

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: I'm wondering what brought you to Tolstoy farm, and when you came?

A: I came with my ex-husband in March of 1965. The farm had been going a couple of years and we were looking for a place, we'd been working at [pause]. Now I'm going to back up, the summer before that we had a friend that got a grant from Boston University to do kind of a communications experiment with a group of people, kind of a funded community. So we did that in New Hampshire for six months and then when that finished we and two other people from that project drove around looking at communities back east. There weren't hardly any then.

Q: Well yeah, because this was before the hippies right?

A: Yeah, or that was just getting started so we did visit some places but didn't like any. But the other two people, one of them was kind of a practice kibbutz in New Jersey and they stayed there. We kind of just went driving around and ended up working at a school for motion disturbed kids because I went to school at Berkeley and that was my [unintelligible] so we did that and

Q: Do you remember the names of any of the communities you visited?

A: One was a school based on Summer Hill, which was Summer Lane and the staff was a communal deal. The kibbutz thing, I don't remember what it was called. And some people in New Hampshire that the guy's name was Bill Cokerthwate and he would have, he was a Nard freak and he had a community up there. And then another community that was kind of attached to - are you from back east?

Q: No, I'm not.

A: Oh, attached to a famous boarding school and I can't think of the name of it, it's near Bennington in Southern Vermont, it's a rich kids school. These people made furniture and they were kind of all ex-staff from the school. They had two big barns and they all lived there and they made this special kind of pilot form furniture that was kind of the thing then. They were all rich kids, I don't remember the name of that but that went on for quite awhile because I would see their ads occasionally. Another place around where we lived in New Hampshire that was just getting [pause] they knew what they wanted to do, but they hadn't done it. A place in Maryland, Heath Cove. The biggest Hooterite place, the one in New York, Rifton, we stayed there for a couple of weeks and the people that we were with decided they had to have sex and we were all kicked out immediately. They said we could stay, but we were all together so.

Q: Because you were married and it was okay?

A: Well no, we had to sleep separately.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, because we were visitors and then, or whatever I don't know why. I kind of enjoyed it there. I sort of, I knew Ben Ziblocki, do you know who he is? He had been there so he came to visit the farm. He was at Mama Foundation and he said to come down there to see, because I might like it. So I did, and we talked quite a bit about the Hooterites and another person at the farm had lived at the Hooterite farm for a couple of years, quite a few years earlier. I think there were some other places but that's all that pops into my mind, if I think of any I'll [pause] oh, there was another one, I'll think of it - I think it was North Carolina.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: In North Carolina? Oh, where Ernest Morgan lives, Arthur Morgan's son - Sealow. Does that ring a bell?

A: Yeah, they had a school there or something. I met some kids that went to that school, it was kind of a junior high school later. Some of the farm, we used to have a lot of kids kind of show up and that stayed with us kind of, and there were some kids that had been to that. What we were looking for really wasn't community because that name wasn't really, we had kind of a vague idea of what we were looking for. I don't even know where we got those lists of those places. But I guess it was common in the people we hung out with because the reason we found the farm was a friend of ours who [pause]. When I first met my ex-husband I quit Berkeley and met him right as I quit and we, he was living at an experimental college in Caramel, California that was with a bunch of people from Black Mountain College, you've probably heard of it, it was a real avant garde school that had lots of famous people, the guy that does the domes, the Original Dome.

Q: Buckminster Fuller?

A: Yeah, Buckminster Fuller was there. A lot of people Marge Cunningham, the dancer. Anyway that was in the forties and some people that had been there and some people from the new school and another one in New York came out with some people from San Francisco State and started this experimental college in some old houses. And so Tom had been living there and I went there and lived with him and then we set up a [pause], we met the guy that had a big ranch back behind Big Sur in Caramel and had a firewood business with Paul, this guy, and he told us when we were in New Hampshire he said, 'You guys would really like this place I went to last summer in Washington.': it was Tolstoy. He kept talking about it and after we worked at that school for about a year and knew we didn't want that kind of lifestyle we remembered that place so we wrote him and then Russ, another founding person who lives in town here who was a good friend, wrote back and we came up in a rental car. We were looking for a place where we could by doing sustenance stuff, like the Nearings, you know where you could get the work done. We didn't know about them either but you could get the work done in four days and have a life with time to do other stuff, you know that kind of thing. That was what was in our mind as we wanted the way to have a really cheap lifestyle where we could follow and pursue our own interests and we did.

Q: Were you also interested in the Peace side of it?

A: Once we got there. When I was at Berkeley there was a bunch of anti-nuclear stuff and I was pretty involved in that, Mothers to Stop the War and some other stuff. This was in the early Sixties because it was when the invasion from Cuba was supposed [pause], all of that I don't know, you're not old enough to remember the Cuban Missile Alert, November of '63 and all these huge demonstrations all over the place and Civil Rights stuff was going on too, there were a lot of demonstrations there. So we were kind of active in that but, there was a guy at the farm that was really into the Peace aspect. Piper theoretically was, but wasn't active about it, but this guy Bob Wilson really was. He had received a thirty thousand dollar inheritance and he gave it all away, mostly to Peace action kind of things like CNBA, the place where a bunch of these guys met each other, Piper and Russ and them. The first thing we did about a week after we were here was he demonstrated March of 95 against Viet Nam here in Spokane. I never even heard of it, I just went along with it because I liked Bob, didn't even know how to say the

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

name of it. We came in and picketed the Selective Service building, where now one of the founders of the farm, Russ, he owns a company that has two floors of the Selective Service building and another building. Isn't that funny - things come around. So, I don't think I had any [pause], I mean I didn't think you should kill people, and I didn't think there should be wars and all that, but I didn't really have a [pause], it wasn't a leading thing in my life at all.

Q: So what was life like at Tolstoy Farm when you arrived?

A: Really bare minimum subsistence kind of stuff, I didn't do very well with it mostly with the food, I'm a really picky eater. I'm better now but then I was extremely picky eater and the food trip was hard, it took me about two or three months to figure out to how to have food that I could tolerate. It was kind of cool looking back and once I got used to it I liked it, when the cow had milk we had milk and we had eggs, but there were hardly ever any eggs. We canned tons and tons of stuff. Ken, who is there now, really old guy, he must be seventy something he met Piper when he first started on this Peace March. Did he tell you about that?

Q: He did tell me about that.

A: Well, Ken's one of the people from them. And about the summer after we got there, he showed up and he and I really got into canning and got thousands of canning jars because people were stopping canning so you could get them anywhere. We canned maybe two thousand jars of stuff that summer. Then I was getting happier because there was applesauce and tomatoes and jam and canned fruit and all that. I had a hard time there, it's always been hard for me to get along with people and a long time I didn't it was to do with me to much so I was pretty obnoxious I think. There weren't any women there a lot of the time, Piper's wife was there but they didn't live in the house, they lived up on the other end and Russ' wife was there and she -

Q: Somebody's here.

A: That's my neighbor. Piper's wife was gone all the time to California because she didn't like it very much either. Russ' wife, they didn't live in the building either, they lived in the main house up the road a ways. She and I didn't get along very well and I don't think she was really happy there either. Then a woman came that summer, Patsy, and she went out with Bob, the rich one, and we really hit it off. Then another girl came, so then it got a little better, it sort of livened up and more people around. A woman that used to come up in the summers with her little girl who was four then, the little girl kind of adopted me so there was more things to you know, it was more fun. We got there in May and I was really depressed by early June. The Hooterites, you know what the Hooterites are, we had interaction with them and they gave us all these chickens, 100 chickens that were layered out that they wouldn't bother to eat, so we killed them all. One day and about half way through it I started getting really, really depressed chopping their heads off and all that blood, I don't know why. Now I know why I was so depressed, but I ended up going to the state hospital voluntarily and stayed there about two weeks until they realized that I wasn't a state resident. I'd only been there for three months so they would have had to commit me. I'd always been curious about state hospitals my whole life, or you know mental hospitals, so it was kind of a chance to see it I think was part of my motivation and then I left. That was my experience, now I go to meetings out there all the time and I have over sighted for their awards and

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

it's really weird I've never told anybody that I was ever a patient there but I think someday I will. I think, sometimes I have to do these little speeches and I think some time I'll talk about what it was like to be there, it was different than it is now. So far I haven't felt like being that self-disclosing, because there is a lot of stigma about it, but I don't know. But, then things got better. I think I figured out then I better take charge of my life so my first project was painting the house. It was really, as you'll see in those pictures, it was really an old house, it just had stud walls and me, Bob helped a little and Patsy helped a little and Ken and I canned food all the time. That summer we went to the lake every afternoon that we could or a lot, it was about three miles down the road and isolated, nobody was there and you could swim naked and it was really nice so life got better. But, then the next winter there was hardly any women again and one of the ones that was there was pretty disturbed. It was kind of weird until there were more people there and we had our own house. We built our own house the following summer, we got there in 1965 and the following summer we worked in Spokane for about three months that winter and got some money. We built the house for \$65.00 - isn't that something? All we bought was used lumber from the Air Force base where you had to pull it out yourself, we bought some 2 by 12's and some flat boards for the floor and roof and the roofing paper and hose. That's pretty good, I still think about that. So we built this little log cabin that's about 25 by 25 and the next year we added an upstairs. Having my own house really improved things, I was really not a very social person. I liked to have control of things, but I didn't like to -, I didn't have any people skills I still don't really but, it's better.

Q: Did your house have a kitchen or did you have to go to the main house to eat meals?

A: We did quite a bit at first, but we always had our own kitchen and gradually there was -, you know the heart house burnt down about two years later did Piper tell you about that?

Q: Yeah he did tell me about that, he said that some factions sort of developed and somebody burned the house down I guess.

A: Yeah, I don't know what he thinks really happened, he was so pissed because his books burned up, he had nothing to do with it. He was already pretty much withdrawn from the farm by then but he -, there were some people that were heroin addicts and speed addicts came and were there for about three months and then some friends of theirs came and there were some other people that were very strange. Another woman there, who was a friend of mine got really concerned they were going to accidentally burn down the house because they were using candles and just kind of wasted people. Everybody else had a house by then so there was this house in the middle, this old farm house that, so she went up there. She convinced three of us to go take the sewing machine out of the house, which we did and somehow it ticked off one of them and they went down to, one of these people, went down to the basement and through matches in the things where we stored apples and tomatoes and straw. Somebody else, I'd already gone home by then, somebody came yelling and we went running back over there and kept putting it out, and the same guy or another person, I'm not sure who went up into the attic and set another fire in there it was too late there was no way to stop it so that was the end of that. I think it was really, although I got blamed for it, it was really weird I had nothing to do with the fire, I did help move it out but that wasn't even my project that was just kind of -, the people did make me really nervous though, I was glad they were gone, they were really scary. The next couple of years after they left federal agents were looking for one of the people repeatedly, coming down looking for him. It was

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

the newer one so no one even knew him, except his name - his name was Casey. I was sort of glad, although it really changed things because then we didn't have a house anymore, we didn't have a central core or something we didn't have a place to store food and we didn't place to eat together, by then people were mostly eating lunch together and then the other meals were kind of catch as catch can, people did their own thing. So those people pretty much all left right then which was fine with me. But at that point Piper had been living up on the north eighty for that was the third year we had been there, he had been up there since, well really almost the whole time he wasn't, it was almost like they were visiting when they came down so I don't think it impacted him particularly, but then people kept building houses.

Q: Did you guys have communal economics?

A: Not at all, the first year or two, now I don't know what happened for that '63-'65 when it was just Russ and Piper, but when we came there people would give you money for basic things like kerosene at their own discretion. There wasn't any expected contribution for kerosene, food, animal feed we help each other pay our bills or medical bills like if there were some people there that had no money and no capacity to earn money, that were really lost souls and we would kind of keep their medical bills paid, things were a lot cheaper then, as a group. But it was kind of on a donation basis and for awhile Russ kind of kept track of money and then I don't know exactly what happened. We would buy honey and oil and wheat to grind and stuff like that - kind of the basics, cheese - big huge things of cheese, it was kind of cool.

Q: Did you guys have electricity?

A: No, we didn't have -, I lived at the farm from '65 until '89 and we got a phone in '86 and electricity in '87 because we had a computer and were running it on a averter and it was driving us nuts so we got electricity.

Q: So you lived a long time without modern conveniences.

A: We did have a gas refrigerator after my son was born, he was born in '72 a couple years later we got a little gas, like that goes in trailers and stuff and also had a propane stove in the last years which I rarely used except in the summer.

Q: What did you use before you got the propane stove - wood stove?

A: Nothing, oh we always used the wood stove to cook on, even in the summer. When we got that propane stove, somebody gave it to me, and in the summer I would can on it for a couple of years and then I got uncomfortable having the propane around so, and then we got electricity so I got a real refrigerator.

Q: What about water, did you have running water?

A: When I lived there, well I actually had a break in the middle I lived there from '65 to '73 we bought, we took some other people from the farm and some other friends of ours from that we had originally known back in New Hampshire, and bought some land in Idaho and built a bunch of buildings and started another place there and did that for four years. Then I came back to the farm and lived in a

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

different house, and that log cabin that we built there was a creek right next to it and so we had running water most of the time, it would freeze up occasionally but normally we had running cold water out of the creek. The new house was up at the other end of the property and it had a spring, but where the spring came from to the house was about a half mile and it was over a rock cliff so you couldn't bury it. In the winter there was just no water as soon as it start freezing up then that was it and I'd have some water in tanks for maybe a month before, that wouldn't work either so we melted snow and carried water.

Q: What did you do for bathing and washing clothes and stuff like that?

A: I got this thing made, I went to the laundry mat usually except for stuff you could just rinse out. I went to the laundry mat maybe every two weeks and did everything, something like that. I had this thing made that had this big tank that went on the back of a cook stove that held about 17 and a half gallons with a spicket where you could put a hose on it and that's what we used or a version of that for taking baths, we had a bathtub right next to the stove. It had a little system for priming the water up above so you had pressure or else you would just sit in the tub and pour water over you. That's the thing I missed the most as soon as I had friends in Davenport, the local town, I'd take showers there a lot. That was the hardest thing for me, I take showers two or three times a day here, and not having adequate refrigeration at the first part and then showers the next part - that was the hard part, I really -.

Q: I guess it got old after awhile probably, right?

A: It really gets old, in the winter I get home and be dark and be really cold and have to go out or Eric, my son, would go out. We got divorced when I left Idaho we never lived together again, his dad and I so the last 12 years at the farm it was just my son and I. I'd have to go out and get snow, I had this root cellar roof that was a good place to take snow off because nobody walked on it, it was clean snow. I'd have to go out there and get the snow and melt it and take a bath in it and everything. When I was starting to work a lot and then I went back to school it was a pain in the neck, a lot of times I would drive over to Cheney where the college campus is and with all my clothes and take a shower there on campus and then go to class because that made more sense. I never did get used to that, I never did all that time I lived there and I never could figure out a good way to do it and really nobody had a good bathing system, it was always complex.

Q: Did you have kerosene lamps?

A: Uh-huh, other people had Aladdin lamps, have you heard of those?

Q: Yeah, but I don't know what they are.

A: They're kind of like a pre-Coleman lamp except there is no noise and no buzzing and you have to kind of pressurize them yourself a little bit. They give a lot better light, but they were a pain in the butt so we had kerosene, and eventually when we moved to the other end we -, there was electricity about six blocks straight down a hill so we would charge batteries and have 12 volt light bulbs and we charge them from the car and run wires in from the outside battery and it charges as you are driving. I like to make quilts a lot and in the winter you really can't do it with kerosene, it's just not bright enough and it smells and you have those fumes. I started getting worried about those fumes.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: Did you heat with wood?

A: Uh-huh, and cooked with wood and we did our own wood until I went back to school in fall of '87 and starting the year before that I started buying fire wood. Before that I always did all the firewood, before with my husband and when I lived there. Then I suddenly decided I was too old and it was too fucking much work it was worth a couple hundred bucks, we had to have about five cords for the winter there, for the year. It's you know -, it didn't really -, I didn't feel like I was missing anything except for the water thing, we worked a way to do it but it's hard work. Is that your question?

Q: Yeah, I just wanted to look at them in case I forgot any. When you ate together did you eat vegetarian or people follow any particular diet?

A: Ate what there was and there were a bunch of vegetarians so any meal that had meat also didn't, there was also non-meat version or something. After we stopped eating together we had potlucks every Sunday all the time, I think they still have them, outside in the summer with volleyball and inside the school in the winter, and there was always a mix there was always vegetarians there. There wasn't really a lot of meat you know, we had milk and cheese from cows, after awhile we always had two milk cows and a milk co-op where everybody that belonged if there was money needed they would put in the money, usually there wasn't because they sell the calves and cover the costs of the cows, and you do hay and you go take the milking. People had chickens so you'd have chickens occasionally and I raised turkeys and people raised ducks and there were goats, so occasionally there would be some meat but it wasn't, well I'm not sure about everybody else, but in general meat was kind of a special deal. I think that's probably right, even now I suspect that's probably right, people were into -, I'd never heard of lentils or soybeans until I got there, and I never did like them, but we had a lot of stuff like that all the time, soy grits and soy [pause] crud.

Q: Would you call Tolstoy Farm a Hippie commune?

A: I think maybe a homesteading one more, the third summer we were there '67 that was kind of the summer of love and we had millions of people coming from San Francisco, not millions but probably four hundred, something like that, that summer through -. Some stayed and some didn't, lots and lots of people because there wasn't a lot of places, did you ever hear of Morningstar?

Q: Yes.

A: My brother lived at Morningstar, and we used to just visit down there and another one, Wheelers. A lot of farm people came from Morningstar to the Farm to Wheelers, ended up at Wheelers because Wheelers was the most, there were no expectations for anyone at all, no social responsibilities kind of. So that summer there was lots of hippie stuff, but in general I would say more people that couldn't make it anywhere else or didn't think they could make it anywhere else and that wanted to live kind of a low key ecologically appropriate life.

Q: Did it kind of lose its Peace emphasis pretty quick?

A: Well, there always I think a consensus decision making that worked and didn't work but I would say it did. There got to be some people there by '70 [pause], by '70 there was kind of a more settled in period and there were a lot of people there, 70 to 75 people for about three [pause], from '70 to '74 was really

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

full and a lot of kids and there were some people, Jeremiah is one who were, actually were violent people. There started to be episodes of violent people and violent incidences, but nothing terrible and we had no way to deal with it at all, we had no structure to -, we had this kind of ethic that nobody could be asked to leave. No rules and no one could be asked to leave so it was more anarchistic immediately than peace. We couldn't manage difficult situations at all it's hard for me to [pause] I know how lacking I was in knowing how to manage myself in that setting, and I think there were a lot of other people. My feeling is that the people that stayed there, lots of people went through that place I kept track for awhile I think until about '70 and two thousand people had to have gone through by there by that point. We got -, somebody put us -, Piper had this little -, he really didn't interact very much, he liked to kind of read science fiction and kind of daydream up ideas. He wrote -, he was writing letters off and that summer and the next year, '67 and the next year, to all these places like East Village Other saying 'come out here this is a good place to be' so we got -, and then of course they were down where we were not where he was so he never actually -, I sound like I don't like him but -

Q: So he would invite people to come and then he wouldn't have to deal with them?

A: Yeah basically, and by '70 the last group that he -, people really coming down on him that he stop this, that we couldn't manage what we were doing ourselves let alone having these people. A lot of people were really problem people, like people with very suspicious backgrounds if I knew what I knew now I would've been a lot more scared than I was then. The last kind of big bunch he invited without telling anybody until the day they showed up. He invited this group of fifteen people from Detroit to come out and suggested they live up on this shelf of land where there's no water and no way to farm or anything, and no access. They just showed up, these poor people all this stuff you know. Some of them stayed and that was good in the long run, I mean there was some people that really were good people to have there. That was the last time he did that I think. That summer was the last burst of that and most of those people are still around. There were a bunch of houses by then, there were [pause] about 13 I guess on the north eighty and at the other, people gradually bought land around there so there was quite a bit more land besides -. The original farm was 80 acres of Piper's grandma's where he lived with people that his grandmother wanted or his mother liked and the rest of us were on 120 and that expanded to 160 and then people bought a 20 and a 40 and another 40 and then 80 and then another 80 at the north eighty so there was more and more land but none by that one until like -, we had a land trust for the two plots, two separate ones cause the one Piper lived on, his mom kept in her own ownership for a long time. [pause] I don't know what I was thinking. At the 120 there were another -, there were about the same number of houses I think so there were quite a few people there. Their houses were mostly kind of shabby houses, I mean some of them better than others but none of them would meet any kind of middle-class standards.

Q: So it wasn't zoned I take it?

A: No way not, most of us were sloppy about our space kind of, and we set up this little lease deal where we each paid a share of the land taxes and the house taxes were in our own names, although we couldn't really exactly own them but you could for the purposes of selling and you paid the house taxes on your own house. Then when you left -, that took a while to work out Rico was the prime driver for figuring out a way where people could leave with something, and it still was an issue for me, I didn't get

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

it - I might want to never leave, but we did work that out that that would be -, you could sell your house but the rule was you could only sell it for what you put into it. For example if you bought a house from somebody that thought theirs was worth two thousand and you added three thousand dollars worth of stuff you could sell it for five, but people started kind of pushing the envelope on that rope pretty [pause] eventually and then it just kind of changed - Rico sold his house for twenty-three thousand dollars, which was -, to some farm people actually. I sold mine for much less than I did put into it, but I got a good deal I bought it for five hundred bucks the second house I lived in, nice little wood house that a kid built a little wooden cottage, I sold it for thirty-nine hundred but I actually put a lot more into it than that. I was just hot get the money out of there and get out of there, to some crooks. Yeah, I let them early before the money came and that worked out okay I got the money when I was supposed to in three weeks but they stole a lot of my stuff. My stuff was still there and the deal was they would just push things aside and stay there until they paid me [pause], I still see them around town one of them sells vegetables at the farmers market downtown.

Q: That would make me really mad.

A: I haven't figured out how to confront them about it, it's just so bizarre. His kid gave it away, part of it, I was looking for my stuff when we came up to do the deal and some other Farm people came up with me, Rico and some other people, to pack up my stuff and I was going to put it in storage in somebody's barn and -, I said, "Hey Chris, where's my stuff including my good wheel barrel?" He said, "I don't know are you sure it was here?" Then his little boy said, "Daddy, you know where it is," and he takes me around behind the building and there it all is, a three year old, I bet he got in trouble. There was a lot of other stuff I never thought about [pause] I didn't really know what to do and [unintelligible]...yeah, that's life. It's my own fault not to know how to deal with it in some ways, I mean he's still a crook. He's a rich kid and they kind of cheated me on the price to because I didn't get it, that they really did have money - which kind of pissed me off. I thought we were being straight with each other. I was being straight with him, but that was my own bad judgement I guess. So there's still -, I don't know if Piper's talked about it now, but all those houses are occupied by people there's a lot of people that still live down there and there is a lot of aspects of neighborliness and communalness that still exists there. It's never worked out that people figured out how to get along with each other closely, but intimately, but people have relationships with people their comfortable with and some people have no relationships with anybody and -, kind of a weird mix. I have some friends that live down there that -, we go camping in the summer and stuff and I have lunch -. One of them is one of our contracting agencies, she's the director of one of the programs I contract for so we have lunch on the side to cut our own little private deals. In fact there's a lot of Farm people in town that I know through work also, like old farm people. That's kind of nice to have a network of people that -, because I don't talk about where I lived, really nobody in my working world -. When we got busted for dope in '66 and then there was another bust about '72; in the first one I was arrested and the charges were dropped and the second I wasn't arrested at all. But the farm was in the paper and everything and it's never -, so I don't what kind of reputation it has in Spokane. There's some people that know a little bit, but at work I never talk about my past. I describe it in kind of a neutral way like, you know, the neighborhood where I used to live there were a lot of kids, stuff like that. I don't want to -, Spokane's a pretty traditional town and I, you know, I don't want to do that so I haven't -. But there's a whole world of people that do know and most people don't

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

talk it, when they lived at the farm, some people do [pause] it depends. Rico does, but I have a pretty um ...a job it wouldn't be helpful, I don't think it would be, maybe it would be sometime but I don't think it would be now.

Q: Yeah, I can understand that completely. What was the bus like? Was it real scary?

A: Yeah, it was really scary. It was after the second summer and it had been a nice summer. We had just finished -, in fact we were nailing the roofing paper on our roof the afternoon it happened. We were still living in the Hart house, that was the main house, Hart like h-a-r-t the name of the previous owners, everybody always made it clear that we weren't spiritual enough to called the heart house. And it was an afternoon, I'm not sure the day of the week it was but it was kind of a cold rainy day and we had four little kids there, two of whom's parents weren't there they had left and left them kind of not exactly abandoned but more or less abandoned, these little kids. The first we knew it is one of the kids came running in and said, "There's policemen over there, there's police over there." So we went across, our house was across two creeks and a field so you couldn't really see the main house. So we walked over there to see what was going on and they had about 15 cops and they were looking for marijuana. They had sent an informer down the week before who had misunderstood what -, she was being -, peoples there rolled their own, the people who smoked cigarettes. There was some dope but there but it was really kind of private and not public, I didn't do that but there were -, you know everybody -, and there were the people growing dope. She thought she was being offered marijuana and it was just a homerolled cigarette. Her dad was the -, his grandpa was the sheriff, the ex-sheriff and so-, but she was sent down to kind of be an informer, and she came back up and did that. So then the cops came down and they did find a little bit [pause], so they arrested everybody - I think there was 17 of us, 6 women and the rest were men. Rico escaped in the process. We called people really fast from the jail and got people to come get the babies, they went and stayed with Piper's grandmother out at [unintelligible] until people came to pick them up.

Q: They took all the adults and left the babies there without anyone to watch them?

A: Oh no, they took them up to the jail so we had them up at the jail with us and then we called Norma, they didn't leave them down there. No, these were really humane nice people and the cops were great. In fact, we were worried about the dogs and the animals being fed so we went over -, one of the deputies who turned out to be a friend later took us and helped us ... We did a quick milking right then, milked the cows so at least they would be okay until the morning when somebody could get there and then fed the animals. Then went back over to our house and put all our tools away, because we knew there would be people coming down. We had had a lot of vandalism from the local kids, so he let us lock every- thing up, and it did happen while we were in jail. I was in jail for about three days and then I got strep throat, thank God, and went to the hospital. I was only back in the jail for about a day and then we got bailed out, my ex-husband and I got bailed out. Pretty soon everybody did except Ken, the peace guy...he stayed in there for quite awhile. Eventually they had a trial and five people who really did smoke dope were arrested and everybody else they dropped the charges on, they didn't take them to trial. It was real sad and those people they did serve -, they served the maximum of about three months I think in the local jail. We would go visit them all the time and bring them stuff and the cops would just let us hang around and visit and [unintelligible] so they wouldn't be just be all alone up in the jail, it was

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

kind of weird and sad. Tom, my ex-husband never ever did dope ever but I smoked some dope off and on occasionally and one summer got into LSD a lot and took a whole bunch of it but that was kind of my dope experience and neither of us ever drank. Piper at that time didn't smoke dope but sometime that summer of '66 he smoked a little and the next summer and got real -, I think it was the next summer.

Q: Pardon?

A: I'm trying to think, Piper smoked some dope a little bit and then he got into more and more and more and more. But originally he was -, he was sort of virginal and kind of innocent, he grew up here. He told me he had been back east, he meant Montana.

Q: That was back east to him.

A: Yeah. He actually did go to Connecticut for that a peace walk thing. Smoking dope was kind of not a popular activity then, I mean it was just getting popular.

Q: In the early years did you guys have meetings?

A: Uh-huh, we had a regular weekly meeting that was after lunch on Sunday right at the start, like the first few years. That's the time when Piper would [unintelligible]...and decided by everything by consensus and struggled with how to get along with each other, but not very directly.

Q: Did anybody play a leadership role?

A: Piper did, or tried to but he really isn't a leader so it was sort of hard. Russ, until Russ stopped -, right when we got busted he was out -, he sold -, he has a big business downtown now, mail-order business in a store. He was starting that right then and so he never came back to Spokane, he rented an apartment. He had always been kind of a business minded person, he was the one who paid our taxes. After that it kind of -, once we formed a corporation we had a clerk to hold the land, that started '66 or -, yeah I think in that first year we were there we incorporated some Mill Canyon [unintelligible].

Q: The what, the Mill Canyon Benevolent Society?

A: Yeah, and the other place eventually. Piper's mother promised to give that land over to people who had lived there after five years. At one point she had to do it, so that was for Sunrise Hill Free School, we had a school there. Those are the two names that those corporate structures were in and some land was added to both of them, but one had 80 and one had 160 acres. Each corporation had a clerk, so the clerk had not exactly leadership role but they made sure the taxes were paid and that the state got it's dollar a year or whatever, filing fees and stuff like that. But the leadership of meetings, and we kept having meetings and they eventually got to Sunday's at the potluck when we started eating outside, and struggled with issues and eventually after about two or three years we started having -. There was a building called the tack shed that used to be for the horses equipment and that's kind of where you put stuff up for people to read. A lot of the mailboxes were right there and you'd put up agenda issues up there so people would know what was going to be talked about. Well, that kind of came and went but -, so mostly you made sure you showed up at the meeting if it was something that you cared about. We had a yearly -, each of them had a yearly corporation meeting where people that wanted to be on governance, I don't remember what it was called.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: Board of Directors or something like that?

A: Yeah, you could get on there by wanting to be on there. The clerk was chosen unanimously but anybody that had been there, I can't remember what the thing was, you'd been there awhile or you had a commitment to being there, and you could still be there after you left. If you still had interest you could still be on there, I can't remember the details. I have that old stuff in the garage if that's of any use I could send it to you or something.

Q: Oh, I think it would be fascinating. We're really into collecting any documents that people have.

A: Yeah, if you give me when you leave if you give me your address or something I'll... . We have the original corporation papers and old magazine articles and we have-, we used to send out these things about - You're interested in Tolstoy Farm, blah, blah, blah you know that kind of stuff.

Q: Oh yeah, it would be fun to see that how you described yourself to people.

A: Yeah, that was stuff from the mid-sixties. [pause] I've always wanted that stuff to be somewhere you know, and it's not really appropriate, the farm there's no -, everybody is -, although the land is owned in common there isn't that kind of ...

Q: That kind of place for it.

A: Yeah, or anybody that has that kind of historical interest, at least that I know of and I probably would know.

Q: Well Tim sure does have a interest in this. He'd be thrilled to receive anything you wanted to send. When you showed up was there any sort of membership process you had to go through?

A: No, that was one of the problems of the farm - anybody could be there and nobody could be asked to leave. That was a oft repeated policy and it was really sort of enforced, unfortunately. I probably would have been one of the first persons -, well there were some pretty [pause] pathetic isn't the right word, but people that had been in trouble with the law, people that just didn't have it in them to be in that world, and then a few people like Piper and Bob and Russ and their wives that were regular people, I mean more or less. You know, it was more of a choice for them to be there.

Q: Did that change over the years? Did you start having a membership process?

A: You had to buy something there. We ran out of spaces so eventually the selection process was having a place be. I think that really happened by '74, something '75 right around there. I don't think there was any new -, I think all the potential places to live had been marked out by then.

Q: So did you guys kind of plat off the land or something?

A: No, you took the space and then it was kind of agreed upon that there was some distance around your house that was yours and with exception of this one couple [pause] very strange people. They were the last people to mark off a place. They wanted this whole territory, liked they owned it sort of which is not the culture that you owned it, it was kind of like it was your space to lease. You had a lease, that's what we called it. Mostly it would be like around an acre or two about that big a spot, big enough to garden and have trees and some animal places a place if you had goats to have a little barn or

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

something. Some people had more space, the place we had at the 120 there was nobody behind us kind of and then in front of us was a big alfalfa field, about a 7 acre field so we were kind of protected by that. But some people picked more public places and some people had little bitty shacks and some people had bigger...

Q: Were there things you did together? Did you garden together?

A: Yeah, the first few -, until about sometime in the mid-seventies there was a big communal garden at the 120 and then people had their own so you would kind of do both. Ken was kind of the person that kept track of that one, eventually it became his garden everybody else kind of pulled out. At the 80 they had a communal garden that never worked out very well [pause - end of tape]. There was just one truck up there that was Piper's and so they had a wood co-op where they all did each others wood, you know they kept going out and telling everybody they had their wood and there was a cow co-op and that was the 120 and the north 80 and there was a goat co-op for goat herding. Everyday during all the months where you could graze goats somebody, one or two people went out all day and goat herded. Yeah, I did that a friend of mine was one of them so I did that a lot one summer, it was kind of fun. The goats kind of hang out they only got lost once, seriously lost where we had to go look for them. We had horses together had that cow co-op together and for quite a few years at the start we had quite a long period of play reading group every Tuesday night, I think it was Tuesday night we had read together like we had a play -, it was really fun. We had stuff like that we had -, I can't think of some other things like that but we had regular. And then Bursts and Spurts we had different kind of psychological deals it kind of depended, Literary Night that's what we used to call it - silly name. The school was a corporate project, and there was a preschool and a regular school and it that was a legal school. We had -, they used to have Seta grants those were federal grants in the seventies the Brave New World kind of things and we had teachers that that paid for and paid for some equipment for about three or four years. The school went about ten years.

Q: Did your son go to the school?

A: For the -, when he was four and a half to six he did and then the school closed, there were eleven kids while he was there. We came back when he was five so I guess for about a year he went to that but it was really two school years because of when we came back. Eventually one of the farm people, Rico's first wife got a job as librarian in the schools and when kind of closed the school and sent all the kids down port and had a long negotiation with the schools about our kids because they were kind of worried about them. It worked out pretty good, except the older kids it was harder -, luckily at that point we only had kids up to the sixth grade so eleven kids went into their schools. I was glad that Eric went, I'm glad it worked out that way but it was really Pat's decision when she decided to draw her daughter who was the same age as Eric out. They were the two little kids then it was kind of obvious that that was what was going to happen.

Q: Did you like the Sunrise Hill School? Was it a good school?

A: No. No, we had a couple years of a couple real teachers, Bill and Donnie but they never had the -, they were more interested in life there and didn't really get invested in the school. It was pretty active for awhile, there were some years when -, when I was pregnant with Eric and the year or two before

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

that so about '70 to '73 I think it was a pretty [pause]. Some kids really learned a lot and some kids didn't, it was really loose and it was just kind of a drop in school. Donnie, the woman that was a teacher, was really into teaching kids to read and a lot of kids learned to read through her. So that was really good. In fact all those kids there, we always had kids you know living with us and the kids, if they weren't readers by the time they were eight they were readers anyway because they were surrounded by adults that read all the time. Everybody there was a reading addict so you just -, you learn how to read when you know ...

Q: When people around you are reading.

A: Yeah, and there were tons and tons of books so -, but other than that it was kind of a mess. Those kids, there were a lot of kids that never did go to school some of them-, when we moved to Idaho some of them moved with us, three of them high school age kids. They started going to school in the nearest town there, it was kind of a small -, not to small town, it was a high school with a couple hundred kids in it. They went about a semester and then we figured out how to do GED so they did GED and they have all gone to college since then and have regular -, two of them are RN's and one of them is a mining engineer or something like that. Some of those kids, the kids that would've gone to college anyway I think found a way to go to college and the kids that probably would never have gone anyway didn't. It's amazing the huge gaps they have in their background like Rory, one of them that is a nurse, she never did have any U.S. History. She has no idea about the political -, no idea she is just blank and she is not interested - I don't think those kids a favor. There was a total lack of awareness about appropriateness of sexuality and I think a lot of things happened there that if I had known then what I know now or realized what -, or got it that I never would have let it happen. It was just-, I can't imagine what was -, I can't imagine where my head was and there was nobody else speaking up. [pause] There was lots of good stuff, there was lots of fun times, summers were just wonderful, tons of kids. We'd go to the lake every day, really the whole time I lived there practically. Went to the lake every day and spent the afternoon, it was too hot to work really in the summer anyway. Work in the morning and then when you get back up, and then when you know got back up from the lake, when it was a little cooler. It was a nice life, the kids could run around and play in the creeks and ride the horses and just have a idyllic time and still have contact with [unintelligible] quite a few of these kids and when I asked them what that was like, when that communities magazine thing came out about kids from the communes, one of the kids is in there that I haven't heard from in a long time either. [pause] I don't know what my train of thought was. I don't think -, I think we did a shitty job but there was some really nice things, really nice things.

Q: Did you guys party together as a community? Would you ever have big bashes or anything?

A: Yeah, but not like normal people I don't think or what I would think you would mean. We would have Halloween parties, Christmas we didn't do a good job on because of the religious aspect was not -, we had some years when it was kind of fun where we really did organize things. We had a Christmas party and a Christmas dinner and had caroling and stuff like that, but a lot of years we didn't. Thanksgiving was always a real deal, that was a good one.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: Piper did mention something about a Corn Dance.

A: Yeah, that started the second summer we were there it's in March, the first full moon of May. There was this girl here that was really a hippie girl and really was into kind of odd things. She thought we had to have a fertility dance, that's what it was the first time, a fertility ceremony or something. We went up-, we had no idea what we were doing. But she made corn necklaces for everybody and we went up in the woods and stayed all night and drummed around a fire, nobody knew exactly what to do-. The next year, that would've been...

Q: That wasn't Kat by any chance was it?

A: Yeah.

Q: I interviewed her.

A: Oh you did?

Q: Yeah, awhile ago. She lives in California.

A: Yeah, she lives near Mendoceno -

Q: Right - well , further south. Her mom lives in Mendoceno.

A: Yeah. She -, I have a real good friend who's husband is the director of the mental health center, one of our contractors and they lived in Missouri where Kat lived.

Q: Oh at the Garden of Joy Blues Commune?

A: No, but near there, so they knew Kat and everything. She and I -, she was telling me some story about some woman and I said, "That wouldn't be Kat?" And she said, "How did you know?" So that was Kat. She was blind, she really has bad eyesight and didn't wear glasses so she didn't have any glasses and she wore these velvet things where she couldn't work, these long flowing things. She never did any work and she thought everybody hated her, which nobody did hate her because she kind of exotic and she was a sixteen year old and everybody else was like twenty so she was a child. I have lots of appreciation for Kat but she was hard to live around, of course I was hard to live around. Russ was her -, kind of true love. She came with a guy named Tom, but Russ has a store in Spokane [unintelligible] the original peoples, they had this kind of cosmic romantic relationship. When we got busted she never came back and went on with the rest of her life and Russ still wears a bracelet from her - he's married and has kids and all that stuff. Anyway she thought of that deal so the next summer -, by then it was tradition already and we had another one except I didn't really participate, but that's where - the first place Piper smoked dope that I know of. He fell in the bushes because he was so loaded. It was another all night deal and then from then on it kind of grew and by the -, when I was pregnant with Eric so '71 was the biggest one. There must have been three or four hundred people there all night and dancing and people had plays we had a little playlets and people -, one of them included people having sex in front of everybody and everybody was pretty interested but they put a blanket over them so. God, I can't believe that. They still have them and I usually go, this year I had was in Seatack for work I was at a meeting for work so I didn't go, but my son's going to come back next year he wants to go see what it's like now. It feels real nice to be there, it's drumming all night and for me it's catching up and seeing peoples babies, people bring me

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

all their babies so I can see them and kids come up and I'm supposed to guess who they are, you know, cause I haven't seen them for a while so it's really fun, I like to do that. I don't know what the point of it is, for awhile we had this little ritual, well we still have part of it, Piper hasn't come for a long time but he had this little story thing where it involved the corn something and then had a pole in the middle of the fire, we had these huge bonfires. If it went over it meant something and that part still goes on I think.

Q: So kind of some rituals.

A: Yeah sort of. The most loosest version, anarchist rituals. Thanksgiving has always been a huge positive nice thing, I don't think it is anymore but, everybody came and we'd eat at about two or three and the kids would run around and scream for awhile, grown-ups were talking then we'd have music for hours. Mostly music not dancing, we didn't have very many times when we had dancing. Right before -, Piper left about -, he wasn't there the winter when Eric was born, he wasn't there winter of '72 and I don't think he ever lived there again - maybe briefly. At the school there were some pretty good parties, a mix of things - drumming and dancing around to music and yelling and screaming and the kids playing outside they had this game called Bear that they all played. The kids were all like cousins or something, lots of kids. Those kids still know each other, a lot of them are at the college my son is at or have been there.

Q: What college does he go to?

A: Evergreen State College.

Q: Oh right, I know where that's at, in Olympia.

A: There are a lot of Farm kids there. It was over there -, I was there for a long time and so there is different kids that don't know each other or just know of each other you know but they all -, the different clumps of kids that were there at the same time in the same age group -, they catch me up with each other.

Q: Was it a good place to raise a kid?

A: Well, I was there with Eric until he was about a year old and then we bought that other land. That year was a bad year in my life. My house burned down, everything burned up, my mom killed herself, Eric was born and my husband and I were separated and my father-in-law who I loved died in about eight months. So I was in kind of a blur, I was just surviving you know. I had a boyfriend besides my husband but he was more problematic than useful, you know he wasn't really, except I had somebody in the winter who could drive. Then we came back when Eric was five and lived there and there were lots of kids so we always had kids to live with to play with and stuff and they were always out playing when they would get home from school. Eric liked to get his homework done so he did he homework as soon as he got home but then they would be gone until dark or way after. A lot of kids stayed at our house a lot, we had a lot of kids that just kind of stayed with us. So there were good things and he went -, I got really scared for him in the ninth grade. He seemed real depressed to me and I kept talking to-, and he would go to his dad's a lot and stay with his dad up [unintelligible], but not during the school year and I kept telling him I was worried about him. I tried to arrange for us to move to Spokane and Eric wouldn't

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

go, or anywhere because I was worried about him and we didn't communicate very well. Do you have -, you're not old enough to have kids?

Q: I don't have kids.

A: Oh. It was hard and I had had a lot of other kids so I knew I might not be able to get him out of it you know. So that summer his dad paid for him to go to this camp that was kind of a -, called Super Camp kind of a motivational camp where they teach kids learning skills but they also you know - you can be all you can be, and he came back just...

Q: changed? Oh how nice.

A: Yeah, and he got it that he wanted to go to a real school. He spent some time with his dad down there and his dad had a big new house and he had step-brothers his age with a swimming pool and hot tub, two hot tubs and he loved it. He really knew he needed to be in a good school and his dad paid tuition at a real classy private school so he went there for the last two years, two and a half years of high school. Which was a relief for me because I had just started college and thought the timing was excellent. He always says that -, I used to think that when we got divorced that he would go live with his dad because his dad was wealthy and could take him to Europe and stuff. We talked about it since, we didn't talk about then, but he said he liked having both lives and being comfortable in both worlds and that he's glad. He said it a million times since and he tells about conversations he has with other kids, because there's other commune kids at Evergreen, that he's glad he's had the life he had. I think he's being sincere because I don't bring it up, he brings it up. I think he feels good about it, but he was going to a crappy little school where nobody goes to college except maybe junior college and he wasn't -, the crappy teachers -, it turned out about two years after he left there was a huge investigation. There was a teacher there, the school counselor and history teacher was taking videos, seducing girls into doing pornographic videos. Four girls, two Farm girls were involved, and the Feds caught him.

Q: Now this was at the Davenport school?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Okay, not the Sunrise School then.

A: No, our school was done by then. No we didn't even know the difference between perverts and nonperverts for a long time, lots of inappropriate things going on. So, it was a bad school and I was glad he got out of there, he's real smart so I'm glad it worked out that he got out just in time. But, for other kids it goes without saying we had a lot of kids there who's parents were extremely inadequate parents and very neglectful and didn't have any idea, and I'm not sure if we did. The parents, the people who really did care about kids would take them in so a lot of kids were just kind of taken or just available, the kid showed up and you fed him and made him a bed and you know like that. We had kids who had no parents, a lot of adolescents during various periods that would come and either had their own or kind of base themselves with somebody and grow up. I think there were good things and bad things and I would never have -, if I knew then what I know now I would -, what we did was not acceptable in a lot of ways to me, but there were some good things. I think I would have been -, I told you about being in the hospital, I think if I had tried to stay in the real world, you know the working world and had a job, that I

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

wouldn't be able to do it. I think I might have ended up actually being hospitalized or being poverty stricken, not by choice. At the Farm we were poverty stricken but it was by choice and it was fun, it was comfortable, simple living. I don't think I would have made it. It never even occurred to me that I could in the real world until I decided to go to college so I'd been there more than twenty years, twenty-two years when I decided that. For me it wasn't even a choice, I didn't think I could fit in the regular world. It never even occurred to me that I would even have friends that -, no really I was just in that world, that was the world that I knew. Even when I had friends that moved into town that I was still friends with I would be friends with them but not with their new life. I think there are a lot of people there now still that are like that and most people could move on, but a few people -, a lot of people got stuck there. Some people wouldn't see it that way but, like I don't know how -, Rico wouldn't see it that way for himself and Piper did leave, but it wasn't out of strength it was more because nobody would treat him like a leader and he wanted to be the leader. So he started another place and hoped he would be treated like a leader there, that's pretty cynical. He's sort of a visionary without followers, he's kind of said I think he's a disappointed person. I don't know what impression you got from him.

Q: Well, he was just so soft-spoken it was real hard to get an impression, I didn't get much of an impression.

A: I think that's the brain damage from dope. God, I shouldn't say this stuff. He's got great kids but one of them, they're Eric's age, one of them was at UC- Berkeley just getting ready to start -, I think he was going to start a MBA program and was in a terrible car wreck, not his fault and is still brain injured from that. Living in Berkeley because that's real -, there's a lot of brain injury -, there's brain injury independent learning center down there it's kind of a center. The other kid has been to Evergreen part of the time but as far as I know he's just kind of lost up[unintelligible]..just kind of a big heavy dope smoker. He was the kid that was getting to do advance placement classes in high school and clean cut wholesome kid, kind of ornery acting kid and really motivated to go all the way and fell apart at the last year and never really did. Nice kid.

Q: So why did you end up leaving Tolstoy the first time you left?

A: The issue of not having enough control about who was living there and not having a real way to deal with conflicts was real hard. Some other Farm people came too -, let's see no, I think when we actually bought the land it was our old friends from New Hampshire, some Farm people that really were at the Farm briefly that we connected with and another couple that were Farm people. So four of us, four couples bought this land in Idaho with a plan of having a -, we never planned to have our economics together but we planned to establish some kind of money making thing that would support us all. We built a big house and a garage that had a living space and -, never forget it had [unintelligible] never pulled it off.

Q: Did the community have a name?

A: Yeah, Nomastay but we really never did any advertising or anything like that. We had a lot of company. We had Farm people and the people that lived there all had friends from other places that were interested in community, so we ended up with about twelve people for about a couple years. Our first money making thing was we contracted with Mental Health Center in Spokane to take in these

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

young adolescent boys who had difficult issues and they lived with us there. We had a really big house and we got money for those kids. The mother of one of those kids we got to be friends later, at that point she didn't have custody so we didn't know her, but when I went to graduate school she was there and she remembered me - she had come up to visit John, we're pretty good friends now and he's doing good. That was fun. I think I was a big part of the demise of that project because I was so angry all the time and it wasn't really to do with what was going on, it was more to do with my own stuff and I think I was a big part of why that didn't work out. Of course, I'm not sure what other people would say but some of them would agree I'm sure. There we all did eat together every meal, we had all our food together I don't remember how we funded it, I just -, my mom had just died so I still had quite a bit of money from them and I had money and Bob, one of the other people had quite a bit of money and Tom had a trust fund. There was money, it wasn't a real big issue about who paid for the house and you know who paid for building materials, we just kind of put in. We weren't poverty stricken any more and we all had good cars and stuff like that.

Q: So why did you end up going back to Tolstoy?

A: I didn't want to be with Tom anymore. The last three years, the year before I got pregnant with Eric I started having a -, Tom and I the third year we were at the farm we both started sleeping with other people, having other relationships and still lived together. In fact we are still together; it's sort of weird. The year before I got pregnant with Eric I started being in a relationship with this guy Bill that was Tom's best friend. This went on for about 8 years so when I moved to Idaho it was partly to get out of the relationship but it was partly -, Tom had already gone ahead and I didn't want to go because I wanted to be with Bill. I finally realized I wanted to be with Tom, I had the baby and it was his kid, Tom's kid. So when I went there it was partly to get away from the Farm because it was just too crazy, there was crazy stuff started to go on, too many people doing too many weird things that didn't seem like a place to have a baby. Went to Idaho and did that and then Bill and I were still together and he had left Idaho, didn't like it there came back and moved into Spokane. Tom and I had just had this painful -, we were like brothers and sisters and it was real painful a lot of the time. The way we related to each other was like we were trapped in it, he was the daddy and I was the incompetent kid kind of and I knew I could never grow up if I didn't get out of there. So I got out of there took Eric, went to the farm, bought that house and started over doing that. It was real good for me because I did start managing my own life and eventually started earning my own living. I went into Davenport I got this really nice rototiller and advertised and started rototilling, that was the first time I ever did something like that and eventually had all these contracts and deals for maintenance of buildings and the custodian of the big church in Davenport for 20 hours a week. So pretty soon I kind of get my shit together, more or less, it was a good thing I did it. Eric had a lot of contact with Tom, so I guess it was -, I don't think it's the right thing to do but I think it saved my life and I think if we would have stayed together it would have been pretty bad. We are still good friends, we got away from each other before we hated each other. We talk on the phone and we have lots of contact, although I haven't seen him for a couple of years. They were going to be at a conference I was going to go this summer, but I got sick and didn't go and it turned out she -, she has breast cancer, his wife but she's in recovery, but at that point something happened and she didn't show up so he turned out neither of us were there, and Tom was going to be there too. But, I haven't seen them since the summer before last I think. He's a good guy, I was just not-, he had to mean

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

older sisters and I think I fit right in - I carried on the tradition. I really came back because I knew I had to grow up and I was scared to live in Spokane, I didn't think I would earn a living. It's a really cheap place to live, or it was then. I had no bills, I never had a bill until '86 when we got a phone, never had a bill. I did have insurance but Tom paid my car insurance until I went back to college, in fact longer than that. That was the one bill, and I never paid it was on his insurance. Isn't that something, my whole life I was 44 when I got my first bill, aside from doctor bills occasionally. I was really lucky, I had my retirement before I went back to work, I mean I had my whole life I never really had a job from college except at that school and that was more of a live-in life situation it wasn't like employment. I don't know what will happen when I get old, but we'll see.

Q: How did people at the farm get along with the neighbors? I mean I don't know if you even had close neighbors really, but -

A: We didn't in the canyon. The only other people in the canyon was Piper's grandmother who died in about '73 or something and his grandfather before and he died sooner than that. I mean they were really sweet old homesteading people that moved there in '34 or something.

Q: How about the surrounding community of Davenport?

A: It was really bad for a long time. We were dirty hippies and we were dirty hippies, I mean that was the truth. We had spells of people that shoplifted and we got busted for dope in '66 and then again in '72 or something. And people did very strange things, I mean people went into town really inappropriately dressed and acted inappropriately, were dirty and stuff like that. There were always people that were curious about us and always people who were kind to us, it was really kind of amazing - always. Like the road grater guy got to be everybody's friend after awhile and his wife, and they would give us gifts and stuff like that. The Hooterites kind of adopted us, mostly out curiosity. They're in Espanol, they're half way between here and Davenport. Did you look on the map to see where Davenport is?

Q: Yes, I saw where Davenport is.

A: About half way there, and they split every [unintelligible] they get to about sixty. The nearest ones are down near Ritzville and I don't know where they are exactly. I haven't had contact with them for along time. They're fairly, at least they were fairly open to people, academic people.

Q: I met one of their elders, this guy Paul Gross does that ring a bell?

A: Yes, of course they are all named Paul Gross, well a lot of them. There is only six or seven names -

Q: Does he have a lot of children or something?

A: Yeah, the one that lives at this one?

Q: Yeah.

A: He's the leader. They used to come down and show us off to their Canadian brethren and all that as the weird hippies. We had dinner there sometimes. Every Saturday night they have a drunken brawl, they make homebrew and they all drink and they sing and party and dance and it's really cool, it's really

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

cool. People that would come to the farm to investigate communes, you know academic people they would also go there we would arrange it for them and some of them stayed there for awhile and kind of got incorporated. They are very open in their real traditional way, I mean they don't change how they are, but they are really open and curious about other people. We used to have lots of people come and stay with us, a guy wrote his Ph.D. on -, he stayed there for eight months with his wife.

Q: And wrote his thesis on Tolstoy Farm - man, I'd have to look that up.

A: Yeah Piper would probably remember the people's name, I don't remember their names but I think he was at -, it wasn't The University of Chicago but it was somewhere in the upper mid-west, maybe Wisconsin.

Q: People were okay with that, having someone there studying them?

A: Yeah, you sort of forget and besides they kind of oozed into -, you know people. All their weak spots in their lives come real open when there's nowhere to hide, I mean all the ways you are are real obvious, that was a hard thing about the Farm that I didn't realize was hard. There was no privacy at all everybody knew everything about everybody. We didn't have -, none of us had the skills at least from my point of view manage that, I mean that's not a healthy way anyway but it ends up with some pretty bizarre reactions and some painful things. There was lots of messy sexual situations, tons and tons -

Q: Piper mentioned that there was some group marriages or something? He didn't really elaborate on it or anything. Was that kind of a thing people did for awhile?

A: Yeah, there were some episodes of that. That one Bill that I liked he and I and his wife and somebody else, another man so there were six of us and Jeremiah and his wife Cindy, who was my best friend, tried it for awhile. It wasn't very long, a couple months and I managed to avoid having sex with anybody but Bill so that worked out okay for me. Piper was in some complicated thing, a couple different times men had crushes on him so it got -, and I don't think he reciprocated but he was -, there has always been gay people at the Farm.

Q: Was that accepted?

A: Oh yeah, I don't think people gave a shit. The same way they didn't give a shit about children's sexual activities with other children. They just didn't care. That was a problem for him and he had different -, he had some group things going up there but I think it was mostly kids, I don't think -, or the guys that had crushes on him. I quit after the first six months and moved to Idaho, but we had a Walden II that went on for a couple years they built a house and everything. That was Farm people and they had a work economy thing -

Q: Really, just a group of people that decided they would live together like Walden II?

A: Except everybody stayed in their houses. They all ate together and had their money together and shared cars, that went on for quite awhile.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: Did you guys have a name?

A: Yeah, Woody Hill. Morton, that guy you might -, I don't know how your times going-, that was in his house. They built this house in -, until they built the new house, in exchange for using his house for that.

Q: So what, you guys read Walden II and got really excited about it or something?

A: Yeah, and I had visited there for awhile, for a couple of weeks.

Q: Twin Oaks?

A: Yeah, I couldn't stand it there.

Q: Oh really, and you still wanted to do it?

A: Well, really Bill was really hot for it, I always wanted to run my own life and I couldn't ever stand to have some -. The first project once we got started, and I just did it really because it was what was going on, was they wanted to use my car which was a brand new little pick-up that I got with money from when my Mom died to go to Seattle to some crafts fair and I said, "No way!" Everybody was pissed at me, but I had a little baby you know. He was four months old and I said, "So what car am I going to have while you're gone?" Well that wasn't in their -, they didn't want me driving their cars they wanted to drive my car. That went on for quite awhile, I'm not sure exactly why it fell apart because I had left the Farm by then, so I'm not sure. People would come visit but we didn't really talk about what was going on there.

Q: And you had a labor credit economy where you got credits for doing jobs?

A: Yeah, and they had some little money making scams that I can't remember what they were.

Q: Little cottage industries?

A: Yeah, I can't remember and the school did too. I don't know if Piper told you about that, but he started this thing, this is one of his things that kind of did go okay for awhile. We had a little catalog and they made Sioux Indian saddles that were advertised in the Whole Earth Catalog, so there was a lot of orders for that and some other stuff in this little catalog, wooden painted puzzles and some other shit, I mean other neat stuff. Then people kind of did their own thing, and that didn't last very long, Indian moccasins, maybe two years or something. But the saddle orders kept coming because the Whole Earth Catalog kind of drug on, and Piper I think he did okay on that, that was his part the Indian saddles and the idea. The school thing was an idea that he had that came to fruition, he did good on that one. That was his dream and he pretty much-, he didn't actually-, once the building was built-, he didn't really do a lot on the building but he did on the upstairs. Then once it was started he kind of withdrew from the school thing and then he left so that part -, but making there be a school was his dream and he made it happen. So was the Farm and he made that happen, he got it started he just never got what he wanted from it.

Q: That's kind of sad.

A: Yeah, it is sad.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

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

A: Um, just having your own life schedule. I didn't realize until I actually worked, but I did know I loved it. You know I gardened, I thought the only things that counted in life was gardening and raising kids and being good to kids and that's all I did - and read and sewed and made things. There wasn't hardly any money we hardly ever had money so everything you did you kind of did from the lowest level and I liked that. It was a really satisfying life for me and lots of ways. My not getting along very well with people was a bad part, but there was lots of good parts. We always had friends and everything, we had a lot of company. Our friends from our other lives would come it was like a little resort in the summer, people would come and stay with us and hang out - it was fun. Most of the people we knew when we moved to the farm were in graduate school so in the summer we'd have company. I liked the kind of natural lifestyle even though I was the one that was most likely to go to town probably. The gardening, I love to garden and that's all you -, you know your life was -, it wasn't very complicated. And then the evenings you hang out with your friends or you worked in the garden or people would come up-. When we got electricity we were the only ones really with electricity and we'd have video in the winter we'd have video night, before that we had movies night at the school, the schools district gave us a projector and we'd have these old movies from the library. But then we'd have video nights a lot and you know lots of games like cards and Risk and stuff like that and games we made up. We had a lot of weird card games that were made up.

Q: That's fun.

A: Yeah, it was really a nice life. The bad part of being you know of all that, that was the bad part the good parts were really fun. You had kind of automatic friends and people to do things with, lots of nice things really lots of nice things. I miss that, and I had some really good friends that have moved on. We're friends but from Seattle or San Francisco or Boston.

Q: What was the flip side - what was the worst part of living there?

A: For me, not being able to get along to very well with people. It gradually got worse and worse and part of that was because how I am, but part of that was because people were doing things that were in my mind wrong. Not taking good care of the kids, smoking dope there was two people that were child molesters there, there was a lot of stuff [interruption].

Q: I was just asking about what the worst part was and you said - not being able to get along well with people.

A: In the structure that not being able to get people out of their -, not being able to deal with people that were really not good people to have around. We never did figure that one out except by who got a house. But people could get a house for all kinds of reason and people would sell their houses to particular people for all kinds of reasons. There were people that bought houses there that nobody ever saw and they sold them to somebody else, and I don't think there's any houses out there like that now, well maybe one. People lived there but it's not -, and I don't know you'd have to talk to somebody out there to see how they feel about where there living and if they think of it as a community or not. I don't know what people think.

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

Q: Would you call Tolstoy Farm a success or a failure?

A: That requires definitions doesn't it?

Q: Yes it really does. It's kind of a bad question but we ask it anyway.

A: Well, it's a -, I'll give double answers I guess. It's a success in a way because it still going, we developed a structure that maintained its -, you know there's people on private land but that basic structure for land holding structure that we made up out of nowhere with no help, that still holding.

Q: The land trust?

A: Yeah, that's still going.

Q: Yeah, because you guys didn't have any model to follow when you started it, did you?

A: No, there was nothing. We tried to -, the only thing was Heathcoat and theirs was worse than ours. Whatever the school is I mean. And everything else started after us that we knew about except for Quinanilla. There was some religious places, but we made that up and it worked. We got along all this time with really no rules, there's some agreements about hurting each other but a lot of those didn't happen very quickly either. I mean those aren't even agreements, there some agreements about [unintelligible] consensus that have held, it's always been consensus there it's never been voted - and that's pretty amazing. And there's people there that still -, there's kids that think of that as home and the kids they know there as home and the lot of us are still friends with each other, you know there's different clumps of people that still know each other, really all over the country. I mean there's people that still have friends from there. One of the people that lived in the house that I bought when I moved back is a published poet, and they lived there for about three years and they separated and her husband is a professor at The University of Mississippi and she's a professor not at Cornell, at the one that I mix up with Cornell. It's kind of at the same level.

Q: It's an Ivy league school?

A: Yeah, I can't think of the name of it right now.

Q: Dartmouth or something.

A: No, it's not -, it's not a like the Big Seven or one of the Seven Sisters its-, I'll think of it, it'll come to me. She comes about every other year and a bunch of us get together to go to her -, she did a big workshop and she does readings and we'll go and hang out and have dinner before and stuff. And that's people from everywhere that come and do that. I wish that I hadn't grown up in the way that I ended up thinking that was the only life that was available to me. But it wasn't that -, there were a lot of good things to that life especially the being poor in a positive way. That's really a freeing life and that's a good thing about that life too, it you could have a life that -, we didn't think of ecology then really we were organic and that kind of stuff but -, you know to have a really easy lifestyle without the kind of -, you know I sell myself 37 hours a week and have a lot of night meetings and stuff and you know that's not a life. It's okay because I make a bunch of money but I've got to figure out something that is more satisfying. The down side is I think a lot of kids didn't get what they needed and a lot of people-, we never did figure out how to deal with each other in general except by withdrawing into the private

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

house holds which is how it is now. A lot of people go healed there never would have. We had a lot of people come there that had been hospitalized and that were really fragile people and a lot of them have worked out okay, some of them haven't some of them are still -, there's a woman who's living up there in the woods now not in a house who [pause]. I ran into her at a thrift store the other day near my office and I'm worried for her, she's been diagnosed with schizophrenia a lot of the times. I'm not sure if she really has it, I think she's just disassociative and post-traumatic or something. There's room for people to really fall apart there and nobody pick up the pieces and it's always been like that, people that have really disintegrated sort of and people just let them do it. I don't know if that's a common -, I don't know what that means. I don't know, I got sidetracked from the question I think.

Q: I asked you if it was a success or a failure.

A: Mixed blessing, how's that.

Q: Okay, that's just fine.

A: I don't regret that life but I sure wouldn't do it the same way again. It saved my life I think, I think I probably end up dead or really in a bad situation if I hadn't had that place to be and struggle with myself and get organized to be able to work. I was pretty retarded, I was about 35 before I really was taking care of myself, 37 and even then I wasn't really I had child support.

Q: As a final question, I'm curious if you think that there are key ingredients that make a community work? Or what you think these key ingredients might be? Like do you think consensus is a good ingredient or maybe having a land trust or things like that?

A: I think the land trust concept is a good one if you have people that understand what they are losing when they do that. You are losing the potential for major profit for one thing no equity or little equity or potluck equity I guess. I don't think consensus is -, I think that it only works with pretty mature people and how likely is that. But I think it is the only way to make decisions really but it doesn't work if you have people that aren't ready for it or something. My own personal vote is places like Twin Oaks with the labor economy and stuff, it's too intrusive for me. It's too close to having your life run by somebody and I'm too independent I think but I think for some people, but I think about for going back to I think about it occasionally about going and take a trip there and sort of seeing what it would be like.

Q: The community is doing really well, it looks beautiful too. They have really beautified it, the buildings look great and it seems to be running really smoothly.

A: Yeah, that's neat. I had lots of curiosity, like I always read that magazine and look at the catalog and my friend that knew Kat from Missouri, she gets that big one -

Q: Oh, the directory.

A: Yeah, so when I'm at her house I kind of -

Q: Thumb through it. There's lots of communities going on.

A: Yeah. There some in Oregon that was kind of a rural mental health -, rural communities conference and I thought about going down there but I got a chance to do something else in Vancouver Island. I

Interview with Andee Carlsson

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 9, 1996

don't know, I think that the Farm was people that couldn't make it anywhere else basically and I think that probably isn't the best place to work from. But, I don't know who else would give up what you have to give up, I guess. Although, I know there's lots of communities that it isn't a giving up situation, so I don't know what I think. That just happened to be that place and I think its -, and I doubt if there is another place like it. Because, even with all the instability and turnover and lack of kind of a uniting value, any uniting value really, it's still there and people live there.

Q: That is amazing, because all the other open line communes I know about failed pretty quickly and hugely.

A: And explosively in some cases.

Q: Explosively, exactly. They got bulldozed you know.

A: It's still going on. Yeah, Morningstar got bulldozed didn't it.

Q: Yeah, I think both Morningstar and Wheelers did.

A: [unintelligible] for code violations. I remember when we were staying there Lou Gotley, who was kind of the guy, he was in court for all those code violations and we couldn't live on land. We lived down on a orchard in this big barn while he went to court and one day he came zipping in, he had this Jeep and needed somebody to drive around the block while he ran into court and nobody else was there and I didn't know him at all but I did it - drove around the block for an hour while he went into court. He was afraid to park because his car wouldn't start if he did, so he was doing all this code violation things. My brother and his girlfriend, who became Lou's girlfriend were insanely in love, really one of those kind of scary because of intensity love things. Once that happened Lou decided for sure he wanted her, he'd been kind of toying with her and he ran my brother off. Kind of funny, it was weird. Whenever I would see her, I can't think of her name now, she'd say, "How is he - how is he?" I think she did well personally, knowing my brother. Yeah, I think -, it's sort of weird I don't know how that is -, I mean I don't know how that's just gone on. Some people dug in their heels that when we came, the people that were there when Tom and I came, another person came the same day, Staush. His name was Staush and he's still there, kind of a burned out ex-alcoholic dope smoker who really doesn't do anything. He gardens real intensely so it's his vegetables that come to the Farmer's Market but he doesn't come in and do it. And that summer Ken came and he's still there, Rico came that spring and he was there until about two years ago and ...