

- This is Rose Norman. And I'm with Kate Ellison in her home in Melrose, Florida. This is November 10th, 2012. Okay.

- Okay, great. So this thing is working, huh?

- It's on.

- It's on, it's working.

- And you're gonna talk about feminism, language and how those were connected in your life.

- Okay. So I was in college when I heard about feminism. And I was in Knoxville, Tennessee at the University of Tennessee, and I was in sociology. I was really trying to figure out how people live together and what makes them sin. And it was just what interested me. I was inspired by some of my teachers, men and women. And then, so I started getting involved in feminist stuff and this was, so when was this? I was in college in, I was done with college by '72, 1972. And I graduated from high school in 1967. I did part of a Master's Degree, actually, in sociology. So they were, feminism was beginning to get organized with the National Organization for Women in various. And the national media said something, seems to me, they said as a way of discounting our movement, they said, you know, if you scratch a feminist, you'll find a lesbian underneath. And I thought, huh, I'm a feminist. (laughing) So I realized in a pretty short time that I really was attracted to women and although it was a, you know, it was a process, and I had been married and I got out of the marriage. And then I had another boyfriend. And then I had a girlfriend, but it was, it took some time. But by the time I was 24, I was pretty damn sure that I was a lesbian. And I was, you know... I also identified as a leftist, a socialist. I just found that I had no patience for so many of the organizations that were dominated by men. The people who were getting things done politically on the left were not welcoming women as equal partners. They were men, and women were helping them. And it just pissed me off. And so I just gradually over time quit doing anything with men, politically like that. I moved from Knoxville to Atlanta and I worked for the Great Speckled Bird for two years in Atlanta, where I met a woman that I fell in love with and I moved back with her to DC. And she was very focused on spirituality. Sort of New Age spiritual stuff that she had her own version of it and she considered herself a writer and a mover in the mental, spiritual arena. Her name is Sharon Evans. And she and I, and another woman, bought land in Northern Virginia outside of DC, Rapahant County. And we were imagining starting something there that was more about spirituality and her focus was like reaching children, protecting girl children, getting some kind of database together. Nobody said database back then. That was you know, 1978, '79, around in there. But she had that thought. And anyway, life happened and she and I broke up, and she went off, left with another woman. And I kept making payments on the land. Yeah, I was freelancing. Through Sharon I got involved in doing graphic artist stuff. And also when I worked for the Blade. I mean, the Great Speckled Bird, I did the pay step of the newspaper and I really enjoyed that. You could really see the product of your work take shape. Anyway, so I

did graphic artist stuff even though I wasn't trained in it at all, but there was work to be had. And you know, I just figured out how much money I needed month to month and managed to pull that in somehow, some magical way. And gradually worked into, where I worked on the, I got hired to work on the newspaper, the Washington Blade in the graphics department. And I worked there until 1988, when I moved. But before that, so I was living, I had moved from down in DC to across the river in Arlington, Virginia. And... It's hard to sort of compress the stories and remember all the names and to, but eventually a new group was formed and we called it Turtleland. And the same land that I had been paying on these few years, you know, a women whose real name I'm having trouble remembering, but her nickname was Easy. So Easy and Phoenix came to me and said they wondered if they could camp out on my land. And I said, sure, maybe it's time to form the land group again, you know, and they did start living on the land in a tent, at least.

- You weren't living out there?

- No, and this land was 20 acres of woods. It had a creek along one side of it. And other than that it was--

- It was all, all woods?

- It was just wooded. Yeah, it was just a small piece of woods because really we couldn't, we didn't have the money for much, but it was, it was secluded, yet not too far off the road. And it did have that water source and so we just went with it. Anyway, so there was that land and there were five of us who came together and had a land collective.

- Did you have a collective before with Sharon?

- We wouldn't have called it that. There were three of us who worked together on a project that she, she called it the Uranian Foundation. She already had that concept when I met her. She was very much into astrology. So Uranian, like New Age.

- Or like Uranus.

- Like Uranus, yeah.

- The Uranian, say it again.

- The Uranian Foundation. And it wasn't, you know, it wasn't a lesbian feminist thing. It was a spiritual thing that came out of a lesbian feminist heart, I guess you could say. But the focus of it wasn't activism or lesbian feminism. But the land, we got the land and the land ended up being the focus of a small collective of five women. Me and Jesrin, and Abby Lyons, and Tony White, and Phoenix, I can't remember her given name. But we really tried to make something there of Turtleland. And I do have this, I'm not supposed to do this, walk away. When it all fell apart, my friend Mandy who lived in the house where we lived made that beautiful pen and ink drawing of a turtle with a lot of symbolism in it.

- Great. Let me pause this. Where is the-- Okay, Turtleland collective from?

- Perhaps 1980.

- Okay. 'til '83.

- 'Til '83. And we, there was a a lot of consciousness raising around class at the time. And because I, well I mean, Abby and I both had college education, so we were considered middle class. And our backgrounds were sort of more easy than the other three women who were not considered middle class. And it was a very, very difficult struggle around class, even with you know, complete commitment to the process. But one of the things that we didn't know is how much style enters into it. Like what I would consider just a terrible, destructive fight, some of the other women from a more working class background considered talking. And when I agreed to be an ally of a working class women, that in her mind, apparently that meant I agreed to be yelled at. And I didn't know that's what I was agreeing to and I wasn't okay with it. So it was hard, it was just really hard. But we tried, you know, we tried and we had some good times and some parties and lots of ceremonies. Jes and I, also had started Circle of ISIS, dyanic wicken group. And we observed the eight times a year when you would have ceremonies. It was a beautiful thing. And there was a lot of opening and awareness that came from that. And also, it's a nature religion, right? And that fit really well with wanting to feel more connected to the land, wanting to live on the land. Figure out how to be a part of the seasons and the cycles and not so separate. Not so civilized and separate from the life of the planet. And then in '82, sometime in '82 or early '83 Jes's father died and she had been taking care of him. And it was a huge deal for her. And she inherited some money, which you know, it's a little bit of a stereotype, but with her working class background she wanted to go out and spend the whole thing. And I wanted to make her save it. And so she, we saved some of it. She bought musical instruments and we went on a trip. And I had some savings also that I contributed to the trip. And that was in the, that was in September of 1983, right at the end of Turtleland. You know, the split was happening. Jes gave some money, put some money in a bank account to have the land conti--, the land payments continued to be made while we left and while they continued on with the land. We wanted the land to be there and be a wonderful thing for women and wanted them to, you know, wished them well even if we were fighting. And they bought a truck with it and didn't make the payments. And they really had no, almost no other money. It was really, their survival was difficult. So whatever, anyway, that's what happened.

- So they lost the land?

- No. The interesting thing was that the land became, we were behind in the payments. We were paying the bank in Rapahanet County. But there's this guy, this paternalistic landowner, redneck, older man who must have been my father in another life. I mean it just was this strange thing where he sold us the land and then when it all fell apart, I had to come up with the money. I borrowed money from my father, my real father and paid it to him and got us back current. And then he bought the land back. It had been his originally. He arranged the bank deal so that we owed the money to the bank. But then when it all fell apart-- And I'm like, you know, sitting on the floor in his living room just working this thing out as if there's never been a problem in the world. And I don't know this man from anyone. I mean, it was just wild how easy it was in the world.

Those things don't usually happen. Anyway, so we didn't, the land didn't become a complete failure and disaster. And in fact, when he bought it back, Jes and I got like \$8,000 out of the deal. And we, so that happened right after that trip that Jes and I took. The not quite coast to coast trip on mostly her money, but some my money. And we traveled around and looked at different things that women were doing. We visited that place in Grand Rapids. Many of the women there ended up in Missouri or North Arkansas. We visited the Women's Peace Camp in Seneca Falls. Right after their big summer. Their big summer had been the summer of '83 and we got there in September of '83. We visited Adobe Land in the Southwest. And we dug crystals in Arkansas and we visited my old boyfriend in Atlanta. And we ended up at Spiral. You know, just these were the things we found through lesbian connection or whatever, however we could find them. There was no internet. And Jes will tell the story that we'd been to Michigan, Lake Michigan, we've been to the Rocky Mountains. We've been to the desert, which Jes loved. We've been to digging crystals in Arkansas. We were heading up I-75 from Tennessee to Kentucky and I'm going, these are my mountains. And you know, it just seemed to be that we met these women who were living beside Spiral in a farmhouse, next door to Spiral is what I mean, in a farmhouse. And trying to keep Spiral going after the original collective of 25 that had come together to buy the land in 1981 had fallen apart. So that was Mary Hoelterhoff, Lucina Arachney.

- Can you spell those names?

- H-O-E-L-T-E-R-H-O-F-F.

- Oh gosh.

- I know.

- H-O-E-L-T-E-R-H-O-F-F. She's from outside of Chicago. And Lucina, L-U-C-I-N-A. Arachney, like spider. And she is from Kentucky, I'm pretty sure. She and another women were the main ones responsible for buying the land, Spiral because they had jobs, they were nurses. They had jobs, they could get a loan from the bank. And there were, you know, I never met all these women, but there were apparently about 25 women who came together with the idea of buying land and in the process of actually bringing the dream into reality, they split apart. And some of them, seem still mad about it.

- So that group, this is still 1983, so that group only lasted a couple years.

- Well I mean, they probably worked on finding the land for a couple years before they bought it in '81. And there is a story of doing fundraising by having a booth in Michigan, the Michigan Festival and selling mama corn. Instead of popcorn, it was mama corn they were selling in this booth in Michigan to raise money for Spiral. And I think that was before I knew them, but maybe not. Maybe it was before I moved there, but after Jes and I had connected. And we started spending all our vacation time at Spiral, even if nobody was there. Mary and Lucina broke up and Lucina moved back to the city, being Lexington. And Mary went to school, went to college and was there part-time and away part-time. She also, I'm sorry, she didn't go to college then, that was later. She worked for her father during the growing season. He owned a landscaping business in Bartlett, Illinois outside of Chicago. Jes's father also had owned a landscaping business, which was kind

of an interesting coincidence, but anyway--

- Was this, where was this? I mean, she went to Chicago to do that?

- Yeah, so when Jes and I would visit on our vacation time, a lot of times, no one would be there. But Mary was in the process of building her house, so there was something like a roof we could park beside. A road and a roof we could park beside and we could go for long walks and just be there. You know, it was, there wasn't much going on. But there were meetings from time to time where say 10, roughly 10 women would meet once or twice a year. At the time, and Spiral was 250 acres more or less. And the purchase price was \$50,000. I know. It was the backend of a holler. There was more farmland in front of it that was open pastureland and you drove through that to get to sort of the steeper, more wooded, but it still had some bottom land and a spring. And some smaller amount of cleared area, maybe two to three acres of cleared area, but mostly woods. But we didn't care, it was beautiful, truly beautiful land. And you could just, you could walk for three hours, not really leaving the land and get to this rock out crop called Pine Knobs and you could just look out on a panorama of Kentucky and Tennessee because it's right on the border with Tennessee. And see nothing but woods. It was just, you know, that was a little bit of a lesion. There were roads and farmhouses and such, but overall it was very beautiful, somewhat pristine land.

- How did it log?

- They did not do clear cutting. They logged, but the farmers logged it. And it was considered a cash crop. They wanted to do it once every 10 years, roughly. So they didn't clear cut. They just took the big trees and tried to drop them on trees that would not, they wouldn't be selling anyway like dogwoods or something. They did it carefully and it didn't, like leave a bare, barren place to erode into nothingness. The woods grew back really fast. And it just grew back on its own. They didn't replant or anything. It was a reasonable, somewhat sustainable way to do that. Anyway, so we really loved the land and being there. And gradually, the reason that Jes and I didn't move there 'til 1988 was because although her daughter wasn't living with her, she had kind of promised her daughter to wait, to sort of like drop off the cliff of civilized normal society until she graduated from high school. So once Star was out of high school, we moved like immediately. She graduated in June, we moved in July of '88. And... You know... Star was like, you know, my mom is a lesbian witch who eats flowers. But she sort of joked about it.

- Who was she living with if she wasn't living with--

- Her father and his wife and their four children, instead of being an only child with Jes. And Jes's sort of unsettled lifestyle, that until she met me and Lorette and the other women from Turtleland, until then she was kind of a bar dyke. Kind of a, it was kind of rough and tumble existence. But she was interested in spirituality and she got into the whole wicken thing, and healing. She was really interested in healing. She was a nurse, LPN. And so she got into this thing called brain balancing. A brain gym. Anyway, it's thing that kind of helps you unite the two sides of your brain. And when that happened, she could suddenly read. Suddenly, she was an avid reader. Just you know, she went from reading three books in her life to reading everything she could find. And one day I came home from work and she was, she had set up the typewriter

with a little, on the little typewriter table and a chair. And she's like, okay tell me how this works. And she started writing. And she wrote and she wrote and she wrote. And you know, the rest is herstory.

- What is brain balancing, I don't understand it.

- Because she didn't, first she had to find out that she was dyslectic, that that was what was wrong with her. And then she found this cure that really does work. It's a, I mean, maybe it doesn't work for everybody, but it works way better than sort of the Western retraining sort of very tedious method that they have. And brain gym is probably something you could look up.

- G-Y-M?

- Yeah, I don't remember names. And she has all the books, so. Anyway. We...

- So you discovered it in 1983, for the first time. Five years before you actually moved there. How long were you there?

- And I left in about 2003. I had one period of a year or something that I lived in St. Pete, that I was away from the land. But other than that I was there the rest of the time. I really thought I was gonna live there the rest of my life. And I had been to visit it a couple times a year every year since we made that connection. And Mary and Lucina and Joy and Jackie, sometimes would come to Arlington and visit us and have meetings. Joy Lohrer, Jackie Gruer.

- How do you spell those names.

- Joy L-O-H-R-E-R. Jackie G-R-U-E-R, I think. Not real sure. They're both from Cincinnati. Joy was the second, Mary was the first one to get her house on the land, build her house on the land. Joy had the next house. And then Jes and I were building ours for a good long time because it was a big house and we didn't have, anyway, but also a small house was built that Bolynn built with help that became the REM. REM being the initials R-E-M, for resident exploring membership. It was Boe's house, she was gonna leave and we bought the house from her. The Spiral bought the house from her. I was gonna say something about the, how hard it was to keep the land. I started talking about that we bought it for 50,000, but it was back in the day when interest rates varied and it was, they had something called the balloon payment. And we were up to like 14% interest. And we would go to a meeting of four or five women. We would have to just sit around in somebody's living room and commit to making payments until the payment, 'til we could cobble together the four or five hundred dollars that it took to keep it going month by month. And it was, and Jes and I had, were able to bring the \$8,000 from Turtleland in and help get the price down to something we could imagine continuing to pay because it was just excruciating to come up with even between five or six women, to come up with enough money month by month to keep the payments up. You know, we just didn't have access to a whole lot of money. And it was hard the entire time, access to money. The entire time. And you know, I may have a really middle class background, but when you move to remote Kentucky, there are no jobs. I temporarily had kind of a social work job, but I didn't really have a social work degree and that job, I wasn't

well suited for it. I was too radicalized and too just unaware of how to be a social worker, and it didn't work. And it was awful. But I did end up having some worker's comp or unemployment, not worker's comp, unemployment for a while, several, quite a few months from that which really helped. And Jes worked as an LPN, home health nurse. She could do that. And Mary worked for her father every summer. And she got a number of things, like big trucks, out of the deal and various tools. We built our houses ourselves. We didn't have any help from men. Men could bring supplies on big trucks and dump them off, but we, and we also, the wells were dug by men. They were regular board, six inch hole wells. Two of the, one at Mary's house, one at our house. But other than that, really, we did all the carpentry, all the wiring and plumbing inside and roofing, you know, just whatever it took, we did it. Foundations. So it was slow, but we loved it. You know, there is nothing, no job I've enjoyed in my life more than building my house. Not that I ever earned any money doing it, but it was just wonderful. Although, you know, and Jes will tell you, the first time I, when we were, we moved into the farmhouse next to Spiral when Mary had moved to her house on the land. And we were trying to like put up some insulation and some paneling over that so that it wouldn't be so freaking cold. And so I was essentially learning to nail using four inch finish nails, which is really stupid. And I bent every one of them. But I managed to learn to hammer a nail into a wall and I learned to use a chainsaw and a circular saw. And I did not have these skills before at all. I was a graphic artist and city girl. But I loved it, I just loved it. It was so invigorating and freeing. And you know, outside of the limitations of what it was, what it had always meant to be a woman was that you can't do anything in the world. You know, you can just push a pencil or something. And it wasn't that I, well... I mean, Tony Wyatt and I, Tony from Turtleland, Tony and I were pretty fem, you know. But we didn't think that meant passive or submissive. It was just a way we were in the world, that we liked beautiful clothes or to be able to giggle and blush. But we could still be in charge of our lives and take control of the situation if we needed to. And much later, when the whole, when the SM community helped us redefine power, we came to understand that there's sort of like, in a relationship there's a, there can be one who tends to dominate and one who tends to submit. And those can change. Like you can, you can be sexually assertive and sexually passive in the bedroom. You can also be, those two roles can be the opposite out in the world. You know, but anyway so power sharing is something that we came to understand a lot better during the whole evolution of lesbian feminism. And being fem doesn't have to mean being passive or being weak. We ended up calling it Super 10 Fem. Because we could just do anything.

- Super what fem?

- Super 10, Super 10 Fem. We could build a house and we could, you know, wear glitter if we wanted. And cry, I cried a lot also while I was trying to build the house. But like when you, when you enter a circle in wicka, you say I enter this circle in perfect love and perfect trust. Or perhaps, perfect love and growing trust. And whenever I went to work in the house that I was building, often all by myself, I said, I enter this love in perfect, I enter this house in perfect love and perfect trust. And it helped me put really good energy into it and just you know, just do it board by board. And it took a very long time. But you know, we really believed in women being self-sufficient. Like the analysis was that women relied on men and women couldn't live without men, that in the end, in the last analysis, the buck stopped with them. They were the providers, the protectors, the controllers. And as lesbians, we thought that just wasn't necessarily true, that we could provide everything we needed for each other. And that meant really learning self reliance, inner self

reliance, reliance on each other, trust for each other and to stop thinking about you know, who can I get to do this thing? Just can I do this? How can I figure out how to do this, how to build this house? My house is a four bedroom, 1700 square foot house that never got completely finished, but a good number of women lived there over some years and it was functional, you know.

- What about electricity? Did you have--

- We had electricity. We wanted to do solar, but it costs like \$10,000 just to set up. And you know, that was just not the kind of money we had. It was just impossible to imagine, you know, we bought a load of two by fours when we had the money for a load of two by fours. We did not have \$10,000 in one big chunk to spend on anything. So we hooked up to the grid and that was somewhat, that involved some difficult meetings because the wires had to go across the big picture windows in front of Mary, you know, had to go across in front of Mary's house and sort of in her view. And she had to be okay with that, and she was. It was a process, but she was really okay with the wires going across like that. And so we had running water and electricity. We did not have indoor toilets. And none of us did. Jes and I bought a composting toilet, so it was indoor, but it wasn't water based. You know, you learn that even if you're trying to live your dream, live close to the land and be in touch with the cycles and the seasons, you still have to make a lot of compromise. Especially, you know, I mean Mary built her first house, which wasn't on Spiral, but she built it with a chainsaw and no electricity and it was a pretty rough house. And it didn't really, and she built it with almost no money, using scrap wood, didn't really survive. And so you know, life involves a lot of compromise. And you just try to live as close to your principles as possible, but knowing that you have to compromise, you know, in order to move forward and not be completely stymied by you know, what's not possible.

- I'm gonna stop a minute.

- Sure.

- Go ahead.

- So we, well I had the idea that we were cultural workers. And that's terminology that I think Holly Near might have come up with, I don't know. But the idea is that we were, as much as we could, creating a world for ourselves outside of patriarchy. What would women be like if they weren't surrounded with male culture? If everywhere you turned you didn't have to answer to a man. You didn't have to work for a man. You didn't live with a man. You weren't really involved in politics that were so male dominated. What would women be like? How would we treat each other? How would we form ourselves together in family units or tribal units or whatever? We made decisions as a group through consensus. And we were very idealistic. And it was not true that you could get away from patriarchy, you couldn't. Because we were raised with patriarchy inside us. And so the ways that we had been belittled or not fully appreciated as whole human beings, the ways that we were mistreated to one degree or another as we grew up. We brought that with us to the land and we consequently had the same kind of power struggles and ego trips and misunderstandings that everyone else had. We tried to work through it and we tried to explore



methodologies that would help through, through consensus decision making, but that's based on listening to each other. Like not talking over each other. Letting one woman talk at a time. Going around the circle until everyone had had her say. And then trying to come to an understanding. And it worked to one degree or another. It wasn't perfect and we weren't that great at it, but it did work for a good, for a number of years. We brought in a mediator a couple times. And later we learned non-violent communication, which is a thing, but that's outside the timeframe. So we didn't believe that we could own each other in couple relationships and so we believed that women could love each other in many ways, including physical. I did not end up as negative on that tack as many women did. I still think it's reasonable and possible. But--

- You used the word non-monogamy. You've used, we don't own each other.

- We don't own each other. Yeah, we called it non-monogamy. Based on the idea that we don't own each other. That was why we, how we got into it. And the thing that's essential about non-monogamy is honesty. Like it's not the same as sneaking around and having an affair. It's completely the opposite of that because there's never any deception or deceit or betrayal. But it's difficult and most people ended up hating the whole idea of it. I don't hate it, but at this point in my life, one lover would be lovely.

- Right. Sounds amazing. I'm gonna pause it.

- Okay.

- Okay.

- I ended up leaving Spiral eventually and now I live alone. I am disappointed that my relationships didn't work out. I really, really believe in doing things together in a group of women who are committed to each other on pretty deep levels and who talk to each other and work things out and develop communication skills. Whatever it takes to, you know, to move the culture forward out of patriarchal families and into consensus based living. But it takes a lot of willingness to sit and talk. Talk things out and trust each other. And I don't have that anymore. I miss it, but I don't have it anymore and very few women do. Even if we supposedly live in a community.

- Okay, so what didn't we get to talk about yet about Spiral because you had, forgotten where we were taking it to in terms of the development of it. You were on the land, you're building houses.

- Yeah, trying to build community. Trying to find a way to make a living. You know, we'd spent a good long time basically doing that.

- And that's community building in itself.

- Yeah, that's community building, yeah. We were a part of the development of the, the larger Landyke community. The one that, is it called a LIC?

- Yeah.

- Association of lesbian intentional communities. And that became, like we would have a gathering once a year and it was at Spiral twice.

- And I was at one of those.

- Yeah, that was outside of the timeframe though.

- Oh yeah, it was. A LIC is after '94, right?

- It probably is. I don't remember when exactly it started. It probably is. But you know, one thing that is kind of important about lesbian community on the land is the traveling dykes. The lesbians, generally young lesbians who would move from place to place. They were gypsy like. And they brought news from different communities. And they brought new ideas, and usually it was kind of disruptive and often difficult, but they were opportunities for very intellectually stimulating connections that I believe moved the culture forward. Through the kind of sharing that they did and the bringing new ideas to women who were kind of isolated and... You know, I think that was an important part. And those women did get a view of the different ways that women lived on the different lands. And often they were serious separatists, more so than those of us who had made enough compromise to actually build something. I don't know, maybe that's a judgment, but.

- How much was separatism apart of what you were going for as opposed to self-sufficiency and learning what life could be like if you depended on yourself?

- See, I never considered myself a separatist, but people who knew me did. Like, I didn't need the sort of hard edged, political statement of separatism. But I did want to learn to live in a world without men. Not because I hated men, but because I loved women, because I wanted to see who and what we could be if we had that kind of freedom. And most people would call that separatism, I think. But I didn't try to claim the label. And usually, I found that the women I knew who called themselves separatists had kind of a lot of anger. You know, maybe they wouldn't characterize themselves that way, but I did.

- So where they have anger, you have idealism or?

- I think that I had maybe more years of spiritual experience like meditation and covens, and perhaps genuine struggle with each other. Where you have to, you really have to listen and understand the other's point of view. And you just can't be doctrine air once you've been through that a few times. I think. The women I knew who called themselves separatists sort of had one way of looking at things and if you didn't buy that, you weren't on their level of evolved womanhood or something. I don't know. That was my experience of it. And I knew some separatists in the DC area and women certainly came to visit us who had the point of view. They also, another reason why I say anger is because they sort of needed to make a statement of their separate lives. And so they would not sort of cattle tell to politeness around the farmers

that we had to live with over the years. You know, not live with in our face, but they were our neighbors. We needed neighborly good relations or we would be screwed. And so we didn't wanna do things like, for example, let drumming into the night on the hillside because the dog had wandered off and the drumming might bring the dog back because the drumming could be heard through the entire valley. It just was so foreign to the farmers there who had maybe never left the county in their entire lives. You know, it just, so we thought it was not polite. And they thought it was being themselves and just doing their lives. But it made us nervous. Anyway, I mean but it was enriching, I thought, to have the women travel through. And they were always gonna come back and they were always gonna settle down and they never did. You know, there was never a traveling woman who ended up coming back and settling. And eventually, you know, there wasn't anyone, younger women that, we always imagined we would live there forever and the younger women would come behind and they were take up the harder parts of living that we couldn't do anymore, but that never happened. Living on the land like that is very physically demanding. You know, just walking up all those steep hills was physically demanding you couldn't, it was not accessible, Spiral was not accessible. We built ramps where we could, but you had to drive to the house and then get out and go up the ramp. But just very, very rugged existence, even if there was electricity. Hauling wood, building houses, hauling wood, doing farming, you know, walking. Walking, walking, walking, walking, walking. Mowing, you know, I mean it was just all, every bit of it was hard. And I loved it and I was strong. And I don't know.

- And were others less, I mean there was--

- Mary was a lot of physically adept than I was. She grew up working in a landscaping business and she knew how to do everything. And I learned a lot from her. And I knew a few things too about drawing, for example, that was good. And I had much better communication skills and just willingness to process. Jes lost patience with building and went and got herself a job, and that was a wonderful thing because then we had a little money to buy boards with. Bolynn had an army background. She could survive almost anywhere. And she was not afraid. She had some skills and she was just good at physical stuff. She's also an artist. Joy was a big, tall, strong woman who had a black belt. And she built her house, I don't think she knew how to build a house before she built it, but she learned and she did it.

- And Lorette?

- Lorette had been a carpenter's apprentice in the city and had learned carpentry from men, the official way, the hard way and so she knew all about all sorts of stuff.

- So it sounds to me like it was physically and perhaps even financially, you had what it took.

- Well, maybe so. It always seemed like we didn't quite have enough. But we did survive there for a number of years and we pulled together from our different skills.

- From 1988 to 19, 2003, that's 15 years.

- I always say I lived there 15 years. And Mary lived there from the beginning and left after me. Mary and I are

no longer speaking to each other, but we do email. I left because I just had a terrible screaming fight with Mary and her lover. And she also had the same screaming fight with Jenna. And this was in 2003 so it's off the timeframe. But in the end it fell apart. And I fell apart when we were working together to earn money in the hammock business. You know, we had gotten that hammock business from Twin Oaks.

- Did Twin Oaks stop that, or?

- Twin Oaks was tired of making hammocks and so they were farming it out. And then eventually, I mean they had a long term, years and years contract to provide hammocks to Pier One. And then Pier One started buying them from, you know, the Philippines or something, yeah. And so that went away. I don't know what Twin Oaks is doing now, but they were really tired of making hammocks and they had branched out into tofu and indexing, making indexes for books and probably a bit of training, you know, survival skills, country living skills. I don't know, I don't know what they're doing now.

- Well tell me, I think it's worth, even though it's well beyond our cut off, it's worth talking about what made it not last in the way that you had envisioned that it would last. What the reasons that you wanted it to last. And you had everything, it seems to me that it had nothing to do with what it takes to live on the land. It had something to do with what it takes to make money while living in an isolated community?

- It was when the issue of making money together, when we had to work that out, that's when it fell apart. And we always said, over the years that issues of money were the hardest thing. We all have different relationships with money and different beliefs about money, and different ways of appreciating work. And we were all very strong in our opinions about that. And so when we were share, when our fate was shared financially, the fights were worse, the struggles were worse. Trying to think of how to be more specific. Mary never felt like her skills and contributions were adequately compensated. And I think that to some extent, that was true. I think that I, and I opposed her on that. I thought that her, that she should have been a lot more willing to share in a more equal way. In the way that I brought in a tractor because my father gave me a tractor, her father gave her a truck, for example. And so the tractor was Spiral's. The truck was Mary's. That's sort of a difference in the way we did things. Mary's a lot more working class. I'm a lot more middle class, or "privileged," and therefore more willing to share because everything wasn't so scarce in my life. I don't know, perhaps. Or my parents were less harsh. And so she grew up in a harsh life and was less trusting. I don't know, I don't know. I had much more a communitarian and more like true socialist, communist point of view. And she just wanted to have women's land and work with women and have a good time, and do all these things that she knew how to do like build houses and grow plants. And you know, it was a different point of view. And Jes tried to be a peace maker and Joy got run out of there earlier than others.

- Why?

- Joy, well you know, she couldn't stand the struggles and she needed to make money. She was just not, things weren't working out for her emotionally and with the struggles. And she just went back to the city and I don't know, got another degree or something.

- So she got run out, not she just took herself away.

- She took herself away. There was a couple of meetings where she had tried to, she tried to say that, that Bo and Susan, that Bo and Susan were not contributing and it was wrong, and they needed to step up and pay their fair share. And when that happened, me and Jes and Lorette and Mary kind of all ganged up against Joy. Lorette kind of, I can't remember if Lorette was there then and she played a mediating role or somebody else played a mediating role and didn't take a stand. But me and Jes and Mary definitely just brought up all the, not all, but several important things that we had never said to Joy about that we didn't like about the way she did things. And as a result of that, she was shocked. And pretty much left after that. So it was, it was rough, it was rough. It was not fine feminists theory in action. It was, there were some harsh things that happened and I was way far from perfect. I thought I was doing the right thing at the time. But looking back on it, I wish I had handled some things differently. But I wish Mary had handled a lot of things differently. I believe that Mary wanted the attention that she got by causing trouble in a meeting. You know, like she needed more attention than she was getting, and so she just blocked decisions chronically, like month after month, year after year. Didn't let us come to a final decision because she would rather stir the pot and get the attention. And if that wasn't happening, she would like go cut down a tree or something without permission in shared space. Just so that we would come together and focus on her. And I just, so. It was, you know, and I blocked her in ways that I wish I hadn't, you know? Somewhere I've written something about all that. It was out of the timeframe, but it might be useful to have eventually if I can find it and share it, about the split that happened.

- I don't know that we need to, it's good to have it. I have it on the record maybe, but--

- Not for this.

- Not for this.

- Yeah, yeah.

- I mean, I think it's enough to say that once it was over money issues that began to have interpersonal difficulties, that eventually led to a split.

- One thing that I haven't talked about that is in the timeframe, I think, is that Jes and I together, but especially Jes developed a business of healing, using herbs. It was called Earth Grown Herbs, and--

- Yeah, I bought some of those.

- Yeah, yeah, we made tinctures and she studied, studied, studied, studied, studied. We both did, but her more than me. And she became an herbalist, self taught herbalist. And you know, she's carried it on in other ways, sort of as a intuitive healer to this day. But it started there at Spiral. And it did bring some income that Jes and I had. And what else? I haven't talked much about our relationship with the land, about how we all believed that the land was sacred and alive. And we wanted to treat the land as respectfully as possible.

Mary had more of a farming attitude, but she still was committed to organic farming and being with the seasons and understanding how to grow from your center, out. We all took that attitude, which is permaculture. From your center to the doorway to the steps, to the kitchen garden, to the lay of the land and the way that you are with the land that's sustainable year after year because you take from it and you give back. And that was hugely important. And a place that we might differ on the details, but we agreed on the principle. And we wanted to do so much more than we ever had time for because mostly, we built our houses and that was essential to have shelter and it took years. But we wanted, we had visions and plans for the way that we would you know, help the land be more self-sustaining and not just have the forest take back over the fields. Mary did have a CSA eventually.

- Did she...

- Was she--

- She was selling her photos to people in the community.

- Yeah, and we all worked for her then. That was hell. Yeah. And... Yeah.

- Yeah. It's coming up on five o'clock.

- Yeah it takes a good long time.

- It does.

- Now there was a Landyke--

- There was a Landyke movement and it was the same across the United States, and perhaps the world. And it was different in each femi-festation, manifestation of the group and how the group evolve, came together, evolved, bought land or came into land and what we did there in each place, and how much money we had to create something or you know, each individual place was really different. But the vision of a sustainable community of women living in harmony with the land. That was what we all shared. And we all tried to create one way or another.

- Do you see that as in the tradition or history if Utopian?

- Yes. Yes, Utopian communities. The back to the land movement of the hippies. We were like that. We had feminism and lesbian feminism as our base. But the appreciation and relationship with nature, I think, was shared with other back to the land movements. And Utopian communities thought they had a vision of how to live in community that was different from the nuclear family version that the modern United States had to offer. We, I think, and even in the past, they were more like religious based Utopian communities. But they were larger than one family. They were ways of organizing human life together that weren't based on the father, the mother, and the two kids. Or the grandparents and you know, the three generations living

together. It was beyond that. And so it was sort of tribal. You know, I believe that it, that we tried to learn tribal living in a way that wasn't patriarchal. Not all tribes are patriarchal, but many of them are and they are all heterosexual, almost entirely, but not exclusively. But tribal in the sense of there's unit, small units within a whole, and the whole works together and their fate is together. In patriarchy your fate is in your nuclear family. That's where the bank account is. That's where the survival is. And in a tribe, the tribe lives together and survives together as a whole. And there may be different power structure, levels of sharing or whatever, but the tribe looks out for the whole tribe. And works things out together among the whole tribe. And I think that that's the closest, familiar vision to what we were attempting to create and live.

- I've read and people have studied groups. And how groups work well together. That they work best when there is age diversity and gender diversity. And something else, which I can't remember. And I'm just thinking, were you mostly the same age and what about, you did not have children, right? So there was none.

- There were no children and we were mostly the same age. The baby boomer generation. A lot of the traveling women were younger and there were younger women outside of the timeframe. So there's that. I don't think, as far as there should be diversity of gender, that there can be diversity of, you know, gender expression or something that's not necessarily based on genes.

- And there was some gender expression diversity among you.

- Yes, yes. And you know, and I think that was valuable.

- And there was class diversity.

- And there was class diversity.

- Ultimately what?

- And that was rough, you know? There was a lot of misunderstandings because of class, I think. And I don't know what it would've take besides just a lot more wisdom. So...

- Well, looks like we--