

Interview with Laurance Headley

Interviewer: Unknown

July 20, 1995

A: I went into the co-op with some open-minded, real loving attitudes. Very few expectations. I didn't have, you know, unexpected or, you know, real difficult goals that I wanted to achieve and, when I came up against the difficulties, we just had had enough. It was time to move on.

Q: So, what, can you tell me a little of the basics of it? Wait. I wrote this down. What was it called?

A: Four Winds Farm was the name.

Q: Four Winds Farm and was it...

A: In terms if it had a label, it was like an artistic bend and working class. The cooperative commune was started by my best friend in college, who had met some friends in Portland and they were a couple and the three of them pooled their money together and bought a 40-acre, run-down farm in Hood River...

Q: And do you know when that was?

A: Knowing that they would invite other people to join.

Q: Do you know when that was what year?

A: I'm not really, really good on dates but it was '74.

Q: [unintelligible].

A: Around '74.

Q: And is that when you started? Were you in it?

A: Yeah. I moved in May and they started in the year before. So, in '73. No, I think I moved there in May '75 and they started in '74.

Q: How long did it go altogether? You were there three years.

A: Still going.

Q: It is still going?

A: Yeah, it's still going, as far as I know, because we wrote it up as a trust. The land was to stay in a trust. It was never to be sold - subdivided or sold and, as far as I know, it's still there.

Q: And people still living there?

A: The same - my friend still lives there and another owner.

Q: Outside of Hood River?

A: Outside of Hood River and it's not set up as a commune, in a sense. It's set up more as, basically, a partnership/owner. Two men, or two families, own the property, as far as I know. They might have changed and they were the ones who had the most invested unless they could find some more investors, basically. [unintelligible] down to money.

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Q: Yeah.

A: But, the way we set it up was everyone who invested, who put in their share [tape stops and starts again] -- he's great, though. He's a good kid, heart of gold. He was born on the commune and he was the first child to be born on the commune. He wasn't the only kid there. There was another woman who brought her kid to the farm. There's probably, as far as communal full-timers, you know, people who had invested and were equal partners and there was probably about nine or thirteen, at the most -- people came and went and the way we -- I was trying to explain this earlier was the way we set it up so that people -- there was this chunk of money that the land cost and everybody who came to the farm paid equally into the ownership of that land. I'd say it was like \$50,000. It was really cheap.

Q: For 40 acres? Is that cheap in those days?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I thought it was. You know, it's prime land. It's like got water. It's got good soil. It's got woods. A lot of privacy and we were close to town. Now, that kind of place would go for \$250,000 or something like that, actually.

Q: Wow.

A: Oh, yeah. I'm sure.

Q: Did it have a building on it or anything?

A: Yeah. It had a farm. It had a barn.

Q: It had a house?

A: It had a house and some other buildings, you know, [unintelligible]. It was a rundown place, though. It needed a lot of work and it took about six months more, a year to clean it up, you know, all the junk around there and we set up an organic garden and whatever investment people made, it was returned to them when they left and you couldn't make an investment unless it was -- the decision was made communally. My interest was setting up a woodworking shop and I built a building to accommodate my needs and another person was the potter and his name was Chuck. There was this interesting triangle. My best friend, his name is Chuck and his best friends were Chuck and Sally and he was in love with Sally. There was this triangle thing going on. Sally didn't really like Chuck but he had his heart set on her and he just wouldn't take no for an answer.

Q: But she was part of another couple?

A: She was another couple and Sally and her partner, Chuck, were really difficult people to live with. They were as far as the group, they were the most uncommunicative, uncommunal-like people. They didn't share their feelings. They weren't open parents. They were the other family who had a child right after we did and they were protective and they were very -- they were nosy about other people and that was Sally's trait and Chuck, on the other hand, was schizophrenic.

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Q: He was really, clinically?

A: Yeah, he was schizophrenic.

Q: That's tough.

A: He would lose his temper and go after people and it was very difficult. But, that's just some of the inner dynamics of the inner personal commune life that went on. It was a lot of horsing around sexually. There was a lot of drugs. There was a lot of communal eating. Every night we sat at a table and we ate together and we shared the food. We shared the cooking and cleaning and we had a and that was divided evenly. Everybody took a share of that. That created a problem down the road when more people came and didn't want to partake or had a complete different diet than we did. The original people or the first nine or so people were really adaptable and the more people came and they just didn't want to they thought it was kind of too much to ask that they fit into our food habit or lifestyle we had chosen and it wasn't like somebody had sat down and said, okay, we're going to be vegetarians and we're going to be strict vegetarians. It was just something that was acceptable, you know, it was okay. We wanted to live this way, maybe, and it was just that we liked it. But, there were some people who were stricter than others and, when there were people who would bend the rules, so to speak, the more stricter people would shun them, you know. Not approving of their food habits. So, it created a, okay, you keep your food away from the communal. You have your private food stash somewhere else. You know, that's just a small, little thing that [unintelligible].

Q: That's not so small [unintelligible].

A: Because what happened, this other couple came and they didn't -- they didn't want to -- they wanted to live there. They didn't want to pay any part of the membership or the responsibility of being a full-time communal person but they wanted to live there and they liked what was going on and they didn't want everyone had to go out and work, basically, for a living to support themselves or they had a lot of money that they inherited and they could bring that inheritance to the farm and pay that money. But, this other couple, they came and they didn't want to do any of that, any of that, you know, pay the \$5,000, or whatever was and work towards paying that \$5,000, or whatever and it was very difficult, for everybody as a group, to stand up and tell those people, time to go and Cec and I were and another person were the most outspoken about what our needs were and in being up front with our needs and the other people, well, just, they didn't have that skill. My friend, Chuck, didn't have that skill and that was something that happened between him and me, where we had gone to college and we dreamed up this communal life about living in the country and building our house and going to work off the land and working hard and, then, sharing our feelings about our friends and stuff like that. We did that just fine in college and, then, we started really living together. We travelled together and we [unintelligible] all these places and, then, we came to this focal point where I would want to be his friend and I could open myself up to him but it wasn't reciprocated. We weren't going anywhere. It was just a one-way street as far as, you know, a sharing friendship. So, you know, by the end of the four years, we'd be in these communal meetings he would listen to everybody and hear everyone's point of view and, then, he would take the middle of the road and his stand was just everyone's -- an average of everyone's point of view. It was amazing, you know, I just couldn't believe it. So, I just told him. I said, you can't keep telling me this because it's nothing, until you tell me how you really feel. He felt he couldn't open himself up

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anymore because what he really wanted to do was live with this woman, Sally, and she just wouldn't have him. Just wouldn't have him. That's what he really wanted. So, that was really hard. So, she ended up leaving. She and her Chuck ended up leaving because of their lifestyle being real different than Cece's and mine and [unintelligible] they just couldn't the children really made that real clear. When our kids were born and we said that we were open parents, we will share our child responsibilities with other people and we did. There was another couple that we shared our son with and they didn't have child and other people, too, other friends that we still keep in touch with but Charlie and Sally couldn't. They were very possessive over their kid and they wanted real strict boundaries, you know, physical limitations for their kid and, now, they had problem. Their kid was real different than ours, too. It was real cranky. It cried a lot. I mean, [unintelligible] angelic boy who'd just smile at you all the time and was real easy going. He nursed and changed, no problem, slept through the night and they had this cranky kid who would just never have a schedule and it was just, you know, kids are like that. You get they don't always conform to whatever expectations you have.

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: And she wasn't unhealthy or anything but it was just difficult I mean, the pregnancy was difficult for her, you know. It just was real different, just the opposite of my own baby. Yin and Yang kind of thing. So, anyway, this other couple got they rubbed everybody the wrong way. So, and subtly, we tried there was this undercurrent to get them to move off the farm and they could feel it. So, they made a decision that they would leave and we never had to come up to them as a group and say, listen, it's time for you guys to leave because we're not getting along with you guys for these reasons, though Cece and I were ready to do it. We were just anxious but everyone kept telling us, oh, it'll work out. These people will leave. They're going to make the right decision. But that's not the way Cece and I are. We're just more open, not that we're battling people, but we're just more open with our feelings and try to help people work their feelings out, you know, [unintelligible] and there was this clause that, if somebody left, we needed to find other people. It was up to the group to find other people. I don't think that was ever a problem.

Q: Well, you needed it financially, probably, among other things. So, yeah.

A: Right. But that was never a real problem and that's why there was this other couple, who didn't want to commit to being responsible and that's the first time the group had to say, okay, it's time for you guys to leave. So, that was like and, then, at that time, Cece and I had had enough of this inability of people saying no.

Q: Yeah.

A: We said it's time for us. We need to go. We had other dreams that we wanted to do and a lot of the the social life, at the commune, was so was so ecstatic. It was so electric that it was contagious. There was so there were other young groups of people living in that, in this one area. The Hood River Valley is a small, agricultural valley that is on the north side of [unintelligible] that runs toward the Columbia River.

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Q: Yeah.

A: It's really picturesque there.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it has a lot of history, agricultural history. The, but the -- most of the young people that settled in that area, in the '60s, were looking for a back-to-nature kind of life and living on the farm, trying to, you know, make it as the best as they could and, when, and since we were the only communal farm, we had visitors constant every night and parties every month. I mean, there was just, we'd have a solstice party, you know, we'd have harvest something or other or someone's birthday, just every and there was something going on every night and there were other groups who'd try to get us, you know, get us involved in local issues, you know, against the herbicides and [unintelligible]...

Q: Yeah.

A: Food co-ops with a restaurant with craft fairs and all kinds of things like that and, so, we were just and we had a farm with you know, we had a agricultural garden. We had a two-acre garden there. We grew a lot of our own food and we bought our food from a food buying club and we were involved with that and going to Portland. Basically, that worked where people in the valley placed an order and went to Portland and picked it up and came back and distributed the food and there was a lot of labor involved there and the success of that, also, was based on personalities and the person who ran that was this dynamic man who had a lot of energy and he flirted with their women and, gosh, you know, just [unintelligible] got himself in trouble and he had a wife and three kids. Oh, God. But there were other people who wanted to were so inspired by the energy that we had going that they got us involved in a lot of things we might, we didn't, we hadn't even thought of. There were musicians that came and we had a group that came called the Illuminated Elephants and they were like a political street theater group, an international group of about six or seven of 'em came to our farm and, then, a couple or two stayed for a while, a couple of months, and they were from Sweden, Mexico, America and India, all over the world and they would travel in these buses, starting in Sweden and they'd work their way all the way down through Europe or the Middle East or across to India and, then, they came back to the States and, basically, their goal was to help out local villages and towns, struggle with, you know, improving their lives and they'd find out what people needed, what help they needed, and they'd set up some kind of theater group and educate or do a school and they one of the things they did with us was work on the Trojan Nuclear Plant. They were trying to shut it down.

Q: Oh, yeah. The Trojan Alliance.

A: Yeah, and we went to demonstrations and stuff like that and another thing that we did in our community was to improve the [unintelligible] anti-spray thing because Hood River has lots of fruit trees they'd spray year round. It's real bad, real bad spray [unintelligible]. I mean, it's not a healthy place to live. One of the original members was a nurse and she worked at the hospital. She had the night shift and she was the other person who had a daughter and she was the oldest daughter oldest child [unintelligible]. She was probably about six or so when she moved there and a lot of people didn't have sympathy for her, the mother, because she was, and she had a they didn't understand her situation because she, you know, she was the only one with a child. And not 'til our son was born did other people

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really understand where this other person, Ruthie, was coming from and, being a parent, raising a child and, then, when CC and I said we were going to have a kid, you know, let's set up these parameters that we want to share our kid, who wants to help out and, when Ruthie did that and she well, for one, she wasn't really that expressive in getting everyone's consensus. She didn't reach out to say, okay, I need you to do this and do this and do this and but, she needed help, people taking care of her kid and it just happened. You know, it wasn't like a planned thing and they as she -- I don't know if I'm being really clear about that but it's just a little detail that, originally, people were not kid-oriented. The kids came later, after a couple of years and, then, when the kids did come, people really understood how difficult it was to be a parent.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, and I think a lot of it had to do with, you know, age. We were all young and not kid-oriented.

Q: Sure, yeah.

A: And we were into having a good time and being involved with other causes. When I said artistic and I was a woodworker and this other, Chuck, was a potter and the fact that we lived on the farm and worked on the farm gave us a lot of time, I guess, to choose our own schedule. Some of the other people who had to go away to work were on a fixed schedule and that was a real nice blend and that was a good mix that, you know, people would you could always know that things were going to be taken care of and there's always going to be somebody at the farm taking care of things that broke down or needed attention. Like, if you worked, come home, there'd be a meal there like, or there'd be food in the refrigerator. There was never that there was never a void. Some things things never broke down that weren't taken care of. There were jobs that we had but people didn't they weren't shared communally and that irritated some people. Me.

Q: What do you mean? What kinds of jobs?

A: Well, we had a big garden. We had wood heat and we had a composting toilet and, I think, part of it was that women and men have different standards, different codes, that they would live by. Women need a lot more privacy than men and, physically, the men were in a lot better shape than the women were and they could go out and chop firewood for a couple of hours or they could go out and use the rototiller for hours. So, for a long period of time, we were pretty hard workers. But, one job, particularly, that people didn't really like doing was doing the compost. It was just, you know, that was I really liked doing it and, now, CC likes doing it here.

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm looking at her going incredible how you've changed but [tape stops and starts again] ... arts and crafts thing where we collectively pooled our resources, like I would do a wood and my friend, the potter, we would go to crafts fairs together and try to make a living off that and the potter he was very, very popular. Wood working was very difficult. I make a lot of [unintelligible] Woodworking, you've either gotta make the little decorative things. That's what I was doing.

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Q: I mean, that's all you can do, right, because furniture you can hardly sell through ...

A: I tried the furniture and nobody would buy it.

Q: You can't. It's too expensive at a craft fair.

A: Yeah. Right. And I ended up making wooden toilet seats, actually.

Q: Really?

A: For a year. And it was a struggle and, then, the following year, Fred Meyers came out with wooden toilet seats.

Q: Oh, no.

A: You know, it was it came to the fairs and the buyers from those stores I mean, they'd get their ideas and they could tell, I mean, you know, and they came out with a toilet seat for \$25.00. It was all over.

Q: Yeah. Yeah, right. Oh, boy.

A: But the handmade pottery just went over really well and we had lots of fun with the pottery, experimenting with different kinds of [unintelligible] glazes and stuff and Charlie was really good, in that respect, that he was open with his craft. That was the way for him to communicate with people. [End of side 1]. People were just interested in doing one project or something like that. That's all they were interested in and it was very difficult for me to make a living off of woodworking because I didn't know what to charge and I wasn't merely looking at it in terms of business. I wanted to be considered an artist and just be able to create pieces or make things and not have to be financially responsible. After a while, realizing that I was not a businessman, I went to work as a for a CETA (?) program and learn how to build wooden boats.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: So, that lasted about a year. They paid minimum wage and gave me experience that I really cherished. It was great and when that was over that's when I left the farm because I had a skill now that I could market.

Q: So, did you go on to make boats?

A: I did. I worked on the east I mean, on the [unintelligible] City and I've also worked up in Alaska on boats.

Q: Really? So, was that what '78?

A: No, I, well, let me see, it was about '78, yeah. Actually, it was '79 by the time I find -- was when I found that job. We left in '79, yeah.

Q: Let me ask a couple things just about the setup I'm still not clear on. Did everyone live in this one house that was there?

A: We had one house that was a communal house and the eating and bathing was done in there and there were two bedrooms in there and there was maybe one couple that, or one person that would live

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in that room and that was it and there were one, two buildings that were there when the farm was bought and, then, three or four other structures were added on, living structures, communal living structures and we got into trouble with the local authorities.

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: You know, for having so many dwellings.

Q: Yeah, it's a standard communal story.

A: Yeah, but it wasn't something that we were we were willing to deal with it I was in the feeling that we just needed to accommodate their needs and it was no big deal.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yeah, because all we needed to do was enlarge our septic system and they allowed it and that was, basically, what we did.

Q: That was simpler then than it would be today.

A: Yeah.

Q: 'Cause it's pretty strict in Oregon today.

A: Yeah.

Q: Alpha Farm has just told me all about it.

A: Oh, yeah, it's real strict. You have to, you know, deal with all this impact [unintelligible] and stuff.

Q: Right.

A: So, you know, when every the other houses that we had set up, it was okay, at first, you know, people were just living in there, sleeping in those other rooms, other houses and, then, when we were becoming rifts were being created, people would take food to their rooms and, you know, go to the refrigerators in there and keep it in there and stuff for different reasons, you know.

Q: Yeah, sure.

A: For diet, they had a different diet and they didn't want to eat communally every night. They wanted to have their own space and that was started by Charlie and Sally, that rift that they created and they, on one hand Sally, her background is that she is from the Johnson & Johnson family, the Band-Aid family, and she had a quarter million dollars in her pocket [unintelligible] her disposal and, when she wanted to do something, she would just, you know, call on the phone and go and get her money or whatever and they she and Chuck built themselves a log cabin up in the woods and they built it with their labor and stuff but they really did a nice, I mean, a nice situation and, then, she wanted to open up a bookstore in town as a way of bringing an income and keep herself busy and that's what she did. She, you know, [unintelligible] she had a lot of backing and she wasn't making any money, anyway, she'd just but she did. She had a real nice book store and that's how she [unintelligible] and CC went to work in the woods as a woodworker and she, you know, did slash piles, at first, and sort of planted trees and I was a

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furniture maker or whatever and, then, my other friend, Chuck, he went to work in a group home as a counselor or something like that and he met another man there, at this group home, who came to the farm and he became a full-time member and he and Chuck, as far as I know, the two are still there. Chuck and Collin [unintelligible] and they both have, now, families.

Q: Chuck was the one who was fixated on Sally?

A: Mmm-hmm.

Q: He's still there, huh?

A: He's still there. He's come and he went away for a while and, then, he came back. I mean, he was always there. He never left in terms of he sold out but he just left to take a break and moved back. I think he had a girlfriend. He had a girlfriend that lived in [unintelligible] Pine Valley and he went to stay with her for a while and he probably had several girlfriends but he's a very difficult for a person to live with but, in that sense, he gets fixated on this one dame, you know, and just doesn't give up.

Q: And you said there was pretty -- sex was pretty wide open? Is that what you said a while ago?

A: Yeah, there's a lot of sleeping around.

Q: A lot of bed hopping?

A: Yeah. Well, for some people.

Q: Yeah. Well, you know, probably some stable couples ...

A: I don't know.

Q: Not totally?

A: Not many. There was some stableness, you know, there were some periods where we just weren't being with our mates but there was a lot of sleeping around.

Q: So, there weren't any real [unintelligible]?

A: You know, you'd go and sleep with somebody for a while. You'd, at least, go and try it out. You know, sleep with somebody and then you go back to your mate. That kind of stuff. And nobody, as far as I know, met somebody else and, then, continued living with that person you broke up with originally.

Q: Really?

A: [unintelligible] stuff. No, there you know, there were some people who came and played games.

Q: Yeah.

A: That was weird. You know, tease. There was this woman who slept with every man on the commune.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yeah. Okay, well. But, you know, the men didn't get to sleep with every woman on the [unintelligible] I didn't get to sleep with every woman who came in.

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Q: Yeah.

A: I didn't make my goals [unintelligible].

Q: But your the basic relationships stood up through all that.

A: Yeah, CC and I [unintelligible] relationship.

Q: That's pretty impressive.

A: Well, I'm really lucky because, when CC and I met, I made it really clear that our relationship was based on just who we were to each other and we were open to meet other people and that was very important that loving someone also meant loving them for what they wanted to do and who they were. I mean, not a possessive love. A supportive love and I we had an open marriage for years. I was, actually, having three or four relationships when I met her. So, it was hard for me to give all the love for her. Well, that, you know, that's what we had happening over many years.

Q: Yeah?

A: About ten years. But, you know, on the same token, I was very receptive to her having relationships with other me. So, I'm not being possessive about it and, then, actually being very open and encouraging and the idea that we should live the fantasies to some degree was hard probably for the other people that we met. They didn't understand why like the men that CC would meet why I wasn't possessive, or upset, that she was sleeping with them and vice versa why women just had a hard time understanding why I would not want to just leave them. I mean, by the time [unintelligible] but that's not what I was into.

Q: What about drugs? You said, also, that it was a pretty...?

A: Well, most of the soft drugs. There was some psychedelic stuff and a lot of pot and mushrooms and that's there was some alcohol. But the hard, heroin and stuff like that, we didn't do it. The main reasons for not doing a lot of drugs is because we were working. It was hard to go to work after getting stoned all week.

Q: Yeah, that's true.

A: Couldn't do it. And we were actively involved in some of the communal politics and we just we never got we were involved we knew our neighbors. We were sociable. We invited our neighbors over. You know, middle class, hard working class people.

Q: Is that right?

A: You know, so, and they you know, we covered up. We would walk around naked. We'd cover up when they'd come over. We'd stop doing drugs when they'd come over. You know, it wasn't like we were trying to make them uncomfortable. That was our we weren't like trying to make people uncomfortable with our choices.

Q: What were the relations with the neighbors like, generally? Were they good?

A: They were really good.

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Q: Really?

A: Yeah. We never had a problem. The fact that we had privacy. Let's see, we had trees bordering all around our property.

Q: Yeah.

A: And no one could really see our property, even in the winter. You could see a little bit in winter but no one's walking around naked in the winter.

Q: Yeah, right.

A: There were -- yeah, we didn't I don't we never had any altercations.

Q: Were there rumors of how wild and crazy this place was that circled?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: I mean, there had to be [unintelligible]?

A: Oh, yeah, because there was, you know, because it was the only communal thing going, you know, [unintelligible] in the valley and there were so many people that came over constantly people coming over have people like of all different, of all levels of our economic stratosphere and like rich people coming people who like - people who owned the mill, you know, their children came over or people who were, you know, laborers on some of the farms. [unintelligible] they came. I mean, that extreme. And the fact that one of the like Sally was running a bookstore in town, you know, a real, you know, upscale kind of bookstore and one of the things that the bookstore did was keep up with the local gossip, [unintelligible] what kind of books they read, like that's what that was her interest. Books and tea, I'm sorry, that's what [unintelligible]. It's kind of cool.

Q: Yeah. It sounds good.

A: It's still there.

Q: In Hood River? What's it called? Books and Tea?

A: No.

Q: There's a place in Eugene, I think, called that.

A: Yeah, it's Lacoma. I think it's Lacoma.

Q: It's in downtown Hood River?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is she still running it?

A: I would think so, yeah.

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Q: I mean, I may be up there next week and might drop in.

A: You should. You should go there. It's an amazing place. I'd be interested to find out on your way back.

Q: I'll see if I I'm not sure I'll get that far but, if I do, I'll go take a look.

A: Well, I'd definitely call 'em up and tell 'em that you're coming.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. 'Cause, you know, I haven't I've never I haven't called them up in years. Last time I saw Chuck was when at the country fair. That's like we one of the things that we did, as a group, we went to the country fair.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, the first year, in '75, the summer of '75. We all went to the country fair. It was great, you know. We had Charlie came with his pottery and we set up a booth and we sold some pottery but we just mainly were socializing with all the people there and partying.

Q: Yeah.

A: And listening to music, you know. We always thought another thing that we did collectively was set up a food booth at craft fairs. As a group, we'd like spend days preparing food and we made our menu was like really simple homemade breads with made into a pizza and we did all of 'em [unintelligible]. It was great. [unintelligible]. It was very labor intensive.

Q: Yeah.

A: All the weeding was done by hand. Then, we got a rototiller and, you know, that made things go a lot faster. We tried to grow a crop together. Like, CC grew garlic one year and, then, she had so much garlic she could take it she did a trip going to the [unintelligible] fair up in somewhere in Washington. I can't remember. I didn't go. She went with some other people and we did group things like that and we thought about opening up a restaurant, a really big restaurant, collectively. But, we ran into a lot of obstacles personality conflicts in making a decision about what kind of menu or what kind of restaurant it was going to be and who was going to give money and blah-blah-blah. It's just and finding a place and blah-blah-blah. It just went on and on and on and on. We hashed around that idea for about a year and a half. That was a long one. That would have been it would have you know, restaurant, I don't know and, since then, I've learned more about restaurants and seen and met people who've worked in restaurants and know how organized and tight you have to be with everybody who works there because personalities really make it or break it. [unintelligible] how they blend and how they work well together. It has to be a team. A restaurant works when you have a good team.

Q: Yeah.

A: From, you know, people all at the top all the way down.

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Q: Yeah. That's a big business to jump into.

A: Yeah. It would've meant that we would've stayed there and my dreams were, actually and I'd told everybody when I went there [unintelligible] that I was going to be wanting to build a boat and sail around. Be a woodworker on a boat. So, that was my dream and, so, I pursued that dream [unintelligible].

Q: Yeah. Actually, you did.

A: When I get some more money, I'll get my boat. That's the way I look at it.

Q: Was it really open door membership? Could people just come and, if they had money, they could they had to contribute somehow, though?

A: If they were willing to work, they could work. Yeah, it was open door. There was an initiation period or whatever where you'd come in, get to meet everybody and see how we [unintelligible] and I think you're allowed like six months you could live there but you still have to pay rent which was like [unintelligible] bucks. Nothing. That included utilities. That's a month.

Q: And the permanent residents did, too. That's what you'd said [unintelligible].

A: We all paid the same. The more people.

Q: Everyone had...?

A: Yeah. If more people came to live, we just split it evenly. I mean, I think the max I ever paid was like \$175. It was like the more people that came, you know, the better it was.

Q: That's pretty cheap.

A: Yeah, it was pretty cheap. For forty acres, [unintelligible]. It's not like we were going we have a lot of wooded area and we thought of using the wooded area for our firewood and for building and things like that. And one of the things that I my attitude about living on the farm was to be more laissez-faire about how things happened. But I've changed a little bit. I'm a lot more, well, I'm more experienced now. I know what some of the things can happen. I'm more protective about abuse and overdose, you know, which those kind of concerns I wasn't aware of. I was more casual, I guess that's a [unintelligible] word but I use laissez-faire just because it's a French word and I know a little French. I'm a real trusting person, real open and, when I was wanting to be a father, there were very few role models for me to look to for help and those days, that was it was really important to me to be a father and raise my child and I didn't know anybody who was doing that but, now, everyone's doing it.

Q: Yes.

A: It's just the thing. Everyone wants to do it and it's great. It's a really neat scene and I just know that I've a real positive about that's changing the world. Anything. If there's anything that isn't changed because if there's anything that's changing the world, that's changing the world, more than anything else right now.

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Q: Yeah, down the road, that could make a huge impact.

A: And I look at my son, my 17 year old son, now, and, you know, we have to moments when the last couple, three or four years hasn't been easy for me and him. But, I just know it's going to work its way through and, you know, we're much better now than we ever have been. But, just knowing who he is and how he carries himself and can handle a lot of different situations, unlike a lot of his friends who can't and he seen so much more of a than most of his friends have.

Q: Yeah. Right.

A: He doesn't remember too much about the communal life but he does -- a lot of that stuff that he experienced has carried on, you know, when we left the farm and he's great. He's a real well-liked kid. He's real sociable where people just have a lot of nice things to say about him. [unintelligible] I'm really glad for what I've done because that's the [unintelligible].

Q: Would you say you're happy with your communal experience on the whole?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Do you think it was worth doing?

A: We got burned at the end. I mean, we were really tired of doing this, you know, holding people's hands and we were just burnt out. Like, time to go on. Let these little babies grow up [unintelligible] and we when we left, a lot of the expectations about how the money was going to come together were not clear and we spent a lot of time trying, after, you know, after we left, with mail and telephone calls, mostly through the mail, because we didn't want to deal with the inner personal discussions and, eventually, it just boiled down to like just a small \$100 little brou-ha and we knew it was small but, you know, and it could've been cleared up long time ago, you know, way before it materialized or mushroomed.

Q: Yeah.

A: But people there just didn't have the ability to sit down and discuss their inner feelings and, the way I see it, to say no, you can't do that, was breaking the tenth commandment. You know, telling somebody you just couldn't do something was just [unintelligible]. No, you have to leave. No, we don't want you or you're a pain in the neck or something like that was just and, you know. I just felt like that was a common it's real common in a lot of situations, not just communal life but, then, part of it had to do with everyone being an equal member and equal say and somebody objected. You didn't create any antagonistic feelings. You don't want to create bad feelings with somebody. So, CC and I were very diplomatic with situations, try and bring them up and try and work them out.

Q: Are you in touch with people at all, anymore?

A: No, we're not, actually. We haven't been in touch with a lot of those people.

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Q: So, there's no ongoing contact? I mean, I've just one of the odd things, or seemingly odd, I've discovered a lot of long defunct groups still have newsletters or something and people are still in touch.

A: Yeah, well, my friend, Craig, he was a real mover, a real big organizer in the [unintelligible] farm and some of the other farms that he was involved in and he organized an emergency response ambulance service.

Q: Oh, the one in the Bronx?

A: Yeah. Right.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. I know about that. Pretty impressive project.

A: Him and some other people were the big organizers but he's definitely he ran around like crazy [unintelligible] all kinds of bad, bad stuff and he keeps in touch.

Q: Wow.

A: Friends keep in touch with him.

Q: Well, you know, the Farm has at least two, maybe more, newsletters.

A: That's what I heard.

Q: That former members in fact, one of 'em's a glossy magazine called FarmNet News.

A: Wow.

Q: And, so, they definitely you know, there are thousands of people that [unintelligible]

A: Yeah, they're huge.

Q: And they still, to an amazing degree, have this sense of identity with the place and, you know, this whole thing, this is part of what I'm fascinated with. Hardly ever will you find a farm person that doesn't think it was a good thing to have done even though they burned out on it or something. You ask them would they do it again and they say, yes.

A: You know, I just remembered somebody else I know, too.

Q: Yeah? Well, I should write this down.

A: Yeah, someone who went there. Her name was Katy Rankin. You know, part of the thing with us was that we did this thing was my best friend, Chuck, was just so infantile. You know, we were so parental, you know, we just had to let go. You know how that is with a bunch of teenagers.

Q: Yeah.

A: Out the door. That's what happened with my teenager here. This winter, he wouldn't get -- we'd had to explain to him that getting grades was as important as working in school, blah-blah-blah and, if we had lived on the farm like ten years ago, that wouldn't have been a big deal. He would've known and would've seen right through it and now that we've joined this school system, we want our kid to take advantage of what's being offered to him but he's just middle of the road and doesn't want to be an

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overachiever and we set up a ground rule that he had to get a 3.0 in his grades and his report card came and he didn't get a 3.0. He got like 2.9 and that was no big deal, but we had to make an issue and he said, "Well, you want grades" and you didn't live up to our expectations so what are you going to do about it. "Well, I don't know what I want to do. What do you think I should do?" Well, this is what I want you to do. I want you to make more effort to work on this room that we're building you over here and how about ten hours a week. I mean, I just threw that off. "No, I can't do that." So, he ran off [unintelligible] and he couldn't do it and said, "I'm not living here anymore. I'm moving out." Within three weeks, he made a decision and had, actually, found a place to live and he's out.

Q: He thinks paying rent's going to be easier than working ten hours a week?

A: Yeah.

Q: Good luck.

A: Well, he just wanted a space.

Q: Yeah.

A: He knew he wasn't going to do this forever and he just wanted to try it out and he is working. He's been working since Thanksgiving but I encouraged him. I said that's you know, I'm here to give you what you want and not create expectations that he can't meet.