either in or associated with or have been in the University of Michigan.

Q: Did it have a name?
DH: We called it Edge City. And then we took that name and we brought it to the Ozarks, and it still is Edge City.

Q: It still exists?
DH: Only nobody called it that anymore. We determined that that came from -- we actually found references in the Beatnik literature about Edge City. It's a concept in Beatnikism. It's like an expression. But we decided that we were on the edge of everything, the edge of sanity, the edge of civilization, the edge of poverty—

Q: --Cutting edge?
DH: No, I wouldn't say that. Just the edge. The edge of Missouri -- the boarder of Missouri and Arkansas, the edge of that. But I don't believe in those boarders anyway.

Q: When did the group in Ann Arbor start?
DH: Well, we started thinking about it like in 1968 or '69 up in Michigan. Then we finally got together in 1970. These are people, variously, that I had grown up with, or known, or known of in my hometown. And then some other people that knew them. It was kind of an Ann Arbor scene, and a kind of a hometown Michigan scene blended together.

Q: So did you get a big house that you rented?
DH: No, we had a little house, and we filled it full of people. We had like 16 people in a 2 bedroom house. That was at the peak. Or the depth.

Q: Would you say you had a mission? Like were you political at all? Anti-war stuff?
DH: Well, we had the usual blend of counter cultural stuff. The usual blend. But it was experimental. For me, because I said I don't believe in Western civilization, so it was like I want to do something different, anything. I've always had this very ecological orientation . Ecology is the way that I look at reality. It's not a human centered region. Part of the bioregional idea is biologically or ecologically centered. So I see things differently than most people. I don't look at humans as the center or the focus. [tape ends] . . .

Q: . . . folks at Edge City decided they wanted to move down here? People wanted to get back to the land?

DH: Yeah, in the late '60's, that was a current. And it was an evolution of the communal movement that we cared about. Because we saw -- we were aware of a lot of the stuff that was going on with the different communal groups, and the phenomenon sort of started out as an urban phenomenon, and the most interesting groups went for the country. To me, that was interesting, because I could see, for me, part of my complete dissociation with the normal stuff. But the worst part of living in the city is its ecological disintegrity, it's just completely ridiculous. The worst thing was flush toilets. Just an abomination, they're a sin. They're evil.

Q: Do you have a composting toilet?

DH: I do, I have a bucket out there. And so, I mean, that was just the most indefensible thing, and then the idea of creating an authentic life that had some ecological integrity, you can't do that in the city. Living in rental housing, you can't change the walls around, you can't do anything. You can't grow food, you can't compost, all the cycles are broken -- to me it's just insane. The city life is insane, it makes no ecological sense at all. So for me, that was a drive, to just get away from -- make an authentic life. To me, an authentic life has to be in the country. The only integrity that there is, the basis of integrity is to live an ecological life as best you can. Otherwise life to me is worse than meaningless, because it's destructive. So that was my drive. Other people left -- our group moved to the Ozarks in 1971 from Ann Arbor. Everybody had varying motives, I think. But we were following what we perceived to be an evolution of the communal idea, an experimental lifestyle. We were going to grow food organically, and put everything together. We were into appropriate technology, and we were into whole foods, and everything, we wanted to put all that together as best we could. Because we ended up putting very little of it together, but at least we got on the land.

Q: How many folks came down here?

DH: I don't know, 9 or 10.

Q: And did you pool your money to buy a piece of land?

DH: Yeah. We had a couple of scouting trips down there from Ann Arbor, and we drove down there looking for land. Another big motivation was Apocalyptic visions. That was part of it. A lot of people had that. We perceived that the whole so-called system was completely dysfunctional, on an self-destruct mode, and wouldn't last very long, so we wanted to get away from it. So that was another thing. And a lot of people had that idea. And we were right, it just takes longer than we thought. I mean it hasn't completely self-destructed, but it's in the process. It may take 50 years, but that's not very long. So we were a combination of naive and visionary, and stupid. All those things. We didn't know what we were doing. It's a good thing.

Q: Were you fully communal? Like were you income-sharing? Shared everything?

DH: Pretty much. Except that the people whose name got on the deed were the ones that ended up with the land.

Q: Has that been a problem?
DH: Well, it's kind of a pattern in these movements. Most of them don't work. So the people who have their names on the deed end up with the land, other people leave. It wasn't a conscious thing, it was just for some reason, that's the way it ended up.

Q: That was kind of what you were saying before, isn't it -- that's a problem, who's the owner?
DH: One of the things that we were foolish and naive about was that I believed that there was some millennial shift in human consciousness that was happening. I was very resonant with the philosophies of Tara che da [? French]. I had this sense that there was a collective consciousness developing within the human species. And that there was actually a shift going on in the nature of the species itself. Which I no longer think . So I thought that human beings could change, and that they would undergo some transmutations that would engender a less interest in private property, and all those permutations of privatization and all that. But really, people haven't changed at all. And that's why a lot of these things don't work. The communal things don't work because people have this need for nuclear families, owning things, owning each other.

Q: So greed and jealousy and things like that start to surface?
DH: "Greed" is a little harsh. Jealousy is real. I don't know anybody that's really transcended it. I thought I had for awhile, but I didn't. It was just an illusion.

Q: What did the locals think of you? What your relationships like?
DH: Well, the locals were divided about us. We didn't know until a few years later that they were considering making us leave. They had actually had a community meeting about it. And some of our neighbors spoke up for us, and others wanted to run us out. And the ones who were for giving us a chance won out. We had no idea this was happening.

Q: Wow. Was this right here around Brooksy?
DH: It was not too far from here. It was phenomenal what happened. Most of the people that I know who came in in the early '70's, whether they were communal or not, had these amazing experiences with the local people. Which were almost all positive. My explanation for it, if it needs one, it doesn't need one, but, was that we came at a time when the old Ozark society, the old way of dealing with each other and newcomers was still in existence. We came at an interesting transitional time, from the old, old Ozark way into the sort of so-called modern era. Because, essentially, no matter who it was or what they looked like, when somebody came into your neighborhood, there was a way of welcoming them. So people came and they gave us chickens, and they sent their kids to work with us, and gave us tools, and basically, we were just welcomed in a very extraordinary way. Lots and lots of people who came in the early '70's had these experiences. It was just an old way of being. We didn't really -- we were strange, and the police came out to talk to us, and we were written up in the local newspaper. We even got put in the Kansas City Star, because we were a phenomenon.

Q: When you say, "we," lots of groups, or your particular one?
DH: I'm speaking specifically about Edge City.

Q: I've got to find that Star article.
DH: I have it. I have some newspaper articles from West Plains. We were in all the newspapers around -- Baxter County, everybody knew about us.

Q: That was the early ' 70's.
DH: There were 3 groups in here. There were only 2 I know before us that I'm aware of in this region. One of them is gone, called Family Farm, which was up around McCullom [?], and then there was Dragon Wagon, which still exists, in a different form. And then there was our group. When we got here, we heard about some other ones that got run out, because they were being very blatant about some of their activities. These are rumors.

Q: And then after you came did a lot more folks come down here?
DH: Yeah. We got down here, and then I put an article in Mother Earth News, a little letter, just asking to make contact with anybody else that was in the area. We never did make contact with anybody, because there wasn't anybody. Except the ones that were already there, like Dragon Wagon and family farm. But then some people contacted us who read our letter, and one of them was Ted Landers, who started New Life Farm, which became the Ozark Resource Center that you're sitting in here. Ted read our letter in Mother Earth News and came down here. He was looking for land and fell in love with the Ozarks. That was around '73 or so. Then he got here in 1975, and immediately started the appropriate technology research work on his place, called New Life Farm.

Q: And then East Wind started when?
DH: 1974. They were a spin-off from –

Q: --Twin Oaks?
DH: Yeah, Twin Oaks, but the original group of people that started Twin Oaks, Cat Kinkade and all those people, yeah, they came here in '74 and, I don't know if they heard about us or we heard about then. They came over, and we tried to clue them in on how to stay cool -- the politics of the situation.

Q: Were they kind of different than some of -- like the group you were a part of?
DH: Yeah, you know, East Wind is different. For one thing, it is a true intentional community, it's based on a set of precepts, philosophy, Skinnerian. Most of the people that I knew were just free form. We have a set -- you can identify a body of ideas, and tendencies, and a sort of cultural matrix for the whole thing, but it wasn't in any sense codified to the point of intentionality like that. It was much more eclectic, less circumscribed by any single philosophy. Especially a sort of a crypto-scientific one like Skinnerianism.

Q: Did your group ever have a leader or rules or did you have meetings, any sort of structure?
DH: We had arguments. We might have tried to have meetings. I guess I was sort of a focalizer, I was sort of an ideologue of our little group. I wouldn't call myself a leader, but some people might. I never could relate to that term very much.

Q: Was there any sort of work sharing system?
DH: There were no systems. Like usual, a few people did most of the work, and the rest of people screwed around, and we kicked them out. Or they left. That's being a little rough, but any group, it's like a few people do most of the work, and other people just don't know what to do, or run a scam. Consciously or unconsciously sort of float. I got to the point where I couldn't tolerate that. The point of paranoia. If anybody is like floating, I get really upset. I never was much of a tolerant -- that's another reason I don't live in communes anymore. I just don't have much tolerance.

Q: How was economics handled? Did you have some sort of common pot that people could get money out of if they wanted to go buy groceries? How was money handled?
DH: I don't really know. I don't remember what we did. We didn't have any money, so it was kind of irrelevant.

Q: You must've had to go to town to buy some groceries now and then?
DH: Yeah, but in the first couple of years, I couldn't really explain how we got that. It was sort of magical. Nobody wanted to analyze it, because if we did, it might disappear. People brought us stuff, and we grew some food. We had some food stamps for awhile, and we had little piddly jobs like working in saw mills for ridiculous rates of money. We brought something with us. It was stone soup, is what it was.

Q: How long did you live at Edge City?
DH: I was there from '71 to '83.

Q: Oh, a long time!
DH: And it became less and less communal every year. And then it kind of went more into like just family things.

Q: And that's what it is now? Just more sort of families?
DH: It's basically one family. My ex-wife, and her husband, and their two kids, one of which is in college. And my daughter was there for a long time.

Q: Were there a lot of kids growing up there when you were there?
DH: We had -- no, not a lot. There were two kids. It was pretty hard for kids.

Q: Did you home school them?
DH: No. Seven Springs, which I told you about, had a school. So my daughter went there for the third grade. And it kind of got her out of a tight problem she was having in school. She was having a hard time dealing with the school. She was going to a public school from kindergarten to third grade. She was having a hard time with her teacher and stuff. So we went to Seven Springs School, Seven Springs had a whole school. So she went there for a year. And I don't know how long they had that school over there, that alternative school.

Q: So that must've been a fairly large community if they had a school.
DH: Not really.

Q: They just drew from the surrounding community?
DH: They just had some people there that wanted to teach. It was a small -- it was mostly their kids and a few others. Yeah, that was a hard life for the kids. There wasn't much, no one around to play with.

Q: So after you left Edge City, did you get involved with New Life Farm?
DH: Right. Like I said, Ted Landers, and Rosemary, we started it, kind of came down here based on that letter. There's a lot of connections that we had running in parallel while we were all still in Ann Arbor. Ted and Rosemary came from Ann Arbor and we were in Ann Arbor at the same time, but didn't know each other, but we actually knew people in common who were working on the same equation as far as getting out of the city and getting out to live on the land. It took us years to actually sort this all out. It was very amazing, we came very close to knowing each other, and we knew all these people in common up there, we were working on the same thing. Amazing. I forgot what you said.

Q: I was just asking about New Life Farm, I'm just sort of curious what it was all about.
DH: Oh yeah. Ted was and is quite a genius. He had multiple degrees and he was a successful waterbed entrepreneur in the early '70's, and did rather well at that. He was also a degreed engineer, had a couple of degrees -- very capable, multi-talented, brilliant person, Ted and Rosemary. Anyway, Ted had a -- his particular passion was ecological technology, appropriate technology. Plus he wanted to get out, get away from the city, start a place. He'd intended to look for land all the way from here to North Carolina. But he got here and he just stopped, on Brush Creek, which is pretty close to here. That's what caught him. He no longer had that place. It's been sold. But it's a beautiful place. But Ted's passion was appropriate technology. He wanted to create a whole home-grown, solar based energy system. And so he started early-on, about 1975, he started connecting with the University of Missouri in getting some small grants to support his work, particularly with methane. Meanwhile, of course, we were all around here in this community, Vinny, Ron Huse [?], who is now in Little Rock, several people around the area. We were all interested in that stuff as well. And so New Life Farm has been a focal point for collective interest and work in appropriate technology, various dimensions of ecological applications. So 1978 we incorporated as a non-profit organization, New Life Farm, and formed a board of directors, and started getting some serious grant support from the federal government. We were doing a multiplicity of different things -- methane digestion, solar flat plat collectors, hydraulic ram pumps, along with organic agriculture, tree crops, there's a whole laundry list of stuff.

Q: Now, was that Carter?
DH: Yes.

Q: So that administration was pretty supportive of that kind of stuff, so did that get cut off once Reagan?
DH: --Right. This whole creative time as far as getting funds and doing all this research work only went on for about 2 or 3 years. As soon as Reagan came in, it just quit. Totally, cut right off. From that point

on, New Life Farm as a research center, as an active funded institution, basically started to fade out. And what it is now, a.k.a. Ozark Resource Center, is a whole lot less active than New Life Farm was. As I say, the funding dried up, and plus we have a bunch of people trying to work together and do unprecedented things there, and the whole house was -- this old 1870's or '80's house was retrofitted with compost toilets and a greenhouse, and collectors. At one point, we actually had methane gas running into it from the digesters. We had methane generators making electricity and putting it back in the grid. There's some pictures up here of the digesters, and the flat plat collectors, the house. You can see that stuff.

Q: So how many of you were living there?
DH: It was only nominally -- it wasn't really a collective living situation. It was and it wasn't. It started living there in 1983. After its peak. But it –

Q: --So it was more kind of Ted's house?
DH: Ted eventually left the whole thing. It just got -- he became a born-again Christian, and just basically became disillusioned with the whole thing, and we had a lot of conflicts and we'd argue with each other, work out our various personal trips on each other. It just, it kind of became sort of entrophic. Ted just pulled out, and moved to the West Plains.

Q: So it was really more of a research center than a community?
DH: Yeah. It was sort of a community, but it was really focused on being a research center, and it was sort of -- it's hard to define what it was.

Q: So did the people who lived there, did they eat together?
DH: Sometimes. Some people had their own food, and some people sort of lived there. But actually, there were, at different times, there would be different people living there. I lived there, and 3 or 4 other people would live there. And then -- but it never felt like an intentional community. It was more oriented around the work. I guess you could say that it was a community, unintentional.

Q: What has happened to the house?
DH: It was sold when it burned down.

Q: That's really too bad.
DH: Yeah. Word is, it got struck by lightening and burned up. It was prone to get hit by lightening.

Q: So is that when you moved over here?
DH: Yeah. After that, after the place kind of faded out, we decided to keep the whole thing going in another incarnation, in another form. So that's what this house was.

Q: So was the Ozark Resource Center then New Life Farm under a different name? The same incorporation?
DH: Right. It's the same continuity. First it was New Life Farm Incorporated, and then we changed the name to The Ozark Resource Center, and now New Life Farm -- in fact if you look at our sign out there, on the bottom half of it, the bottom quarter of it's painted out, because I painted out The New Life Farm part of it, just recently, because I wanted to put it away.

Q: And is the Ozark Resource Center mainly you?
DH: No, we have a board. We have several projects. We have a list of our projects somewhere. We have about six or seven projects -- there are varying degrees of activity. There's 8 or 9 people on the board. We have a director, Janice, who's not here today. My project is still within the Resource Center, which is called The Bioregional Project, which is one of the vehicles for my bioregional work. Then there's the Mark Twain Forest Watchers, and there's a Stream Team. There's the Ozark Beneficial Plant Project, which is affiliated in certain ways with, well, Steven Foster, who is also working with Vinny down there, Steven's a nationally famous herbalist. There's several things going on here. The Resource Center's an umbrella for these groups. Also the Ozark Area Community Congress, the bioregional congress, is a project of the resource center, and has been since 1980. Very integrated. It's got its own major history to it. The first Bioregional Congress was in North America, [unintelligible] Turtle Island [?] Congress. We've had 16 annual congresses, going on the 7th Turtle Island. So this whole nexus here has generated a lot of stuff. Stuff that has continental ramifications as far as movements. The Green political movement essentially engendered that whole matrix here. We essentially put together the first meeting of the Greens. It was done out of New Life Farm. We also did a lot of things on this configuration, New Life Farm, Ozark Resource Center, Bioregional Project, OACC.

Q: What does OACC stand for?
DH: Ozark Area Community Congress. There's so much now, a lot of things have come out of this. We started organizations with the cooperative movement, passed legislation in the Missouri legislature making food cooperatives legal.

Q: They weren't legal before that?
DH: No.

Q: So do you guys have a food co-op in this area?
DH: I don't know if there is one around here.
HW: There's one in West Plains.

Q: Is it a retail co-op, or is it a buying club?
DH: Buying club.

Q: You buy from Ozark Cooperative Warehouse or something?
DH: They probably do. There are different suppliers that the Whole Food's people access. When we came down here in '71, we had all these ideas for all these things, these different threads, these different ecological dimensions. At least I did. I have another project called The Ecological Society Project, which is affiliated with the Tides Foundation in San Francisco. That project covers about 30 or 35 different ecological movements, and tries to interweave them and develop them and start the movements. I've always had these ideas in my mind, to set up ecologically based systems that cover all the functions of human life. Food, energy, technology, politics, all these things have always been in my mind. That's the reason I came down here, was to try to put all this into effect. So like in 1971, after we'd gotten down here, we wanted to get something going with food cooperatives. So we made the first cooperative food run to Ann Arbor and got a whole truckload of wheat. And then we went around to all these different communal groups and distributed it. We just drove our truck around and dumped off these 100 lb, 50 lb bags of wheat. We found an organic producer up there. Far as I know, that was probably the first food cooperative effort in the Ozarks. There could've been 10 others, but I wasn't aware of them.

Q: So the communal groups around here sort of act together collectively in some of these things.
DH: Yeah, well that's a whole nother story. Okay, so we were aware of 2 other groups in the Ozarks when we got here in '71. Turns out there were a couple of other people, individuals down in the Arkansas Ozarks. But by 1973, there were hundreds of people in here. And we used to have solstice and equinox parties. Every solstice and every equinox. And there would be variously huge numbers of people. And there would be other gatherings where there would be 2 or 3 hundred people. They just flooded in here, starting '70, '71, '72, '73. I don't know when the peak hit. But there was a major immigration of people, from primarily Michigan, Ohio, the Midwest, some from California. From all over the place. And we used to have these huge parties, these huge gatherings.

Q: What do you think drew people to this area?
DH: Probably cheap land and beauty. That's one of the things that made us end up here, we started looking in the real estate catalogs. The Straut [?] catalogs and all that. You'd see these -- this is in 1970, and you'd see these whole farms on a creek for $8,000 with farm equipment and buildings and everything. And you'd go, "What's going on here, this is unreal!" You didn't see anything like that anywhere else. So we had to come down and check it out. Our land was $100 an acre. So it was a place we could afford -- we didn't have any money. So we put $1,000 down, and got 40 acres of land, paid it off in 1973. A lot of people looked in the catalogs and couldn't believe it. They wanted to get out, and here was this unbelievable land on creeks and all this stuff for $50 an acre, some people got it for $50 an acre. Some people paid $150 or $200, but hey.

Q: So when all these people started coming, was there a feeling that you were part of some sort of movement that was important that was really doing something to change society?
DH: We all had a sense that we were -- like a tribal mentality. Sort of an amalgam of some of these counter cultural values, a part of some sort of evolution. It was kind of amazing, because all the people that came down here were really extraordinary. There was barely a dud among them. Some of them

were just too weird, but most everybody was totally intelligent, self-motivated, had all the fruits of middle-class, so called civilization, and said, "Forget it," they weren't interested, couldn't care less about it, blew it off. Everybody was amazing.

Q: That surprises me, though, because if you had a bunch of middle-class kids, that maybe grew up in the suburbs or an urban area, they probably didn't have a lot of the skills you might need to survive here.
DH: Nobody knew anything.

Q: So how did you get by? Is this what you were talking about before about how you guys were put in the trenches.
DL: I think the local people who lived here, who are now in their 80's, or have died off, I think we were the kids that they wanted. Because their own kids -- like electricity just came here in the '50's –

Q: --So their own kids split, and you guys were there for them to teach?
DH: I never had a lot of learning experiences from older folks, but very resonant conversations. We had much more in common with the people in their 60's, 70's, and 80's, and we had almost nothing in common with the next generation down of Ozarks. So we liked to talk about funky old stuff, how to do stuff, and chickens and pigs, manure, and trees, and gardens and stuff, and we wanted to do our own stuff, like the old people did. Put up our food. Lot of older folks never had anybody to talk to about this.

Q: Were there Amish and Mennonite folks in this area?
DH: Not around here. But in Seymore [?], north of here. I never had any interaction with them.

Q: So all these older people had skills that they could teach you, is that what happened?
DH: It was there. For myself, we never had a lot of ongoing -- we had neighbors that took us under their wings. Really old. But whenever we would get around some old people or happen to have a conversation with them, everybody had different experiences, but it was always much more resonant, because we had something to talk about. We were interested in the same things. The younger generation, all they wanted to do was go live in town and buy their milk and go to Walmart.

Q: I'm curious how things have changed from the '70's to now. It seems to me just from hearing you talk, that maybe the movement was sort of communal for awhile, but it's not in a communal phase anymore, people are more in private households, doing more of their own thing?
DH: I wouldn't characterize it -- take the whole Ozark back-to-the-land movement, that's a more descriptive term than a communal movement. I wouldn't characterize the Ozark back-to-the-land movement as communal in the sense of -- in no way would I say that there were predominant number of people who were here at the peak who were living communally. Just some of them. It wasn't a communal movement as much it was a back-to-the-land movement. It was only communal in the sense that there was a shared ethos and reason for leaving the city, that was shared, and then a number of values were shared. But I wouldn't call it a communal movement. It happened to have a number of communes in it at different times.

Q: Has there also been kind of a lesbian aspect to it?
DH: Well, Dragon Wagon was the first lesbian rural group. That sort of came in gradually.

Q: I keep hearing about a lot of women's groups, but I haven't actually been connected with any of them. Do you have any knowledge of that?
NW: Yeah. I used to go down and visit Dragon Wagon a little bit after it was lesbian. Like I told you on the phone, most of them don't live there anymore, they live in St. Louis or San Francisco or something. That was the only lesbian group here. I haven't lived in the Ozarks very long. Most of my experience is in St. Louis.

Q: Do you have any communal experience in your background?
NW: Yeah. I don't know. When I lived in St. Louis, it was probably '74, '75, we had, it was kind of a little core lesbian community, and we put out a publication together, and a lot of us lived in houses together of like 4 or 5. We had some businesses. Like I was a part of a car repair collective. We all kind of shared cars -- the car repair collective was to repair the cars. But a lot of us lived together and shared cars, and money some, stuff like that. Some of it was just living together.

Q: What brought you down here?
NW: Well, my dad's family is native to the Ozarks, and he lived in Springfield, and got really sick a few years ago, so I came back down here to take care of him, and I just haven't left again yet.

Q: Were you drawn to the land too?
NW: Yeah, the Ozarks feels more like a mother.

Q: It does kind of have a magical quality.
NW: It will always feel like home in the most familiar geography.

Q: Could you tell me some about how things have changed from the '70's to now?
DH: Most everybody left. A lot of people went to Springfield. I'd say more people that live in the country have gone to Springfield that I'm aware of than any other one place. A lot of people just went back where they came from. There's probably a lot of people that have moved in, but we're not necessarily aware of them. There are still a lot of folks around who were assemble, given the right events, will come back in. A big birthday party, or we had 1990, and than last year we had the Ozark, back to the land, back from the land, homesteader reunion. There was -- in 1990 there was probably a couple hundred folks who came in from various distances, and then 150 or so at the last one. We had it at East Wind. So I guess -- so a lot of people have left, and some more people have come in. I don't even know, I don't keep track of everybody anymore. And then OACC has also provided a function to provide a yearly gathering place for people who have an ecological mind set. In the last several years, OACC has more become like an Ozarks family gathering.

Q: Does OACC actually have a building?
DH: No. It just moves around. It's a disembodied, nonorganization.

Q: So you have yearly gatherings, sort of like Rainbow type gatherings?
DH: Well, not I've consciously stayed out from characterizing it in that way. It's much more -- it's more, a lot of kids come, and a lot of workshops, and we try to talk about politics and economics, and the [unintelligible] . . . well nobody wants to talk about that anymore. So it's not like a Rainbow thing. It's more focused, it's a little more serious than that. It's not doped up.

Q: So is there still a feeling here of being part of a movement?
DH: I don't think there's that much feeling about that anymore. It's kind of settled into a kind of a - there is a shared sense of values, still, among folks. It's like when we get together, we get around each other, there's a certain kind of way of relating that's comfortable, and resonant. And there's a lot of shared -- when we get together and party, we have great times. That happens every once in a while. So there's still a celebratory aspect to it. And there's a sense of values, but I don't think there's a real missionary, idealistic zeal anymore, amongst very many people. Most everybody's had to do some pretty intense cutting and pasting with their life in order to be here. If you want to live here, you have to really focus on it, and you have to be very -- you have to really want to be here, and that's what weeded a lot of people. This is not an easy place to be. It's hot, dry, cold, wet, it's buggy. There's relatively little money. There's not very many jobs around here. If you want to grow something, you have to work pretty hard at it, the soil is not very rich. The culture, the indigenous culture is very foreign to most people who don't live here. There isn't [tape ends] . . . operas or -- the radio is probably the worst in the United States.

Q: You do have an NPR station, though.
DH: That's true. You can get NPR.
DL: And the opera is coming to Springfield, once in a while, thanks to Juanita [?] Hammond's Performing Arts Center.
DH: Yeah, well you have to go to -- but it's not in Brooksy. You have to drive 2 hours to get culture, so to speak. Of course, I don't have an interest in culture myself, so it doesn't bother me. I'm acultural.

Q: Is there any sort of artistic stuff going on here, like music?
DH: There's quite a bit of music that goes on from time to time. It's unorganized. People get together and play music, but it's not commercial or serious. It's just fun. So there's still a loose community around here, a community of values and shared history, lot of good times. Like for a big birthday party, 2 or 3 hundred people might show up. So the nexus, the network connections are still out there, scattered a big distance. One reason -- I organized OACC for a lot of reasons, but one of them was to try to get all the people together across the boarders of Missouri/Arkansas. Because there's a whole mob of people who have the same general history pattern, back-to-the-land people, in Arkansas, but we just don't hear about them, because they're across the boarder. I thought that was really stupid. So that's one reason I started OACC, was to -- in fact, I have a flier that I circulated, myself and Cat Yronwode, circulated in 1976 or '77, which is three years before OACC, before I even thought that much about OACC, which we were trying to make contact with all the back-to-the-land people in Arkansas, and have a combined Ozark back-to-the-land gathering, which is was kind of a precursor, for that very reason. That's one person you should talk to, is Cat Yronwode. She likes to talk on the internet. If you get in

touch with her and tell her what you're doing, you will get unbelievable stuff. I just got an outrageous story about Ozark hippie days from her off the internet last night.

Q: Now is this in relation to --
DL: --Peter Yronwode's her ex-husband, lives in Columbia.
DH: You need to hear about The Garden of Joy Blues.
DL: In fact, they are the people that we came here to be with, when I was talking about the 2 trucks with all their stuff, they are the other -- we came to live with them at The Garden of Joy Blues, and they were the ones that we had the dispute with over the use of water.
DH: Garden of Joy Blues was a totally wild, funky place.
DL: Things to come for the nation at large, disputes over water, right? Tight.
DH: Where did you have this dispute over water?
DL: They wanted to use it for their goats, we wanted to use it for the garden. We weren't even doing it yet, we could see this on the horizon. So we left before it even happened.
DH: Cat Yronwode, her connection with the whole counter culture movement is like phenomenal, just in itself. She has this amazing story about going to the first hippie commune in the United States, which was in 1964.

Q: Would that be Drop City.
DH: It was before that. It was called Tolstoy Farm. She was one of the people that transitioned it from being a peacenik group into a hippie group, in '64.

Q: Now, does she live in this area still?
DH: She's in California.
DL: I 'm just realizing that it was her dad that had that farm in British Columbia.

Q: Where you stayed.
DL: Right. He has since become a Buddhist monk, right after he left that thing.

Q: So she gets this through her genetics?
DH: Oh yeah, she was born -- her father was a jazz musician, and then became a Buddhist monk, and he mother was a Bohemian. They lived in Berkeley, and she grew up with Joan Biez [?], she's like a living history of the counter cultural movement. And then the communal movement.

Q: Now, Yronwode is her married name, right? Do you know what her maiden name?
DH: Manfreddy [?].

Q: What was the name of the farm in B.C., or did it have a name?
DL: It didn't have a name, I think. I can't even remember her dad's name. Bill something or other, Glosure [?]. Very nice guy. Talk about somebody to have as a role model. He was real good for that.

Interview with David Haenke, David Lakish, and Nancy Williamson
Interviewer: Deborah Altus
March 21, 1996
DH = David Haenke, DL = David Lakish, NW = Nancy Williamson

Q: Where did the name Garden of Joy Blues come from?
DH: It's a blues song. Cat is like a total genius. She has this encyclopedic brain. She's like a deep aficionado in a number of things, including blues music. She knows all this unbelievable, obscure blues stuff, and she just never -- she's a walking catalog of blues. As well as any number of arcane disciplines she has stored in her brain. She can download tons of arcane -- just hundreds of disciplines.

Q: So what groups from the '70's still exist?
DH: Well, as I say, vestigially Dragon Wagon, as a very closed group. And then East Wind. There are some other groups that I'm not that familiar with that may still be hanging on, but I'm not sure.

Q: Now does Seven Springs still exist?
DH: Seven Springs still exists. It's not real -- the people that live there don't integrate a lot with their economics or anything, but yes, it's still an entity, it's still Seven Springs and it still has its different land parcels. And Paul Clark over there could give you the long history, because he's been there for the whole time.

Q: Yeah, I called him, and he was real friendly, but he was a little reluctant to be interviewed. And I understand that.
DH: Yeah, he has sort of a straight job, so he's probably not interested in being too public. I don't know what his motivation is, I'm surmising.

Q: So do you have any feel for why some groups have kept going, and other ones fell apart?
DH: Well, so few have kept going, it's like, it's more like how did they do it? Why did they fall apart -- the whole story of why communal groups don't work is like this great long litany, from the fact that -- my theory that people haven't changed, and people get together because they have ideas, they have this ideological bent, and they want to try some experimental thing that's in their head. A lot of it just doesn't work. I don't think people can live together very long. My -- the evolution of my thought about community comes down to, okay, yes, you may be able to get together and create a land trust or something, but people need their own space in order to maintain their equilibrium. Somewhere between -- there's a continuum between full communal life, packed together in a house and sharing everything, to the way a town is, as a community. Those are sort of the antipathies of the continuum, the extremities. And there's some place in between where you can find something that will sustain itself for a long time. And in that continuum, the commune lives for milliseconds, it just pops up, explodes, and people fly all over the place, because it's just, people don't function very well in that kind of pressure cooker for very long. Unless they have some Nazi ruler that mesmerizes them and makes them all zombies. Or some sort of guru.

Q: But East Wind doesn't have that.
DH: No, they don't.

Q: How do you think they pull it off?
DH: Well, they don't all live in the same house. I'm not putting on them the extremity of the continuum.

Q: They've worked out some private space.
DH: They do have these little rooms and stuff. They have a system. The system is sort of mechanistic, but it's less of a community than it is a college. It's like a learning institution. And people pass through it, and they have life experiences, and then they leave. As an educational institution, as a system, it works. And it has some very smart people who put together its economic base. Like Milan Wilkison.

Q: Will Bailey, and Cat and all?
DH: Yeah. Milan is probably the smartest one they ever had. They figured how to manage big debt, and they managed to take the hammock business, the continuity of that, institutionalize that, and then Milan and those other folks came up with the peanut butter business, and that worked. And so it was a combination of basically financial astuteness, and then the system. So that's how they've done it. But to me, this is editorializing, and perhaps a little pejorative, but it's kind of like Skinnerian -- it's mechanistic. It's a social machine, social economic machinery that seems to work. It doesn't work very well for individuals for very long. Because the people come and go in droves, and every few years, there's a huge -- you either call it a mitosis or a rather large catastrophe where anywhere from 10 to 20 people will leave, and the whole community will sort of hemorrhage all this experience, and then they'll go off and try to start something, probably fail, and then become stockbrokers or whatever. That just happened, they just lost another bunch of people. They have these people leave in ones or twos, and then every few years, they leave -- this thing builds up and sort of explodes, and a whole bunch of people leave. Not to say that people don't have great experiences and they learn a lot, but the number of people who have been there for the duration is like, zero. It would be remarkable if there was. But I guess Yohannon [?], he's been there for 17, 18, 20 years. John.
DL: This point for me raises the whole time issue -- why do we evaluate things in terms of time? In the Ozarks in fact, a goal seems to be to live to be of old age, like if you could be 80 or 90. It doesn't matter anything else, like that is kind of one of the most important things -- how old you were, and how long you were married. I'm not degrading these things, but people are really into that.
DH: We obviously don't want to live that long, otherwise we wouldn't be working in the woods.

Q: Well that's an interesting point. So would you say that a lot of these short lived communal groups still have been very important and very successful, even though they didn't last very long?
DL: Sure, like right here, tonight, we have a community -- we have common ground where we're all agreeing to unspoken rules, probably. We're being nice, --
DH: --I'm not.
DL: I just wonder about time. it probably does matter, and then why does it matter? For instance, the communities I was in, the longest one was 6 months. How does that compare with 3 years, or five days? I don't know. I think what comes out of that is probably the really important stuff. I wanted to add a little footnote too about what makes a community work, and one of the things we discovered early is that if you had your dwelling unit out of sight and out of sound shot of the other dwelling units,

that was almost a prerequisite for this to work at all, you had to be able to get away from each other. Anyhow, how long it lasts, what difference does it make? And those differences, yes they are real, and what are they? It would be really interesting to explore that time line.

Q: Now I know that all of your are real ecologically oriented and concerned about the environment, and that's a real important part of your life and why you're here and doing what you're what you're doing. Would you say that living communally is more ecological?
DL: It can be. When I was in California, there was this sharing of vehicles kind of thing that happened. In fact, there was a whole sharing of everything. When we came to the Midwest, it was like going back in time or something. You couldn't get an old car, you had to pay for an old car. Out in California, if somebody had an old car, and you needed one, half the time they'd just give it to you! Because they knew if they needed something, somebody would give it to them. There was this whole thing going on of material stuff that didn't have a dollar value. Where were we going with this?

Q: I guess I was wondering a little bit, now that you're all living privately, do you have any sort of sense of disappointment or concern that maybe you should be living more communally, to be more ecological?
DL: Well, I don't know. It's kind of like the federal government has this big cloud in the background, hovering over everything. When we had the oil embargo thing in the '70's, and we had all this scare about how we're not going to have fuel and everything, and they reduced the speed limits, and now they're just raising the speed limits, it's like, this is something that's in people's lives every day, minute by minute by minute. Now the reality has changed, and there's the big gray cloud in the background that did it, that we were trying to ignore. It's almost like, what's the point? Right here in this building, for instance, I haven't said anything to David about this, but it's like he's living in poverty, because when you turn the faucet on, there's all these water restrictive things. They have a well here. It's like this is sort of a philosophical way to punish yourself or something. He could have the facet running all day long probably, and it wouldn't hurt anybody or hurt anything, even -- the water's going to run out of the ground before he'll ever pump it out with a pump -- it depends on the rainfall. Let me say a little about our long-run existence. We really got into recycling big time, the first time we were there, we hardly ever took anything to the dump. Nancy can verify how much junk is around. In British Columbia one of the things we discovered was there was this old dump in the woods, and it had all these leaves and pine needles over it. A lot of the metal had rusted. So on our farm we have a compost pile that is for ferrous things, things made of steel and iron, and we burn leaves on top of it. It's like a very long-term things. I don't have to take my tin cans anyplace. If I live long enough, some of that stuff will probably make it back into the garden soil. It's all loose and crumbly. We have all of the broken bottles and glass. Anything that's organic can go into the compost pile. We have composted boots, here's a shocker for you -- we compost our own pee. Our pee is recycled into the garden, because it's sterile as long as we're living a good lifestyle. We are not flushing our nitrates out into the ocean like this whole crazy world is. I love garbage, and when the garbage pail fills up, to me, that means food to eat, because it goes right back into the garden. We've just been doing that all along. The trash gets burned in the sauna, we're digging a sauna. [unintelligible] . . . trying to raise that [unintelligible] . . . As long as the ashes go into the garden or the compost pile, to keep from slipping on the paths in the winter, they're

for bug control in the garden. Ashes to me are very precious. All of these things -- we have done that. And we try to make our own clothes, out of rabbit skins and things like that. Where it kind of fell apart was is that our whole life and our whole energy became kind of this thing that we were taking care of. We had no time for reading, we had no time for movies. We were sort of back there, before the technology, just into life maintenance. College would have no meaning because the college would've been, at that time, those neighbors were telling us how to raise sweet potatoes.
NW: I have an answer to that question a little bit. But, I feel like what gets lost by not living more closer together is the support for each other, just the isolation.

Q: Emotional support?
NW: Yeah. Just, yeah, to keep on progressing, and moving in the direction that people want to, and stay in touch of what their goal is.

Q: Do you miss that?
NW: Yeah.

Q: Is that something you miss? Or do you see yourself more as a loner?
DL: What?

Q: Emotional support that you might get from living communally. Not really?
DL: The issue here is whether you are a self-made person and take your values from yourself, or whether you get them from outside of yourself . And in the end, to be a person with worth, you really have to get it from inside of yourself. If you're going around leaning on other people, if you get your selfworth from somebody saying, "You did a good job," what's that about? The next time they'll say you didn't do a good job. I work for David. He can tell me anything he wants to, because it doesn't matter. Because I know what kind of a job I'm doing. That's why I can work for him. He's hard to work for.

Q: I can spend all night asking you guys questions, but I know that you have to get up early to work. So I'll end with a couple of questions. What I'd really like to ask is what was the best part of your communal experience, and what was the worst part?
DH: I liked the parties. They were great. Those were the best parties in the world. The only thing that was as good as those parties, the OACC parties and the bioregional parties.

Q: Would parties involve things like sweats and music, the whole works, go on for a long time, a lot of food?
DH: Yeah. Now that I look back at it, I'm sort of amazed at the first 5 years of actually being a homesteader, where I was like, that's all I was doing, trying to keep this little scene together. Just like taking some bailing wire, and bailing this together, holding this together, then running over here and milking the goat, and having to go kick him on the head, beat on the goat for a little bit, and then run over here and dig in the garden for awhile. Everything was interconnected in a real amazing way. I didn't really realize that -- cut up the wood for the wood cook stove, but then wait a minute, you've got to sharpen the saw, and then you've got to run out here -- just run around all day long, not really

knowing what I was doing, but sort of doing something. It was kind of amazing -- keep the animals going, fighting with the other people in the group. Sweep the house, fix the food, pump the water, it was really amazing. And then I realized how far we were from actually knowing what we were doing, because I went and lived for about a week with some Mayan Indians in the rainforests in Jeopas [?]. I watched some people there that grow 90% of their food and work from dawn to dusk. And really know how to do it. And there were 4 or 5 of us there, we were staying with them. I was the only one there that knew what was going on. Even though I couldn't have come anywhere near emulating it. I knew what they were doing. The rest of the people didn't have a clue. But they were astounding. I knew what they were doing, because I had done maybe a tenth of what they could do for 5 year, in the height of living on the farm, running around growing food and fooling with animals.

Q: And is that because they have centuries of knowledge, and you only had a decade or something?
DH: I don't know. They're more evolved than we are. Or less devolved.

Q: So what was the hardest thing or the worst thing.
DH: Oh, having to say [unintelligible] to people in the morning. Being a dysfunctional personality, you know. Like in much of [unintelligible] . What I experienced had entirely to do with who I am, and what [unintelligible]. I was sort of a looney. I'm more sane than I used to be. I was sort of a nut. So I'm basically not very social, I'm sort of asocial, and I had this theory that I could be social. It didn't pan out. I would like to live in a community. And I sort of do, sort of a spread out one here. But my idea of a community that will last and sustain itself and not just flame out, but that isn't as cold and as frightening and as mechanistic and anonymous as a town, in the continuum between that hypercommune and the town that lasts for 100 years or 200 years, in there somewhere is a place where people like us can live. And the extremity of how community you can do without coming up against these sort built-in stops, is something that's occupied my mind a bit. I'd envisioned it as a sort of a place where people live out of sight of each other, where there's philosophical room for nuclear families, or anything else, but at least you can have it without somebody running a theory on you. Or just maybe there could be a communal group in this community, it doesn't matter. Where you have a sort of a village, and where you have a chance to associate with other people as you functionally need to and want to. But aren't forced to by somebody's theory. Or by some sort of social arrangement. So it's like voluntary association. So you have as many community functions as you can stand, and that you need, but you have the flexibility to not participate if you don't want to, or don't have to. I've yet to see anybody really come up with that balance really well.

Q: Is this something that you're working towards at all?
DH: I suppose, somewhere in the back of my mind, I don't know quite how it would manifest itself. There was a time in the middle to late '70's where I figured that there were a lot of forces that were really, economic forces, that were really pushing people to the wall. We were in that situation at that time, there was some sort of recessions that were going on. And I came up with a plan whereby a bunch of people would pool all their resources a create a big land trust. It was sort of along those lines. But nobody went for it, because people really were into private property. Including myself. I mean, when it

comes right down to it, I don't want a bunch of fools who may even change over the years to be taking control of something that I know how to steward.

Q: How about best and worst for you guys?
DL: I had some time to think about that a little bit. The worst for me probably had to do with stuff coming up, and really deep profound friendships, [unintelligible] . . . ideological differences or something, or preferences, like somebody not wanting somebody else to be there. Breaking off really fine friendships because of some junk that got in the way. The good side of it was that it seemed like a greenhouse for human potentiality, like we got together sometimes in some of those situations, and it seemed like you could give us any kind of a problem -- there were so many backgrounds, so many people with so many skills and knowledge that you could hand us a problem and we were many times rather ego-free. I hardly remember what that's like anymore, but it seemed like egos were not an issue, and we could do frontier brainstorming, I guess is what you would call it. It was like seeing new stuff in people's minds happen right in front of you, and you were a part of this. It was extremely exciting to be totally alive, come up with stuff like that. For me, one time as an artist, I was thinking how terrible it would be, how terrible could it be if I became blind? So just on a whim I decided I would close my eyes and not open them again for an unknown length of time, living in the woods and stuff, it was a pretty safe place to do this, I knew my paths well. I had to cook dinner, I made spaghetti on a fire, I did all of these things. Not having been blind, I wouldn't wish it on myself. But I found that in this community situation, there was plenty of room for me to be a very important part of the community. There would be the shelling of beans, there would be the telling of stories, doing drama with the kids, all kinds of things that might not be possible for me just in the world at large. It's was like, having the community to me was like, made me more empowered, a more complete human being than I could ever be by myself. That's my story.

Q: Do you want to say anything?
NW: Sure. I think the best part for me was feeling connected to so many people. And a real sense of belonging to this bigger thing. And it just sort of seemed more to me like how it ought to be. And there were so many people I could depend on for all kinds of things, even if it wasn't somebody that I was like especially really close with, if one of our cars broke down or something like that, it was just this automatic thing. Of course, if they were able to help out, they would or whatever. So the sense of belonging.
DH: I guess when we would all kind of get together and going off on all of our ideas, it was very exhilarating. Before reality would set in.

Q: Do you miss that at all?
DH: We still get to do it at the OACCs and at the Turtle Island Bioregional Congresses. We get to get together and, particularly, I've had this feeling up at Turtle Island events, where for a week, we do it in 7 days in community forums, it cooks and it washes to kids and it cleans up after it self, and it goes through all this stuff, for 7 days, you just kind of get off on a pretty amazing plane. And you think, wow, this is the way it ought to be. And you begin to think maybe it could be. This particular group of people would probably have the best chance of any random bunch on the planet of making it work. But who

knows what happens after a week is out. So it's fun, it's fun to go into that collective zone and have a community for a few days, and just sort of envision what it might be like, what would happen if you just sort of kept on. So it keeps happening. I'd still like to live in a community, but I wouldn't want to live in a commune.

Q: Does the idea of cohousing appeal?
DH: I know some people in Santa Fe who are in cohousing and I keep hearing about it. I've been at one and eaten with them, and I think it's a pretty good idea. I think it embodies a lot of the ideas that I sort of laid out as a good try at finding a sustainable point in the continuum between the extremities. We'll see how it goes. I think it accommodates human nature pretty well, whatever that means, human nature. I don't know really know what that is, it's a rather useless term. It has a different home, it's a private space. It has the capacity to interact as you like it, without hitting a constraint, we'll see. Because the ones that I was at, it seems a little raw. It's like these people are thrown together, and they put a tremendous investment into this idea, into these houses, and they're in Santa Fe, you can imagine what the houses cost. So there's sort of a feeling around there like, "God, I really hope this works." It's sort of everybody's kind of strung out a little bit. It looks like they're kind of like, the sense of desperate euphoria. It's such an investment. I wish them all the best, and when something doesn't work, it's like, "Whoa, what are you going to do now?" I hope these cohousing things work out. I think it's a good run at something that will sustain itself. We'll see what happens. It will get refined over time. For most of these things, they're just way to expensive for anybody that I know. It's like upper middle-class houses now.

Q: Right. Although, you know the place that Kelly lives, in Lawrence?
DH: I've never been at his current place, I don't even know exactly where he lives.

Q: Okay. Because I would describe it sort of like a cohousing community. It was built before anybody ever called anything "cohousing." And it's not pricey.
DH: It wouldn't have to be. In fact, I know a funky one in Texas that's not expensive or slick at all. I think I'd like to live somewhere that's a little spread out and bigger, more land.

Q: Yeah, like you were saying, you don't want to see another person's land where you were living.
DH: Yeah, go into view when you want to, or if you feel like you had to. So that's a story from Cat that just came in last night.

Q: Great! Now is this her e-mail address?
DH: Well, you can reach her through the Ozark Hippie Network.

Q: Okay, so that's something else.
DH: Yeah, that's the Ozark Hippie Network.

Q: Is that somebody's e-mail address, or is that a discussion group?
NW: Isn't it that guy in Springfield?

DH: Yeah, that's the Ozark Hippie Network address, and there's a bunch of people on it, Ozark hippies. But this story by Cat is like totally outrageous. It's typical Cat, however.
NW: I didn't say what my worst thing was. That was like meetings and self-criticism.

Q: Did you have like mutual criticism sessions?
NW: I think we finished every meeting with it.

Q: Yeah, those are hard.
NW: It usually had to do with political correctness or something. But I do miss all of that. Not that part of it, the good stuff. The sense of community and belonging . I grew up in a really isolated, nuclear family that didn't even really relate to the relatives or church or neighbors or friends or anything, and so it was like the closest think I ever had to a family.

Q: Were the things you were part of in St. Louis, were they ever organized enough to have names?
NW: Yeah. We had a building, and a coffeehouse, that's where we had meetings, stuff like that.

Q: Is that something you'd be willing to tell me, or would you rather not?
NW: I don't know.
DH: Don't use this, don't tell Cat I gave it to you.

Q: And that's her e-mail? Great.