

Rose: This is Rose Norman, and I'm interviewing Nett Hart. N-E-T-T H-A-R-T, by phone, on January 28th, 2015. We are now recording.

Nett: Okay, okay.

Rose: And I've already put the introduction about who we are on there.

Nett: Okay. Are you speaking, then?

- Yeah, I'm speaking on the beginning of the tape, saying my name and your name.

Nett: Okay, okay.

Rose: I have some questions I probably should have mailed to you. But I don't think there's anything here that you wouldn't have already thought of, but I was just thinking of things to guide us. I think we want to talk about, well, first, I want to get some biographical information. We need to put a short bio at the beginning to contextualize who you are.

Nett: Mm-hmm.

Rose: So go ahead and say things like where you grew up. Where you went to school. What you did for a career.

Nett: Okay. Well, I'm doing it. I grew up in south St. Paul, Minnesota, the south area of St. Paul, and went to college in Iowa. And then, finished up in Augsburg in Minneapolis, because the student strikes were happening, and I just couldn't be in Iowa when all that stuff was happening in Minneapolis. And then I taught junior high arts for four years, four and a half years, which I absolutely loved, but I decided to go to graduate school, because I wanted to study theology. Part of that is related to the whole feminist thing that I just felt that we had to get out of some institutions. And the only way to do that was to work in original languages and stuff, so I did that for three years. And then, let's see. I got boot out. And I had been doing graphic design as well as my personal art for some period of time, just as a way of supporting myself in school. So, I did that pretty much full-time for a number of years, and part of that was that there was so many lesbian businesses at that time getting started, from women's carpentry groups to the outdoor groups, to conference services and stuff, and so, I worked almost exclusively for lesbian organizations. I did theater flyers, and posters and illustrations of all different kinds of things. And I did that for about 19 years, but that was concurrent with a lot of the land stuff. And then, I've been up on the land here for 34 years. And I during that time have done a lot of different things, but for the last 20 years I have been doing organic farming and I have 18 years as a CSA farmer right now, at this point and so I've been active in a lot of the

food security issues and food justice issues for a long period of time. So my activism has just been running through the whole thing. Anything from anti-racism work from even in high-school to very active in the feminist movement, and in the lesbian feminist movement, and then just trying to do social justice work in as many areas as possible. So that's kind of where I am, lion's shares. Do you need more from that?

Rose: No, no, that's plenty. What school in Iowa?

Nett: I went to Wartburg, it's called a four-year scholarship. Yeah, (laughs) yeah. Being at Wartburg is oh, it changes (mumbles), how's that. Yeah, I think I actually know somebody who went there.

Nett: Yeah.

Rose: She was older than me, though. I mean she's-

Nett: Yeah, it's an academically excellent school. You know, at the time it was, it was a good place for me to be. It just got too small.

Rose: Yeah. Okay, that's probably plenty to give a sense of who this is that's talking. (Nett laughs) Okay so now I want to talk about, and if you think of other things, I mean I'm going to edit this, I'll move things around so that, if we feel like we trail off somewhere, don't worry about it.

Nett: Okay.

Rose: Just let it flow.

Nett: And I should say I can just barely hear you.

Rose: Oh.

Nett: You kind of go in and out. But it's okay.

Rose: Okay, you know what, that's because I'll remember to turn around when I'm going to say something.

Nett: Okay.

Rose: Mostly I won't be talking, though. But right now I want to say that, I would like at some point to come up with sort of the timeline of when things, if you can,

Nett: Mm-hmm.

Rose: If you have years. Because I was looking, and it looks like Word Weavers publishing came before LNR.

Nett: Oh, by a long time, yeah. Yeah.

Rose: And so it's-

Nett: Just a quick timeline for you is that, we got the farm here in '79, '80. Early '80. And had been part of a lesbian land group, search group for a period of time before that. And then the year after that began the first almanac, Ripening. And actually it wasn't the first almanac, we thought it was the only almanac. But we did that, in late '80, and then we started receiving all kinds of material in the mail from other lesbians, and so we did the second one, and then Joyce Cheney had been collecting the land stories for a number of years before that, and approached us to publish Lesbian Land. So we got involved with that, and certainly after that Bev Brown began Maize, the magazine, and did one issue and then wanted to pass it on. And so Lee took that on, and we published, she edited and we published Maize, it's barely been out at the time, let's just put it that way. And then, LRN didn't start until '90. We began to do stuff for '90 and that. So that's a good ten years later after the almanacs. Does that help you a little bit on time?

Rose: Yeah. Yeah, that is helpful. Okay, so we should then begin I suppose with the almanacs. You want to start talking about what got you doing that? Sounds like everything sort of wove together? Over time.

Nett: It did, yeah. And I think one of the things that happened is that when we'd been in the lesbian land search group, we talked politics all the time, we were trying to decide what kinds of things would be possible for as large a group as we were looking at. We were looking for a resident community, maybe 30-40 lesbians. And so we had to negotiate a whole lot of stuff in talking about that, that some of the groups that were around us at that time were more weekend groups. And they just had some policies for visitors. And we were looking for a lot of stuff. And so, our whole thing coming to the land, and we had actually already bought this farm, but were looking to join a group, was all around politics. And then we got here, and what we were totally thrown with, is that it was all about the natural world and our interaction with it. From the city, you don't know where the moon rises at different times, and how that changes. And just all the phenomena of the plants and animals, and the cycles. And we had gardened, each of us, for years. But being a part of a cycling world here was so different that we decided that we had to research it and write little note cards on it and put all these little pieces together. And as we were doing this, we had talked about publishing in a very vague way before that. But this seemed like it was a book. And so we took all these little cards, and we took a braided rug, a very large braided rug, and we said okay, this is winter, on this side of the rug. This is summer over here, this is. And we just started putting the cards in, in their right part of the circle. And then just said what are some extra things we'd like to have put in there? And we had a book. And that was it. You know, and just had lots of fragments that we thought fit together in a seasonal kind of a way. So we did that book because it was about us coming to a relationship with the land, I think at that point. As soon as that book was out, we seriously got mail after mail after mail of pieces that other lesbians were writing. And not necessarily Landykes, but some. And so that's how we decided, okay I guess we have a second book. And we did that. And that was really a different sort of relationship to land than what our original political inclinations had been. So that was the shift. And I think that's why we started doing the books, yeah. And then the lesbian land book was a totally different experience for us because here was a manuscript, a taped manuscript. Actually it wasn't even a manuscript, it was all on tape and it had to be

transcribed in the days of pause, rewind, pause, rewind, kind of days. And so that took a fair amount of time. And then once we had that, we could begin to edit and Joyce at that time was largely through with the book. She had done all the interviews and traveled, and done that, and she just wanted it out there in the world. So she did edit with us a bit, but we mostly did the editing on that. And then got that out. To our surprise it wasn't as popular book as the almanacs. And so we still had many copies left of that one. So we did that, and then when Maize came along, we really were so taken by what Bev was doing with the magazine. It was just such a necessary magazine to be out there that when she didn't want to do it anymore, we said, I'll take that on. She hadn't done anything other than editing of Lesbian Land before that as editor. But she just had to keep going. And so that's what happened. She, I'm just going to make a guess, but she edited I think at least through the 70s. Like though issue 70-something, or whatever like that before it moved on to somebody else. So that's a lot of issues. And then that put us into a lot of contact with a lot of lesbian land groups. And lesbians that were not part of groups. And, you know, we did some bit of traveling related to that too.

Rose: Let's stop a minute. I realize, I've only got a vague notion of who Lee is, and who we are.

Nett: We, yeah. (Rose and Nett laugh)

Nett: Lee and I were partners for a long time.

Rose: And this is Lee Lanning, right? Is this-

Nett: Say it again?

Rose: Lee Lanning?

Nett: Yes, mm-hmm.

Rose: L-E-E

Nett: Yeah, L-A-N-N-I-N-G. Yeah.

Rose: And go ahead and say how long you were partners?

Nett: Well, I mean we're still people who are in touch every week of the year, I mean like that. But we were always in a kind of relationship that allowed us to move and you know, be in different places and with different people and stuff. So I don't think either one of us knows when that, you know, it was just always in change and flux like that, but we did a lot of things together, including originally buying this farm, and starting Word Weavers together. Yeah. Some of those connections that are just very full blown. There are so many different parts of your life that are in conjunction.

Rose: Mm-hmm. Okay, so we as, and that land group also, that a lot of people started land groups in the

early '70s.

Nett: Mm-hmm.

Rose: Do you remember roughly when your land group started? And how it started? What got it started?

Nett: Well, see there were already a lot of them around here, even, long before that. And there was a fairly formal one that was the DOE farm which was in Wisconsin. And that's a lot of lesbian supporters both from the Twin City area, from Milwaukee and Madison. It was kind of equidistant to those three cities. So that was the one that was most prominent just because it had so much activity going on there. But there were a lot of smaller ones. There were a lot of ones that were started by a couple of couples, and whatever else. There were a number of lands that were on rental property, and so they were rented for a couple of years and lesbians came and created the space that we did and then it didn't continue. And I think part of that was that none of us at that time were thinking of land as livelihood. I think we all thought that we would have to make our livelihood some other way. And so, and it was probably wise at the time. So that seemed more temporal. In terms of lands that are still around in here, not very many. But there were some that were formally organized as non-profits, and there have been quite a few. Right in our immediate area here.

Rose: That would be, you're in the vicinity of Minneapolis-Saint Paul? Or out from that area-

Nett: Yeah. northern Minnesota. The other thing that is fairly prominent in our area is a lot of outdoor women's activities. There would always be large groups camping and hiking, and that kind of thing. Which is not exactly lesbian land. But it also drew the same lesbians. To do that kind of thing in groups. Something that has changed quite a bit I think in the last 30 years. But we didn't start looking for land until the early '80s. Like '80, '81. And the group that we were meeting with met from '81 to '83, sometime in there. It ended up being a really good chance to be with very like minded and not so like minded lesbians over time. But it was clear that that was not a group that was going to actually come together and buy land together, so no.

Rose: You already had the farm so you weren't looking for-

Nett: We would have changed that. I mean we would have sold the farm and moved on to a community if there was something that could have pulled together. Most of what was happening at the same time is we were meeting to buy land, and other lesbians were buying houses in the city. Which seemed like you know, okay. How serious are we about doing this? But I think that we all felt we wanted to do this, and we felt we wanted to live in community. And the economic realities were just too harsh to figure out how we were going to do that kind of thing.

Rose: And that farm you bought in 1979, '80.

Nett: Uh-huh.

Rose: This is where you are now?

Nett: Yes, yes.

Rose: And did you live there then? Or did you, was it a place you went to while you lived somewhere else?

Nett: Well, basically lived here part time. I was here about three days a week and then I ran a graphics studio in Minneapolis. So I was there part of the week. And some of that time I lived in a collective household in Minneapolis. And other times I lived with partners in an apartment or whatever. From the very beginning once we had the land here I was here at least half of the week. Every, and then I've been here full time probably since about '92.

Rose: I'm going to put that in the biographical introduction because that'll be good context.

Nett: Okay.

Rose: Okay. Okay, well, we had gotten to Maize coming along and Lee editing it through the '70s.

Nett: That means issue number 70. That is a guess on my part. I could look that up for you or whatever else, I'm just guessing that's about how long she had it.

Rose: Oh, issue number 70. Because I was saying it started publication 1983.

Nett: Yeah right. No, she took it over in issue number two. And so I think she did probably 70 issues or so before passed it on.

Rose: 70, 70-X. Okay. So that would be,

Nett: Yeah.

Rose: let's see, just trying to think. 31 was in the '90s, so 70s would be in the 2000s, right?

Nett: Oh yeah. Yeah. Somewhere in there, yeah.

Rose: Okay, I can ask. I might want to try to get that from Jae. And try to get, was she the first one? I mean was she the one after Lee?

Nett: No, the thing is it bounced around a little too much there for a while. It first went to Spinsterhaven in Arkansas?

Rose: Yeah it is. No, it's-

Nett: Yeah, and she edited it for a while, and then I think that the next editor after that, see I wasn't as

involved at this point, because we were no longer publishing it. It moved, the publishing moved with the editor at that point. But then Carol Jean Coventry edited for a while and then Rebecca Hinton, and then trying to think who else. There was at least one other person in there. And then Jae took it over.

Rose: Where was Carol Jean Coventry?

Nett: She's in Wisconsin.

Rose: And Rebecca Hinton was still in was it New Mexico or Arizona? Where is that?

Nett: Oh, Jae? Jae's in New Mexico.

Rose: But where was Rebecca?

Nett: I think she's east coast.

Rose: Well she was with Pelican, right?

Nett: No, this was an-

Rose: Another Rebecca?

Nett: That's Henderson,

Nett: Rebecca Henderson.

Rose: Oh, okay. I'm getting my Rebeccas mixed up.

Nett: This is Hinton. She wrote two small books about do it yourself projects and handy girl kind of stuff, basically.

Rose: Oh, okay.

Nett: Yeah, I don't know how long she had, but there was one other editor in there that I cannot remember exactly how that moved, and then it moved back to Outland and Jae took it over.

Rose: And who was the person at Spinstervhaven? The name of the-

Nett: It was one of the resident people there, there aren't that many that were actually living there at that time.

Rose: That's okay.

Nett: They're not people I had, I mean I didn't have any contact at all with that process.

Rose: Well okay, so talk about the years that Lee was editing Maize. Were you involved with the editing of it?

Nett: No, when she was editing it there were times that she was here when she started doing it. But then she was living in other places and she always did the editing of Maize but what role I had was I continued the publishing so that I did all the book fulfillment for the almanacs and Lesbian Land, and some of the financial bookkeeping kind of stuff for Maize as it came through Word Weavers at that point. And so, it wasn't really until Lee wasn't editing it anymore that Word Weavers and Maize were totally separate things. Everybody that's an editor now has basically run it as a small business of their own, so.

Rose: Okay so. Was it Word Weavers that was the publisher of Maize when Lee was doing it?

Nett: Well yeah. Because Word Weavers was the publisher of the almanacs. So we just did that all together, the orders.

Rose: Okay, well let's get a list of Word Weavers publications.

Nett: Okay, so we did the first two almanacs. "Ripening, an Almanac of Lesbian Lore and Vision". Then we did "Dreaming, an Almanac of Lesbian Lore and Vision". And then we did "Lesbian Land". And then we did "Awakening, an Almanac of Lesbian Lore and Vision". So those are the four books. And then let's see. In the early '90s we published my book, "Spirited Lesbians: lesbian desire as social action". And then we had been doing Maize before that time. But Maize is actually, we have our own archives of our issues, everybody else I think has pretty much archived their own issues.

Rose: Yeah, we sent a complete collection of Maize from Shewolf to, I think we sent it to Sinister Wisdom. But she had already sent it to the, the Lesbian Herstory Archive I guess that's in Brooklyn.

Nett: Uh-huh, right.

Rose: I'm not sure what Julie Enszer is doing Sinister Wisdom, not sure what she's going to do with those issues of Maize. Sure are a lot of them.

Nett: Yeah, yeah. I don't know what the publishing run is right now. But you know because we had the books in the women's bookstores, we sold Maize through the women's bookstores too. And we sold a lot through the bookstores. It wasn't all subscription. So that I think that, we picked up a lot of new subscriptions that way, but we also always had people that just bought it at bookstores. Which are fewer, at this point.

Rose: Many fewer, 13 is what I read last.

Nett: Yeah.

Rose: You have any sense of what the distribution was of Maize in those years? How many did you print?

Nett: You know this is stuff that I haven't dealt with for 20 years. I have no clear idea right now of how much we printed of any of those things.

Rose: Okay, that's all right.

Nett: Yeah, I mean it's kind of one of those, we print this many because this is how many subscribers and stuff we have. We didn't have a lot of back stock. There were times that we just had to go to the copy machine and make a few more copies or something. And then we used lesbian printers in Grand Rapids, Michigan too for that whole time. So we were lucky about that.

Rose: That's good. Okay we can come back if you think of something else to add there. But maybe we should go ahead and get into how LNR, the things I was thinking about have a lot of questions. Origins, whose idea, how it came to be, whose name should be given as founding mothers, where you got all those volunteers from, you said that you have thousands of hours done by volunteers. How did they come along? And how was it publicized besides Maize?

Nett: Okay, well I think the background to even having LNR was that in the early years, let's say not necessarily the late '70s, but particularly in the '80s, there were a lot of lesbian lands that maybe some of the original people were there, or not there, but there were all these crises that were happening so that we would get notices to Maize and you know personally, saying there's nobody able to pay the mortgage on you know Cabbage Lane this month, or something like that. I mean there would be these calls that would go out widely, is that we need money just to keep the mortgage going and whatever else. And then you know those might be repetitive and different ones, a lot of different lands were doing that. But there were also lands that had some pretty messy kinds of title things going on, where the original people that came on the land put their names on the title not thinking of ownership of land, so much like a, were no longer on the land. And just some things that have, more people wanted money back or whatever else. Or the lands had started out as mixed communities and then it was all women and stuff. So there was a lot of, we felt like crisis stuff that was happening all the time that there were so many lesbian lands that were on the brink of being lost. And many that were lost just in that period of time. I think some of us that were in that land group and just lesbians around that were talking about this, is like, there has to be something that helps some of these lands, And that it isn't always the same few people that they're asking for help. And that the lesbian lands belong to all of us in a way, that we all need to be somehow responsible for them. Talking about it and well, I think it just kind of came about like we should just see if we can get a small fund together and I think I have to say that almost everything that here seems like it's an institutional thing was a flying by the seat of our pants let's do it for one time kind of effort to begin with. It wasn't like let's publish a series of books. Or it wasn't any of those kinds of things. And that's how it was with LNR. It was like let's see if we can get a fund together and help some of these lands that are struggling, month to month, making costs for mortgages. They need to have more stability and that. Let's see if we can do that. The first call went out and pretty much through Maize, let's say. It wasn't too many other networks that we had about that. There was

at that time Lesbian Connection had a land directory. And so I think we used that. That's been a long time since they had that. That was basically the extent of the call both for funds and for let's see if we can, you know, funnel some money from maybe more of the urban women to some of these lesbian lands. And it still got pretty small. But there was some indication pretty early on that money wasn't the only thing that was going to help any of these lands. It's that they needed to be a lot more structural stuff that helped. And basically there were things that were just to help clear up titles, or a lot of lesbians on land I think we started these as anti-patriarchal pieces but they still ended up being within a state, in a county, and all those kinds of things. There were too many ways in which that non-interaction was disadvantaging those lands. Pretty quickly after that we started doing some work and at this point a friend, Sally Koplan who had a law background, she wasn't a lawyer but had a law background. And I started just doing a lot of research of you know, how else could lands be structured and owned. Those kinds of questions. And it became clear that we need to do the same thing for leveraging natural resources, is that even though the whole idea of creating a non-profit seemed like a big commitment, let's say. Then it seems like then it's something. We realized we had to do that. And just prior to that I had been doing some conference work. Again another kind of flying by the seat of our pants group, but we called it Creating a Lesbian Future. And we were bringing together a lot of lesbians from a lot of different backgrounds to have conversations about what it was that we wanted to create together, and we did a series of three really large conferences but in the process of doing that we interacted a lot with funders. And that was my first experience as writing grant proposals and that kind of a thing. So when we were doing Lesbian Natural Resources, I knew that any process that we were doing with grants and giving out grants had to be questions that were really related to what we needed to know in order to make decisions. I didn't want to have anybody have to go through the kind of hoops that we had to go through for some of the funders that, and they were women's funds and stuff like that too. To get the funding that we needed for those conferences. We tried to make it a real direct setup. And again we're kind of standing one foot in, there are women who would make larger donations if they got a tax exemption. We don't have a lot of lands that could use funds for which someone gets a tax exemption. And so then we were, I was doing a lot of research in the libraries, law libraries, and the foundation libraries, trying to find how it could be done. And then at that time there was the consortium of women's funds. There were a lot of women's funds at that time. And so I did a lot of research in their books about just how, well the public papers of these different funds to how that could be set up so that we could take donations from individuals that wanted a tax exemption for that donation. But at the same time, bring that money to lesbian lands that were not formally organized as non-profits, and 501(c)(3)s, at that point. Trying to figure out that, and then I read an article by this lesbian lawyer who was just talking about the different ways that you could do that and I set up an appointment with her and we just had a great meeting of the minds almost immediately. It was very funny, because we were in this very crowded restaurant, and I told her exactly what I wanted to do, and she said a little too loudly, yeah, let's bifurcate (laughs). Everybody turned, and the whole restaurant looked at us like we'd said something like that. And I said, I think can we do that? I mean, that's exactly what I want to do, is have two parallel organizations, because clearly one can do one thing and then the other can do the other. And so that's what we did, is we created the model for having the 501(c)(4), which is the Lesbian Natural Resources. Which is a community based organization. It takes donations for which the donors get no tax exemption. It gives money to any lesbian that we choose to give that money to under our own guidelines. And then created a subsidiary to that, that was the 501(c)(3), and that is the one that can take donations from any lesbian or person that wants to give money but have a tax exemption for that

money. But then under the terms you agree to with the federal government, a 501(c)(3) has to do something that if you are not doing it, the government would be doing it. So it had to meet some educational purpose, or some charitable purpose in some way. Or be given directly to a charitable organization. So that's how we ended up making all of our grant designations, is that we had the different kinds of grants. But within those they were all layered, because if a 501(c)(3) organization, and there were lands at that point that were doing that kind of work, applied for a grant for almost anything, it would come out of the fund, the 501(c)(3) fund for us. Because it could. Anything that we did to fund apprenticeships, or support educational groups could come out of the 501(c)(3) and, you know we did a lot of things that way. Any group that was in a pending 501(c)(3) status, a new group forming, because we were trying to encourage a more diverse population in the lesbian land community. So if they had made the application form even though they had not received their 501(c)(3) status at that point, they could still be funded through that as a provisional. That's how we did that whole kind of thing. There were a lot of lands that were simply in the names of a number of individual lesbians, and then those were always funded through the 501(c)(3), C 4. So the Lesbian Natural Resources. But it was so complicated that we just did everything publicly as Lesbian Natural Resources because it wasn't so clear that the non-profit lands got this money, and the privately owned lands got this money. It was much more criss-crossed in there because we were creatively trying to see what could be funded out of 501(c)(3). So that's how we did the structural stuff which is boring to everyone but me. But it made a lot of things happen, because we could use some of that money that came that way, more effectively. And then as far as volunteers, there were a lot of land lesbians just in the immediate area. We started out with a board that was the original grant committee became the first board in the process of us incorporating. So that was kind of a bridge group like that. They weren't formally, they were formally a board but they had no legal obligation let's say. So the first board was Chris of Coventry up in Maine and Jean Mountain Grove, from Oregon, and Susan Wiseheart, from Missouri. And me. And so we met, and made, they made the first grant decisions. Because that was one of the other decisions I made for myself, is that I would raise money but I would never make a funding decision. Is that I felt that I would keep those roles clear. And so I was on the board but I was never on a grant committee during any of this time. So I was much more directly involved in fundraising through this whole time. That was the first board. And then we met as we were incorporating and creating bylaws. And each of the times that we had to meet it was a significant expense to bring everybody together. To fly people from different parts of the country. As there were some changes in the board we went to much more local boards so that we could basically drive to meetings. Which meant that we could meet much more often. Where we felt like the kind of expense that was involved with a board that was more geographically diverse, the advantage of that was outweighed by the cost and the infrequency that we could meet because of it. So we went to quarterly meetings, in a much more local group. Local meaning Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, basically. And I think most of the volunteers, other than things that could be done more remotely like Sine Anahita was originally I'm going to say in the Carolinas. Then she moved to Iowa to do school, like that. So then she became more local. But she started doing the apprenticeships before she moved here. So it was just basically a series of people volunteering to do things, or people that were known in the area as being on land or part of that network. So that's that. The grant committees on the other hand have always been pretty diverse geographically. So that's where we made the decision is that if we were going to put money into flying lesbians around to make decisions, we would prioritize the diversity on the grant committee. And so each of the years, lesbians that were invited, we tried to make a balance, to give as much diversity as possible not just geographically but age and the

kind of experience on land, whether it was community land or private land. Length of time. Different racial and ethnic backgrounds, that kind of thing. And I think we made some pretty good committees out of that. Because there were some pretty hard decisions to make in the space of a weekend, many times not having met one another before. We always had committees that worked. That always worked.

Rose: You're talking about grant committees. When you say we always had committees that worked?

Nett: Ah? Say that again?

Rose: The grant committees. The committees you're talking about. There aren't other kinds of committees.

Nett: Yeah, yeah. Basically they would be together like three days, and the other thing that we did from the beginning with LNR is that we said this is what we have in the bank, and here are the applicants. You decide which ones you're funding, and how much you're funding them. And we'll just spend it all. I mean we did that each time. But one of the things that happened particularly in the ones that were for land purchase, especially creating more diversity in the land communities, is that they were provisional, because they had to actually have a contract for a purchase for us to send the money. Some of those that were provisional didn't get paid out within the year just because the purchase didn't happen. Some of them were renewed multiple times because of that. But other than that, the grant committee just basically spent everything each year.

Rose: Wow.

Nett: I know (laughs). Why not? I mean it was for lesbians, right?

Rose: Yeah. Now that reminds me, somebody was telling me and I want you to talk about this on tape, because I think this is worth recording, that LNR had a policy of not investing that money in stock. That the whole idea was that that was destruction of the environment, oppressive to women, therefore they wanted to instead just give the money to women.

Nett: Well yeah. I guess we never had a philosophy of keeping money at all. As it would come in, we would begin to know how much we had to work with for the next grant cycle, but we didn't know until the grant committee met. The week before we were kind of doing all the numbers, and whatever else about that. So, or I was. I was pretty much doing all that stuff. It wasn't so much that we were anti-stock, we were just not interested in investing things. There were a couple of times where we had some stock that was given to us that we didn't sell until we were close to a grant period. Mostly because of what we would have to do to do it, to get a-

Rose: (laughs)

Nett: But no. We were never interested in keeping money in any kind of institution. It was always gathered for lesbians and to go out again. Because it seemed that that was the spirit in which it had been given to us.

To distribute it.

Rose: So how did you, what was your fund, you said in the article that came from lots and lots of different sources. Some large donors, many smaller donors.

Nett: Mm-hmm.

Rose: I never, I had heard about LNR, but I never heard about donating to LNR.

Nett: Hmm, we sent stuff out pretty regularly about that, and every time that we did a grant cycle in Maize and pretty much every issue that we could, we encouraged donations, and one of the things that I always felt so good about is that we'd send out the donations, or the grants. And many of those grant recipients would turn around and send us a small donation immediately. I mean that was the kind of thing that was really, you know, it kind of broke the stratification that can happen in those kinds of organizations where there's the grantees and the granters. And that wasn't true so much at LNR. We got a lot of donations, and there were a lot of lesbians who gave on a regular basis, sending what they could several times a year or whatever else. So that's basically what we did.

Rose: And were those local? Part of your three-state network? Those, that were sending in regularly whenever they could?

Nett: It was pretty much all over. We had a lot of donors at that point. And I think that right now it's a little bit hard to imagine that, because none of the lands are quite as active as they were then. But at the time that we were starting to do LNR, it wasn't just the number of lesbians that were living on land, it was all the lesbians that were moving through land. That weren't necessarily settled there, but they would go and visit different lesbian lands, and so there was a lot of flex with lesbians who were committed to land. And you know, were supportive of land. And that was one of the ways they could be supportive. Yeah, and in terms of the three state area for board members and stuff, that wasn't anything that was other than practical but we had some good working boards there and the boards didn't do the glamor work. Just basically worked on the pieces that needed to come together or whatever else like that. Mailings, and that kind of thing. The glamor work was all the grant committees that got to make those fabulous decisions.

Rose: Right. But that was usually over a \$100,000. Every year from like '92 to '99.

Nett: Now some of that, I don't know if you're looking at the grant recipients, there will be a number of repeated grants for down-payments. Yeah, so it isn't like those numbers were spent every year and then were spent again the next year. So there were a few of those that the same \$15,000 was awarded over and over again. Basically, we couldn't spend it while it was contingent, and then we would have another grant cycle and the same applicant would, applicants would apply and you know, I guess they would be taking their chances, but nobody every not funded them, again. So it was basically money that we had to keep, set aside, because we had awarded it, but we had a contingency that hadn't been met to actually pay out on. But yeah, there were significant amounts of money. But I think the other thing we have to keep in mind is

that that kind of money was happening before LNR, it's just that it was happening in a crisis situation all the time. That this land is in danger of being lost, because they can't pay their insurance or mortgage, or you know there's some legal suit against them, or whatever else like that. So it wasn't new that lesbians were supportive of lesbian land. It was just new that the donors were more broad spread, I think.

Rose: I'm still thinking about how it got so widespread. I mean I know that, this is the '90s and it sort of pre, well, it's definitely pre-social networking, for most people it was pre-email. So we're talking.

Nett: Oh yeah.

Rose: We're talking print media, for finding out about, for fundraising.

Nett: You're forgetting the very important lesbians who never settled on one particular land but moved from one to another to another to another, or basically just traveled. Lesbians that had particular skills and threw their tools in the back of the car and just went to any land that might need that skill, or whatever else. I think that we had kind of our own lesbian minstrel or we call, troubadours, going around. Passing the word and the gossip, you know even as much as the print media. We had so much traveling going on that news moved pretty quickly.

Rose: Of course there were festivals that a lot of people-

Nett: Oh for sure. For sure. And the other thing besides the festivals and women moving like that is that well, I just lost what I was going to say about that part. Okay, I'll come back there. But I think there was just a whole lot more, or the women's bookstores were such central places for information that lesbians passing through an area were very easily connected to information, too. And that kind of institution is not around anymore, but it was so much more than bookstores when they were active and all these, I think we had 170 of them at one point. Bookstores, women's bookstores. And so without that kind of hub for information to be passed out too, that makes a huge difference right now. And I don't know what your experience is but you know there were gatherings all the time. Several times a week there was something going on somewhere. We were just so much more connected than I feel we are now. And then that connection wasn't specific to Landykes. Landykes were just part of the lesbian community at that point. Were now I feel like Landykes are more isolated from the rest of the community. In many ways. The word funding is a good word if you want to have something catch on fast, right? Funds are available. That's pretty-

Rose: Gets their attention in a hurry.

Nett: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Rose: I remember our land group person who know about it I don't know where she heard about it. She subscribed to Maize, that's probably where she heard about it.

Nett: And what land group were you part of? I'm still part of Ravens Den Sanctuary near Sewanee,

Tennessee. Although Kat, that's the one, Kathleen O'Donoghue.

Nett: Uh-huh.

Rose: She lives there. It wound up none of us living there. We all live within a few blocks of each other in Huntsville, Alabama.

Nett: Okay.

Rose: But at one time thought we were all going to move out there and we incorporated so that we could apply for LNR funds. But we never, I don't know, it always took us so long to do anything. Forever to make a decision. But we did incorporate, and we're still incorporated. But we donated the land, there's a land trust that actually borders our land South Cumberland Regional Land Trust that Kat's a board member of. I think she's been on it for a long time. Anyway, we concluded that in order to put our land in a trust, it was going to be better to just donate it to them, with our, we have an easement on it. Conservation easement. So we don't even own it anymore. But we have lifetime privileges. So it's not technically lesbian land. Except that a lesbian is living on it and lesbians bought it, and lesbians protected it, so.

Nett: Oh yeah, yeah. Well I think you know lesbian land when you get down to it, there's so many different ways that happens. Because there are large public land trusts that lease land to lesbians, and the land trust itself has nothing to do with lesbians. They just are leasing a piece of land for 99 years to a lesbian group.

Rose: Or Hawk Hill. I think Hawk Hill is that way. Hawk Hill, Susan Wiseheart?

Nett: That's a good example, yeah. There's just so many different ways that came together and I think part of that was that when a lot of lands were coming together it was possible for a lot of craftswomen, that went to the different festivals, and that was primarily their livelihood, to live on land. And create a livelihood for themselves. There weren't so many other options and I don't know that there were a whole lot of lesbians that were farming for a livelihood on land. Many of the lands were not particularly agreeable to that. Because they were bought because they were cheap. Right, you know? On a steep hill or something like that. I think that the young lesbians I see now that are on land, are much more focused on that's their livelihood. They're going to land so that they can farm or so that they can ranch. Or something where the livelihood is based on the land itself. There's a shift that has happened that way.

Rose: Talk some about, we talked about this before when I was writing the article for the Sinister Wisdom, about when LNR stopped awarding those grants every year and started shifting its focus. Talk about that a little bit.

Nett: Well part, there were things that were happening, part of it was that we had not seen a new applicant for a few years. In other words, even within the same communities we were getting the same people applying for a different kind of grant or something every year. And we began to think that we really had first of all, we didn't have a lot of lands in crisis, which is a good thing. We weren't losing lands because of the

financial stuff in the same way. But we also were getting applicants that basically were on fairly stable lesbian lands, which is good, but we didn't feel we were reaching all of the potential, the land communities. We at that time, we weren't so dormant as we were doing a whole lot more advocacy work. And I think that was one of the things that probably I feel best about is that a lot of lesbians that were living on land were so not integrated into the patriarchal system that they were disadvantaged in a lot of ways, economically as well as legally. And the kinds of ways that we were able to offer these services without you know, without putting them into patriarchal situations that they had avoided, but just like this is all you have to do. You get this piece of paper, you send it in here. You know that kind of thing. Breaking it down, and walking lesbians through that. I think stabilized a lot of lands. And so we did a lot of that kind of thing. We also helped lands that wanted to have apprentices but the apprentices were a financial burden to the lands. So we continued with the apprenticeship stuff longer than we did the large grants. Because that, we basically set aside money for apprenticeships that, you know just as the applicants came in we funded them for a few years after that. But I think that there was a shift that has happened in the lesbian community as a whole. We weren't getting as many donations either, at that time, you know, that was falling down. But we also felt that some of the things that we had felt we have to help this situation get some things out, weren't the crises or the most immediate thing and then we started to look at a broader way and that's how we got to the research and the publication of "On Our Own Terms", the book that just really tried to answer a lot of the questions so that either lands could in the first place get their titles, in the way that they would work for them, or could change them like that. But they would have the resource to do that. So we spent some time doing that. But it wasn't so much that we said okay let's do something else because we're bored, it's just that the, everything around us had shifted in a way. And I think that the Landyke community right now is a little bit more defined than it was then. That there are Landykes who are living on land, and there's not so many lesbians who are sampling. You know, moving around to different communities. That's my experience. I don't know if it's different where you are too. But I don't feel the same kind of band of roving lesbians checking out land that there had been before. So there's a little dynamism that has been lost with. And you know we have an age gap too. We have a lot of lesbians on land that are say 45 and older. Then we don't have so many until we start to get some now that are in their 20s and you know, early 30. There was a period of time, and it wasn't unique to lesbians, because I'm real active in the organic movement, and there's a whole gap where there aren't many farmers that are between 30 and 45. Organic farmers. So everybody's on one side or the other of that divide. And so I think that that's kind of a wider thing in our society. Does that make any sense to you?

Rose: Yeah. Yeah. Of course there's fewer of them. There were so many of us. Baby boomers.

Nett: Say that again.

Rose: There's fewer of them. There's so many of us. The baby boom was such a-

Nett: There are not that many fewer. Ten million fewer, or something? It's not just that. It's that you know so the numbers, there was something different happening. There were more career opportunities for lesbians and women in general. A lot of other kinds of things created a more urban lesbian community I think at a certain period there. And I see that shifting right now. Which is good. So that I'm aware of a lot more

lesbians that are looking at land again now that are in their 20s. But it isn't just the lesbian community that became much more urban focused. It's, I think at least in the region here in the organic groups that I'm a part of there just aren't many farmers in that middle age group there.

- Yeah.

Rose: Yeah.

Nett: Yeah, and it's just here in terms of there's so many lesbian activities that took place in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area or you know hiking in the national forests and parks and stuff like that. And that's not much a part of the lesbian culture here now either. Is that even the activities of urban dykes have shifted to be even more urban than they had been.

Rose: Yeah, well that's what's happened to us, you know. There were seven of us. And here we are living in a city. It's not a big city, but you know it's definitely urban. I guess you get older and you like your creature com- we have no electricity or running water on our land.

Nett: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. (Rose laughs)

Rose: And we can't ever agree on getting it, you know.

Nett: Yeah, I know, I know. Well there's that, you know, and then for some reason we weren't bringing a lot of young lesbians that were just a little bit younger than us into the land communities either. There's just, there's an ebb and flow to that kind of thing.

Rose: Well, it's been an hour. So.

Nett: Okay.

Rose: I think we should stop now, and I will go through these notes and I know I will have questions as I go through and listen to the interview and what I'll do is get it all best I can, embed notes and mail it to you.

Nett: Oh, okay.

Rose: Along with the form you need to sign.

Nett: Mm-hmm.

Rose: And I don't know how soon you can turn it around. I'm hoping to have all this ready to send Duke at the end of February.

Nett: Okay, that's a possibility. You should know that with my farming I start ramping up with planting and

stuff like that, I'll start in a couple of weeks planting, and it just gets busier and busier until mid April. And then by the end of April I have zero time to do anything. I mean if my friends want to see me they come up here. So that's kind of my life (laughs) until October again. So that sounds like a great timeline for me, if you want to work with February into early March at the most.

Rose: Okay. This will be my priority right now. (both women laugh)

Nett: I hope you have a transcription program you do.

Rose: No, but I type very fast and I would say I got about two thirds of what you said typed while you were talking.

Nett: Okay, that's great.

Rose: So it's not too hard, knock on wood. To go back and get it. Plus I'm not transcribing, per se. I'm, I call them interview notes. Because I'm changing it around, moving things around, it says right on it, this is not a transcript. Because that has to be edited anyway, a transcript does. So I'm just sort of skipping that step.

Nett: Yeah, yeah yeah.

Rose: Editing as I go.

Nett: Well this is a good, and the collection that you're putting together is pretty much focused on Landykes then? Or is it broader than that?

Rose: Well, it started, it's called "The Southern Lesbian Feminist Activist Herstory Project". And it started, we thought we were going to collect memoirs because the South, probably like the Midwest gets left out a lot of these feminist histories that are being written. So we sent out a call for contributors and we got one. This was in LC and OLOC and some other place so we realized we were going to have to write the stuff. Do interviews, is what we actually we weren't even sure how we were going to publish any of it.

Nett: Oh okay, mm-hmm.

Rose: Sort of depends- how you all started with, that's sort of how this transpired. *WomonWrites* is the Southeastern lesbian writers conference, twice a year. That's what we've been talking about since 2009. And I started doing interviews in 2013 I think. But we also got the idea of making a connection with *Sinister Wisdom*, and once we had a publisher, things just took off. So we have three special issues. We've already published one.

Nett: Mm-hmm, I've read that.

Rose: Of the three. And this one is just on women's land. And then there's one more that will be on festivals,

music, bookstores, that whole cultural wing.

Nett: Good.

Rose: Of lesbian feminist activism. Although this Landyke one has been just so absorbing I would really like to, we've got 21, stories of 21 land groups, plus we have a traveling dyke, we have a young dyke. We have stories about Shewolf and about LNR. I would like to go back and try to interview some more of those. We have over 50 in the timeline. 50 land groups. And I would love to interview some of those that we don't have.

Nett: Oh yeah, yeah. I think that's one of the things that I think part of it is that nobody has asked the history of the lands so much like that, and nobody on land has said well this is an important thing for me to write up or anything. I mean we have discussed that with LNR too, is that when we put out the lesbian land book Joyce's interviews ended in '83. You know, I mean that was, and we put the book out and got it out by '85. It was current then, but a lot has happened since then. And a lot of the lands that are in Lesbian Land are not around at all, or have changed drastically. I think it's a history that we need to put something together on.

Rose: I think there's only fi- Well this might be, I can't remember if it's only Shewolf's Directory. We have a story about Shewolf's Directory, it's either Lesbian Land or Shewolf's Directory that there are only five land groups that are still existing that were in that publication.

Nett: The original?

Rose: Five, and three of them are in the south.

Nett: Yeah.

Rose: But they're all, there's a whole lot of similar things. They're all worrying about who's going to, what are we going to do with this land. Because we haven't gotten, we don't know who's going to carry it on.

Nett: Well I think that's part of that larger question that I see. With the organic farming stuff too is that a lot of the kind of whatever it took to get a land going whether it was to farm it or to create a haven for lesbians like that, is something that you did out of nothing. I mean you just made something out of nothing kind of thing like that. And you want something to happen with that. You want somebody to carry it on or be able to appreciate and use that and stuff like that. But like you said, no running water, no electricity, it's kind of like huh, I don't think I want to live there. (Rose laughs)

Rose: No, let Kat Dodds live there, she's got solar lights and

Nett: Yeah, a lot of people live without that stuff. But it's kind of like you know, it makes a hard sell. Let's put it that way.

Rose: Oh yeah. If I were to build out there I would definitely figure out how to get water and electricity. We're not that far from a road. I mean we are on a road that has electricity and other houses on our road have all modern conveniences.

Nett: Yeah, well see then I mean that makes it a lot more accessible. When you were talking about how did the word spread with LNR, without social media and stuff, we had so many lesbians that had no phone at that time. Because it would have been prohibitive to get a phone in. So if we had contact stuff that we needed to do by phone it was more elaborate than just putting something in the mail. Like, call this neighbor who will come down the road and get into whatever houses. I'm sure a letter can get to you faster. Yeah, yeah. Well that has changed a lot. Well I've enjoyed talking with you.

Rose: I did too.

Nett: In the other instances as well, so thank you.

Rose: Than you. And I'll be emailing you and writing you.

Nett: Okay.

Rose: Okay.

Nett: Sounds good. You're going to put on email the transcription, or?