

Interview with Jack Manno, Cindy Squillace, and Karen Mihalyi

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

June 27, 1996

JM = Jack Manno, CS = Cindy Squillace, KM = Karen Mihalyi

Q: 28th? Are we that far along?

JM: 27th.

Q: 27th, okay. 6/27. And an interview with Jack Manno. I really don't know much about your communal experience. Is it just living in this house, pretty much, these two houses?

JM: Yeah, these two houses. We...oh, jeez, I never brought in my basket of arugula.

Q: Uh-oh.

JM: Got all dried out.

Q: Oh no!

JM: I'm trying to think of what to do with that. Yeah, these two house. Seven adults and three children.

Q: Now, I saw a sign out front that said "Grassroots." Is that what you call yourselves?

JM: Well, did, yeah. I sometimes still do, but this was Grassroots and that was Dandelion. The two houses had names. The collective started before Cindy and I, my wife and I, moved here. It had already been together for five years. It must have started in '69, '70, I guess.

Q: And did they buy the houses?

JM: Yeah.

Q: Wow.

JM: Started out renting both of them, then we had options to buy on both of them. I'm not exactly sure how that all worked out, and it got kind of complicated because then when we split up, you know, the ownership was really unclear. It was like a huge divorce, with children. It actually wasn't as messy as divorces can be. It was all pretty civil, it was just very complicated.

Q: Because you weren't incorporated?

JM: No, no.

Q: The deed was just in somebody's name?

JM: Yeah, yeah. We had no legal agreements at all.

Q: Oh yeah, that can be messy.

JM: Part of our intention, part of the intention of the community was to be able to live really cheaply, everybody was doing political work. So as I said [??], it's really politically based, in terms of community building. It was kind of a center for activity all throughout the whole community. This whole area was sort of the alternative community of Syracuse, the Westcot [??] Street neighborhood. The Women's Information Center started here, which is still going on, and the Syracuse Cultural Workers puts out, distributes posters and calendars and bumper stickers, and all that stuff. Still in existence. Dik Cool, lives next door, is the founder and director of that. There was a kiddie co-op, cooperative day care center

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that operated out of, first of all, this house. All those things kinda started, and Dik worked full time for the Syracuse Peace Council. Karen and Liz founded the Women's Information Center, and that was out of this house, too. Then it moved over here on Allen Street [??], that's still active, too. All the things that were started, except for the kiddie co-op, which kind of segued into the Jevonian [??] School over there, everything that was started here is still going on.

Q: Was there a food co-op as well?

JM: There is a food co-op.

Q: There still is?

JM: Yeah.

Q: Great.

JM: I don't think we were involved in getting that started. I'm sure we were involved, but it wasn't out of these houses. That I remember, anyway, it might've been.

Q: Right. A lot of food co-ops have started out of like group houses and things, so that's why I asked.

JM: It may have, I don't know. I don't think so, though.

Q: So, do you know what the original impetus was to come together in these houses? Was it anti-war work, or...?

JM: Well, most everybody was involved in anti-war work. You really better talk to Dik or Karen about that. Hopefully, they'll come out.

Q: Oh, that'd be great.

JM: Dik is...I talked to him and he was all set to come out. I talked to him about what I knew about the project and he started getting a little bit testy about academic....

Q: That it wasn't quite right or something? Oh, no, no, I see.

JM: Well, no...he thought it was for a book, if it's not gonna be something that...if it's just available to academics, then he didn't want to do it, so....

Q: Oh, no, I don't think so.

JM: I said, "I don't know anything about it. If you want to come out and talk, talk. If you don't, don't. It's none of my concern." So I don't know. Anyway, Dik and Liz and Karen are all next door, and they were all the people who started it. Dik was working at the Syracuse Peace Council, he was a major organizer. So [unintelligible] had been in prison for two years prior, as a resistor.

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Q: Wow. Now, did you folks pool your money?

JM: Yeah, well...yes. We pooled our money for the housing expenses, for the children's expenses, school stuff, and obviously, for the house. And it was real cheap, that was the great thing about living here. You could pay eighty dollars a month apiece, that covered everything.

Q: That is cheap. And then, would you eat your meals together?

JM: Yeah.

Q: Both houses would come together, like for dinner?

JM: Yeah, we still do.

Q: That's great.

JM: In a rotation of who's cooking nights. We've set up the back apartment for, first, Dik's father who lived there when he was struggling with cancer. He died there. Now my mom is ill and she's there. My mother and father are there now. So it's kind of become the place for the elders.

Q: Oh, but it's nice that you have it though, yeah. That's great. And then, have you had some sort of work-sharing system where each person has to contribute a certain number of hours per week, for tasks?

JM: Yeah, we always had a chore list, and we had to have childcare, too, so we had childcare rotation.

Q: Oh, so you'd share childcare duties.

JM: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. And so has the population been around seven adults, three kids, or has it been larger?

JM: Well, the whole time that we lived here...we split up, moved out. We moved out in '83.

Q: You and your wife did?

JM: Yeah. And my daughter.

Q: When you say "we split up," you're talking about the community?

JM: Yeah.

Q: You split up in '83.

JM: Well, it actually split up in '81 or '82. We kind of stayed here. Stayed living here after we were no longer seeing ourselves as a collective. Then we moved back here, I guess it was three years ago, three and a half years ago.

Q: So you were gone for about a decade or so?

JM: Almost ten years, yeah.

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Q: Now, do you see yourselves as a collective now, or how do you view yourselves now?

JM: Well, I don't know. I don't think we define ourselves as a collective now, although we're consciously sharing. We still have a dinner, a meal rotation. We still share child care although not quite as formally as we used to. But there's a new, well, not so new anymore, she's two, next door, so we do childcare with her. My children are thirteen and ten. We share meals and we do workdays. So, I guess, nothing more than real good neighbors would do, I guess.

Q: Yeah, okay.

JM: It's still all mixed together. Even the ownership is -- Dik owns half of this house. We also own the other house over there, too, so.

Q: Oh, so is that a rental or...?

JM: Yeah, it's a rental to my wife's brother and his partner live there, so they're involved in our lives, too, so it has kind of spread out into another house. We try to do that with the whole street, and we're getting there.

Q: That's so wonderful.

JM: When we first moved back here there weren't any children at all. Now you go out there and there's thirty-fourty kids on the street. It's pretty amazing.

Q: Your kids must love that.

JM: We have been part of turning the neighborhood around from all student rental [unintelligible] to mostly [unintelligible]....

Q: Homeowners....

JM: ... and lots of children. So that's great. That's been a really big change over the last two-three years.

Q: Is this still kind of a center for alternative activity?

JM: Well, yeah, sort of . I wouldn't say the houses are, but Dik is still the director of the Syracuse Cultural Workers, and Karen is the director of the Syracuse Community Choir. And many other things. I teach at a college, so that has altered.

Q: What do you teach?

JM: Environmental Science at the College of Environmental Science and Forestry [unintelligible].

Q: Have you had any sort of formal governing structure? I mean, did people hold leadership roles and did you have regular meetings and stuff like that?

JM: Yes, although people didn't hold formal leadership roles. Whatever formal leadership there was, like meeting facilitator or agenda setter and all that stuff, was rotated.

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Q: Okay. How often did you have meetings?

JM: I think we used to meet every week, once a week. We only meet every three weeks now. When we're lucky.

Q: Right. And would you have a special way of running the meetings, like by consensus, or did you vote on things?

JM: Yeah, well, both Liz and Karen in particular were involved in the training with Movement for A New Society.

Q: Oh, yeah.

JM: So, we used a lot of that, Movement for A New Society facilitation process. You know, we always do personal sharing and agenda review and everything was by consensus. There wasn't much in the way of formal decisions. It was mostly discussions. I think the area that was probably the trickiest in terms of decision making was around the children since we were doing sort of collective parenting. The biological parents always had [unintelligible].

Q: And how has that gone?

JM: Well, I think it went really well.

Q: Do you think it is easier being a parent having other adults around to help?

JM: Oh yes, no question of that. I mean, there's obviously some additional difficulties, too, some complications, I think. I mean, it was great for the kids to have that much adult attention. I don't know. It would be good to talk to them. Derek is actually here now. He's living upstairs.

Q: One of the kids that grew up here?

JM: Yeah, I guess he's twenty-two or twenty-four now. Mark is now here too, with his baby and his girlfriend.

Q: Wow, another generation.

JM: Yeah, we have another generation.

Q: That's great.

JM: But their mother, Liz, who lived here and we see her three days a week, has a farm out in [unintelligible]. She's living there, also with Mark and his wife and their baby right now. So she's here half time. We have always talked about that being sort of our country setting.

Q: Oh, how nice.

JM: But it hasn't happened. We've talked about it for years. We would build out there, and this would be our city setting, that would be our country setting. But with the drive, it's never worked out that way, but we've always had that vision that we would.

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Q: Do you guys garden together, or have you in the past?

JM: Yeah.

Q: Is there an emphasis on a certain way of eating? Like, are you vegetarian or eat organic food, things like that?

JM: Not exclusively, but I guess the emphasis on eating is conscientiously, but not rigidly. We eat meat, but not a lot. Maybe three meals a week or four meals a week we might have meat, usually not red meat. That sort of thing. Everybody eat frugally. Combination of sort of working class ...

Q: Now, what about a membership policy. If someone wanted to move in, did you have some sort of membership policy set up?

JM: Uh, I don't think we ever had certainly not a written policy. We certainly had an understanding that nobody would move in until everybody had discussed it with them....

Q: So that's probably something you might talk about at a meeting?

JM: Oh, probably several meetings, yeah. That was never done lightly. In fact, it was not done at all until towards the end, anyway.

Q: Because you had a core group that lived here?

JM: Yeah, the group that lived here was together for quite some time. The time we moved in until the group split up, that was probably maybe seven years. Nobody moved in or out.

Q: Wow. So it was very stable.

JM: Yeah, it was a stable group, you know, at least five of us and one of the children, my daughter, so still six or seven of us still here.

Q: Now, what were the living arrangements like within the houses? Would each adult get his or her own room or couples have their own room together, things like that? Did children have their own rooms?

JM: Well, let's see. I think when we first [unintelligible] I think Mark and Derek, the two boys, shared a room in this house. In this house it was Dik and Liz, who are brother and sister, and Marvin, who's not here, and the two boys, Eileen lived up in the attic.

Q: So there were about six people, then, you just named off, in this house?

JM: Yeah. Then Karen and Cindy and I and David and Zachary, David's son. That was another complicated thing, because Zachary kind of got adopted into our family. He was, basically, the kid who didn't have a home, and David had been spending a lot of time with his mother and his mother kind of took of, so, it wasn't really his son, but we took him in, so he lived with us through that whole time. He's still around, but we don't see him that much. We kind of helped to raise him. I think he lived with us from the time he was six until we all left. He was probably about twelve or thirteen then, and then he went and lived with David after we all split up, and now he has a baby. So we don't see him often. Anyway, Cindy and I were the only couple that were living together. Liz and David were a couple. That's

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how the whole thing split up, when they split up, because...it was not good. It wasn't a pleasant break-up. But they lived in separate houses. David lived over there, Liz lived over here.

Q: But, even still, when the relationship broke up, the community couldn't stand it.

JM: Yeah. Cindy and I, we moved in together as a couple, when we were married, and we had two bedrooms over here. And then Deanna [??] was born, my daughter was born here, but we moved when she was just a year old.

Q: Now, the kiddie co-op was for more than just your kids? Other kids would come from...?

JM: Yeah, it was a cooperative day care center, so parents would take shifts one day a week. They didn't pay....

Q: They just worked. That's great. And did you do any other formal things with the kids, like, did you home school them or anything like that?

JM: No.

Q: No, just went to public schools?

JM: Just went to public schools. We were all involved in their schooling, so it was an interesting encounter with the school system. They never quite knew. Every time there was a parent-teacher conference, there would be a different group, you know. It was interesting.

Q: Well, did the kids ever get hassled at school about the way they lived?

JM: I don't know. Neither Mark nor Derek, the two of them are still close with us, ever, you know, they seem reluctant to talk about the...we've sort of prodded them, "What was it like for you growing up?" Just sort of like young adult males everywhere, they're just....

Q: Pretty stoic about it?

JM: ...not real open to talking, they're just, "Oh, I'm fine." So, I never really heard the details about how awful it was. I think it was really great. Clearly, they're both wonderful young men, so....

Q: Well, at that time, were there a lot of other sort of group co-op houses going on in Syracuse?

JM: There had been one that actually I had been involved with from a distance, [unintelligible] called the Rainbow House. That was also very political. And they were more...I don't know what they were more. I don't think this group was together at that time. I guess that would've been around the same time this group started, but I didn't know this group. Complicated series [??] of time, but that would've been probably '69, and then there was also a group down Madison Street [??]...that ran the drop-in health center. I was aware of them, but not really. There were a lot of other groups living together and trying to...but it was more not terribly different from now, where students all live together. There weren't other groups like ours that were as many people or as consciously a collective, with names for the houses.

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Q: Right.

JM: And we have a brochure which somebody finished, to show it.

Q: Oh, you have a brochure. I'd love to see one, if you have a spare copy. That'd be great.

JM: I'm sure we have. Dik will have it.

Q: Okay.

JM: If he's not out yet, I'm not sure he's coming.

Q: He might not be coming, this is too academic for him, perhaps.

JM: He's a cynic about academia.

Q: Yeah. Well, that's too bad, because we feel like, the reason we're doing the project really is because we feel there are some really important lessons learned about how people live together successfully. We feel that it's important to chronicle those, so it's really not just to write a book, or write some dry academic treatise. Yeah. Well, anyway, would you say that the group has a common ideology or shared philosophy?

JM: Yeah. Definitely. I think that's what brought us together. I don't know exactly how to define it. If anything, probably the stuff in Movement for a New Society was kind of the heart of it, although we weren't active members in any political organization. But we were all committed to working for peace and social justice and feminism we certainly have a big part of our identity.

Q: When you split up work assignments did you consciously try to do it without following gender lines?

JM: Oh yeah, we did a lot of that, and there was a lot of consciousness about the women doing carpentry work, and you know, encouraging that.

Q: And did that work pretty well?

JM: Oh, yeah, I think for the most part it worked pretty well. I think there were times where ideology overtook practicality. It might not have been the most useful, but I think it was still good. It was apropos. It was easy for me because I don't do any of that stuff anyway. I'm much more into cooking, child care....

Q: Domestic work?

JM: Yeah, yeah. I don't do that stuff anyway, so it was no big deal for me, but David was a carpenter. I think it was really hard for him.

Q: Uh-huh. To watch people do a bad job on something or be slow?

JM: Hard to have his whole work ideologized in some way. It was like, he just wanted to do his work.

Q: What were your relationships like with neighbors and the surrounding community?

JM: I think good. I don't remember ever having any problems. We always had a very friendly relationship with the immediate neighbors. It certainly wasn't a close relationship. We didn't really

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socialize. It's really not the older, traditional family. When we moved here it was more like it is now. There were a lot of children, and there were families. But that really changed over the years. So it became all student rental housing. Shifted back. We never had any problems. Maybe just this one guy up here, Al Hirsch [??], he used to yell at the children all the time. Because they'd be playing, and he thought they were wild. They were wild.

Q: So, did you have a reputation of being, like, the "hippie house," or something like that?

JM: Well, I'm sure we did. It's not something that I was real aware of. It's not like people came by to be tourists and look at the hippies, or anything like that.

Q: Oh, that's good.

JM: That I know of. They may have.

Q: They may have run tours by your house, and you didn't know it.

JM: I'm sure we had a reputation. Not something that I was terribly aware of.

Q: Did you have any encounters with police or city officials over anything? No zoning hassles about too many unrelated adults living in a house?

JM: There was a period of time about that. I don't remember it really well. I don't think it ever really involved us too much. There was a period where there were concerns about that, and I remember public hearings. But I don't ever remember housing inspectors coming to our house. And we never had any run-in with social services around our children or anything like that, stuff that you hear about. Our encounters with the law were always over demonstrations and things, not about houses and stuff.

Q: Okay. So, what other political activities did you get involved in besides anti-war protests?

JM: Yeah, we were heavily involved in that, and there was a lot around the feminist movement, anti-nuclear power stuff. We all went to...what was it now, in Massachusetts?

Q: Three Mile Island?

JM: No.

Q: No, it was something else?

JM: There were really big camping protests. A site where they were building a power plant in Massachusetts, I can't remember the name of it. Occupation of....

Q: Oh, right. Sort of non-violent action type stuff?

JM: Yeah.

Q: Did people actually go down to Philadelphia to get trained by the...?

JM: Yeah, Karen and Liz did. They went through the....

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Q: Movement for New Society training.

JM: Yeah.

Q: That's great. Would you say there was a common or shared spirituality at all, or common religion, perhaps?

JM: Not really. There was a common emphasis on the importance of building community. I think that if there's anything that we all shared apart from our political beliefs, it was the importance of community. We worked at that consciously. We really had a picture of community being a place where people celebrated births and deaths together and we were in it for the long haul.

Q: Yeah. Did you have home births?

JM: Yeah.

Q: Oh, wow.

JM: Yeah, my daughter was born in this house. My son was born after we moved, so he was born in our other house.

Q: Were people into midwifery? Did anyone get trained to be a midwife?

JM: No, none of the people who lived here, our friends. None [??] of them were closely involved with that. We've also been closely involved in support of the Native American community in this area, pretty heavily involved in communal work at Onondaga [??]. I still am.

Q: What is Onondaga?

JM: Onondaga is the Iroquois community south of here. The original peoples of this area, of the Onondaga. What's left of their territory is south of here. Onondaga nation. It's the capital of the Six Nations, Iroquois Confederacy.

Q: Oh, okay.

JM: I currently chair the environmental/technical advisory group to the chiefs and clan mothers of the Onondaga. So that's probably another area that we've all done work in.

Q: Native American rights?

JM: Yeah, Native American support. [tape interrupted]

Q: How would you describe the people who have lived here, like, maybe demographic characteristics? White, middle class, well educated?

JM: Oh, definitely white.

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Q: Well educated?

JM: Well, I think all those are true. Most everybody comes from a working class background. Raised in working class families. I think that distinguished us in some ways from other...made the commitment more serious in some ways. Somewhat more resourceful than middle class kids ...

Q: Hi, I'm Deborah.

CS: I'm Cindy.

Q: Nice to meet you.

CS: Yeah.

Q: Have there been rules, like written rules, formal rules about behavior, conduct or anything? Like no smoking, no drinking, things like that? Lights out at eleven?

JM: No, I wouldn't say that. We didn't even have formal agreements or understandings about home ownership or anything like that. That, I think, was a real weakness. We kept records of all our decisions from meetings, so in that way the rules were more of an ad hoc thing. They would be developed as we went along, but I'm sure we still have lots of notebooks of meeting notes. The communication systems were...each house had their own log book and so messages to each other and messages about things would be written in the log book. So these log books are still around somewhere, where all these messages to each other....

Q: Oh, I bet they're interesting to look back in.

JM: Oh, I'm sure they are.

Q: Probably get a kick out of that. Yeah.

JM: I don't know. Are there any scrapbooks around, like the brochure from the original house?

CS: Yeah, Dik's fiftieth birthday scrapbook would have all that stuff in it.

JM: Yeah. He said he was gonna come out, so.

CS: Oh, just now?

JM: No, no, no, last night when I talked to him. I told him we were gonna have it at 7:30, and he and Liz and Cora go and have a breakfast date every Thursday morning.

CS: I'll see what they're doing. I'll see if they're up. Mama slept all night.

JM: Yeah, great. I didn't hear her. It's like having an infant again.

Q: Yeah. Is it helpful to have other adults around to help out with your parents or does it work that way?

JM: Yes, although we haven't got that down. It's not real clear how to help my mom. It's like, what needs to happen? The help that's needed is sort of physical, getting her up and moving her. We haven't talked about people in the other house helping out with that. We did it some last year when she was here, but now she's here for the long haul. But that's something we did a lot when Dik's father lived here with us. We definitely took shifts with him and helped take care of him. So I'm assuming we'll do that

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with my mom, too. But it hasn't come up yet. Although it's a good point to bring it up at the next meeting.

Q: Right. Now, is it pretty much just your family that lives in this house now?

JM: Yeah. It's a little complicated, too. When we moved back, we moved back when Dik lived here and then his father came after a while and lived with us. And Karen was next door and she had done up the house, she made an apartment upstairs, she was renting out the upstairs. But she wanted to have a baby, getting on the biological clock. It's something she always wanted, and it was time. So through a lot of...Dik and Karen decided to have a baby together, even though they weren't, at that time, a couple. Although they had been living collectively for all these years. Having had a long-term relationship, but not a romantic relationship.

Q: So did they?

JM: Yes, that's where Cora came from. And in the process, Dik has moved next door to be with Karen and Cora. So now they're over there, we're over here.

Q: Yeah, got it.

CS: Nice little nuclear families.

JM: Now we're nuclear families after all this.

Q: But you still do a lot together, so that's like an extended family, almost.

JM: That's how we see it now, rather than as....

Q: As a collective.

JM: ...it's more of an extended family.

Q: Uh-huh. Yeah. Okay. Was there much artistic expression going on during the big political times?

CS: Oh yeah! Oh my god, yes.

JM: Well, Cindy was...we did a lot of...well, Karen has always done choir kinds of things and for a long time she.... Well, they used to have a yearly gathering of women called Women Harvest, which was sort of a feminist festival, gathering. She started it at one of those, put together a choir and a lot of things grew out of that, where they would do women's shows every year. Cindy was really involved in that.

CS: I was doing theater and mime class.

JM: She was doing theater. We were also founders of the Open Hand Theater. Which is still going on.

CS: Co-founders.

Q: Oh, okay.

JM: And Cindy was doing mime. I was doing poetry and poetry readings.

CS: We had music, poetry, and dance nights. And Dik is the founder of the Syracuse Cultural Workers, I don't know if you're familiar with them.

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Q: I just heard little bits and pieces, I'd love to hear a little more, though.

CS: Well, we can show you brochures.

Q: Oh, okay.

CS: Catalogs.

JM: Don't you have them right in the door there? Are there any more there?

CS: I don't know if I have any more there.

Q: And they promote cultural events?

JM: No, it's more like a publishing house for posters, calendars.

Q: Of alternative events, kind of?

JM: Nooo.

Q: No?

JM: Sort of the annual Peace Calendar, or....

CS: Here's the catalog. They try to support local artists, but certainly not everything is local, but they're all artists who in some way believe in social justice, peace, or women's issues, some kind of progressive agenda.

Q: Lesbian and gay issues, I guess, too?

CS: Yeah, just by looking [unintelligible]. There's the Peace Calendar.

Q: This woman lives right, well she used to, she's dead now, but she lived right near my house [??].

CS: Is that right?

Q: Yeah, really cool person.

CS: And this person who did this and the cover of the Peace Calendar and many many other things in here is local and she works with the Cultural Workers. And this poster was adopted by the Seneca, the Women's History Museum has the [unintelligible] poster, and her other one, this one was adopted by the Holocaust Museum as their official poster.

Q: Oh, wow. Yeah.

CS: In Washington. So they're really, I mean, it's an international publishing house, and Dik started that at the Syracuse Peace Council with the Peace Calendar, and the Peace Council decided that it wasn't enough [??] [unintelligible] and it was taking time and energy away from doing other things to keep publishing a calendar, so Dik took it out of the Peace Council and created the Syracuse Cultural Workers with the calendar and that has turned into this. It employs up to twenty people, at various times, during rush season, that is.

JM: Was there anybody up there now?

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Interviewer: Deborah Altus

June 27, 1996

JM = Jack Manno, CS = Cindy Squillace, KM = Karen Mihalyi

CS: No, he's not stirring, even. This is the workers. That's Dik and there's Cora, his daughter, this is our daughter, Deanna, and there's me, and this is our across the street neighbor Katie, and there's my brother who lives in that house there, so we kind of have a little three-house thing going on now.

Q: Yeah, that's great. So you guys were involved in a lot of artistic stuff. Yeah, that's great. Well, what would you say has been the best part of living in a collective house? Or what are some of the benefits?

JM: For me, I like being around people, I always have, and I like the sense of ongoing support for trying to build alternative visions about the way people live. I've probably not done as much as I would've liked. But we've done a lot. One of the neat things for me is just being able to show that we can share material goods. We don't have to have one of everything for everybody. Certainly, in my own work around environmental studies, environmental policy, a lot of times we talk about ways to reduce consumption, and the students [side 1ends]

Particular benefit of living together, when we lived together earlier a big part of it was that we could live so inexpensively. That freed us to do the kinds of work that we wanted to do, that we weren't going to make a lot of money for. I think that that's a real benefit. I think it's all the benefits of an extended family, but this time you get to choose your extended family.

Q: Ah, right.

JM: They're not selected for you. I really like it with the children. It matters a lot to me that there are other adults that are looking out for our kids. We could have that in any closely knit neighborhood, but those don't exist so much anymore. You really have to make that happen.

CS: And these are the relationships that from birth the kids have had, and in a neighborhood situation, kids might not feel comfortable going to the other adults with problems or with that kind of close relationship. With this one, when my daughter gets really angry with me she goes to Karen.

Q: Oh yeah.

CS: Where she can let it all out and get the support that we aren't able to do at that point. It just is an invaluable thing to have that. And when we're too beat to do something with the kids, maybe somebody in the other house is up for playing basketball or whatever it is that they have a need for, so we don't have to meet a hundred percent of the needs at the time.

JM: And that was really good before. Liz, at that point, was really a single mom with two kids and yet, she was able to do the political work that she did, she was able to be one of the founders of the Women's Information Center. Things that she would've never been able to do in an isolated situation, but she had a lot of people who were participating in her child care.

Q: How about the flip side? What have been some of the hard things and some of the drawbacks?

JM: Just a lot more relationships to work on. So it takes time and energy to work on relationships, particularly if you're committed to them. I would say, time. You save a lot of time by having help around, but it takes a lot of time to maintain the relationships.

CS: Yeah, I started really wondering whether it almost was having a negative effect on the work that you could do in the world because it was taking so much time to keep the intimate relationships on an

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even keel. So much emotional and psychic [unintelligible] just to do all that that then there wasn't any time left to go out and do whatever in the world ...

Q: So that's sort of ironic in a way, because I guess collective living saves time but then it also takes time to maintain these relationships, so....

JM: Yeah, definitely it's a trade off.

CS: And sometimes, according to how the relationships are going, sometimes it feels much more frustrating than others, and we left the collective for...I don't know if you talked about that.

Q: Yeah, for a decade?

CS: For a decade. One of the reasons, for me, was really a very personal thing because we wanted to have children. Well, actually, we had a child, and I wasn't feeling confident enough about myself as a parent to be able to hold my own with everyone else in the collective, helping to parent my child, and I really think that that was a part for me of needing to go and learn how to be a mother on my own.

JM: Hey, Dik? Hey, you know what you could get? Your fifty-year scrapbook thing?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

CS: And then discovering after a decade that, "Okay, I learned how to do it. Now I want it back!"

JM: That has that old brochure in it? You don't know where it is? We must have that around somewhere.

Q: Yeah.

CS: I could've gotten it back after maybe five or six years. That would've been enough time, but for me, that was a negative thing, that you have to have such a strong personality to [unintelligible]. If you're the type of a person who is a little bit more intimidated or less confident, then it's harder to maintain your sense of self and not just go with the group with everything. That's been one of my personal struggles, when I was younger, particularly. And I grew in that way and was able to come back into the situation and not feel quite that same way about it. But I needed to be older. Especially about parenting, to handle that.

Q: Yeah, I can understand that. Yeah, it makes a lot of sense.

JM: Are you caught over there?

CS: Especially with someone who was already a mother and had a lot more experience with that. Oh good, Dik is here. You can continue on for a while.

Q: Yeah, that'd be wonderful. Okay.