

Interviewer with Martha (Mara) Devine

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

November 12, 1995

Q: This is an interview with Mara Devine, in Arcada, California, on November 12, 1995. Okay, so Mara, tell me a little about your background and what led up to your involvement in '60's communal living?

A: Wow. That's an all encompassing question. I was born in South America, of all continents, in one of the three colonies on the Northeastern Coast, which was then called Dutch Guiana, and is now know Surinam. I was born in the capital city of that country. My father was working for a big American corporation, exploiting the resources of the country in the form of bauxite to make aluminum. Anyway, I spent many years growing up in South America, where my father continued to work for other corporations, mining various things, iron ore, and whatnot in Venezuela and stuff. So I -- when I settled in California in the late '60's, it was the beginning of what you might call the psychedelic revolution, and I was a student at San Francisco State at that time. I was studying for a degree in linguistics, and I wanted to become some sort of career diplomat.

Q: Do you speak a lot of languages?

A: Well, I spoke fluent Spanish, having grown up all those years in South America. And I had been studying Russian at the time, and I had studied Italian. So this is what I thought I was going to do. Then along came the student strike at San Francisco State in 1967. I had actually gone -- in 1968 I had spent a year living in Spain and teaching English in Spain, and hanging out with all these Spanish anarchists who were telling me that the war in Vietnam was really bad news, and why didn't you do something about it?

Q: That was in '68?

A: Yeah. So then I came back, and things were really happening in the Haight/Ashbury where my friends were living. Everybody was taking acid and joining communes. So I followed suit, and I went out to New Mexico that summer, and I met the Hog Farm, who are still among the more famous of the '60's communes. I lived with them in an encampment in the forest in Northern New Mexico during that whole summer. And then in 1969, I continued hanging out with them. They went to New York for the winter, and I stayed in New Mexico. In 1969, I got pregnant with my son, who's now 26. His father was a Hog Farmer -- my association with the Hog Farm was really what led me directly into seeking a utopian communal lifestyle. Because the Hog Farm, I didn't feel, after my son was born, met my requirements for the communal living scene anymore. I was really turning towards vegetarianism, and also leaning a lot more towards feminism and lesbianism, and I was seeing the Hog Farm as antithetical to these things. But they really opened up my mind to the idea of living in a group and sharing resources, trying to have some kind of social change movement based on a new way of seeing the world. That was totally unlike anything I had ever been exposed to before then. From there I went into this other communal situation, but it wasn't until my son was about 3 years old that I joined this other commune, so there was a space in between there. But then I joined the Lime Saddle commune in '73, and lived with them till '76. So that's the tail-end of your time period there.

Q: Did you do anything after that? We're interested beyond that too.

A: Not communally, although when I came over here to Humboldt County, I lived with some folks who had been part of the communal situation in Lime Saddle. But we didn't stay together. They wanted to do their own thing, and we didn't continue to share living situations. Since then, I've had roommates and lovers, but never been part of an intentional community since '76. Oh wait, not really since '76, since

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more like '79, because then there was a third commune called The Good Times Commune in San Francisco from '78, '79, when my son was about 8 years old. There wasn't any intentional living scene happening anywhere around that I felt good about, so we were looking for community, we went out looking for community. Our car broke down in Nevada. We were on our way to the Ozarks, where there were several communities, and we were going to go check them out. And the car broke down. And we ended up going back to San Francisco, I just sort of flipped a coin, I think, and decided to head back West and check out this other commune that I had heard a lot about, which was the Good Times Commune, which was in San Francisco. So they ended up having room for us, so we moved in. That was a true commune in that we shared the rent, we split it, and we shared food buying and dinner every night. So it was pretty tight knit. That was the last time. So that was till 1980, 15 years ago.

Q: Going back to when you were San Francisco State, did you ever go to any of Steven Gaskin's classes?

A: Yeah, I did go to Monday night class a few times, and hung out, listened to his rap. It was definitely part of the whole scene that was happening.

Q: Did that excite you?

A: Yeah. Oh yeah, I really liked what he was saying, and I almost went with him, I think. I thought about it, but I had spent a lot of time growing up in the South and everything, and I really didn't think I wanted to go back there. I think that's what kept me in California, because I didn't think that Tennessee was going to be a very -- well, they didn't know where they were going to end up, they were just on a road trip, looking for land. I just -- I think probably what kept me from being more serious about the Farm was that I perceived it to be fairly, if not completely hierarchical and patriarchal, with Steven Gaskin at the top of this pyramid. And this was something that my whole spirit was just sort of turning away from at that time. I thought that in order for a commune to work, it would have to be really egalitarian, and that women and men would share power equally, somehow. I didn't know how exactly that was going to work, since there weren't many models for it in real life that we could see. That was my ideal. But they turned out doing some great, incredible things, especially with soy beans. They were still my soy bean gurus. Not only that, but what about all the wonderful work they did with birthing, midwifery? Just incredible.

Q: Did you have a home birth?

A: My son was born in a hospital, because -- there was nobody to attend my birth, and the first thing that happened was my water broke, and the doctor told me I'd better get myself to the hospital, or I'd be risking infection. That was 1969, home births were not all that common or popular yet. And I lived in a cabin in Northern New Mexico that didn't even have running water. So I went to the hospital, and I had a long, very hard labor, and I was glad to be somewhere where I would be taken care of. But it wasn't like a home birth.

Q: Tell me about what got you to New Mexico, and something about the Hog Farm.

A: I was following the Hog Farm. No, what got me there, because that's where I met them, but what got me to New Mexico was that I had been at San Francisco State, and I had been studying linguistics, like I said. I had been taking classes with S. I. Hiacowa [?], who was a renowned linguist who later became

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president of the university, and kind of fascist, but at the time, he was pretty groovy. And anyway, he'd written some text books on the subject which were considered to be state of the art at that time. So he was my teacher, and I was really interested. At this time, I had started taking psychedelic drugs, and I had been really thinking a lot about the connection between language, and thought, and perception, and how our language really does color what we're able to think about. In fact, it even dictates what we're able to think about, because we think in words. So I thought, "Gee, wouldn't it be interesting to study and become fluent in a non-Aristotelian type of a language like Navaho or Hopi or something?" That's not even like the Romance languages I had studied, or Russian or anything. It's something that didn't have the same kind of world perception as our Indo-European languages do. So I thought, "I'll go out to New Mexico and check that out." And that's when I went out there, with not much money, and didn't have any real plan of how I was going to survive, but went out there to just check it out, and that's when I ran into the Hog Farm. I started camping out with them, hanging out with them, because I could see that they were thinking a lot about the same kinds of things that I was thinking about. That there had to be this revolution of consciousness in order for the world to be saved. Somehow, we were going to show people how it could be done.

Q: So what was the Hog Farm's encampment like? Like how many people, and what were conditions like?

A: It was amazing. When I first got there, it was at the beginning of the summer, 1968. And what they had, what they did was you could get a permit to camp in the national park, and they had a beautiful national park system in Northern New Mexico, just incredible camp grounds. Kind of like here, but just a different setting. Big sky, and high elevation. You could get a permit for 2 weeks at a time, so we would set up a camp for 2 weeks, and the camp would be completely self-contained, and we had people -- Wavy Gravy, who at that time was not called Wavy Gravy, he was Hiromni. And he and his wife, [unintelligible] Jean, she was like an actress from Hollywood, T.V. actress, they were the part of the group that brought this whole thing together. They were friends with Ken Kesey, and Ken Babbs [?], and Jerry Garcia, people like that who were all part of this acid revolution of the late '60's, early '70's. So the camp would be a conglomeration of these people and their friends, and people would live in big, vividly painted school buses that they drove out. Like Ken Kesey, I saw him this summer at the Hog Farm picnic, which is now an annual event down in Laytonville [?], where they have a piece of land where they're living collectively. They have this big rock and roll picnic every year now. Ken Kesey came out with his bus, Further, and he had Ken Babbs, who, I'd seen him there, and I was remember how Ken was always the one who would put the water system together so we'd have a sink with running water, and he'd be like cooking for 80 to 100 people every night, and have these huge communal meals. There wouldn't much money, but sometimes people would get food stamps, they'd pitch their food stamps in or their welfare check, or whatever money they had. We'd go down, or we'd just go and get vegetables from the Safeway in Espanola [?], or one of the nearby towns, where they would throw away the vegetables that they couldn't sell, and we would be like feeding the masses. The loaves and the fishes -- we'd take this little pile of vegetables and make it into something for all these people. Night after night this would go on, and then there'd be music, and people lived in tepees, and people played -- the Hog Farm had a musical group that grew out of these encampments. What they would do, they had a traveling light show with a dome, a geodesic dome. They would put the dome up in the campsite in the nearby town,

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wherever we were, and invite people. All the local townspeople and the kids would come to these light shows with this rock and roll band, and we would all take acid, and it would just be this total trip. It was incredible.

Q: So there was like 80 to 100 people?

A: Yeah, during the summer months, when people were off school or work, they'd come and hang out for as long as they could, stay in as many campgrounds, because we'd have to keep moving, we couldn't stay in one place for more than two weeks. So that was quite a summer.

Q: And then they went to New York, and you stayed?

A: Yeah, they went to New York that winter, and they did shows in New York, and they worked with Bill Graham, and they had all these shows at Winterland, and some more East. And I stayed in New Mexico over the winter. And then I was there the next summer -- they all came back, and I was with them again during that summer. That was the summer of '69, that the producers of the Woodstock pop festival flew us all out on a chartered airplane from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to be the free kitchen and the security police force for the festival and take care of the people, feed them, and if they were tripping out and didn't know what to do, we'd take care of them. We had the "freak out" tent and the medical tent...

Q: What was Woodstock like?

A: Oh my God. By the time we got to Woodstock, I was like 7 and a half months pregnant with my son, so it was really hard for me to get around. I'll never forget, it was quite a party, because there were 400,000 people that showed up, and we were serving free food to 100,000 people a day. The producers of the festival -- we went up there 2 weeks before the festival and built the stage and got the free kitchen set up, and lived in tents, and partied every night, went to New York on these buying trips, and got all this bulk food. And when the parties started, we were running the free kitchen, and yeah, I mean, it was just like in the movie. And then after the party was over, we moved back to New Mexico with all this food that was leftover. We didn't have much money, so we were eating this food for awhile. Big bags of bulgur wheat. We used to call it "vulgar bulgur," we had to eat so much of it. But Woodstock was definitely a party that I'll never forget. The world will never forget that party. Talk about a commune.

Q: Did you live in tents?

A: Yeah. We did. We lived in big tents that they provided. And then a lot of the people who came didn't even have a tent, they were just sleeping out in the field in the rain. When they left, we stayed behind and cleaned it up for a couple of weeks. And we, people just kept stuff that they found. People just left stuff there, I mean, people left everything, it was incredible -- sleeping bags, watches, and shoes and clothes and wallets, and everything.

Q: So would you guys take that stuff and keep it?

A: It was a major score. I suppose the wallets and stuff were returned, but I know people kept clothes and sleeping bags and things, it kind of kept us going for quite a while. A lot of these kids came to this party from New York City, and they were like first time ever out of the city, the first time they'd ever

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taken any kind of psychedelic drugs, and they were just like -- they didn't know what they were doing.

Q: Did they end up in the freak out tent?

A: Yes, many of them did. We would just feed them hot tea with honey and hold their hand. It was far out.

Q: So you went back to New Mexico, and then what happened?

A: Well then my son was born, by this time it's like late October, and it was getting cold. I didn't have anything together, was like the proverbial grasshopper. And so -- my son's father was escaping from the draft, it was 1969, he ran over the border to Canada. I decided to head out to San Francisco and get on welfare, which is what I did.

Q: Why did you choose San Francisco?

A: Because that was sort of where I was from, although I hadn't really lived there, but I had gone to school there, San Francisco State, I had friends there. And I had other friends in the Hog Farm who were living in a house communally. I decided to go live with them, so that's what I did, and we all lived in a house in San Francisco for awhile. Then when that house broke up, I lived in another communal situation in Los Altos, near the Zen Center, until my son was about 2 years old, and then I went to India.

Q: Back up just a second -- did you know the name of the community in Los Altos?

A: It was a group of people living together in what had been the Zen Center. It wasn't the Zen Center, but it was somebody's parents' home, and we all lived there communally. It was called the Transoceanic Egg. That was the name of the commune. How could I have forgotten that?

Q: Was that supposed to mean anything in particular?

A: I'm sure it did mean something, it was very cosmic. So there we were in the Egg, we called it the Egg for short. And then when the Egg broke up, that was when I had my first really full-blown affair with a woman, and I was really freaked out, I didn't know what it meant, and I decided to run away and go to India. So I went to India to study yoga. I took my son, he was still in diapers, and we lived in this ashram, which is really like another form of community in India. I studied under this crazy guru called Swami Gitananda [?] who was a real charlatan. That was a learning experience. Anyway, we were there for a few months, and we traveled around through India, then we ended up back in Europe, then we came back to the States. In that next year is when we joined the Lime Saddle commune.

Q: And where was the Lime Saddle commune?

A: Based in Northern California, near Oroville [?], in Butte County.

Q: Can you get me oriented?

A: Outside of Oroville, near where -- there's Oroville, Chico, and Paradise form a triangle. It's within that triangle.

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Q: And does "Lime Saddle" mean anything?

A: It referred to the geographical feature of the land there, which was a saddle of limestone, a ridge.

Q: Was that maybe the original name of that parcel of land?

A: I think so. What we did, there was a conference that was convened by Communities Magazine and other people, in Mendocino, in this campground in '72. Some time in the summer of '72. It was at this conference that a group of people came together to look for a piece of land in order to do a communal living situation. And this was the piece of land that was purchased by the principles, this Lime Saddle commune. A group of people went to live there, and I was one of those people.

Q: Were you at that conference in Mendocino?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember much about that?

A: There were several people there. There must've been 150 people or so. People got together, there was a lot of networking that went on. That's where we hooked up this group, about 10 of us. We decided that we wanted to do this, so we went back to our communities. I was living with my sister-in-law outside of Mountain View, in the Palo Alto area, still. We decided we wanted to check this place out, so we kept in touch with them, and then when the land -- they did a very thorough land search, and they bought this piece of land. We went up there to check it out, and we ended up -- they had a house in Oroville, and then they had this 20 acre parcel outside of town. Some people lived in Oroville, and some people lived out at the ranch. We had a soy burger business, which was one of the first soy food businesses in North America to come together. We bought that business from 2 women from San Francisco who had started it. They called it Village Soy Burgers, and we bought it from them in 1973, and we started manufacturing these soy burgers out of this kitchen in Oroville, and selling them. We made these patties and froze them and packaged them, and carried them ourselves to distributors in the Bay Area, and they took them around to the stores and stuff. Turns out, the guy that was our distributor, a small company called Natural Foods Express, these two guys Huey and Gilbert, were entrepreneurs behind this little business of distributing natural foods in the Bay Area. Well Huey turns out to now be Huey Lewis of Huey Lewis and News. Even then, he was in this little band, and he was always begging us to come and hear him, when he played with Stone Ponies, he had a band, I can't remember the name, it wasn't The News, but it was right before that. Can you believe that?

Q: So what was he like?

A: He was a very jovial, good natured character, I always liked him.

Q: How did the Lime Saddle group get the money together to buy the land?

A: It came from people's -- it was all what people put in. And so therefore, that was always the problem, because there were -- the people who's money who was put up to make the down payment were the ones who actually controlled the situation, and made decisions affecting the group. I guess at some point -- I can't remember -- it must've transferred ownership from private ownership or even partnership, because it was two families, a man and his wife and their two kids, and another man and

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his brother, were the two groups of people that put up the money for the down payment. But then somehow the ownership was transferred to a group situation, as I recall. I can't remember how that happened. But in any case, the businesses that we operated were communally owned. We had the soy burger business, we also had a goat dairy farm, mostly for our own consumption, but I guess we did sell some. And we had a truck [?] garden, an organic truck garden, we sold vegetables to the local restaurants.

Q: How many people were there?

A: There was a core group of about 15. But because we were working so closely with communities and we were so tied in with the whole international communal movement, we had a floating population of sometimes 2 or 3 times that. Because people would come from all over the damn place to visit us. Because we were like this model intentional community. We set ourselves up -- we wanted to expand, and we wanted to develop this whole idea of a communitarian village, that would be groups of communes living together in one big huge commune. We were always proselytizing, looking for new people to join us so we could get a bigger piece of land. Absolute uncontrolled growth. It made for a very interesting lifestyle, because we had a constant flow of really interesting people that came and stayed with us, for days or weeks, or months at a time.

Q: You said you also helped to publish Communities Magazine?

A: Yeah. We had a production shop, with one of the first word-processing, computer run things -- Compu-Graphic, it was called. We shared the publication with Twin Oaks. We would take turns editing issues, every other issue. We would do the layout, and proof read the article, all that stuff.

Q: So there must've been a lot of opportunities to learn new skills at this place.

A: There was. Because I learned how to do word processing on that machine. Never would have done it before. Actually, I had done a little bit, but that was really a great opportunity, you're right. As far as learning business management skills, that was something else I had never studied in school. I never really thought I would ever do that. That's where I really started thinking about becoming a business person, was in that communal situation.

Q: And is that where you learned the soy burger business too?

A: It certainly is. That's where I first got really turned on to the idea of marketing soy beans as human food.

Q: When did you become vegetarian?

A: Pretty much at the time my son was born, 1969. That was the biggest motivational factor behind my becoming a vegetarian.

Q: Did you become vegan at that point?

A: No. Not at all. In fact, I've only been a vegan -- anyone who's trying to be a vegan can tell you, there are degrees of veganism, and no one can really claim to be perfect, unless you don't even breathe, because every time you breathe, you're killing bacteria. I'm mostly a vegan, and I made the leap from

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vegetarianism to giving up dairy foods altogether about, three years ago, almost.

Q: So when you were living at the Hog Farm, were they not vegetarian?

A: No. Well, in our communal scene we pretty much were, because A) We couldn't afford to buy meat, and B) Most of us were vegetarian by choice. We had the goats and we had plenty of milk and cheese from them, we made yogurt. And so sometimes -- I don't think we ever even ate one of our goats. People were pretty much into being vegetarians. People would go into town, and they'd eat whatever they damn well chose, but at night, at dinner, it was pretty much rice, beans, and soy burgers, veggies from the garden.

Q: This is at Lime Saddle?

A: Yes. One of the big issues was -- a lot of people wanted to eat more meat, and it was hard for them to adjust to a vegetarian lifestyle. They felt deprived at the lack of meat. I would say mostly some of the men felt that way. The women were pretty much vegetarians and could handle it. But it was definitely an issue. In fact, food became the issue that was more compelling than any other issue, really, politics, or sex, or anything. What about your food choices? I think we're seeing a return to that now in the '90's, I think food choices are becoming the most important issue that we're facing, because everything else sort of hinges on that.

Q: Can you describe some about daily life at Lime Saddle?

A: Sure. We have a weekly schedule that we'd make up every Sunday night, and we'd fill in this chore chart. Depending on what chores you signed up for, you could be milking the goats, and that would get you up at dawn. Then there would be breakfast preparation, and then there would child care. We rotated child care only amongst people in the commune who chose to do child care, it wasn't compulsory, which we thought was the best way to handle that. So the kids would spend the day with whoever was on child care, and they would supervise their activities, and they would do stuff with them. The kids had their own little house too that they lived in, which was really neat, where they would be put to bed, and they'd get read stories at night, all their stuff was in there and everything. So meal prep, three meals a day would have to be -- I guess nobody would be responsible for lunch, but breakfast and dinner. And then we had a -- we'd have various chores, household chores, gardening chores to do. Almost every night, we had meetings to process our business, be it emotional, financial, or whatever other business we had to take care of. That was, instead of watching TV, we had these meetings. And it was good, we had our communal house, we had one little house that was like the communal house, and inside this communal house was the business office where we kept our telephone and all our business records. Then it had a communal dining room, and a kitchen, where we'd prepare all of our group meals. Then the milking shed was right outside this little house. And then there were various outbuildings all over the place where people lived and had their bedrooms. That house also had a library. It had a whole room just lined with books. We had lots of books, and it was a great resource for kids and parents too, that library.

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Q: What were you and other folks reading or listening to that influenced you during that time?

A: One of our big influences -- the library was very eclectic as I recall. There was -- people were really into Gandhi, various forms of socialism, and social utopianism. People were reading all kinds of eclectic literature, from comic books to cook books, whatever it was. Macrobiotics was all the rage for awhile. George Oshawa [?]. We listened to all kinds of music. One of the big musical influences was Bob Marley. We used to listen to Bob Marley and the Wailers constantly. One of our members was from Detroit, and he had all this great Detroit rock and roll: Aretha Franklin, all the music of the period. Maybe you get the idea.

Q: Were you ever interested in Walden Two at all?

A: Yes, of course, we did have Walden Two, and B.F. Skinner, and people were very much involved, the people in our commune were very much involved in the 1973-1975 American Indian Movement. FBI standoffs in Pine Ridge and in the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee in the Midwest and Kansas. People from our group went out there and worked with the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee and did a lot of work with the American Indian Movement at that time, and you probably remember what was going on at that time back on the reservations at that time. So we were really involved in that, that was a big influence, the lives of people in the modern Indian movement, and Native American thought and cosmology was a big subject for us. People were interested -- many of the women were discovering their own sexuality, both as lesbians and bisexuals, and there was a lot of movement toward feminist causes and feminist writing, even amongst some of the men. We had some pretty lively discussions.

Q: Did you have a shared spirituality?

A: I think we did. We all were pretty much acknowledged Neopagans.

Q: Did you celebrate --

A: --We certainly did: the solstices and the equinoxes were the high points of our years, those three years we were together. We always observed those days with communal feasting and celebration. We had this most incredible hot tub that was like a big huge soup pot. It was a giant, tall thing. It wasn't very wide, but it was really deep, and we had hollowed it out underneath so we could build a fire underneath it to heat up the water, and then had a duck board inside. We always had a hot tub at the solstice and the equinoxes -- we had them all the time, but that was part of our ritual. And we would do this thing we called the "people soup," where we'd get in the hot tub.

Q: Would you have sweats too?

A: Yeah, we had a wonderful sweat lodge that we made. We did Indian-style sweats, just chanted, played homegrown music a lot, drums and guitar, flutes. The kids all played music. We loved to play music together, that was one of our other group things that we did, because we didn't have TV, we didn't really listen to the radio. We had records and tapes and books. And each other. And we were highly entertaining.

Q: What were your relations with your neighbors like?

A: Well, we didn't have any real close-by neighbors. Most of our neighbors that were anywhere near us,

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we were pretty good friends with. There was a little country store down the road, about a mile down, where the local community, were mostly kind of rednecks, would hang out. We used to hang out there too and shoot pool with them, and we had pretty friendly relationships with the people in the neighborhood, including even the -- the school that our kids went to was just down the road about a mile, it was called the Pence [?] School. It was the public school, it was for K-6. Our kids, which at the time was my son and this other little girl who was about a year younger, were the -- this was their school. And Heather, the little girl, had this -- she didn't like wearing underwear, and she would often not put her underwear on, she would go to school without her underpants on. If you didn't check her, make sure she was wearing them, she would go without them. They got kind of upset about this, because when she would be climbing up on the jungle gym or whatever. So one day they sent -- I think they even sent notes home about it, but it kept happening. So one day the principal of the school came down to the commune to ask us to make sure that Heather wore our underwear. And when he came up the driveway -- we had a driveway that was pretty far set back from the road, so you couldn't really see our place from the road, you had to come up the driveway. He came up the driveway and parked, and got out of the car, and came up. Several people [tape ends] ... so there we were, and he comes up to tell us to please put underwear on the six year old, and we're all, "Okay. We'll handle it."

Q: And you're standing there nude.

A: He was so flabbergasted, he got all red in the face, he could barely talk, but he sputtered it out, got in his car, and left. It was so funny. Heather and her mom came to visit us last year, and I hadn't seen them for 15 years. And Heather was all grown up. Andrew and Heather, the two kids, are now like 25 and 26. The two of them, her mom and I came out here one afternoon, and we were just laughing hysterically over all these stories.

Q: So what do Heather and Andrew think about that time?

A: I think -- my impression is that they remember it with great fondness. Heather and Andrew hadn't seen each other for several years, and the connection between them, I could see for both of them that they were really happy to see each other. They were really almost like there hadn't been any interruption. The kids were very close to each other, we were like a big family. We did everything together. It was their formative time, and they remembered each other really well, they were really happy to see each other. It was great, because they've been through incredible lives, the two of them. Heather's had some real -- we've all had experiences, but Heather went through drug rehab at age 17 from alcohol and drugs in high school, pulled her life together, and now she's doing really well in community college. She's really smart and really beautiful. So it's just great to see them again and to realize that despite our quirky influences, they've survived.

Q: Does your son live around here?

A: Yeah, he does, he lives not far from here, about five or six miles, with his significant other, and her 8 year old daughter, who he's co-parenting with, with her other dad. He's a real sparkling little sprite, Lupin [?].

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Q: Did you have any particular way of dressing?

A: How did we dress? We were -- everything was extremely casual. In the summer, a lot of times people just wore shorts or something to garden in. The women were topless, the men were topless, we would often go without shoes. Our clothes came from the free box. Or we -- there were lots of hand-me-downs for the kids, and we traded clothes with each other. I guess the emphasis was not on fashion, but on comfort and whatever was cheap. That's in the days we were discovering how many incredible things people would throw away. We'd go to the recycling centers and find all this incredible stuff. We prided ourselves on getting along with not much money, but still having good stuff, because we knew where to find it.

Q: Was there an emphasis on energy efficiency?

A: Oh yeah. Of course. Although at that time [unintelligible] ... all our panels. In our dream village of the future, it was all going to be based on solar energy, passive solar and other energy efficient -- we actually put up a windmill one time, we were going to create energy with our windmill. Forget that. We actually used a lot of electricity, but that was because our place wasn't set up to be alternative, and we were always working toward an alternative energy type of a future.

Q: Did you heat with wood?

A: We heated with wood, but we cooked with electricity. But we had this huge great wood-burning stove that was made out of an old oil drum. And it was really neat, it worked great. It heated up the little communal house. And then people had little wood burners in their private spaces.

Q: Did you have running water?

A: Yeah, we did have running water.

Q: Just in the communal house?

A: Yeah, just in the communal house. In the little houses, no one had running water in there. But there were a couple campsites that had developed running water. And then we had shitters. We wanted to start -- I think back even after I left, people didn't have a compost privy, we had pit privies while I was there. We composted all of our kitchen waste. We recycled all of our cans and bottles and newspapers and all of that stuff, long before it was the rage.

Q: Did you ever have any trouble with the authorities, like zoning or drugs?

A: Not really, no, we never did. We were very -- and we weren't really very lucky. We had a presence because of our food business, and because we had a factory in town, and because we did engage in commerce. But we didn't have any trouble with the authorities. Maybe the worst thing was when the principal came to tell us to put Heather's underwear on. I don't remember if the police ever came to our place. We maybe had a runaway or two come and stay with us. Or a battered woman, her husband might have been looking for her. But we never had any trouble with the authorities.

Q: Were there any other communes around the area, or were you guys pretty isolated?

A: Right around us there was -- maybe they were called Mountain People also. There was a group called

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Mountain People up near this place called Jarbo Gap, which wasn't far from where we were. And in fact, one of our members, after our group split up, went and lived with a guy from there, and they still live there, and they have two kids. They came to visit me last summer. They're still part of that commune.

Q: And it still exists?

A: Yes.

Q: Why did you end up leaving this community.

A: Well, the community itself broke up. It split apart.

Q: And how did that happen?

A: Well, it was around a number of different things. I think the main one was around the split between men and women. Not able to resolve differences -- the women were all involved in the goat herding, and the men were all involved in the Communities Magazine, and running the soy burger business. I was one of the few women that was kind of in both worlds. As I said earlier, a lot of the women were coming out as lesbians, and this threatened the men, to the point where finally everybody just got terminally pissed at everybody else. The men just all kind of left en masse. And the women stayed on, a lot of the women stayed on. I left at that time too, came over here. A lot of the women stayed on and tried to open up the land as women's land, and have another communal scene there. That fell apart around class lines, where women of color and women who had come from low income backgrounds did not get along with women who had inherited money, and who were from a more upper-class background. They went on for years, but I don't know, because I wasn't part of that group, but there was a big falling out in that group, and then the land finally stopped being a communally own piece of property.

Q: Did the women's land group have a name?

A: Yeah, it was called La Luz. Did you ever hear of that name?

Q: No, I haven't, but Tim may have, he has a whole huge list.

A: I'm trying to think, who can I think of that can be a contact person from La Luz. There's someone in San Francisco who might be willing to talk to you, who was actually one of the women that I was really close to in Lime Saddle, and she stayed on and became part of La Luz, and so she's a real repository of information. Her name is Mishwa. Her number in San Francisco is 821-4341. You can say that Mara gave you her number.

Q: So after you left Lime Saddle, then you didn't live communally for awhile, right? But then eventually you ended back up at, where was it, Good Times?

A: That's right, I did end up at Good Times after Lime Saddle, after not living communally for about 4 years.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about Good Times?

A: It was an urban commune, as opposed to a rural commune, and it was based on -- it had a cottage industry which was a graphics business, Good Times Graphics. And they did graphics for all kinds of

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companies and businesses, and they had a newspaper called Good Times Newspaper for a few years, too, that was published regularly. But not everybody in the commune worked in this business. Some of the people that lived there just rented rooms and worked another job outside the commune. But everybody more or less participated in the life of the commune in terms of eating together at night, and sharing food expenses, sharing cooking chores, housekeeping chores.

Q: About how many people lived there?

A: Maybe a dozen, including two or three kids.

Q: Did this start in the '60's?

A: It started let's say, yeah, Good Times did start in the '60's. Let's say maybe '65, or something like that.

Q: So it lasted a long time?

A: Yeah, it did, -- well, at first, it wasn't a living situation, it was just this newspaper. And then they started this graphics collective, and then they got a house and started living together. I'm not sure exactly when that happened. But by the time I came along, they'd been living there for a few years, and it was a big, beautiful Victorian house on the corner of Market and Castro. Which, was later destroyed by a fire, after the commune broke up. We always thought that the landlord had set the fire to get the insurance and put up some condos and stuff, which he did do. But it was a beautiful building, and inside the building there was a beautiful piece of '60's artwork by one of the poster artists of day. I can't think of his name, but he was really famous, but he did this mural on the wall of the dining room, of these people standing on the sea shore, all this beautiful color of sky and sunset, this utopian mural that was really gorgeous, that had all these creatures in it. It was on the wall of the dining room, which was destroyed in the fire. But it had like 13 bedrooms or something, 4 story house.

Q: How many of you were there living?

A: There must've been a dozen of us or so, with some couples and single people.

Q: Did you work on the newspaper?

A: No, I didn't work on the newspaper. At that time I had a job working for Vista program in San Francisco, as an organizer in the women's community. I was the coordinator of the San Francisco Women's Switchboard, which was like an information and referral service for women in the Bay Area at that time. Which was really an interesting job too.

Q: I'll bet. But you only lived at Good Times about a year?

A: Yeah, I'd say a year and a half. Then I moved back up here to Humboldt County.

Q: Why did you end up leaving?

A: I didn't want to be in the city anymore, I really couldn't handle it. It was too --

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Q: --Did you have your son with you?

A: Yeah, I did, and he was going to an alternative school in the city, which is a good school, but we both really were used to the more rural lifestyle, and we wanted to get back to that. So we came back to Humboldt County.

Q: And you've been here ever since?

A: Pretty much, yeah.

Q: So how do you feel about that period of your life, when you lived communally?

A: I have great fond nostalgia for it, really. Even though there were things about it that were really hard. I think it was just the hope that we had, that we could change the world, that was so heady, and that kept us striving to work things out, no matter how difficult it was sometimes to live in a group situation, with everybody's foibles and everybody's preferences and everything. But we were dedicated to trying to find a way so that people could live this way, so that we wouldn't have to go on living in these little nuclear units that were consuming too many resources. I don't know if I answered your question.

Q: Sure you did. So do you feel like there are things that you learned during that period that you carried on in your life?

A: Certainly, because that's where my exposure to soy foods came. It's been the cornerstone of my life since then. Working to develop soybeans as human food, and market them, and become a business person, kind of what I call an enlightened capitalist.

Q: Do you ever see yourself living communally in the future?

A: Yeah I do, actually. In fact, I look forward to, especially in my older age, to being part of a group situation. I would really like that.

Q: I hear a lot of people say that, especially women, they talk about how they'd like to live with their women friends as they grow older.

A: Just think how fun it would be. I think it would be a creative and enjoyable way to live, it could be achieved given the right group of people and the right physical situation. I think everybody needs to have their privacy. And yet, if you had a place where people had their privacy, but could still come together, it would fill a lot of the needs that we have for companionship as a species, and yet solitude at the same time. Especially now that I'm entering menopause, and thinking about how when women get to the years where they don't have children to take care of, and they don't have responsibilities that involved family, how you can really have a whole new life, living with your friends.

Q: You can do a lot of fun, interesting stuff. I think that's it.