

Interview with Huw (Piper) Williams

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: Who's Carey Goldman? Is he one of the early Tolstoy people?

A: Yeah, he was there in the early years, for a while, and then he was gone for awhile, and then he came back. And he's been there, with his wife, for probably close to 20 years.

Q: I have talked to one person who lived there. I don't know what her last name was then, but her name's Catherine, and she goes by Yronwode now, that's her last name, but it was something else when she lived at Tolstoy.

A: Yeah?

Q: She was in the bust and everything. Um, but I don't remember what her last name was then.

A: She was in the second bust, probably.

Q: Oh, was there more than one? I don't know. Yeah, she said she was real young when she was part of the farm, one of the youngest members, if that rings a bell.

A: Yeah, her name could've been anything.

Q: Yeah, she might not have even gone by Cat or Catherine then, I don't even know.

A: Cat? Let's see, did you talk to her in person?

Q: Yes. Black hair? Um, kind of short.

A: Thick glasses?

Q: Thick glasses, yeah.

A: Yeah, that would be Cat. Yeah, I lost track of her.

Q: Yeah, she lives in California. Kind of near Santa Rosa, I think.

A: She and her boyfriend, they were like the first of the uh, . . . the hippies, you might say, to come up from the Bay Area, and they brought the whole psychedelic culture with them.

Q: So did it start out as being a hippie farm?

A: No, we were more considered peaceniks, uh, come out of the, drop-outs from the peace marches. Our intention was to set up a training center for nonviolent peace action in the Northwest. There wasn't much going on. Some of us had been on a peace walk in 1962, on the East Coast, to Washington D.C. We decided if I could get some land from my folks, that we'd set up a training center. There was one -- Committee for Nonviolent action had a center in Long [?] County Connecticut. Our peace walk was kind of organized from that farm. We thought we'd do the same thing in the Northwest. I guess we got kind of discouraged with the way the peace movement was going, more toward heavy confrontation. We kind of got involved more in the idea of trying to develop an alternative lifestyle that didn't result in things like wars. More of a tribal . . . I'd been a student of Leo Tolstoy, and that was his solution, a simple living kind of alternative Christian lifestyle, cooperation, self-reliance. So we kind of got into that. Then the whole drop-out scene from Berkeley and San Francisco happened. And that changed the whole character of things. I guess that was like near the third summer.

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Q: What year did the Farm start?

A: Oh, I moved down on the land -- my grandfolks had a farm down there. I moved down there with them in the fall of '62, and invited people to come out in the spring. We bought a piece of land nearby. And I guess that was the spring of '63 when that actually started as a cooperative place.

Q: Do did you actually grow up in this area then?

A: Yeah, this was one of my farms when I was a kid. I'd walk on it -- my son lives there still. We have a nonprofit corporation, 80 acres. I've been kind of camping out here, keep this farm going. I have a herd of cows. It's all homegrown to me. My grandparents always lived down in that canyon when I was kid. That's where I spent 20 [?] years.

Q: Do you have like a Quaker background or something?

A: No, um, my folks were Methodists, and I was pretty much into that. Even in Methodists, there was some information for the youth, the Methodist youth were really into, we were totally into conscientious objectors. I heard about Gandhi through a newsletter that my dad got. I think, a political newsletter. There was also some mention of some Quakers protesting a nuclear missile base back in the '50's. But I didn't really get into that. When I went to the university in Seattle, I did start attending Quaker events. Sort of turned into a Quaker for awhile there. I also started reading Tolstoy. Tolstoy's brand of Christianity is kind of anarchist. He didn't really belong to any organizational structure. I kind of set up Tolstoy Farm on an anarchist basis, politically. The only rules we'd have was that anybody could join, and nobody could be forced to leave. We'd work out everything else. We were pretty idealistic. People that moved in tended to be people that were anti-authoritarian, dissatisfied with society, so we got pretty independent, ornery bunch of people, trying to get along.

Q: How did you all come up with the money to buy the farm?

A: Well it wasn't a whole lot of money. 120 acres -- my folks gave me, my mom gave me 80 acres, so she made a deal that if I lived there, after 5 years, I could have it. And I incorporated that as a school after I had done that. The other 120 is where most of the community actually lived. We only needed to raise a couple thousand dollars to buy this 120 acres. A friend of Russ and Pat, they were from New York, and they were, along with myself, main founders. Helped me get started. They uh, they had a friend, Russ had a friend who he went to school with who inherited a million dollars or something. So he loaned us the money. Russ and Pat were going pay him back by going to the New York World's Faire, working on a candy shop or something. The Fair was kind of botched, and we couldn't really pay him back. We made one payment, and he decided to forget this debt. We set aside five acres I think where he could have a cabin. Later on, he gave us that back too. Lost interest. It was actually Joe [unintelligible], he lived here. It's been a couple other pieces, people have bought, set up their own community, and then ended up donating to the nonprofit corporation.

Q: Did you guys set up a corporation?

A: Yeah, after the first time we got busted, Tom and Cat, actually, were growing a little patch of marijuana. But there was a lot of rumors going around in Davenport, they sent down a sheriff's granddaughter to come join the community. She uh, they busted us. Then the lawyers that I had been

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asking to help us get incorporated decided to do it, as part of a deal, getting us out of a deal, they set up a non-profit -- benevolent association, is what it was, pretty much. To hold the land for our experiments in cooperative living, for the purpose of corporation. That 80 acres was set up as a school.

Q: Does the school still exist?

A: There's a building there, but Gary Golden teaches art sometimes, he considers it kind of a school. We talked about maybe when we're done with this project, maybe to do an art school, arts and crafts, maybe. There was just a couple years there, it was actually a school, I think three years. Go with the local artist and inspectors and stuff. They made the law -- when we started building the school, there wasn't any real requirements for private schools. And then they, I think when we got started, the first alternative school around, they wrote a bunch of laws, a lot of health inspection. We had to go through a lot of trouble to put in a lot of plumbing and heating and electricity, and build the building to code. They just kind of hassled us out of business, finally. The stuff had got to be too much trouble. Then they worked with us for awhile, because I think they didn't really want all these Tolstoy kids in the local school. They send a bus down there now.

Q: How many people lived at Tolstoy Farm?

A: Well, at any one time there probably wasn't more than 150.

Q: Oh, that's huge. I didn't realize it was that big.

A: Well that would be the peak. Maybe 200, and that was in the summer. There was like, there were busloads of people coming up from the Bay Area, especially in the summer.

Q: Busloads of hippies?

A: Yeah. Mostly. And then other people, after that first bust, it was all over the news, and then people came from all over. Most of them didn't stay very long. Because it was, you know, kind of an unstructured environment to survive there, unless you had a lot of money saved up. Get yourself organized, grow a garden, get farming, fix up your shelter, and so on.

Q: Did it continue to be kind of open land? Could people just sort of show up and stay?

A: Well, that changed -- it was up until that bust, and then, then we kind of agreed that if somebody wanted to move in, they needed to have announced their intention, and have a meeting. Or at least talk to anybody that had anything to do with it, about their plan. So that kind of discouraged most people, going through that process. There wasn't anything to say they couldn't go ahead and do what they wanted anyway, after they talked to everybody. I was surprised at the power of . . . opinions. It was pretty easy to keep new people out, once the people had gone through the process themselves and got accepted, they get real conservative about anybody coming in.

Q: Would you actually have meetings and vote on a new person?

A: Well, we kind of always went on consensus. They couldn't really vote on things, but . . . it really wasn't necessary, there was very few people, maybe nobody actually, who would move into a situation where there was people who would stand up and say, "I don't want him here." It's rejection in a way.

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There were cases where people, somebody sold their house they built, to somebody else, without going through that. And a particularly ornery person might say, "Well, I don't care what any of you think," and see how long they could stick it out. One guy who was alcoholic, he caused a lot of problems. Even when I tried to get him to leave, he just kind of dug in. But he only held out for six months or so. Then he left.

Q: So did, when you bought the land, was there like an old farmhouse or something on the land?

A: Yeah, just kind of, it was house not unlike this, except it was just, the bare wallboards and the roof was all torn up and stuff. Shell of a house.

Q: So was that the first place people lived?

A: Well, . . . that was the first on the land that got to be known as Tolstoy Farm. We had . . . um, just kind of had a camp, a little trailer on that 80 acres in that first summer, and we had a garden up there. There was just a handful of us. Then we moved onto the new -- we had somebody, a couple guys camped down on the 120 and fixed up the house a little bit. But nobody stayed in it the first winter. We went, most of us went to Seattle and did a campaign against capital punishment. There was a man I knew named Don White that was going to be executed in the spring. So we spent the whole winter campaigning to stop that. That was the spring of '64 that we came back. Then there was people living on both places.

Q: And eventually people built other dwellings?

A: Yeah. The second winter, um, it was pretty much everybody living in that big old farmhouse, about a dozen people. We were really poor. At that time, we . . . we didn't even know how to get together enough to get a good supply of firewood in for the winter. The house was just barely livable. We had about \$50 a month for a dozen or so. But uh, some of us worked in the harvest up here, to get supplies in for the winter. It wasn't until I think, uh, . . . about '66 that people started building their own places. Tom and Andy were the first to get their own place. Some people started building homesteads. My wife and I did that. We went up to the north 80 and started building up there. Nobody had been living up there in the winter before that. And then you had two classes after that for the summer people, the temporary people, and then there were the people with homesteads.

Q: So you were talking about kind of the full-time people built their own places, and I guess the summer folks sort of, did they just crash where they found a spot?

A: Well, they had camps, tepees. Sometimes, when there was a lot of people, I added a summer kitchen up one side of the canyon, a kind of organized community in some ways. There was usually somebody -- I remember there was a guy named Phil, organized a kitchen, kind of like rainbow. Early version.

Q: Now, in the beginning, did you guys eat together?

A: Yeah, the first couple years there, we did. We lived off the garden and we could get wheat from up here. We had a little hand grinder, made a lot of biscuits and bread. And uh, even probably for 4 or 5 years anyway, there was, up till the house burned down -- the main house, the hard house we called it, got burned down one day. Up till then, we had meals there pretty regularly. Some of us who lived in our own cabins would take turns coming down and spend the day cooking, doing meals.

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Q: Did you follow any particular diet, like were you vegetarians?

A: Well, there were vegetarians. It was kind of a hassle doing the meals, because you had to prepare at least two different kinds of food, or sometimes three different, for different kinds of vegetarians. There was a lot of strange theories about diet. Different ones. Lot of times those people would do their own food. But we did have to have non-vegetarian and vegetarian meals.

Q: Did you pool your income?

A: Yeah, at first, it was just, yeah, we just, well, it was pretty much people who dropped out and came there . . . there wasn't a whole lot of them. Most people, if they got money from home or, uh, a job, would put it in the treasury, and we bought bulk foods and . . . a lot of times there would be a room -- we had a building set up, old clothes, kind of a free store. A person didn't really need money to live there, except cigarettes or something, and then had to get their own money for that. We had a truck, for awhile we had a truck and a car that were the community's. Gradually, as people got more settled in some of the houses, they got their own car, and separated out. There got to be some pretty serious conflicts between the permanent people and the summer people. That's actually why I think the house burned down, because everybody was having this big argument.

Q: Do you think it was arson?

A: Well, I heard one of the girls or guys, I forget which, who was kind of mentally deranged, he lit this fire, part of the discussion, "Why don't we just burn it down?" And started this fire. It got put out of course. And then this other guy, he had worse problems, took some of that fire and put it upstairs where nobody'd notice it. That's what I heard, but I'm not sure exactly. When I got there, it was burnt pretty good. I lived a couple miles away. I always get too much stress trying to get everybody to come together. So that marked kind of a change for those two groups of people. They pretty much lived separate.

Q: When was that?

A: That would be probably about '67. Some of us at that time, before that time even, decided we would have a different kind of community up at the north 80 that was families, half a dozen families with their own house and garden and such. Schoolhouse, we'd have a cooperative -- we did actually, in the schoolhouse, we ran the school, and a work co-op, we did mail order hand crafts and somebody had already, somebody who made toys had made a catalog. We also did odd jobs, building fences and haying and harvest jobs. People would put down money. Workcrafts and this and that, for a couple years.

Q: So it was pretty organized and structured?

A: Yeah. It was voluntarily organized, but we had a lot of meetings, and ended up spending half our time talking.

Q: And people had to do a certain number of work credits, like a week or something?

A: Well, they got -- their share of the income was determined by their share of the hours of work they put in. We may have changed the system at different times, but that's kind of what we did.

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Q: Did you have a separate name for this little community?

A: Yeah, we called that the Sunrise Hill Free School. The work co-op probably was the Sunrise Hill Work Co-op. We kind of went together.

Q: So were the people that participated in this primarily the permanent residents?

A: Yeah. Pretty much were settled in there. And then there were other families, most of the people at the 120, they just had, their separate, uh, they had a cow co-op, they shared a milk cow, maybe some other garden crops occasionally. And then within both places, after the work co-op kind of disintegrated, in '68, that was, in our community, some of the couples were breaking up and trying different combinations. Everybody tried sharing and . . . all that went together. Group marriage, couple different ones. There was one that Andy was in for awhile, was organized kind of on a B.F Skinner model. I left there in '69, or was it '70? That group was more . . . in the seventies. I moved up to Lacona [?], set up Earth Cycle houses. Co-op with an organic research farm.

Q: That's Earth Cycle Farm?

A: Yeah.

Q: You started that in around '70?

A: Um, well it probably didn't get officially organized until maybe '73.

Q: And what did you say the purpose was?

A: To research, develop, and demonstrate ways of growing food without damaging the environment. I guess you'd say "sustainable agriculture" now. Organic farming, we just wanted to see if we could grow a lot of food. This whole area here is kind of devoted to uh, winter wheat. We grow a lot of food here, and it's a very ecologically negative style farming, to keep growing any crop like that, you destroy the soil. They've been doing it for a hundred years, they've been growing wheat on this land, and it's in pretty bad shape. The ecology is severely degraded. We're trying to see if we can come up with an alternative way of farming, to this lifestyle.

Q: Is it still going, Earth Cycle?

A: Yeah. This farm here is one of our projects. Try doing that on a larger scale. Like 1500 acres on this project. The original farm was 80 acres. Kind of a smaller scale project.

Q: Somebody gave it to you? Is that what you said?

A: Well we had to pay for some of it. It's like a corner of the farm that we used for this project, and then we bought it later. \$30,000 for the land and the machinery and livestock and everything.

Q: Have you been successful in your efforts to farm in a sustainable way, organically and all?

A: Well, in a way, you can see up on the hill, there's some wheat growing up there, and it's good wheat and good grass. I have cattle, and we've done a lot of different crops. Seth, my son, that's kind of what he's been doing, developing the fruit trees and bushes. He planted some on this too. For a small scale, with a family, you can grow, you can have a good diet here, without damaging the environment. I think

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we've been improving the soil slowly. And growing food at the same time. In an economic sense, as far as being [unintelligible], it's not, especially this project here, it's not making it economically. Even organically, it doesn't sell for enough to cover the costs. That's pretty much, world-wide, that's the way things are, cheap grain. The government, the U.S. spends a lot of money to make it possible, cheap grain. It's done on a large scale, erodes the soil, uses up the carbon base. Destroys the water table. But we get a lot of cheap grain, but world-wide, that makes it very difficult for small farmers to live on the food they produce. The working class can get this cheap carbohydrate from big corporations. So you've got a small organic farmer and a family that works very hard to make it, if they have a direct market, customers who appreciate what they're doing. And that's how most organic farmers make it. And it could be done here too, if the market was effective enough. We've had some farm -- our main, building up this plains land, building up our livestock, our main crop has been beef. Beef is not a popular item among environmentalists. People who do support this kind of farming, most of them are vegetarian, or non-beef anyway.

Q: How many people are part of Earth Cycle?

A: Well, right now it's just this family, . . . a couple of welfare families. My son's got friends from school, and connections through that community's movement, people come and stay for awhile, especially in the summer. But he's the only one living here year round, at this point, and this family here. They do some volunteer work in exchange for part of the produce, horses and things. It's not, I guess there's money to be made from welfare. Another family living up on what was my dad's farm, they work in town, they rent some big corporate garden. A few years ago we had five families, and probably 12 people living on the 80 acres. There have been, maybe 20 living there, ten years ago.

Q: Has peace work ever been part of Earth Cycle Farm?

A: Not really active.

Q: Have you kept up with peace work at all?

A: No, not really. My son sometimes, when they were in school, my oldest son Senna [?] went to Berkeley, and he was pretty active there in the environmental movement, some in the peace movement too. He demonstrated against the Gulf War, I guess. Walked the streets in Berkeley for awhile. But I think that's all. We've been more involved in the environmental movement. Sometimes hunger action. We used to do a newsletter in the early days on the alternative market news. We were part of some other organization's telefund. We tried to set up an alternative food system, co-ops and houses and organic farmers. We made kind of a coalition. The warehouses went bust finally. The system didn't hold up very long.

Q: Has Tolstoy Farm continued to be involved in any peace type work at all?

A: Oh, not a whole lot. Some individuals in there. Rico, more than anybody probably stayed involved. In the height of things, I think it's pretty much in the nature of intentional communities, most of them, self-absorbed. It's like the outside world didn't matter. That second bust, that kind of popped the bubble, but the first one didn't. Before they busted us we thought we could be having our own laws and ignore the outside world pretty much. We didn't really, it didn't seem like it mattered, the war, anymore,

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except we were getting draft resisters on the one hand, and veterans on the other, coming later. I guess, I went with people once to picket the draft. Probably '64. And then some people later in that. There was ... a march in Spokane out in the air banks [?] every year, some people went to that. I pretty much dropped out after things got going at Tolstoy Farm. Politics was irrelevant. For what we did, we could be independent on the land. That was, it seemed to be what they were. Actually what was being fought about was the control of the land. ... wasn't that much better, so ... it seemed like; one of the guys from the Farm, was with the International Voluntary Service. He was working in villages in Wales, digging wells and stuff. 'Cause his answer, he got killed doing it. The rest of us thought, taking care of our own needs, that was the best thing to do. Maybe it was. We got a lot of the brightest kids, children of the politicians, businessmen stuff, dropping out, refusing to participate.

Q: You mentioned that things kind of changed after the second bust. What -- I haven't heard about the second bust. What happened there?

A: Well, there was, things were, that must've been '69. And uh, and there had been some people, some dopers growing some, marijuana up in the side canyons, and selling it in town. Then I think all the dealers in town started calling our stuff "Tolstoy gold," 'cause it got better prices or something. So a lot of cops -- I wasn't there, I was up harvesting my dad's wheat. And uh, cops from all over the reservation, and volunteers, and they were expecting some, there was a few hotheads down there, war veterans, who uh, liked to talk big about overthrowing the government or fighting the cops or whatever. Maybe some of those growers had, I don't know. They didn't catch them, they just rounded up all the kids and the women in the communes, and the people in their houses. Eventually, they let most everybody go. A couple of guys resisted arrest. Spent some time, finally two of them went to Canada to get away from that all. They didn't catch the growers. But it sort of changed the whole -- a lot of people left, to get away from the violence of the city and so on, they kind of left after that. My wife decided to move to town, take the kids. And that's pretty nice of me to move up here. Some people stayed and kind of, kept the school going for another year. It ended a lot of things. It ended the craziness. I wouldn't let anybody grow any, everybody had to promise that they weren't going to grow any dope if they were going to live there. They chased those people out, and changed things. Good thing.

Q: Now you haven't lived there since '70 about?

A: Yeah.

Q: But it sort of kept going as an intentional community?

A: Well, it did for awhile, a sort of different intentional community, but, I don't think there's anything going on you'd call an intentional community now. People sold their homesteads to other people. Everybody has their own job, mostly commute. There is one, a couple guys, there's actually probably half a dozen people involved in the farming, they grow organic food for the Spokane market. They're the only ones that actually make their living in the community. Other people maybe have some gardens and stuff. It might have been some kind of gardening co-op this summer. I don't know, I didn't go down there last year at all. There's an annual corn dance in May. Lot of people come back to that I guess.

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Q: Is that something you had from the very beginning?

A: Pretty close. Since '65 I think.

Q: Is it like a harvest festival?

A: I guess, spring planting festival.

Q: And a lot of the former members will come back?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well what was the community's relationship with the neighbors like, or with the local community?

A: We pretty much kept to ourselves before that first bust. And then after that, it was mixed. There was some people in the community who were friendly, and then most of the people in the Davenport community actually got pretty hostile. Tolstoyers weren't allowed in some of the restaurants.

Q: Were you guys pretty obvious by the way you dressed and looked and stuff?

A: Yeah. Lincoln county was pretty straight. The place is like the ideal of like the '50's. Poor people pretty much stayed out of sight. We were the first hippies, I guess you might say. Long hair and beards.

Q: So you guys looked more like hippies?

A: Yeah. Long hair and the beards was pretty radical for Lincoln County at that time. Nothing now, but.

Q: Were there any rules at Tolstoy Farm about behavior? Drinking, smoking, drug use? Sexual behavior? Anything like that?

A: No. There weren't any rules. There were meetings. People, we discussed the issue quite often. We ostracized, in a sense, certain behaviors that we didn't want around, didn't want to deal with . . . any rules and such. There was trouble with the locals being pretty uptight about nudity. People liked to work in the fields without their clothes, and others liked to go swimming -- the Spokane River's just a few miles out of the canyon. People would go down there and swim naked a lot, and when the local people started building summer cabins down by the lake. That got to be a problem. We had people arrested once for that. People thought we were doing . . . immoral things, long before it actually happened! For awhile there, three of the people bought acid and mushrooms and things, it was pretty wild. The conservative ones of us, mostly had moved up to the north, off to the edge somewhere. But in a couple of the side canyons, things were pretty wild for awhile.

Q: Was it discouraging to you at all, given that you had started the place as a peace farm, to see some of these changes?

A: Oh yes, I had a falling out with the ... South 120, we called them, pretty early on. So, I spent most of my time, for a few years, just doing my own homestead. Growing my own food. I had horses, goats, and a big garden. A log cabin. It's hard to do that on my own. I tried to get other families to move out there too, and do things cooperatively. Didn't come to the meetings, sometimes. There was another time where they asked me to stay away. That was about ... I had been writing letters and such to people

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about cooperative community, and ... people at the South 120, they didn't want to have any publicity, or invite anybody new or contact the rest of the world. So they asked me to stay away from them.

Q: Were you perceived, or had a role at all, as a leader in the North 80 group? Or in the beginning?

A: No -- the beginning, in the other place, in the 120, yeah, a lot of people -- I discouraged that. The hardest was for a little while, a year or so, the land was in my name. I owned the land, and a lot of people just treated me like I was the boss. For a lot of time, I was the one who made the plans, and submitted them, and mostly I knew how to live on the land, grow food and stuff. I read a lot of books. Mostly city kids coming out there. Mostly my age. So for a long time, I was kind of a leader. We had a lot of meetings. There were always disagreements. Andy kind of took over that 120 when we had big fights about how to deal with things. She had built her house on that land, and I had built on North 80, and ... I'm not sure what year that was, but it must have been about -- yeah it was probably after 2 years maybe, spring of '66, I pretty much separated off, and started organizing the North 80. Then, maybe it was in a way, kind of getting independent. Andy wasn't, she wasn't trying to be a leader, she just was kind of anti-authoritarian. So, there was a lot of different groups, people had groups, and leaders. One of our destructuring things. I moved off, and I was into cooperation, voluntary cooperation, and the people with the drugs and stuff, that was more experimentation than cooperation. They didn't make a plan and then decide to do it. They just did what felt right, what felt good. I kind of stayed out of that one.

Q: And you also wanted to do some kind of networking or communicating with other intentional communities?

A: Yeah. And I, even, I forget which summer when they had the biggest demonstration at the Pentagon? I thought it was kind of ironic, I was in the first demonstration at the Pentagon, I was the first one arrested. At this other one, I just happened to be traveling around the country for time, hitchhiking, I was trying to organize this community market, with a catalog to try and connect all the different intentional communities, whatever industries they had, produce, into our cooperative catalog. I was just an hour away from that demonstration and didn't go. I was busy talking to people about the community market. And then later when we got the school going, there was a pretty good network up and down the West Coast and Canada. I used to write a lot of letters, and read a lot of magazines, trying to do that network thing.

Q: Did you visit other intentional communities?

A: A few. I did a [unintelligible] before I started Tolstoy Farm, on the peace walk. We stayed at a number of communities, and I went and lived with the Hutterites for awhile.

Q: Oh did you really?

A: Just a few weeks. I read a lot of books, and then this community market, I went around to all the ones I could connect with. And then the last year, I guess that was the fall of '69, or '70 maybe. I took a big camper truck of kids from the school and went with the school to communities on the West Coast.

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Q: Do you remember some of the communities you visited?

A: There's a place called Pacific High School that was pretty neat. It had a lot of tubs, hot tub, I think pretty rich kids. They had money, anyway. Let's see, what was that other one -- there was a place, Wavy Gravy, some of the Grateful Dead people were --

Q: Oh probably the Hog Farm Ranch, the Black Oak Ranch near Willits [?], in California?

A: Yeah, I think that must have been it.

Q: Where Wavy Gravy does Camp Wannarainbow [?]

A: Yeah, that must be it. Sort of went from one place to the next. [unintelligible], Oregon, that was one of the first places. I don't know if there's anybody there yet or not. They had quite a scattered community. Most of those places, people didn't want a lot of progressive folk. It was kind of word of mouth to find them. There's a place just North of San Francisco, artists, writers and stuff, poets.

Q: And were these all places that had started some sort of free school or alternative school?

A: Mostly, yeah. Yeah, some connection with a school.

Q: Did you visit in Petrolia [?], California? Does that ring a bell? 'Cause I know there was, that might have been later, but there was an alternative school going on there for a number of years.

A: Doesn't ring a bell.

Q: What was the thing that you liked the best about living at Tolstoy Farm?

A: Well, it changed a whole lot. There was a whole lot of different things about it. I pretty much enjoyed, when I was homesteading there, just being independent. Growing my own food, and not having to deal with a car, or money. Never went to town, hardly. That felt pretty good. And then, right at the end, the last time I was there, after my marriage had broken up, and everybody else's, log cabin, they kind of turned it into a community for the kids. All these couples had come here and broken up and were going through all these changes, and they kind of just let the kids take care of themselves. And the kids preferred it that way, in some aspects. So I just opened up the house, and some of the other people ... that felt real good, just to be part of that family, we got to be real close. For a few months. Then, I went through a lot of changes. The first couple of years when we were real poor and we had to work real hard to get by, that was pretty great. I felt like we were succeeding at being different from the world, where it's all a rat-race, clock ticking for money and time. I didn't wear a watch here, or watch TV or anything like that. It was just mostly living outdoors. We're discovering now, we delayed each other, the relationships, sometimes it seemed like time . . . went a lot slower. A whole lot more happened in a day or a week, than in the straight world happens in ten years, as far as learning, emotions, changing, just because you're so intensely involved with people and their problems, differences.

Q: What about the flip side: what was the worst part? Or the thing that you liked the least about living there?

A: I guess I'd uh ... it's kind of a loss of um, that utopian idea, or it seemed to me, I'd read all these books, and I thought I understood what was wrong with the world, what people were doing wrong, the

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wars and the, um, ... using the land for profit. If we could just, by applying sense, and being reasonable and cooperative, we can change it, we could be different. And then it's like, realizing that the most important thing in life is your family, your extended family, your tribe, that real satisfaction in life comes from being part of that primary group and helping each other. I realized that, but we thought we could recreate our ancestral past, we could form a native tribe. Just forget about those nuclear families and stuff, uptight. And then, the hard part was the disillusionment when we realized that it's not that easy, that everybody that comes into that group, in spite of their good intentions, they bring their family with them, and the connections and the differences, and when it comes down to it, the difficult parts of life, it's a matter of, crises happening, family created, wasn't there, it fell apart. People were leaving real easily, and switch loyalties. The reality in the long run wasn't easier, isn't possible, maybe, for us. Looking at the history of communities and what happened in all these places, unless there was some, like a religious connect, belief more important than even living was, or their relatives, it didn't happen. Come unglued. So I don't know -- after you go through that, I've gone through it a number of times, it's, you end up feeling really lost. I consider my generation, we're the lost children. Because you know, this technological civilization, we rejected it. Having all these toys doesn't make your life complete. We can't get our tribes back, they're scattered, and our immediate family has their jobs. Tolstoy taught that there are two different kinds of society -- forced cooperation, he called it, and voluntary cooperation. He considered it like, a higher stage of social evolution, you learn how structures, doing it voluntary to help each other cooperatively. I think where that failed to work as I understand for me, is that, the feminist question. That came up early on at Tolstoy Farm. There was a lady who really tried to talk to me about feminism, and women's rights. It turned out that it was very difficult for a single woman to survive there, the way things are set up. It's harder. And, after that, Tolstoy Farm, and since then, I've come to think that we have two different societies since way back. There's a cooperative, democratic civilization, where men and women and children are equal, came first, I think. At least in part of the world, people had learned to live that way, and we have pretty advanced civilizations, cities. And then within the patriarchal, the war-god people, they came on, destroyed that, conquered it, and now it's the dominant society in the world. Most of our institutions, our economies, are controlled by people who believe in that kind of structure of hierarchical, male dominating. The other culture's still there, and has been all along, as a resistance movement more than anything. Back in the jungles, bush men, and the pygmies, and the polar Eskimo, you know, groups here and there, have most of that tradition, and other tribes have mixed. They've been conquered by the war-tribes too. North American. And so, ... then reality is, realistically, I've realized that trying to restore the tribal ways, egalitarian society, is more of a resistance, underground movement. Things are deliberately set up to discourage that, especially if you start to succeed at it, or teach these things openly. Things are built in to the system, at least to stop you or discourage you, make it harder. Because uh ... those ... pirates that run things, they're very much afraid of these ideals that are getting around. So, ... it's not just a matter of educating people, "Hey, there's a better way to do it." It's more like a war. A war that's gone on for five, six thousand years. Most of us have mixed blood. There are genetic memories, and we have the heritage of the conquerors as well as the conquered. So, and most of us have been growing up in the conqueror's world, this late society, we have maybe in us, some of our cultural traditions, we have the desire to change it. Get back to where we were. But we also have a tendency from our conqueror part of our blood to ... conquer.

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Q: Do you feel Tolstoy Farm as a success or a failure?

A: Well, it depends on the mood I'm in. A lot of times I consider it, my personal failure, like I failed in a lot of things that I tried to do there. And probably that's true. A lot of people came there with dreams of what they wanted to do. I think hardly anybody, if anybody did what they hoped, very quickly, people's goals changed, their values. If I look at it as a school, as a place where people come to learn or change or be healed, then yeah, a lot of that went on. Most of the people came there, even if it cost them a lot of money, time out of their careers and stuff, a lot of times it broke up their families. Still, most of them would probably tell you that they learned a lot. They learned a lot about themselves, went away wiser. But it would be interesting to find the people that came and went, there were thousands of people over the years.

Q: Are there things that you would do differently now, about how you would have set up the commune?

A: Well, yeah, I guess I have. This house here is kind of a co-op house for people who are helping with this Earth Cycle project. Yeah, I would, if I was in that situation where I had some, people were listening to me at that time, I was pretty good at organizing my thoughts and my speech. Yeah, I would make the issue of equal rights of women and children. Actually, I think ... I would try to select people to work with who understood that this was a resistance movement for equal rights, feminist movement, actually. I think it comes down to basic things, the attitude toward sex, and the way the patriarchal model, women are sexual property. The decision and the power who decides who the woman mates with is mostly in the hands of the men. They have goals, possessive property, keep control of it. I think in the original civilization, when people worshiped a Goddess, kind of the heart of the culture, values system, was the woman's choice for a mate. Way back, with the apes, part of being female, humans, they didn't show their estrus, so it was their choice. So women would tend, and did in that tribal society, to choose mates, supportive, protected, who respect that the desires of the mothers, grandmothers, and by extension, the self, trees, the elk, and all that attitude toward life. And that was religious, rituals and rights developed from that choice. Young men, instead of striving to capture and impregnate females, are more into trying to win the approval and the blessing of the young woman and the old women. Maybe in a public ceremony sometimes, the temple priestess. The way, one of the ways that this culture of respect was destroyed was by subjugating, the lessening of the women, the young girls -- that still goes on as part of the culture, preventing the power of the women from happening. So if I was going to, if I had people wanting to be part of a community, I would say, "This is the goal -- worship the Goddess, and try to set up our lifestyle accordingly."

Q: Do you think there are key ingredients to a successful commune? Such as Goddess worship?

A: Well, it's a sharing of your spiritual or religious belief. I think that's essential. The other is ... failed because they didn't get together and buy their land back then, or didn't pay for it. There was questionable ownership, who's paying for it. Most of the breakups occurred around that issue of debt and ownership. So, that has to be settled up front, by owning the land outright, for someone to gift the land over the group, and then ultimately, the question of who controls what happens on your land. The only way you're ever going to get an agreement on that is to have the same religious belief. Same morality. I don't know, personally, any communities that are based on Goddess worship. It seems very

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difficult to get together a group of people to do that who've been raised in Western society. The whole way of talking even, everything you do is, been conditioned by this patriarchal system. Some of the tribal societies that are still doing well, probably more than not, worship the Goddess.

Q: Do you think having sort of an open-land policy at Tolstoy, was that a mistake?

A: Yeah. It was a mistake in terms of ... trying to establish a sustainable alternative culture. I think to do that, we should've had our beliefs agreed on, and accepted people who shared those beliefs. But, at the time, the situation for us, was we didn't, we didn't really know what would work. All the land was taken, so there was no space for experimenting with the culture, so it was kind of an act of, a revolutionary act to say, "This space is open to anybody who thinks they have a better idea and wants to try to work it out." It was pretty much like establishing a free university.

Q: Was Tolstoy the first of the open-land communes?

A: Yeah, as far as I know it was the first. There was various structured communities around, mostly religious. We really had a kind of radical initiative for Tolstoy Farm, but it was, it wasn't really open. Activists, whatever, they were trying to advocate, be committed to the cause. We didn't follow the rules.

Q: Do you have any documents from the early years? Or did they all get burned down in that fire you were talking about?

A: Uh ... yeah, I don't have any. Andy might. She might have, I think she kind of kept a scrap-book with pictures, and probably some of the documents.

Q: Did you guys write things down? Like, did you write down any sort of mission or vision or anything like that?

A: Yeah, we put out a flyer. One of them was, described the purpose of the farm. I think we talked about voluntary cooperation and self-reliance, and uh, simple living. And some of them, there was another page that just described who we were and what we were doing there. I used to write this and that. Make some copies. I don't know if any of them are still around. Sometimes they're in a newspaper like Catholic Worker or Peacemaker magazine, different print letters, articles. The local paper did a feature story with some pictures of us. Second summer, I guess it was.

Q: The Davenport newspaper?

A: Yeah. They might have it.

Q: Cat shared some newspaper articles, I think from the Davenport paper, about the bust. I've seen those, but I haven't seen anything else.

A: Where'd you say she's living now?

Q: I think around Santa Rosa. I don't remember exactly, but it's Northern California, north of San Francisco, around the Santa Rosa area.

A: Her mother had a bookstore.

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Q: Yeah, I interviewed her mother. Her mother lives in Mendocino. Yeah, her mother had an antiquarian bookstore, I think in Berkeley or something. But her mom moved up to Mendocino, they got some land, and they started a little commune there that they called Equitable Farm. It was based on Josiah Warren's views, he was a 19th century philosopher I guess, who had ideas about bartering and not using money, and having kind of an alternative economy. So they sort of modeled themselves after that. And then she moved to the Ozarks and started a commune there.

A: Yeah, that's an effect. A lot of communes, communities around the county, got started later, had people in them that were at Tolstoy Farm for awhile. Wonder how much, it certainly had some effect on that whole movement, I suppose.

Q: Yeah, I'm always real curious about people that started at one place and moved to another place, and how ideas kind of traveled. Do you know of any communities that kind of got their start from Tolstoy people?

A: Well, uh, Andy was part of, they started one in Idaho, Northern Idaho, after they left Tolstoy Farm. Namas Day [?] Farm, it was called. I know there were others, I think one in Ohio somewhere, but I don't know the names of particular . . . a couple of people have gone and started something somewhere.

Q: Well and I guess Earth Cycle is a descendant of Tolstoy, in a way?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, I guess that's all the questions I have.