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**The history of a hippie commune: The Farm**

**LeDoux, Pat, D.A.**

**Middle Tennessee State University, 1992**

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THE HISTORY OF A HIPPIE COMMUNE: THE FARM

Pat LeDoux

A dissertation submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty of Middle Tennessee State University  
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for the degree of Doctor of Arts

May 1992

THE HISTORY OF A HIPPIE COMMUNE: THE FARM

Pat LeDoux

APPROVED:

Graduate Committee:

*Susan M Howell*

Major Professor

*Newell S. Moore*

Committee Member

*David J. Ray*

Committee Member

*Bob Womack*

Committee Member

*Gene H. Brodshire*

Head of the History Department

*Mary Martin*

Dean of the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF A HIPPIE COMMUNE: THE FARM

Pat LeDoux

The purpose of this paper is to trace the history of The Farm, a hippie commune established in 1971, in Summertown, Tennessee, within the context of American society and culture of the times. Since no single history of The Farm exists, it is hoped that this study will be a contribution to scholarship. Furthermore, the intent is to answer questions concerning whether it is a success or failure in creating an alternative lifestyle.

The premises are: (1) that this development, the establishment of The Farm as a collective community, was a natural outgrowth of a social phenomenon which was sweeping across America during the late 1950s, 1960s, and the early 1970s; (2) that while collective communities such as The Farm may begin with a unified intent and the leadership of a strong personality, they inevitably succumb to the yaw and sway of conflicting opinions which evolve as a consequence of the pressures and experiences of living together in a collective community and the unexpected compromises which must be made as human beings attempt to translate ideas into reality; and (3) that if success means that the community continues in numbers, influence, and spirit, as it did at its peak, then this venture is just another failure in a long

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history of failures in utopia endeavors. But if one thinks of success in terms of a kind of fruition in the ability of human beings to change their situation, then it has been a success because many of the philosophical and social ideals upon which this movement rested are still vital and alive. The full influence of The Farm is, as yet, unclear.

Chapters I and II are devoted to the rise of a movement known as the counterculture, the social scene in San Francisco, and an account of the time on the caravan during which the sense of community was developing. Chapter III deals with the initial experiences and organizational problems as the hippies established the collective. Chapter IV focuses on the changes which occurred in the community, while Chapter V describes the characteristics of continued growth, financial difficulties, and the problems which developed. The change from a collective to a cooperative is the main topic in Chapter VI, and Chapter VII focuses on the impact of the community and why it failed as a collective.

Following a chronological account of the history of The Farm from 1971 to 1989, integral aspects of the collective will be addressed. These topics include the importance of Stephen Gaskin as the founder and spiritual leader of the collective during its formative years, as well as the social, religious, economic, medical, and educational components of the community.

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The preponderance of material for this study is the audio-taped interviews with residents of the commune and their neighbors. Written questionnaires mailed to fifty former members, Farm publications, Stephen Gaskin's books, newspaper and magazine reports, and videotapes of television coverage were also valuable sources of information.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

It seemed deserted. No one was stirring that hot July morning in 1989. There was the narrow dusty dirt road, the flat empty fields, and a few run-down structures in various stages of disrepair. The landscape was sweltering under the heat of the Tennessee sun. It was quiet and peaceful. Suddenly this mood was shattered by a motorcycle coming through the front gate with an ear-splitting roar, leaving behind it a cloud of dust.

It is difficult to comprehend what has happened here, to the idealistic hopes and dreams of the 270 hippies who had, in 1971 invaded this area that had been almost entirely the province of loggers, moonshiners, and "rednecks." They came from San Francisco, site of the Haight-Ashbury developments, in a caravan of old school buses and settled in a corner of Lewis County, Tennessee. Here they established a religious community where they hoped to create an existence based on spiritual values and show all mankind how to live in peace and harmony with one another and with the natural environment. Saving the world was their mission. For a time the fields and shelters had been full of people, visiting and singing as they went about their work. Now there was silence. What had happened to bring the community to this

point of decline? Was it a failure? How is "failure" measured.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to answer these questions and to trace the history of The Farm, a hippie commune, from the emergence of its leader, Stephen Gaskin, in San Francisco in the late 1960s to this July morning in 1989. Because there has been no single history of The Farm, it is hoped that this study will be a contribution to scholarship as well as a valuable teaching tool. These subjects are of interest to young people in any society but especially so in a free society where people can, if they choose, pick up and move off to one side to live according to values that seem appropriate to them. No one says that these choices, in the end, need be "successful."

This study of the Gaskin Farm will be placed within the context of other communities established away from the mainstream to foster more humane and spiritual principles of living. The study will also be placed in the context of the counterculture of the 1960s, which provided the ideological origins of The Farm. Following the introduction, each chapter will trace a particular phase in the origin, development, growth, and change of The Farm. The particular problems and achievements of each phase will be addressed based on the accounts of participants and/or neighbors. A conclusion will speculate on the long-term impact of The Farm on its participants and on American institutions.



Utopian communities have generally appeared during times of social, political, and economic stress. Plato was perhaps the first, in his Republic, to design a blueprint for an ideal society. Early Christians gave all their earthly possessions for the common good and shared alike. During the Middle Ages, people were dedicated to living a saintly life here on earth in order to achieve the ultimate utopia, heaven. The Renaissance created a revolution in the way man thought about the world and his place in it. In 1516, Thomas More wrote Utopia, in which he questioned moral and political practices in British institutions and visualized a just society based on communitarian ideals.<sup>1</sup> After the Reformation shattered Catholic religious unity, many Protestant sects adopted communitarianism as a means of bringing about reform. Through these sects social reformers of the nineteenth century learned about utopian groups.<sup>2</sup>

While these groups have a long history in Europe, one of the first recorded instances of a religious commune in America was the Hoorn Kill settlement on the Delaware River in 1663. It was established by a group of Dutch Mennonites under the leadership of Peiter Corneliszoon Plackhoy. A better-known and more successful utopian experiment was started in the 1770s by the Shakers. Under the leadership of Englishwoman Ann Lee, they established a community based on religious principles. Other religious groups--the Ephrata

group, the Rappites, the Zoarites, and a group at Ebenezer-- were among a number of sects founding communities.<sup>3</sup>

In America, spiritual communities have usually lasted longer than purely socialistic ones largely because their religion bound them together into a family. Self-support, self-perpetuation, personal leadership, inspiration, and common ownership of property also strengthened them.

Following the example set by these religious groups, social reformers of the nineteenth century began the first big wave of secular community-building in America. In the United States, the two great non-religious movements in the nineteenth century were the Owenites of the 1820s and the Fourierists of the 1840s. Both had their ideological foundations in Europe, the former in England and Scotland, and the latter in France. The socialistic theories were put into practice in America with the hope that others, seeing their example, would demand social, political, and economic reform. Despite the proliferation of these secular communities, they were all short-lived. John Humphrey Noyes, the leader of the Oneida community, identified the primary reasons for their failure as: the kind of persons attracted to them--selfish, stubborn, lazy, hot-tempered, worn-out, good-for-nothing folk; little religious or spiritual commitment; and lack of money. He concluded that the best chance for socialism was in working through the local churches.<sup>4</sup>

It is in the Oneida community that one finds an important precedent to The Farm because both began as indigenous American religious communes which lasted for a number of years before converting to cooperatives or private ownership. The original community was established by John Humphrey Noyes at Putney, Vermont in 1840. Based on his belief that the second coming of Christ had occurred in 70 A.D. and that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, Noyes started a community which consisted of himself, his wife, his two sisters and their husbands, and his brother. While at Putney he refined his beliefs and others joined the community. All facets of their lives--work, personal relationships, and social activities--were dictated by Noyes's religious beliefs. For instance, based on scriptures from the Bible, Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32, and Matthew 22:23-30, they held all things in common and did not enter into marriage.<sup>5</sup>

The beliefs of the Oneida group included complex marriage, communal child-care, and mutual criticism as well as economic communism. The system of complex marriage was instituted by Noyes to create total commitment to the community. In order to get rid of their egos and develop a "we-spirit" as opposed to an "I-spirit," Noyes devised a test. The test was: "They who had wives be as though they had none."<sup>6</sup> Each man was allowed, by following a carefully laid-out procedure, to have sexual intercourse with any of

the "spiritual wives." This practice of complex marriage brought the commune into conflict with local people. After Noyes was indicted for adultery in 1848, he relocated the group to Oneida, New York. Following a period of great hardships during its early years, their industries became very profitable and the community's population increased to 306.

Despite its success, dissension arose. By 1870, the second generation, which had not freely chosen that way of life as an alternative to the dominant culture, began to question the validity and morality of some of the religious beliefs and practices, especially complex marriage. And in 1876, when Noyes attempted to turn over leadership to his son, Dr. Theodore Noyes, an agnostic, many disgruntled members left the community. Noyes, himself, went to Canada to live. Although he never returned to Oneida, he wrote those who remained in 1879, suggesting that they discontinue complex marriage out of deference to the mores of the larger society.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1930s, several groups attempted to build experimental communities in the South. Two of the better-known ones were Black Mountain, North Carolina (1933-1956), and Highlander Folk School (1932-1962) located near Monteagle, Tennessee. The Black Mountain experiment explored the possibility of a group of individuals committing themselves to a common endeavor with the goal of integrating

their ideas into a way of living, a "seamless" existence. Much of what is considered new and innovative in the art world was produced by individuals who were at Black Mountain.<sup>8</sup>

The aim of Highlander Folk School was to change society, not by withdrawing from society and creating an alternative way of life, but through education. Throughout its history it served as a training ground for Southern industrial workers, farmers, the poor of Appalachia, and civil rights workers. Many natives in the area adopted a hostile attitude toward it and spoke of it as "that Communist school on Monteagle."<sup>9</sup>

While there are alternative communities that may be compared to The Farm, this group can best be understood within the context of a counterculture that developed in the 1960s. A seminal event in the development of this counterculture occurred in Bethel, New York. Woodstock, as it came to be called, drew a crowd of almost 400,000 people who came, ostensibly, to hear some of the great rock musicians of the era. Later many admitted that they were succumbing to a gathering fever. Such a mass of people disrupted all the plans of those who organized the festival, and the facilities were inadequate to meet the needs of the overwhelming number. The roads leading to the site were choked with people who wanted to attend but could not get through. Some of the major performers had to be brought to

the stage via helicopters.<sup>10</sup> Yet, this multitude, in essence unpoliced, was largely orderly and peaceful. The degree of cooperation and mutual help surprised those who later studied the event. But, on the other hand, many average citizens were shocked by, what in their view was, the level of amoral behavior. Still, the spirit of togetherness among the youths who attended that event set the tone for many later developments of that time. Woodstock is considered a significant moment in the development of what is now termed the "youth culture" or counterculture.

The counterculture originated as a reaction against the complacency and conformity of the Eisenhower years. An undercurrent of dissent visible in a small but vocal and well-publicized group of deviants known as "Beatniks" or "Beats" developed in reaction to the contentment and self-satisfaction of that period.<sup>11</sup> The undercurrent gained strength, surfaced, and began to change the dominant culture.

Even though many people had a nagging suspicion that some American institutions were failing to meet the needs of a considerable number of citizens, few spoke out. They were deterred by the thought that things were much better than in the Depression years, and now that peace had finally come, they wanted to relax and enjoy life in the years following World War II. However, the young and many others believed that most adults were abdicating their responsibilities in protecting fundamental democratic rights. They were outraged

by the value system many Americans accepted and pointed to obvious violations of democratic principles: the injustices of the racial situation, the presence of American troops in Vietnam, the abuses of privilege and status, and the widening gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." The latter was the focus of Michael Harrington's influential book, The Other America, which was published in 1962.<sup>12</sup>

But the criticisms cut even deeper into the basic fabric of life, to fundamental concerns about the nature of what it is to be human and how people ought to live together in more harmonious, peaceful, and just relationships. Some thought that the "settling" of the dominant culture was, at best, hypocritical; and, at worst, morally abhorrent and even obscene. Paul Goodman labeled the adult position characterized, as he perceived it, by inertia and ineptness as the "nothing can be done disease."<sup>13</sup> It was evident that a wide gap existed between democratic theory and practice. Seeing the hypocrisy and incongruity of the situation, many youths were alienated and became radicalized. They rejected authority because they believed the leaders to be unjust hypocrites who were unfit to lead.<sup>14</sup>

Partly in response to these perceived discrepancies between what most Americans claimed the country to be and what the prevailing practices were, a youth movement sprang up. In the resulting "generation gap," many of the young adopted a mindset which was characterized by the phrase, "you can't trust anyone over thirty."

Not only was dissent articulated in the music of the time by performers like Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and the Beatles, but also in the work of writers and poets, the "Beatniks," who congregated in the San Francisco Bay area. In On the Road and other books, Jack Kerouac chronicled what it was to "drop-out" and wander in search of random encounters. Lawrence Ferlingetti and Allen Ginsberg were two poets taking up the cause. It was Ginsberg above all, in his Howl, who made explicit the concerns of his generation. As he saw it, young people brought up in an inhuman environment were driven toward a nightmarish soul-splitting insanity.<sup>15</sup> Not all the dissent was expressed with the excessive rage and aggression of Howl, however. Much of it was "laid-back" and "cool" as seen in the Electric Kool-Aid Test, which tells of the picaresque adventures of Ken Kesey's "Merry Pranksters."<sup>16</sup>

Issues in the society that came under attack in the 1960s were racial injustice, the escalation of the war in Vietnam, and the insensitivity of the university. There were demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago and at Kent State University which erupted in violence. These protests were predominantly anti-war in sentiment. The civil rights movement, centered in the South, was non-violent in intent, but also at times produced violent reactions on the part of those entrenched in power. More radical individuals such as Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael,



and groups such as the non-violent Black Muslims and the militant Black Panthers were confrontational in their approach. Both Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X were assassinated during this time.

Much of the protest was directed against the university. Many youths did not believe the university was a haven for the free flow of ideas, a bastion for ideals related to the noblest and best in humankind, and a repository of knowledge. Instead, they saw it as a training school, controlled by the power structure, for the technocrats and the military. Because of this, many students "dropped-out" of school but stayed near the university to continue their protests against "the Establishment." In time they came to believe that in order to create a more passionate, nurturing, "human-friendly" society, not only was it necessary to change America's institutions, but these changes must be accompanied by a change in the consciousness of man.<sup>17</sup> They hoped that man transformed could transform the social environment.

In their quest, the youth began to search for alternatives to the dominant society. The philosophies of Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, and Paul Goodman provided them with a theoretical basis for their movement. Even though the positions of these men differed in many ways, they shared concerns for the direction capitalism was taking and its effect on the human consciousness. With Norman O. Brown, the youth took up questions about reality--was social reality

the major force in life or was there an alternative, a psychic reality?<sup>18</sup> Concerned with the unequal distribution of the world's resources, they came to admire those cultures that lived in harmony with nature, as for example, native Americans. In their attempt to promote self-knowledge over acquisitiveness and power-seeking, the youth began to study Eastern philosophies, especially Zen, Buddhism, and yoga. With Marcuse, the youth were critical of the technocracy that reduced human beings to things and caused alienation from the self, from others, and from the environment. They agreed with him that a change must occur in the sensibilities of man in order to bring about a radical transformation of society.<sup>19</sup>

Goodman's greatest contribution to the movement was the idea of communitarian. When the young complained about the defects in society, Goodman told them to do something about it, to get rid of the alienation and estrangement and build their own communities with those they loved and respected. He told them to live together in peace and to earn their bread through honest labor. These ideas became the foundation of the "great American drop-out."<sup>20</sup>

For some, drugs were a shortcut to enlightenment and wisdom. Drug heroes such as Timothy Leary appeared as role models. Stephen Gaskin said that he had his religious vision after he "dropped acid" for the twenty-sixth time. After that he had no further need for the drug because he was

"there," ready to "turn-on, tune-in, and drop-out." The new consciousness was set to forge the new culture. The general population, however, was not always sympathetic. This radical departure from the mainstream came to be seen almost as a "barbaric invasion."<sup>21</sup>

The movement always had at least a quasi-religious orientation. A term used often, "high," was a key word suggesting the transcendental. Although many Americans had experienced a renewed interest in religion in the 1950s, it was somewhat superficial compared to the evangelical Protestantism which dominated American religion in the middle of the nineteenth century, supporting their traditionalism and complacency rather than focusing on the deficiencies and inequalities in society.<sup>22</sup> Many of the young in the counter-cultural movement had attended Sunday school but believed that religion, too, as it was being practiced, was hypocritical. In their search for alternatives, they recognized the need for spiritual component, not a dogmatic or sectarian one, but one based on clear moral imperatives.

One of the most important developments of the counterculture movement was the sense of community that grew out of the wish to restore dignity to humankind, to re-establish respect for the sanctity of life, and to tear down the walls which isolated individuals from one another. So great was their mission that some gave up hope or became cynical. But others, in their attempt to create a nurturing

society, followed Goodman's advice and withdrew with others of a like mind to a "little corner of the world" where they could create a nurturing society.<sup>23</sup>

The germinal place for this movement was the Bay area of San Francisco, specifically, and most particularly the Haight-Ashbury District of that city. Or simply, the "Haight" as it came to be called. It was noted that "as a physical center, the Haight worked like a cyclone--tugging them in from all over, whirling them up in the air and scattering them in every direction." Known as one of the most permissive and tolerant cosmopolitan areas in the country, San Francisco attracted deviants of all persuasions; and Berkeley University, an open and tolerant institution, was also located in the Bay area. Thus, San Francisco became the major base of the radical movement in the sixties, and the Haight became the hub of the psychedelic community which was a part of the movement. In its heyday perhaps seventy-five thousand hippies lived there and in the surrounding area.<sup>24</sup>

The first large group to come were college drop-outs, already experimenting with drugs and looking for a life of freedom. Those already living there looked after the newcomers, feeding them and sharing their "pads" with them. Because the hippies had a reputation of being "cool enough to have fun," many of the young people came just to play. The "flower children," as some were called, presented flowers to policemen and tourists, admonishing them to make love, not

war. The weird-looking, peace-loving hippies "made the scene" dressed in theatrical costumes in fact, it was their appearance--outlandish fashions, beads and bangles, no deodorants or cosmetics, braless women, and bearded, long-haired men--which was the focus of much of the reaction against hippiedom.<sup>25</sup> Disparaging terms such as "dirty bearded longhairs" and worse were used in reference to this group.

Others who came to the Haight were more serious. One could determine the level of commitment by noting the length of their stay. For most, it was a summer, a school term, or at most, a year. Dropping out into hippiedom was, for some, a way of extending childhood and temporarily avoiding the responsibilities of the adult world.<sup>26</sup> And many, while denouncing the middle-class values of deferred gratification and accumulated wealth, were writing or calling home for their middle-class parents to send more money. Ironically, it was the affluence of the middle class that made possible this attack on the Establishment and allowed young people time to "do their thing." Only wealthy nations can afford hippies.

Because they did not find answers to their fundamental questions in their families or in the universities they attended, these young people were drawn to alternative modes of thought in their quest for truth. One of these was learning more about the spiritual plane of existence through

the use of drugs.<sup>27</sup> To guide them in their quest for truth, a number of spiritual teachers appeared in San Francisco. Because of the number of "gurus" of Eastern religions and spiritual teachers from Western nations, young people could attend two or three meetings each night. The teachers competed for the allegiance of the youths. As some of the young people came to realize that those who took LSD advanced more rapidly in understanding than the students of the Eastern "gurus," the Western leaders gained more credence. Through the use of LSD, with the aid and guidance of teachers, enlightenment was almost instantly available to the man on the street. Stephen Gaskin said that with "acid they could have experiences like those one reads about in the holy books."<sup>28</sup>

Because of the somewhat chaotic environment and the immaturity of many of the young people, splinter groups began to emerge. In the midst of this process, they began to coalesce around a specific teacher, creating stable groups. With their spiritual leader, they would sometimes "rap" all night until the answers to their questions emerged.<sup>29</sup> Amid the anarchy, the play, and the pointless "hanging out," there appeared some groups with serious intent and staying power. They, in time, began to forge a common purpose.

After 1967, the media coverage of the Haight diminished. Because of the number of people in the area, many of the young people had to resort to begging and sleeping in the

parks. As the Haight became a haven for drug dealers, psychotics, and criminals, crime and disease increased. The police, searching for runaway teenagers and draft dodgers, began to patrol the area more effectively. As conditions deteriorated, many hippies left the Haight which "tugged them in from all over" and now began to "scatter them in every direction."<sup>30</sup> Most simply returned home to college, and in time, became productive members of the society from which they had escaped for a time. Others began experiments in building communities for themselves and their friends.

Earlier communal attempts by the nineteenth-century-social reformers who believed that the best way to accomplish objectives was to build intentional communities, were, in the main, short lived. But they were the beginning of what Paul Goodman has characterized as "that great task of anthropology . . . to show what of human nature has been lost, and, practically, to devise experiments of its recovery." Between 1967-1975, a second wave of community-building swept the nation. Many of these intentional communities were started by hippies. They believed in peace and love; they were compassionate, tolerant, and truthful; they rejected mass materialism and chose to live simply so there would be more of the earth's resources to share with the world's poor and hungry. They believed there was a spiritual level of existence as well as a material one and by withdrawing from society they could concentrate more on the transcendental one.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, during the second wave of community-building which occurred in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s, over 100,000 communes were established. In 1989, between 150,000 and 300,000 persons still lived in collectives. Certainly present-day communes differ from those of the nineteenth century, but common to both is the attempt by a small number of people to change society. The hippies defined their communes as "a group of people who looked like hippies and identified with the hippie way of life, and who had come together in order to share their lives in a peaceful way." The leader of such a group was Stephen Gaskin, part-time English teacher at San Francisco State University. Eighteen years later, Stephen said, "I be a hippie."<sup>32</sup> This is the story of The Farm which he inspired and, for many years, led.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lewis Mumford, The Story of Utopias (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959), 60.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Bestor, Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), 4-38.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 27; John Humphrey Noyes, History of American Socialisms (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870; reprinted, New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 133-47.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. 653-56.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Holloway, Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America 1680-1880, 2d ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 182.

<sup>6</sup>Allan Estlake, The Oneida Community (London: George Redway, 1900), 35; Holloway, Heavens on Earth, 182.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. 194-96.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Duberman, Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1972), 11-12.

<sup>9</sup>John M. Glen, Highlander: No Ordinary School 1932-1962 (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 1-6.

<sup>10</sup>William L. O'Neill, Coming Apart: An Informal History of America in the 1960s (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 260.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 234.

<sup>12</sup>Keith Melville, Communes in the Counterculture: Origins, Theories, Styles of Life (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972), 57-58.

<sup>13</sup>Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1969), 21.

<sup>14</sup>Melville, Communes, 114.

<sup>15</sup>Allen Ginsberg, Howl: For Carl Solomon (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956; reprinted, New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 3-6.

<sup>16</sup>O'Neill, Coming Apart, 242.

<sup>17</sup>David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge, eds., The Evangelicals: What They Believe, Who They Are, Where They Are Changing (New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), 14.

<sup>18</sup>Roszak, The Making of a Counterculture, 84.

<sup>19</sup>Herbert Marcuse, "Marcuse on Esthetics," Center for Cassette Studies, Middle Tennessee State University Learning Resource Center, Murfreesboro, TN., (n.d.).

<sup>20</sup>Roszak, The Making of a Counterculture, 200-204.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 41.

<sup>22</sup>Suzanne Labin, Hippies, Drugs, and Promiscuity, trans. Stephanie Winston (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1972), 72; Wells, Evangelicals, 13-14.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>24</sup>Charles Perry, The Haight-Ashbury: A History (New York: Rolling Stones Press, 1984), 291; Melville, Communes, 61; Perry, Haight-Ashbury, 245.

<sup>25</sup>Labin, Hippies, Drugs, and Promiscuity, 51; Perry, Haight-Ashbury, 245-46; Gilbert Zicklin, Countercultural Communes: A Sociological Perspective (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 6.

<sup>26</sup>Kenneth Keniston, Young Radicals (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 239-45.

<sup>27</sup>Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>28</sup>Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Labin, Hippies, Drugs, and Promiscuity, 26; Perry, The Haight-Ashbury, 244-291.

<sup>31</sup>Kenneth Keniston, Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1971), 293; Melville, Communes, 20-28; Gaskin Interview.

<sup>32</sup>Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 7; Keith L. Thomas, "The Farm Has Changed With the Times," Atlanta Journal-Atlanta Constitution (Atlanta), 23 April 1989; Zicklin, Counter-cultural Communes, xii; Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 8 July 1989, Summertown, TN., notes from interview.

## CHAPTER II

### STEPHEN, MONDAY NIGHT CLASS, AND THE CARAVAN

Sometimes called "Moses in Blue Jeans," Stephen Gaskin led a band of hippies from San Francisco, California to Lewis County, Tennessee in April, 1971. They traveled in recycled school buses painted in psychedelic colors. Since a group of Amish lived in adjoining Lawrence County, some locals called them "Technicolor Amish." The neighbors wanted to know who Stephen Gaskin and these 270 long-haired individuals were and what business they had in Lewis County.<sup>1</sup> It is the purpose of this chapter to trace the formation of Stephen's Monday Night Class, its development, and the migration to Tennessee.

Stephen Gaskin was one of the spiritual teachers in San Francisco in the 1960s who competed with Zen and yoga teachers for the allegiance of perhaps five thousand young people. He began holding meetings every Monday night which came to be known as Monday Night Class. While many of the teachers were from India and the Orient, Gaskin had been born and reared in the United States. His early background may provide clues to his emerging beliefs.

Stephen was born in Denver, Colorado, in 1935 to Carol Ruth Carter Gaskin and Enzell Floyd Gaskin. His father owned small businesses. At different times he was a chicken rancher, a commercial fisherman, and the owner of a trailer

factory. Gaskin had a southwestern upbringing, living first in Colorado, then New Mexico, Southern California, and Texas.

He entered the United States Marine Corps in 1952, and was engaged in combat during the Korean Conflict. Taking advantage of the college GI Bill after his military discharge, he entered San Francisco State College and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1962, and his Master of Arts degree in 1964. He was an instructor in creative writing and general semantics, and also taught four freshman English classes at San Francisco State College in 1964 when, in his terms, the "hippie thing hit." Thinking of himself as a Beatnik rather than a hippie at this time, Gaskin taught in an unorthodox manner. For example, he instructed his writing students to "forget about the formal stuff like spelling and punctuation" and just write what they felt.<sup>2</sup>

Before long he put aside his traditional Brooks Brothers suits and began wearing beads and bangles and letting his hair grow long. Then he began to "hang out" with some of his students who told him that he was popular and fun, but he did not know "where it was at." Before they would continue talking to him, the students insisted that he see the movie, Hard Days Night. "I fell in love with John Lennon at that time," Stephen says. "It was awesome seeing young people wield that much power through media power and stuff."<sup>3</sup>

He left teaching. As he tells it, "I didn't get fired; I just got too weird to get rehired when my contract ran out." After traveling for a few weeks, he settled in Boston, where he became a partner in the Boston Tea Party Rock and Roll Hall. He returned to San Francisco after being swindled out of his share by some of the investors.<sup>4</sup>

Before he met hippies he believed that everything was "sewed up," and that there were no new frontiers. He saw in their movement, for the first time in his life, new territory in the form of the quest for answers to the questions which young people were asking. And, being a generation older than most of the "seekers" and far more knowledgeable, he believed he already knew many of the answers. Some of his understanding of the problems in the society and the spiritual realm came through the use of psychedelics. He said the first time he "dropped acid," his mind rumbled because he was an educated American who had been taught to believe in an American world view that took progress for granted. As a result of the acid trip he realized that many of the ideas about the American way of life, the "givens," he had been taught were, in fact, optional. A whole new plane of existence, a spiritual plane, which he had believed to be merely superstition, was revealed to him through LSD. "Well, it blew my mind," Stephen said, "I realized all that stuff in the Bible was the truth and the Sermon on the Mount was not

just goody-goody Boy Scout instructions but a technical manual about how to survive at a certain level."<sup>5</sup>

Believing that his past experiences and his new-found insights qualified him to answer some of the questions the youths were grappling with, he began Monday Night Class at the Experimental College in San Francisco. Since by now he considered himself a spiritual teacher, he was simply called "Stephen." In the classes, he taught comparative religion and life. He also served as a "tripping" instructor. This meant that he used his own experiences with LSD to prevent others from having a "bad trip."<sup>6</sup>

Starting with only a few members meeting in a small lounge on the San Francisco State campus, the group moved to larger and larger facilities as attendance grew.<sup>7</sup> Some of those who went to those sessions of Monday Night Class are still living on The Farm today: Thomas Heikkala, Joel Kachinsky, Elizabeth Barger, Michael Traugot, and Dale Evans.

Thomas Heikkala attended Monday Night Class for about two years. Thomas was young and single, a veteran of the Vietnamese conflict who had trained to be a commercial pilot. He, like hundreds of other young people who felt threatened by the cut-throat tactics of the business world, was moving through the Bay Area trying to "find himself" and to gain a sense of direction in his life. Thomas heard of the class which met each Monday night and attended. He continued to attend when the group came together for Sunday religious

services which were held on the cliffs that overhang the Pacific. The services consisted of a period of meditation followed by Stephen's sermon, which was a blend of different religious philosophies. The meetings concluded with a question-answer period. In these classes, Thomas says the message, as he perceived it, was "about getting your head together and making the world a better place; understand yourself so you won't be crazy; know yourself and what you know instead of what's just conditioned into you by the culture; know what is real and practical and what is bullshit."<sup>8</sup>

After Joel Kachinsky received his undergraduate degree from Tufts University in Massachusetts, he was still eligible for the draft. Not wanting to go to Vietnam, he enrolled in Boston College Law School and received his law degree when he was twenty-five years old. Knowing that he could still be drafted until he reached the age of twenty-six, he joined Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and worked on an Indian reservation near the Oregon-Nevada border for a year. After leaving VISTA, he went to San Francisco where he was a schoolyard director in the public school system for a time.<sup>9</sup>

Joel said that like many others in the Baby Boom Generation, he was trying to deal with basic moral conflicts--Vietnam, pollution, civil rights, depletion of the earth's resources, etcetera. His generation, like every generation of young people, went through an idealistic



period. But where others abandoned their ideals as being impractical when they reached adulthood, Joel hoped to keep his as a blueprint of his life. Through the hippie movement and the use of psychedelics, he strived to do this. He described his experience in this way: "Psychedelics gave me the same vision and viewpoint I had as a newborn infant only I had experience and education and could see things with these new eyes and viewpoint unpolluted by conditioning." He came to the realization that "there is a God and I can understand non-conceptually what God is and how the universe works." Joel met Stephen and others who believed as he did at Monday Night Class. He chose Stephen out of the large pool of "gurus" in San Francisco as his spiritual teacher. A basic tenet of Stephen's teaching was that the world needed to be changed. Although he was only one man, if others who believed he was honest and reasonable would support him, together they could bring about the necessary changes. Stephen taught that creating a better society began with individuals who were willing to change themselves and devote their lives to this work. It was after a revealing "trip" that one would gain the vision to change one's self. For many years Stephen helped Joel understand the spiritual dimension of life.<sup>10</sup>

Elizabeth Barger is a former school teacher who had taught in Arizona and California. She lived near Golden Gate Park with some friends who were interested in witchcraft.

Not being particularly interested in this but needing to feel part of a family, she stayed on until a friend told her at Stephen's group. Although she had read Oracle, a hippie newspaper, and attended a few meetings in the park, she never became deeply involved in the hippie movement. Then one day while attending a sunrise gathering in the park, she met Stephen and was swayed by his teachings. Because she was interested in freeing some land and associating with others in a family environment, Elizabeth became a member of the group and later came to Tennessee in the caravan.<sup>11</sup>

During the late 1960s, Michael Traugot was "an angry young man" just out of Harvard University. He was angry because he discovered that democracy in America was not what his textbooks had said it was. He was shocked at some of the things his country was doing in the name of democracy. Feeling stifled by the atmosphere in which he was reared, unable to talk to his parents about sex, drugs, or other subjects important to him, not finding the answers he had hoped to find in college, and wanting to "do some acid," he and the woman who would later become his wife went to the west coast. He was willing to "open himself up more and get rid of his hang-ups which were from growing up in neurotic America" in order to bring about needed political and cultural change.<sup>12</sup>

Michael arrived on Haight Street on the day Richard Nixon was elected president. By this time, the place had

deteriorated into an area inhabited by drug addicts. Because Michael did not feel safe there, he moved on to Berkeley to continue his "search" for an answer to America's problems. While there he had an opportunity to experiment with psychedelics. Although he had not been brought up as a religious person, drugs provided a spiritual experience which made him feel at one with nature, with the universe, and with others. After that he did become religious, not in an orthodox sense; but in his feelings about life and in his relations with others.

Near the end of his second year on the west coast he met Stephen and the group. Stephen taught that only by healing oneself could a person heal others; and that by joining together and emphasizing the positive, members of the group could become so attractive that other people would see them and want to become like them. Needing spiritual guidance and believing that Stephen's plan was a viable one, Michael became a member of the class.<sup>13</sup>

Dale Evans, who came to The Farm in 1978, attended Monday Night Class in San Francisco in 1970. Although some of the things Stephen said interested her, she was not astounded by revelations of any great truths or any new ideology. She was, in fact, disappointed by the fact that after Stephen finished speaking, a number of young people, wanting to talk to him, rushed up to him with their arms outstretched in such a way that it resembled hero worship

to her. She did not approve of their actions and was disappointed that he did not discourage this adulation. She thought that he welcomed it, and she believed that anyone who allowed this to happen was not worthy of her devotion.<sup>14</sup>

As the membership of Monday Night Class rapidly increased to about five hundred people, more attention focused on the group. Opinions varied. While some people considered them merely "spaced-out" flower children, others ostracized them for being too religious. Because of growing numbers and intensified police surveillance, the class moved to a church which offered more space and a safe haven. The next move was to Haight Street where they met in a still larger space, the Straight Theatre. There observers noted that people on Haight Street were no longer flower children putting flowers in their hair or seekers taking acid, but instead were dope pushers, junkies, and some out-and-out psychotics. This situation forced them to move again in just three months to the last meeting place of Monday Night Class in San Francisco. It was a rock hall on the beach called the Family Dog Ballroom that was large enough to hold the fifteen hundred people who were attending the class by 1970.<sup>15</sup>

An open door policy prevailed at the meetings; anybody could come in and, at the appropriate time, ask questions. Stephen was in charge of the meetings where their talks and arguments sometimes lasted until 2:00 a.m. When the group

was unable to solve a problem, he would give them reading assignments in philosophy, religion, science fiction, yoga, and fairy tales. The readings and the discussions would often lead to answers they were seeking. Stephen said that he could simply look at the expressions in the faces of the hundreds of students and often find answers, because "you can see an opinion or expression from one thousand faces like the wind on a wheat field. It was like revving up a computer with one thousand parallel processors and a tremendous data base."<sup>16</sup>

Occasionally there were "knock-down, drag-out" events like the time some young men on PCP began beating drums during one of the classes. Stephen, defending his own meeting, threw them out. Because of such incidents, he said that he "earned his position more in trial by combat than anything else." As long as he was fair and in the open and did not use the power against individuals, he felt justified in continuing as a spiritual teacher.<sup>17</sup>

Influenced by Aldous Huxley, Stephen believes he was more idealistic than most. He summarized his message in this way: "What put power in your magic was mostly the decency rather than the weirdity and it was permissible to do mind games with each other and consenting adults but it was not permissible to try to get to anyone's head or cop their mind and that stuff." He recognized that the possibility of someone else imprinting on an individual while he was on a

"trip" was one of the dangers of LSD. Thus it had to be used wisely and well.<sup>18</sup>

After four years of Monday Night Class, Stephen's fame spread and he received invitations to speak at a variety of functions. By this time the "hippie thing" had swept the country, and concerned parents were wondering what they could do with their long-haired, rebellious children. In 1970 a group of preachers, concerned about the problem, conferred in San Francisco. Stephen, along with policemen, parole officers, social workers, and others, was invited to speak to the group. He told them that the problem families were facing with their children was a spiritual problem and that they, the ministers, were in the right business to deal with it. The group, liking what they heard, asked Stephen to tour the country and speak about the problems young people were having adapting to societal norms. Stephen accepted, and eventually spoke in forty cities.<sup>19</sup>

Many of Stephen's flock were devastated when they learned that he was leaving in order to conduct a national lecture series. As he prepared a bus for traveling, some of his students discussed the possibility of accompanying him. He invited them to join the tour if they could pay their own way.<sup>20</sup> Many decided to try it.

Living in a rich throwaway society made their job easier. They bought old school buses and outfitted them for the trip with wood from the dumpsters and carpet remnants

given to them by carpet stores. It was done cheaply. For example, Stephen's bus, which housed six people, cost \$650. The buses, home as well as vehicle, were equipped with small stoves for heating and cooking. On Columbus Day, October 12, 1970, the caravan of fifty buses and vans carrying about 250 people left San Francisco. They were about to discover America; or, perhaps more appropriately, to let America discover them.<sup>21</sup>

Elizabeth Barger said that she and a group of friends planned to buy a bus and join the caravan, but they were unable to do so. It was not until the group returned to San Francisco that Elizabeth was able to accompany the others as they began the journey to Tennessee.<sup>22</sup>

Looking forward to the great adventure, Joel Kachinsky and sixty-nine other Monday Night Class students pooled their money, bought nine buses, and then split into groups suitable to travel in these vehicles. Since the bus to which he had been assigned had mechanical problems, Joel's group did not leave San Francisco to join the caravan until early December. After repeated mechanical problems and missed connections, they returned to San Francisco to await the return of the caravan. When they arrived there they learned that Stephen and his followers had returned earlier then departed again almost immediately. It was not until the spring of 1972 that Joel joined the group on The Farm in Tennessee.<sup>23</sup>

As some of the other members of the group began getting the buses together, Michael Traugot thought it would be a great adventure, traveling about the country like a tribe of gypsies on buses. Not having any other plans at the time, he decided to go along. Until then he had been sort of a "lifestyle" hippie, just "hanging out" with them for a short time rather than being truly committed to the hippie way of life.<sup>24</sup>

The people on the caravan earned their living as they went doing odd jobs and picking up wood to fuel their stoves. The cost for keeping a bus running and eating expenses was approximately sixty dollars per one thousand miles. The bus averaged only about eight miles per gallon, but gasoline prices were low at that time.<sup>25</sup>

The caravan made stops in forty cities during the speaking tour. Stephen spoke in colleges and universities, state parks, churches, civic auditoriums, and to drug-help and teacher groups. His messages were wide-ranged and varied. For instance, he delivered long, often rambling, discourses on religion, politics, culture, the economy, diet, morals, and human nature. Many of the comments seem to have been extemporaneous. Indeed, in his talk at Curtis Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he admitted as much. He said, "Certain ones of my ideas are always in constant flux because I'm learning them right out as I go along."<sup>26</sup> The following is a synopsis of the message he delivered as the group traversed America.



Stephen said that he and his followers represented a microcosm of all mankind. They were on a pilgrimage to teach people that their materialistic wants could never be satisfied, and the struggle over the dwindling supply of material goods could only lead to hostility and conflict. It was only through concentrating on the spiritual realm that people could live together in harmony and peace. When he accepted the Spirit, he said, he was capable, through telepathy, of entering into mind communication with others; and that, by using this new-found spiritual energy, he could heal someone by hugging them. He argued that religion surpassed politics as a means of bringing people together and providing for their needs because "politics is an ego confrontation and a power trip, and a power trip means that everyone is going to lose a little bit." Stephen described his religious doctrine as one which extracted the beliefs and ideas that all the world's major religions had in common. He said, "The thing about all those religions is that you can stack them all together like IBM cards, and you can look at them and see which holes go all the way through. And that's the trip we're trying to do."<sup>27</sup>

He was accepted everywhere he went, Stephen said, not because he was an outstanding orator who used drugs, or had long hair, or was married to three other people, but because he was non-violent and carried the message of peace. He taught that God was real and that man should live by his

commandments. The basic rules, according to Stephen, were to love God, love your neighbor as yourself, tell the truth, and avoid what you hate. He said it was time for the hippies to stop being "spaced-out," for them to get off the welfare rolls, to begin to produce with their abundant energy, to change the world by changing themselves and being an example to others.<sup>28</sup>

One event on the journey had far-reaching consequences in later years. It was on the caravan that Ina May Gaskin first became involved in spiritual midwifery, which would become one of The Farm's contributions to present-day society. Since none of those on the tour had delivered a baby, "necessity was the mother of invention" in this instance. There were several pregnant women on the buses, and they had no money with which to pay doctors or hospitals. And too, some had given birth in hospitals and were not pleased with the experience. As the due dates approached, a group of them began to study a childbirth manual.

The first birth on the pilgrimage occurred in a bus parked on the campus of Northwestern University. A birthing committee delivered a baby boy. Fortunately, there were no complications. Their second attempt at delivery almost resulted in tragedy. Cara, the soon-to-be mother, was moved from her truck to a neighboring bus so that there would be room for the twenty-five people who had come to witness the event. Perhaps because there was so much commotion, Cara's

contractions ceased. The men were asked to leave. Following their departure, the contractions resumed and a baby girl was delivered. The baby turned blue, however, and was not breathing. Not knowing what to do because they had not read the pages in the manual which dealt with this condition, they sent for Stephen. When he picked up the baby and blew into its mouth, it began breathing.<sup>29</sup> After this incident it became clear that some of the group must learn more about delivering babies if they were to continue the practice.

A more poignant reason for Ina May's interest in midwifery was that she too gave birth on the caravan as it made its return trip to Tennessee. In a Nebraska snowstorm she went into labor. Stephen and Margaret Nofziger delivered her son, who was two-months premature. The tiny baby survived only a few hours, possibly succumbing to a hyaline membrane condition.<sup>30</sup> This was the tenth and final birthing on the caravan. After that experience, and perhaps more importantly, because of that experience, Ina May made a commitment to learn all she could about the subject which would, in the future, become her life's work.

Perhaps because the idea of community was implicit in the hippie scene, the group spoke of staying together and finding a suitable place to build a home. Feeling that they had already become a community during the time they were on the road, they did not want to return to separate existences. While on the cross-country journey some had grown weary of

the nomadic lifestyle and dreamed of getting some land, raising their food, and living a simple life. The fact that they knew little about farming was no deterrent. And too, they had developed a deep personal commitment to improve the world. Stephen taught that by changing oneself, one could change the world. In order to do this they needed to withdraw and make a real break with the old life.<sup>31</sup>

Believing that they had a viable alternative to contemporary society for making the world a better place, they wanted to manifest their beliefs as an example to the world. They could put their ideals into practice in a community all their own, but because land was so expensive in the San Francisco area and the communes which had been established there were overrun with "day trippers," they knew that California was not the place to launch their experiment. In their reminiscing about the time they had traveled together, they recalled two places where they had elicited a friendly reception--Minnesota and Tennessee. They were aware that the climate in Minnesota would be too hostile to such an undertaking.<sup>32</sup>

The moment of decision had come. It was in a drivers' meeting in Sutro Park, San Francisco on February 10, 1971, that Stephen made the announcement: "After the services the caravan's going to take off to Tennessee and get a farm." Two hundred seventy of the group decided to pool their resources and return with Stephen to Tennessee to buy land

and build a community. "We are doing this," Stephen said, "because it's the hope of the world. The mainstream culture is far wrong and has lost the essential values, and we're trying to grow a little culture of those essential values."<sup>33</sup> So it was in the early spring that a caravan of brightly painted buses with white roofs left San Francisco carrying a tribe of hippies to Tennessee.

Some who knew the group expressed doubts that such an experiment could succeed. When Dale Evans heard that the Monday Night Class was moving to Tennessee, she said she thought, "Good luck! Hippies in Tennessee! I don't know how you guys are going to make it." James Leigh, an associate professor at San Francisco State College, expressed his feelings in these terms: "When I got word that this Gaskin was leading a bunch of folks around the countryside, I wasn't too surprised. But he wasn't all that bright and that made me chuckle a little bit."<sup>34</sup>

A Nashville television station opened its evening news program with the alarm, "The hippies are coming! The hippies are coming!" They came through Kentucky, where approximately twenty thousand people attended a three-day "Be-in." Because the local people would not allow blacks to attend, the group left. They then camped around Percy Priest Lake near Nashville while looking for land to purchase. Some went to Arkansas to look at a parcel of land but learned that a family feud was in progress over its ownership. Then they

considered purchasing a farm in Cheatham County, Tennessee, but discovered the owner was lying about the acreage. Meanwhile local folks came to gawk at the newcomers. So many came that the police had to break up traffic jams for miles around. Elizabeth Barger remembered that a number of people drove by and threw suitcases of supplies to them because the police would not allow cars to stop at the site. A few who passed by invited them to come and stay on their farms. Some of those who threw supplies to them still visit The Farm today.<sup>35</sup>

By this time, because of extensive media coverage, most of the area residents knew that the hippies were looking for a place to settle. When some of them went into a music store in Nashville, an employee there offered them a one-dollar-a-year lease on a one-thousand-acre family farm near Summertown, Tennessee. This land, known as the Martin Farm, was adjacent to the land that would later become The Farm.<sup>36</sup> It was on this place that the hippies "landed" in late April, 1971.

From Nashville they traveled south on Interstate 65 to Highway 43, then west on Highway 20 to Drakes Lane and what they referred to as the "boondocks" of Tennessee. They drove in "off the interstate, off the four-lane, off the two-lane, onto the dirt, off the dirt across the back of this farmer's cornfield, down through the woods to a little clearing in the middle of a thousand acres." A double column of buses lined

Drakes Lane. When a local resident closed the lane and refused to let them pass, a few of the neighbors came with chainsaws and cut down trees so a road could be made across the land. That night as they drove in over two miles of stumps, it began to rain. As the buses mired down in the mud, people took hold of the backs of the buses and lifted them out.<sup>37</sup>

While some of the local residents were helping them move in, others came with shotguns, threatening to force them to leave. The big question in everyone's mind was, would they be allowed to stay?

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>David Brill, "Down on the Farm," Tennessee Illustrated, January-February 1989, 29; "The Farm That Keeps Flowering," Newsweek, 10 August 1981, 14.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording; Alice Alexander, "A New Age on the Farm," The Tennessean Magazine, February 1979, 7.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen Gaskin interview.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.; CBS, "CBS News," 27 December 1970.

<sup>6</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik! (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1974), 3.

<sup>7</sup>Kate Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," New York Times Magazine, May 1977, 81.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Heikkala, interview by author, Tape recording, Summertown, TN., 13 July 1989.

<sup>9</sup>Joel Kachinsky, interview by author, Tape recording, Summertown, TN., 26 July 1989.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Elizabeth Barger, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Dale Evans, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>15</sup>Stephen Gaskin interview; Heikkala interview.

<sup>16</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 3; Peter Jenkins, A Walk Across America (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1979), 205; Stephen Gaskin interview.



- <sup>17</sup>Stephen Gaskin interview.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup>Heikkala interview.
- <sup>21</sup>Kachinsky interview; Stephen Gaskin, The Caravan (New York: Random House, and Berkeley, CA.: Bookworks, 1972), 137; Kachinsky interview.
- <sup>22</sup>Barger interview.
- <sup>23</sup>Kachinsky interview.
- <sup>24</sup>Traugot interview.
- <sup>25</sup>Heikkala interview.
- <sup>26</sup>Stephen Gaskin, The Caravan, 144.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., 1-60.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., 106-171.
- <sup>29</sup>Stephen Gaskin interview.
- <sup>30</sup>Ina May Gaskin, Spiritual Midwifery, 19-20.
- <sup>31</sup>Stephen Gaskin interview; CBS, "CBS News," 27 December 1970; Traugot interview.
- <sup>32</sup>Heikkala interview; Stephen Gaskin interview.
- <sup>33</sup>Stephen Gaskin, The Caravan, 231; Stephen Gaskin, Mind At Play, (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1980), 172.
- <sup>34</sup>Evans interview; Alexander, "A New Age," 8.
- <sup>35</sup>Barger interview; Traugot interview; Barger interview.
- <sup>36</sup>Traugot interview.
- <sup>37</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 4; Barger interview.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE FIRST YEAR, 1971-1972

It was in this way that the group of California hippies, feeling like pioneers, found themselves in a rural area of Tennessee. According to Stephen Gaskin, they were like "an island of long-haired hippies in the midst of a not so friendly group of short-haired red-necks." This chapter will deal with their initial experiences and organizational problems as they endeavored to establish a community which they hoped would become their permanent home.

In their attempt to create an ideal society, they were confronted with numerous problems. When they arrived, the group was composed predominantly of high-school and college drop-outs who were young and inexperienced offspring of middle-class families. In this regard, they fit the pattern that Keith Melville discovered in his study of communes in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Although some of Gaskin's followers had college degrees, they were ill prepared for the lifestyle they wished to adopt. These people had come to establish an agrarian community in which they could live in peace with each other, their neighbors, and the environment. But, at this time, they had no land of their own, only an elementary knowledge of farming techniques, and no farming implements. They lacked money, they had 270 people to feed, and their

population was increasing rapidly through new recruits and reproduction. Another worrisome factor was that they were surrounded by potentially hostile neighbors. Rumors abounded that they were Communists intent on establishing a commune, that they were an off-shoot of the Charles Manson "family," and that they were a group of drug-crazed rejects engaging indiscriminately in sexual experimentation.

On the other hand, they possessed some positive attributes. In their youthful idealism and enthusiasm, they envisioned a better way of life based upon decentralization and debureaucratization of the system, more spontaneity and honesty in their relationships, rejection of the accepted measures of success, and a nurturing environment. Seeking a place where they could live and grow together, they chose a rural section of Tennessee because they believed that people in this area would be more likely to judge them by their work and concern for others rather than by their dress.<sup>2</sup>

According to Stephen, one of the reasons for success up to this point was that they were talking peace and attempting to carry out a new kind of revolution. Unlike revolutions in the old mold where the demands were that money, property, and the army change hands, this revolution was in the human spirit which would, in time, so permeate and saturate the whole culture that the value changes they saw as necessary would occur "normally." Stephen said he realized

that the minute one began to make impossible demands, that all the good demands would "go down the tube with that."<sup>3</sup>

Michael Traugot, who at the time was a young Harvard University graduate and a member of the Monday Night Class said,

I figured we were going to start something that was going to change America and do it by building something that was so graceful that everyone would follow it. I was into it because I thought it was the vanguard of the new way of doing things. In some ways, it was.<sup>4</sup>

Elizabeth Barger said, "Every fanatic visionary sets out to save the world and that was sort of a joke. We thought we have to avoid being fanatic visionaries and putting our visions on anybody else. What has to happen is people have to realize their hearts' vision themselves." To Elizabeth, it was the sense of family and living close to the land that was important.<sup>5</sup>

In his study of communes, Richard Fairfield found hostility from the general public and unfavorable media coverage to be one of the six causes of their failure. The hippies were confronted with this issue. In fact, some of the neighbors spoke of forming vigilante groups and forcing them to leave. Stephen, aware that relations with the local population were critical, made it a top priority to quiet their fears and win their respect.<sup>6</sup>

Because the owners of the Martin Farm had not lived there for many years, it was under the supervision of a caretaker named Homer Sanders. In the beginning he was

disturbed over the hippie intrusion, but later became a staunch supporter of the group. Stephen told this story about their experiences with Sanders and the local judge:

The caretaker of that farm was an old moonshiner down here and he was friends with the judge. And Mr. Barton in Nashville sent a fifth of whiskey down to the judge and a fifth of whiskey to Homer and said, "Take care of my friends." This was a dry county. Homer was a moonshiner and Doug a judge but they were old drinking buddies. Doug was a friend too. He was a noble dude. He said, "I don't see why we can't get along here and share this county. I don't know why we can't get along and do a little music together and a little softball stuff."

Thus, when others saw that Homer and Doug were willing to give friendship a chance, they were more tolerant.<sup>7</sup>

Neighbors on Drakes Lane remember their arrival. Linda Tonguett, a teenager when the caravan arrived on the Martin Farm, recalled that neighbors were curious about the newcomers. She told of the carnival-like atmosphere which existed when the group first arrived, noting that people came from miles around to get a glimpse of them. She said rumors circulated that they were all on drugs or were escaped convicts or worse, but that they were always friendly to the neighbors.<sup>8</sup>

Gene and Helen Williams, who live across the road from the Martin Farm, remembered the hostility which many of the local folks exhibited toward the newcomers. Williams said that while many did not like the hippies because they did not understand them, he had always respected them. Williams said, "See, they call 'em hippies but they not no hippies.

They people just like we are, just hunting for a place to settle and try to make a living."<sup>9</sup>

Another Drakes Lane resident, William Campbell said, "People felt more resentment against Mr. Sanders over there in charge of the Martin Farm. He helped them come in and get established but what happened, they came in all those buses and people thought they were just a gang of outlaws coming in. People just didn't trust them."<sup>10</sup>

Tressie Black, who lives alone in a small house near The Farm, recalled, "I didn't think nothing about 'em. Just thought they was a bunch of hippie people. I wasn't familiar with hippies. Didn't know." Although Jean Shirley lives near The Farm, she had little contact with them during the first years there. She said that despite the carnival-like atmosphere when they arrived, she saw no reason to fear them.<sup>11</sup>

The Drakes Lane neighbor who had the most official contact with the hippies was T. C. Carroll, the sheriff of Lewis County. He recalled that his small law enforcement force was tested when the caravan arrived. There were many calls from concerned citizens who were disturbed by the intrusion. Also, Sheriff Carroll had to spend two or three days on the road trying to keep it cleared of the hundreds of spectators who came to look at the newly arrived group. Because traffic was so congested, he requested the assistance of the Tennessee Highway Patrol. Carroll continued, "Why

they was backed up plumb down both ways. We kinda got it situated around 'til they all got in because most of the time it was rainin' and it was soft and havin' to go through the woods, they'd just mire down." He said that he had to take a shotgun away from one man who was going to shoot them. It took a great deal of effort on Carroll's part to manage the crisis and defuse the emotionally-charged atmosphere. And although he was not pleased to have the group as neighbors, he said that it was his function to uphold the law regardless of his personal feelings.<sup>12</sup>

Sue Garrelson, from nearby Lawrenceburg, said that people for miles around were "scared to death" of the hippies. She said "wild stories" circulated that three husbands and three wives lived together in each bus, and it was "freaky" when dozens of media people and hundreds of onlookers came to observe and report on the new settlement.<sup>13</sup>

Mrs. J. Howard Warf, a leader in the community and Superintendent of Lewis County schools at the time of their arrival, remembered some of their admirable qualities. She said that initially area residents were concerned about the hippies being there but came to understand and respect them when they learned the hippies were willing to work. Mrs. Warf said that the area had a history of accepting newcomers; for instance, the Swiss and German immigrants were welcomed to the area in the 1800s.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the presence of Menonnites in nearby Ethridge was a factor in gaining acceptance of the hippies by local people. Stephen admitted,

Menonnites and the Amish all the way from Lancaster County [Pennsylvania] to Tennessee got there first and broke ground for us--for long hair and spiritual groups and things like that. So there's a lot of stuff people accepted about us from the beginning. Once they learned that we weren't violent and we really were truthful, they started thinking we were Technicolor Amish.<sup>15</sup>

On June 8, 1971, under the Tennessee General Corporations Act, the community drew up articles of incorporation and adopted a charter for a non-profit corporation known as The Foundation. The purpose of the corporation was to handle the material resources of a religious community and to develop educational projects which would include the publication of books, tape recordings, and films. The corporation would accept funds from donations, foundations, and other sources. The incorporators were Warren Jefferson, William Santana, and Peter Schweitzer. The chapter was registered and certified by the Tennessee Secretary of State Joe Carr on June 10, 1971.<sup>16</sup>

In August, 1971, the community bought its first parcel of land from Carlos Allen Smith and wife, Evelyn Smith, for seventy-five thousand dollars. The title to 1,014 acres located in the 4th Civil District of Lewis County was conveyed to Peter H. Hoyt, Leslie M. Hunt, and William Erik Hershfield, who were trustees for the church of The Farm religious communities and its resident members.<sup>17</sup>



It was in Tennessee that the idea of becoming a religious community developed. Thomas Heikkala said, "We were just trying to figure out what to do and this was the stronger idea." They referred to their settlement as a community rather than a commune because they believed that the term "commune" denoted a political entity rather than a spiritual one. They preferred to think of themselves as a tribal collective, like the Indians. The community was known in legal documents as the "church of The Farm religious communities." Its theoretical basis was from the Book of Acts, "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."<sup>18</sup>

They also sought a legal framework for their practice of midwifery, and established contact with a local doctor. A few days after the group arrived on the Martin Farm, a public health nurse visited them. When asked about the requirements for becoming practicing midwives in the State of Tennessee, the nurse told them that since there were no provisions under Tennessee law, they would not be allowed to continue home deliveries. Yet, the next day the nurse returned bringing them silver nitrate drops to put in the babies' eyes. Later, representatives from the State Bureau of Vital Statistics arrived at the Martin Farm with a number of blank birth certificates. Thus, although the authorities said that they could not continue home deliveries, their actions seemed to

sanction the practice.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this ambiguity was influenced by the poverty of the hippie group, a reluctance on the part of local health care personnel to treat them, and the fact that locally some home deliveries were still being performed, especially among the Mennonites.

A midwife crew, led by Margaret Nofziger and Ina May Gaskin, was assembled. The hippies built a clinic to provide prenatal care to expectant mothers as well as primary health care to the group. The delivery room originally opened "with a couple of hemostats and a pair of scissors." As the demand for their services grew, more equipment was added.<sup>20</sup>

Because situations developed on the caravan for which they were untrained, they sought professional help for emergencies. Dr. John O. Williams, a native of Mt. Pleasant, a small town ten miles away, was experienced in home deliveries. He had assisted an elderly physician, Dr. James H. Jones, in the Mennonite community. After Dr. Jones's death Dr. Williams continued this practice. He assured the midwives that he was available day or night.<sup>21</sup> This midwifery program grew and, in time, became one of The Farm's major contributions to society. It was one factor which attracted many pregnant women, both single and married, to The Farm.

Another difficulty was that they did not know how to farm. Even though they were vegetarians who planned to feed themselves by farming organically, they soon discovered that

it took too much manure and compost to fertilize the amount of land needed to feed their growing numbers. They had also hoped to use horses or mules to plow the land but found that they could not cultivate the needed acreage without using farm machinery. Thus, early in their history, and frequently after costly mistakes, they turned to the neighboring farmers for advice.

That first season they learned how to hoe, how to plant the rows, how to eliminate some of the weeds, how to enrich the soil without using commercial fertilizer, and how to plant trees. They learned that one must know something about cultivating the crop before planting it in order to set up the rows the correct distance apart. When they discovered that hoeing alone would not control the weeds which were stealing nutrients and moisture from their plants, they began to use commercial herbicides. They were forced to supplement the compost with commercial fertilizer, but learned that they could also enrich the soil by planting cover crops of vetch and clover. In his study, Melville found that most communes had no time dimensions such as clocks and calendars, wishing to live in the present without schedules which would interfere with their freedom. Thus, one of the most important lessons they learned was that farming is "an adult vocation instead of some sort of mystical hobby" and that the planting, cultivation, and harvesting must be done on time, regardless of their disdain for clocks and

schedules. Otherwise their crops would fail or ruin in the fields.<sup>22</sup>

While the group accumulated needed money from a variety of sources, from income tax refunds, inheritances, and the sale of cars, drum sets, electric guitars, and other items, the main source of income during this period came from work crews. Crews were organized for farming, the dairy, outhouse, construction, horses, motor pool, water, and so on. In the early days when the group was smaller, Stephen assigned people to different jobs. The farm and construction crews were sent off The Farm to earn money, which went into the common treasury. Like migrant workers, some of these crews went around the country picking apples, oranges, grapes, and other crops. Most of the crews bartered their labor for produce instead of wages and returned to The Farm with their buses loaded with food and grain. One crew returned from the Midwest with twelve tons of wheat. By that time, the first cottage industries had begun to develop, and the hippies had built a mill on The Farm for turning the wheat into flour.<sup>23</sup>

Forrest McClain and Dennis Whitwell, farmers from the West Fork community, were the first in the area to hire the hippies. Because McClain and Whitwell needed farm workers, were more open-minded than many of the neighbors, and were curious about the newcomers, they hired them to haul their hay to the barn. While other workers charged a hauling fee

of fifteen to twenty cents a bale, the hippies charged only five cents per bale. When asked by other farmers about the effectiveness of the hippies as field hands, McClain told them that although it was rumored that they smoked marijuana, they did not come to work intoxicated or "hung over" as many hired laborers did. He said they were punctual, competent, and diligent workers who more than earned their meager pay. And, although they had almost no farming experience, they learned quickly and did not require constant supervision. People from adjoining communities, in time, came to respect them and even to accept them for these qualities. Because they were willing to work at such difficult tasks for so little, the neighbors realized that they were committed to their goals. Soon The Farm had many requests for the farm crew, and other landowners asked them to become sharecroppers on their land.<sup>24</sup>

The Farm construction crew built solar houses, barns, log cabins, and restored and remodeled homes. During the first few months, the construction crew worked in the surrounding area because they were not yet building permanent structures for themselves.<sup>25</sup>

The group also hoped to earn money through sales of "The Farm Band" recordings. In April of 1972, the band recorded a single record in a Goodlettsville, Tennessee studio which featured "Loving You" and "Keep Your Head Up High," both written by Farm members.<sup>26</sup> Although their

records were never successful in the music world, The Farm Band accompanied Stephen as he travelled around the country in an effort to recruit members and raise funds for the community.

A wide variety of jobs existed on The Farm itself. During the first year, an abundance of tasks kept the members occupied--building permanent structures, fencing, digging wells, preparing food in the community kitchens, attending to the farm animals, keeping the vehicles operational, caring for children, washing clothes, planting and harvesting the crops and orchards, and freezing and canning the produce. Members also worked at the Gate, where they met visitors and talked with those who appeared daily wanting to become part of the commune.<sup>27</sup>

Another money-making operation was the sorghum mill. With the neighbors' help, especially the Amish, they made and packaged molasses which was marketed as "Old Beatnik Pure Lewis County Sorghum." A local farmer who evaluated their product said, "Them's damn fine molasses." If they produced scorched or watery molasses, they ate their mistakes and sold the best quality. The syrup of lesser quality was used on The Farm as a sweetener, but some complained that anything sweetened with molasses tasted like molasses.<sup>28</sup>

Long hours, hard work, and "doing without" were acceptable at first, because they were committed to the idea of creating a model society. Peter Else, a former resident,

said The Farm provided "an escape from eight to five city living, chance to form a model society, chance to be closer to the land. Well, I did escape city living, but I ended up working from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.; I definitely got closer to the land." He described the early years as "somewhat medieval" and added that he learned a great deal about subsistence agriculture.<sup>29</sup>

Another important aspect of Farm life was education. The Farm made arrangements with Lewis County school officials to have their own school. The Mennonites once again prepared the way for the hippies. Because the Amish children were not required to attend school past the eighth grade, the hippies assured state education officials that their children would be able to pass the eighth grade examinations by the time they were thirteen. At a time when all the able-bodied labor was needed on the Farm, the community members believed it was more important that the older students work on The Farm rather than sit in a classroom. Theodore Roszak, who wrote about the counterculture, found that many of the rebellious youth of the sixties believed that no one had anything of importance to teach the young; thus, they would make up their education from scratch. The hippies followed this precept to some extent; yet, because they did not want their children to be strangers in their own culture, they taught them "numbering and lettering and true facts about the planet."<sup>30</sup>

When Mrs. J. Howard Warf, the Superintendent of Lewis County Schools, was informed by Farm members that they wanted to have their own school, she explained that although there were thirty-four college graduates among them, the Tennessee Department of Education required a certain number of credit hours in education courses for teacher certification. She also pointed out that they had to use textbooks adopted by the Lewis County school system, that the children were required to be in school six and one-half hours a day, and that she could inspect the school at any time. When the Tennessee Department of Education certified three or four Farm residents, the school was opened. It began with a kindergarten in a facility very much resembling earlier Lewis County one-room schools. Farm educators followed the required rules and procedures, kept accurate attendance and enrollment records, and bought textbooks and some used equipment from the Lewis County School system.<sup>31</sup>

School officials may have been relieved that the hippies assumed responsibility for the education of their children as many local citizens did not want their children to come in contact with them. In fact, some informed Mrs. Warf that they would not permit children from The Farm to attend school with their children.<sup>32</sup> Acceptance took time, but in later years, children from The Farm did attend the Summertown and Lewis County schools.



In addition to education, the organization of health care facilities received attention at The Farm. Almost from the beginning the members of the collective experienced health problems. At the time of their arrival Stephen, very thin and very frail, was experiencing severe back pain and walked with the aid of a tall walking stick. When Elizabeth Barger had pneumonia, she and her husband hitch-hiked to Mt. Pleasant to see a doctor. This was their first encounter with Dr. J. O. Williams, who would later serve as a back-up for the midwifery program. Elizabeth said Dr. Williams told her she had pneumonia and gave her "a ton of samples" (medicine), and warned her that he would send the police for her if she did not return to his office for a check-up the following week. They hitch-hiked back and she went to bed. Others in the group nursed her and she made a satisfactory recovery, but later contracted hepatitis.<sup>33</sup>

Local authorities were alarmed when an epidemic of hepatitis occurred on the Martin Farm because the spring which supplied Mt. Pleasant's water was on this land. While some said the hippies got hepatitis from eating watercress from a stream that was downhill from a neighbor's outhouse, Elizabeth Barger said it was the result of improper disposal of human waste.<sup>34</sup>

During the first winter when the sweet potatoes and green vegetables were almost gone and the inheritances spent, the group broke out in boils and sores from malnutrition.

Because health department officials were interested in studying the effects of a vegetarian diet and because they were concerned about the health of the group, the officials prepared a list of foods which would give the hippies a balanced diet.<sup>35</sup>

Sanitation practices received attention as recurring illnesses were a problem. Some of the first structures were outhouses and the holes were so deep that waste entered the water table. In time they learned that lime sprinkled over the waste or kerosene poured in the hole would control flies. Because the members were aware of the connection between cleanliness and good health, bathhouses were also constructed during the early months.<sup>36</sup>

While education and health care were important aspects of life on The Farm, religion was central. The Farm was organized as a spiritual community, as a church. According to Tennessee law, one need only have a congregation in order to be a minister. Since Stephen already had 270 members in his "congregation," he qualified. To lend respectability to the community, he could now use his legal status to marry couples who had been living together.<sup>37</sup>

Stephen has described their religious beliefs in many ways. He once wrote,

We believe in Jesus; we believe in Buddha. We believe in some other avatars too. . . . When you look at Jesus and Buddha from a stoned viewpoint, you can't tell the difference. They really did the same lick. . . . In

the telepathic medium of the Holy Spirit, Christ consciousness, Buddha consciousness, call it what you will, exists all the time. And anybody who quiets their mind can tune into it.<sup>38</sup>

On another occasion, when asked to characterize their religious beliefs, Stephen said that their beliefs came from all faiths. Stephen explained that religion "came from the same wholesaler but had many distributors." To Stephen religion never meant people organized into groups with rigid beliefs and practices, but "a philosophy and a world view that covers you all the way through." He thought a true religion was compassionate, provided guidance and strength now, and did not cost money. He said, "I think any teacher that charges money is a fake, because spiritual teaching is for free or it ain't real."<sup>39</sup>

The members sang rock and roll hymns, which they believed helped them become telepathic. Another sacrament was smoking marijuana at religious services. Stephen taught them to use natural substances like marijuana and peyote rather than laboratory drugs as sacramentals. He wrote, "We believe in psychedelics and that they expand your mind. The ideal is that you want to get open so you can experience other folks, not close up and go on your own trip."<sup>40</sup> This practice soon brought confrontation with legal authorities and almost proved their undoing.

Two other important sacraments of The Farm church were births and marriages. The marriage ceremonies, performed by Stephen, were of the "till death do you part and for better

or worse" kind. Marriage was taken very seriously and promiscuity was no longer allowed. Stephen said, "If you are making love, you are engaged. If you get pregnant, you get married, license and all." Births, too, were religious sacraments, hence their term "spiritual midwifery." They believed that every birth was the "birth of the Christ child" and should be kept Holy. Home birthing meant they could preside over the sacrament.<sup>41</sup>

Farm members could not drink alcohol, take hard drugs or LSD, or smoke tobacco. Diet was also an aspect of religion. Members ate no animals or animal products such as eggs, milk, or honey. Honey was declared unacceptable when Stephen realized they were exploiting the bees which produced it. All stimulants such as coffee, tea, and ginseng were prohibited. They wanted to "slow the world down," not speed it up.<sup>42</sup>

There was little emphasis on religious ritual and ceremony. The congregation simply met every Sunday morning to meditate as they sat on a hillside and watched the sunrise. After they chanted the OM, a Zen practice, Stephen delivered a short message in which he emphasized the importance of the spiritual plane and loving God and one another. Moreover, the Sunday meetings also served as a type of town meeting in the early days, because the membership was small enough for direct representation in the governance of

the community. Thus, attendance was compulsory for all members.<sup>43</sup>

To allay the concerns about their religion, Stephen invited local ministers and their congregations to attend. A young reporter for the Nashville Tennessean, Albert Gore, Jr., covered some of the joint religious services. Gore wrote, "To the surprise of both sides, they found they share a lot of common ground in the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Golden Rule, and the value of working hard and trying always to tell the truth--and, most important, a deep faith in God." Gore concluded that suspicious and judgmental attitudes were altered and each group gained respect for the other.<sup>44</sup>

Neighbor Gene Williams said he and his wife declined invitations to the services because he did not share their beliefs. When asked to describe the hippies' religious practices, he said,

I've heard talk they used that marijuana at first. They said they used it in their religion. They was talking to me about it, and I said, 'Naw, you're wrong there.' Said it made 'em happy, made 'em feel happy. 'You're wrong there,' I said. If you love God and want to be religious, He'll make you happy, not the marijuana. I said,<sup>45</sup> 'That's the devil's work; that ain't God's work.'

For tax purposes, The Farm was classified as a monastery. It was organized as a non-profit corporation.<sup>46</sup>

There is some questioning as to the sincerity of their beliefs. Some cynically say their religion was merely a ruse adopted by a group of drug-taking individuals in an attempt

to legitimize their actions. They say they were seeking some power which could bring deeper meaning into their lives than that attributed to objects the dollar could buy. Many of these young people had already possessed the material "trappings of success" and found them lacking. It was a time when it seemed that technology and the natural environment were on a collision course, that America's promise of equality and the sanctity and dignity of human life was a fading dream, and that society had accepted and institutionalized a corrupt value system. The hippies found America's political, economic, and social systems wanting. The price of living in such a system seemed too great to pay. Once they arrived in Tennessee and learned that they could organize as a church, they followed this course because it would strengthen the bonds by which they lived and worshipped together. More practically, it also made possible tax-deductible contributions.

Although they insist that they did not pattern their commune after any of the earlier ones, one can speculate that they may have visualized themselves in a "Huck Finn" or "Noble Savage" mode, believing by "going native" they could regain something of the dream that had been lost. They do speak of their love for the natural world, seeing it as important in shaping attitudes and life relations. But, this relationship between nature and social organization surely remained below the level of conscious decision-making.

Thus, in the midst of a myriad of concerns, it was with great care that The Farm, cooperating with local people, established its government, purchased land, created health and educational programs, and organized work crews. This is not to say that there were no problems. The following section describes these difficulties and the manner in which The Farm, under Stephen's leadership, approached the challenges associated with the establishment of an intentional community.

Studies of communal undertakings emphasize the critical importance of having enough capital for initial investment and expansion. The Farm struggled with the lack of capital from the beginning. A new phase in their development was the acquisition of land of their own. Following the purchase of land from Carlos Smith, they began construction of a few permanent buildings. By November, 1971, seven houses and a bath house had been built, and a laundromat was under construction. Men and women shared the bathhouse until the women complained that they were being "leered at" by male visitors. Since there was little money left to put into building construction after they purchased the land, they built shelters which were part tent and part house, which inspired the architectural terms "hents" and "touses." These shelters were constructed by building the frame and floors from wood, often salvaged from trash bins, and

covering the structure with Army surplus tents or sheets of heavy plastic.<sup>47</sup>

While the rapid growth of the community placed added strain on the limited resources of the group, some of the newcomers did have assets in the form of inheritances, vehicles, or other property. Also, new people meant more laborers, sorely needed during the initial stage of development. By November, 1971, the population grew to four hundred, and five or six people came to the Gate each week asking to join. Even though some thought it would be wise to hold the number at about four hundred people, Stephen favored growth because they needed more workers and the financial aid some of the new members contributed. He also believed they needed to be open to all because if the movement did fade, they would influence as many as possible in the meantime. Michael Traugot said they took almost anyone because they were promoting a lifestyle and "wanted to give everyone a shot at it--felt an obligation to our generation to let them come here, visit, live if they could hack it and wanted to."<sup>48</sup>

Some Farm members spoke of living conditions during the formative years. Thomas Heikkala spoke of "wheatberry winter," one of the first winters on The Farm during which they had almost nothing to eat except wheatberries. Since they had little money, they survived on what was brought in from jobs, a few inheritances, and donations from members who



had rich parents. Michael Traugot recalled, "Times were hard but the spirit was still there and everybody was really trying and we knew why we were doing it. It was important above everything."<sup>49</sup>

Elizabeth Barger recalled that dogs and cats were not allowed because they did not have enough food for pets. However, when rats began biting the babies, the rule was rescinded and they got cats to bring the rodent problem under control.<sup>50</sup>

Jack Shields said they built the community from the ground up. During the early days he remembered that there was no hierarchy and everyone was equal. Social life consisted of "groups of people hanging out at night, playing music, talking, sharing, cooperation, extended families, a letting go of the isolation often felt in our society and the feeling of being with so many people in agreement about a philosophy and a way of simple living." Peter Else recalled that living conditions did not improve dramatically and that life on The Farm was a constant struggle.<sup>51</sup>

Even though they lived in poverty during the early years, the lack of material goods did not cause discontent. They were not materialistic, but idealistic. Stephen defended their outlook in this way:

People say that hippies are a bunch of people who don't take baths, listen to rock and roll music, take dope, promiscuous--all that, and probably we were. We're idealistic and I've had to defend it. Idealism is to be capable of imagining a better state, just better conditions. Without it we would never get anywhere.

Stephen saw The Farm as a sandbox or laboratory in which experiments in life styles and familial organization could be carried out. Others in society were participating in social experimentation too; but the difference was that, on The Farm, one could not walk away and leave children, the result of the practice of "free-love" or multiple-partner marriages, behind. Some criticized Stephen because he allowed so many single mothers to come to The Farm. He justified his position in this way, "Being hippies, we had espoused some of the free sex ideas, and now should stand by the results. Some of the folks having a good time were going to get pregnant and shouldn't have to do this themselves because they were women and not men." On The Farm, if a woman became pregnant, the couple married. The group also experimented with multiple marriages. While most broke up by themselves, Stephen broke some of them up because, as he told them, "You guys have been nutty for some weeks--won't work, hassling about your trip."<sup>52</sup>

It was stories about multiple marriages and sexual promiscuity, coupled with the belief that the hippies were drug addicts, that gave strength to some prevalent rumors which circulated in the surrounding communities during the first year. For instance, when the Gate was closed to visitors because a large number of residents were ill, it was rumored that it was mating season on The Farm. Upon hearing this, Stephen decided that the Gate must be reopened.

Keith Melville found that most communes had no officially adopted policy or rules. In this respect The Farm was typical, for policy was improvised as they went along. Realizing that they were, they did not pattern their community after any other but took whatever action they felt was appropriate for their circumstances when the need arose. Dez Figureira said, "Stephen said that the policy is whatever we're doing right now." Elizabeth Barger said, "Basically whatever is policy is constantly changing to whatever works. Stephen said, "There's things that we agree on like that we're absolute vegetarians, and nobody smokes cigarettes, nobody drinks alcohol or wears leather or eats meat or dairy products. That kind of stuff is like ground rules, but otherwise, everybody is just supposed to be cool, to be on top of it."<sup>53</sup>

Joel Kachinsky saw policy as commitment to the community. He said:

In our innocence, enthusiasm and arrogance we said it's going to work because we're totally dedicated to this. We dedicated our lives to it which was saying 'You bet your ass.' No guarantee it was going to work and if you walk away from it you're not going to get any part of it. Also required that you take a religious vow of poverty and make a lifetime commitment to the community. Felt we were creating own rules. Didn't look to other intentional communities that have started through history for guidelines. We were just doing what was right for us.<sup>54</sup>

The charter did not stipulate the exact procedure for admission of new members. In the first two years this was an informal and haphazard affair; but in later years, the

process became more ritualistic. All who came on the caravan and the Monday Night Class members who arrived later were members and did nothing beyond signing a vow of poverty. Some who arrived that first year described the process through which they became members. Generally the process consisted of getting Stephen's approval, accepting him as one's spiritual teacher, signing a vow of poverty, and consenting to abide by The Farm agreements.<sup>55</sup>

Studies of other intentional communities reveal that many kept a record of the hours of labor members gave to the community, and based on this, they received credit for goods and services within the community. The Farm had no such plan. Stephen, explaining the reasoning behind the decision not to have work-credit said,

We all just work till it all gets done, and then we all be together. It would be a hassle to have work-credit or something as formal as that. We be like a family. There's no food ticket at The Store or anything--everybody<sup>56</sup> who wants food from the store goes and gets it.

The leadership role is a vital one in the survival of intentional communities. Historically, one finds that the community usually survived or failed as a result of its leadership. A community with a strong, all-powerful leader may fail when that person leaves or dies as no one has been trained to take over, as in the Oneida community when John Humphrey Noyes left. In other communities, such as Nashoba, the absence of a strong leader contributed to failure. The role of Stephen in the formation of the Monday Night Class

and spearheading the search for land has been duly noted. It is imperative that one consider the importance of Stephen's leadership during this crucial period when The Farm was struggling for survival as a point of comparison for his changing status as the years passed. Three original members who still reside on The Farm assessed Stephen's leadership capabilities. Joel Kachinsky said that as their spiritual teacher, Stephen was the unifying force in the community. Bonnie Holsinger said that Stephen had a vision which they all shared, and being older, he had more self-confidence than his young, inexperienced followers. Bonnie continued:

He was like a father, the leader of the band. He related to the neighbors. We were all such honkies, came from other places and were full of pride that we knew how to live and the rest of the country was going wrong. He was wise enough to know you can't go laying that on a bunch of backwoods folks and expect them to stand having us here. I think if he hadn't of been the one who personally met the neighbors and let them know we were o.k., I think we would have gotten run out of here.

Michael Traugot agreed that The Farm would not have survived without Stephen, who took the risks and accepted responsibility for what happened on The Farm. Because of this respect for the local population, Michael said he helped them come in like a transplant and be accepted.<sup>57</sup>

Three members on The Farm in the first year who have since moved away also commented on Stephen's importance. Jack Shields wrote, "He's the energy that first pulled The Farm together." Beverly Golden called Stephen "the George

Washington" of The Farm. Peter Else wrote, "As a theologian, he knew how to breathe fresh life into ancient scriptures."<sup>58</sup>

When asked about the scope of his jurisdiction, Stephen replied, "The nature of my authority was from the root of the word. I had authority over what I authored--the stuff I started and created myself." His role as creator of The Farm gave him power over it, power which was unchallenged for a time. As leader, the group gave him credit for any successes. One example of this is the album the Farm Band recorded in 1972. The instrumentalists and vocalists are listed on the cover then in larger print, one finds the words, "Inspired by Stephen." T. C. Carroll, the local sheriff and a neighbor, observed that Stephen had all the power in the beginning and could do whatever he liked.<sup>59</sup>

Two very serious problems occurred during The Farm's first year which threatened the community's existence in Tennessee. One was that three members were charged with murder and the other was the arrest of Stephen and three others for growing marijuana. In March 1972, Judith Kowler, a member of the commune, died. Her death was attributed to suffocation and occurred as Mike Schlichting, Robert Powers, and Thomas Dickerson tried to restrain her by wrapping her in a blanket during a "mental illness reaction." She was pronounced dead by Dr. Neil Kellman, a member of The Farm community. Law enforcement officials were notified of her death on the following day. The three men were charged with

murder, but were later tried and acquitted by a Lewis County Circuit Court jury.<sup>60</sup>

The most serious and threatening problem during the first year on The Farm grew out of the cultivation and use of marijuana. As there are conflicting stories, it is not clear whether Stephen ordered the growing of marijuana or not. In a Columbia Broadcasting System news report on September 1, 1971, Dale Vaughn asked Stephen if he knew marijuana was growing on The Farm. Stephen asked, "Who me?" In an interview in 1989, he said that when they first arrived, some in the group did not have a great deal of discipline. During a time when he was not well and could not supervise them, some of the members planted beds of marijuana. On the other hand, Sheriff T. C. Carroll recollected that when he asked Stephen, at the time of the raid, if he knew that marijuana was being grown, that Stephen told him he had ordered it grown. Regardless of whether Stephen approved or not, he assumed responsibility and was arrested during the raid.<sup>61</sup>

The marijuana raid was conducted in the late summer of 1971 after some neighbors informed Sheriff Carroll that they had seen plants growing on the back side of the Martin Farm. Sheriff Carroll contacted Tom Whitlatch, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation agent for the Lewis County District and Sonny Jones of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. After getting a search warrant from Judge Doug Humphreys, they and law enforcement officers from Maury, Lawrence, and Wayne

counties raided The Farm. Sheriff Carroll went to the front gate and read the warrant to them. He said that the hippies opened the gate and allowed them to enter without making any comment. They found about five hundred marijuana plants, some as large as ten-feet high, growing in a space which had been cleared when a power line was run through the property. Three men, Dana D. Culbertson, Wilbur Jordan, and Brandon Lerda, who were working in the patch, were arrested. When Stephen assumed responsibility, he, too, was arrested. The four men were taken to Hohenwald, the county seat, where they were arraigned for the offense and jailed until bond was posted a day or so later.<sup>62</sup>

While trial and conviction concerning this event will be taken up in a later chapter, some claim that this incident actually helped the group's standing among neighbors, who knew the place had been thoroughly searched. None of their worst fears had been confirmed. No hard drugs were found, only marijuana. Although the neighbors opposed the use of marijuana, they realized that drug use was widespread throughout the country and knew the hippies never attempted to sell it to others. Some of the neighbors said that it was "home-grown," and equated it with making "moonshine," a common practice in earlier times. Others even teased Stephen, telling him that they heard his "grass won first prize at the county fair." There was speculation that this was an attempt by the FBI to destroy the infant community by



arresting and removing Stephen from the premises at a very critical point in its development. Many believed the commune, without its leader, would fall into disarray and disintegrate. Thus an event which had the potential for destroying the young community had little detrimental effect on its survival.<sup>63</sup>

The Farm went through many changes in the first years and some of the original ideas were cast aside. One writer came to this conclusion: "People who once promoted free love now ban adultery and insist on marriage. Where they once lived off food stamps, they now work night and day. And, perhaps most extraordinary of all, the same people who once stood firmly and loudly against any absolute authority, whether it be their parents or the state, now accept Stephen Gaskin as their unquestioned and unchallenged leader."<sup>64</sup>

At the end of this period, the community was established and growing, if not prospering. There was peace with the neighbors, they were legally a church, and were living the ideas which they espoused. And, most important, a down payment had been made on a thousand acre farm--land of their own.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording; Keith Melville, Communes in the Counterculture: Origins, Theories, Styles of Life (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972), 20.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin Schur, The Awareness Trap: Self-Absorption Instead of Social Change (New York: Quadrangle-New York Times Book Co., 1976), 92-99; Atlanta Journal-Atlanta Constitution, 23 April 1989.

<sup>3</sup>Gaskin interview.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, Tn., Tape recording.

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth Barger, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>6</sup>Richard Fairfield, Communes USA (Baltimore: Penquin Books, 1971), 17.

<sup>7</sup>Gaskin interview.

<sup>8</sup>Linda Tonguett, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>9</sup>Gene and Helen Williams, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>10</sup>William Campbell, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>11</sup>Tressie Black, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., Tape recording; Jean Shirley, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>12</sup>T. C. Carroll, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>13</sup>Sue Garrelson, interview by author, 8 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.

<sup>14</sup>Mrs. J. Howard Warf, telephone interview by author, 14 July 1990, Hohenwald, TN., notes.

- <sup>15</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik! (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1980), 14.
- <sup>16</sup>State of Tennessee, Secretary of State, Charter of the Foundation (1971), vol. 0-28: 5264.
- <sup>17</sup>Lewis County, TN., Warranty Deed Book A-3, (4 August 1971), 49.
- <sup>18</sup>Thomas Heikkala, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording; The Phil Donahue Show, 22 May 1980, (Videotape, Learning Resource Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.): Acts 2:44-45.
- <sup>19</sup>Ina May Gaskin, Spiritual Midwifery, 2d ed. (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1980), 20.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., 22; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 86.
- <sup>21</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 21; Ina May Gaskin, Spiritual Midwifery, 21.
- <sup>22</sup>Melville, Communes in the Counterculture, 99; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 8-11.
- <sup>23</sup>The Phil Donahue Show, 22 May 1980; Tennessean, 29 November 1971.
- <sup>24</sup>Forrest McClain, interview by author, 21 April 1990, Lebanon, TN., notes.
- <sup>25</sup>Traugot interview.
- <sup>26</sup>Tennessean, 17 April 1972.
- <sup>27</sup>Heikkala interview; Bonnie Holsinger, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording; Barger interview.
- <sup>28</sup>Tennessean, 29 November 1971; Robert Lichtman, "Sweet Thing." Farm Net News. July-August 1989, 10-11.
- <sup>29</sup>Peter Else, written interview by author, 2 February 1990, Tucson, AZ., written questionnaire.
- <sup>30</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 69; Theodor Roszak, The Making of the Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday & Co., 1969), 46; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 69.
- <sup>31</sup>Warf interview.

- <sup>32</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup>Gaskin interview; Barger interview.
- <sup>34</sup>Barger interview.
- <sup>35</sup>Alice Alexander, "A New Age on The Farm," Tennessean Magazine, 4 February 1979, 8; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 15.
- <sup>36</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 29, 65.
- <sup>37</sup>Kate Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," New York Times Magazine, 8 May 1977, 81.
- <sup>38</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 53.
- <sup>39</sup>The Phil Donahue Show, 22 May 1980; Stephen Gaskin, session of Monday Night Class attended by author, 9 October 1989, Windows on the Cumberland, Nashville, TN., Tape recording; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 23; Ibid., 5.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., 56.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., 76; Tennessean, 29 November 1971; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 92.
- <sup>42</sup>Tennessean, 29 November 1971; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 31; Lichtman, "Sweet Thing," 18.
- <sup>43</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 50; The Phil Donahue Show, 22 May 1980.
- <sup>44</sup>Tennessean, 13 March 1972.
- <sup>45</sup>Williams interview.
- <sup>46</sup>Wenner, "How They Keep them Down on The Farm," 81.
- <sup>47</sup>Dr. Dawn Huddleston, telephone interview by author, 16 September 1990, Summertown, TN.; Tennessean 29 November 1971; David Brill, "Down on The Farm," Tennessee Illustrated, January-February 1989, 30; Kim Trainor, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording.
- <sup>48</sup>Tennessean, 29 November 1971; Gaskin interview; Traugot interview.
- <sup>49</sup>Heikkala interview; Traugot interview.
- <sup>50</sup>Barger interview.

<sup>51</sup>Jack Shields, written interview by author, 9 February 1990, Mt. Ranch, CA., written questionnaire; Else interview.

<sup>52</sup>Gaskin interview.

<sup>53</sup>Melville, Communes in the Counterculture, 126; Dez Figueira, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., Tape recording; Barger interview; The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 19.

<sup>54</sup>Joel Kachinsky, interview by author, 26 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>55</sup>Barger interview; Else interview; Holsinger interview; Kachinsky interview.

<sup>56</sup>The Farm, Hey Beatnik!, 102.

<sup>57</sup>Kachinsky interview; Holsinger interview; Traugot interview.

<sup>58</sup>Shields interview; John and Beverly Golden, written interview by author, 25 January 1990, Iraklion, Crete, written questionnaire; Else interview.

<sup>59</sup>Gaskin interview; The Farm Band Album, Mescalero Music 1972; Carroll interview.

<sup>60</sup>Tennessean, 30 March 1972; Tennessean, 16 May 1972.

<sup>61</sup>"CBS News," 1 September 1971; Gaskin interview; Carroll interview.

<sup>62</sup>Carroll interview; Lewis County Herald, 2 September 1971; Carroll interview.

<sup>63</sup>Tonguett interview; Williams interview; Gaskin interview; Carroll interview.

CHAPTER IV  
GROWING, 1973-1977

From 1973 to 1977, many changes occurred in the developing community. Its population increased from the 270 original settlers to 600 by the summer of 1973, to 750 in 1974. By 1977, the number, counting its ten satellite communities which stretched from Franklin, New York to San Rafael, California, reached fourteen hundred. It was then the largest working commune in America.<sup>1</sup> The community changed in other aspects as well. The residents turned from organic farming to large-scale commercial farming, established an international relief organization, and purchased an additional seven hundred acres of land. Houses were built and support buildings were constructed. This growth brought about changes in the nature of The Farm itself. There was a loss of idealism among some, with some a disenchantment because of the distortion of original goals, with some a weariness resulting from the constant struggle of trying to survive while conditions showed little improvement. Despite these concerns, most believed that their mission could be accomplished. Spirits were high even though some conceded that it would take longer than they had originally thought to achieve their goals. The thrust of this chapter will be to trace the pattern of growth.

Peter Jenkins, author of A Walk Across America, visited The Farm for a few weeks in 1974. His account is that of an objective outside observer. During his stay there Jenkins compiled a demographic profile of the group. His records show that of the 750 people who lived there, 320 were married, 180 were single, and 251 were children. A majority of the residents had urban backgrounds and only three or four had any real farming experience. Two hundred and twenty-eight were from ages nineteen to twenty-seven, 102 from ages twenty-nine to thirty, and eight were over forty, with the rest being eighteen or younger. College graduates were mostly in the liberal arts area--fourteen had masters and doctors degrees, and eighty-two had bachelors degrees. One hundred twenty-one had one or more years of higher education, and only twenty-three were high-school dropouts. One hundred and thirty-eight were Protestants; one hundred, Catholics; forty-six, Jewish; but a majority had checked the "not much" box in the religious section on the census form.<sup>2</sup>

Newcomers came from varied circumstances and for a variety of reasons, ideological, midwifery, and a better environment for rearing their children. Many of the younger ones were dissatisfied with their lives and were searching for a place where they could belong, or perhaps they were merely seeking excitement in this vital, dynamic atmosphere. Others came to take advantage of The Farm's midwife program. Single women with children needed support. A few were mature

adults who sought to heal deep personal losses by losing themselves in a larger cause. Among the newcomers were: Peter Jenkins, David Brown, Sue Castor, Barbara Wallace, Kathy Woodside, Anthony Gaudic, Mary Ellen Bowen, Dez Figueira and Kim Trainor. Some came to visit, others came to stay. Only Mary Ellen Bowen and Kim Trainor remain on The Farm today.

While some came for ideological reasons, their beliefs differed. David Brown, who came to The Farm from Arkansas when he was seventeen years old, was reared in a narrow, constricted, religious fundamentalist atmosphere. His parents were convinced that everyone who did not believe as they did was going to hell. David, seeing the harsh injustices in society, but opposed to violence, sought a group that worked for peaceful change. He learned of The Farm in The Caravan, a book published about the Monday Night Class's tour around the country in 1971. He left after two months at The Farm because he was not allowed to smoke marijuana at age seventeen. Back in Fayetteville, Arkansas, his attempt to form a commune failed because he lacked real goals and a sound economic base, and "spent his money on grass and chasing girls." After his eighteenth birthday, when he was old enough to smoke marijuana, he returned to The Farm.<sup>3</sup>

Dez Figueira, who came in 1975, had worked for a Park Avenue brokerage house in New York City for seventeen years.



She said, "I was tired of trying to conform to a society that was brutal and I didn't agree with in any way. It was making me crazy." After reading Hey Beatnik!, she called the "phone lady," the person on The Farm who responded to inquiries and was invited to come for a visit. Wanting to play a role in changing the world through being an example of "other ways to be rather than the rest of the world was being," she decided to become a member and gave everything she owned to the commune with the assurance that it would take care of her. Dez, feeling like one of a tribe, was more secure than she had ever been in her life.<sup>4</sup>

Kathy Woodside and her husband had known Stephen and his family during the Monday Night Class time in San Francisco but they went to Oregon to be near family and friends instead of coming to Tennessee on the caravan. Arriving in 1974, they took a vow of poverty in order to become members and moved into one of the living areas.<sup>5</sup>

Kim Trainor was one of many who came because of the midwife program. An unmarried mother with one child and pregnant with a second child, she learned of this program in Hey Beatnik!. Furthermore, there was this offer: "If you're pregnant and don't want to have an abortion, come to The Farm and we'll help you have your baby and give it to you if you want it or keep it for you if you don't." A native of New York City, she came to The Farm from California where she supported her child through selling her art work and

accepting food stamps and medicaid. Kim was seeking a community where all would take care of each other.<sup>6</sup>

Others were mothers who sought a healthy environment for their children. Those who came and decided to stay were making a significant decision, not only for themselves, but for their children as well. Sue Castor, thirty-four, was a divorced mother of three working for minimum wage as a landscaper at the University of Oklahoma. Needing help raising her children, believing that she was a hippie at heart, and wanting her children to experience a system different from capitalism, she said to herself, "I better do this or shut up about wanting to do it." After a visit in 1977, she settled her affairs in Norman, packed four bags, and returned to The Farm to live.<sup>7</sup>

Mary Ellen Bowen, who also learned of The Farm through reading Hey Beatnik!, believed that The Farm would offer a healthy, wholesome, spiritual environment in which to rear her children. She wrote a letter to The Farm stating that although she had three children and no money, she offered commitment and hard work. After visiting the Wisconsin Farm first, they came to the Summertown community because it had more older children. Mary Ellen returned to Chicago, sold her house, divided the profits with her ex-husband, and gave her share to The Farm. When she moved there in 1976, she realized she was giving up everything she had and wondered if she was making the right decision. As soon as she saw her

daughters thriving in the rural setting, all her doubts vanished.<sup>8</sup>

Traveling with her two children in an old school bus from Canada to Mexico in 1971, Barbara Wallace learned about the hippie community near Summertown when she made an overnight stop in Nashville. She and her children visited there for three days, but thinking it was a "totalitarian cult," she left. In 1976, however, through the World Symposium on Humanity, she learned more about the commune and returned. She then decided the lifestyle and beliefs were more in harmony with her own and decided to stay.<sup>9</sup>

Anthony Gaudio of the Spring Hollow Farm, a small commune in north central Tennessee, actually effected a merger of his group with The Farm. He came with his wife, two stepsons, and thirty other members of the Spring Hollow Farm. Gaudio explained the reasons for the merger as: The Farm school and its large school age population, more career opportunities for the women, and the general belief that The Farm was "where the action was."<sup>10</sup>

Others, who had no place to go, converged on The Farm. David Brown spoke of the arrival of "crazy trippers," who were sometimes violent and threatening. Some would have to be physically restrained until they reformed or their families came for them. Others would be driven a distance from The Farm and left. Stephen said they took in a large number of "crazy" people, single mothers, and pregnant women

because one could not abandon the casualties that resulted from a big psychedelic movement with a free love component. He believed they owed it to the system to take care of these people.<sup>11</sup>

With such an influx of new people, the procedure for becoming a member changed over the years. Michael Traugot and Joel Kachinsky said that in the early years all newcomers were required to attend "soakers" meetings, the first of which were conducted by Stephen. There prospective members learned that the group did not eat meat, smoke, or drink, and that they talked openly about everything. Furthermore, they were expected to be non-violent, work hard, and give all their personal belongings to the community. Later, when newcomers arrived in large numbers, they would just say, "Well, you'all want to come in? OK." Joel said the procedure changed in other ways. Because of rapid growth, it was no longer practical to have everyone accept Stephen as spiritual teacher, although new members were still required to join the church and donate all personal possessions to it.<sup>12</sup>

The formation of affiliated communities was also encouraged in order to accommodate the overflow. Even though all are gone now, at one time there were fourteen satellite communities ranging in size from ten to fifty people. Experienced Farm residents went to establish the new communities. One in Florida grew food for The Farm.

Members of others manned the relief organization's projects in the Caribbean. Still, too many people were coming to replace those who left and a constant juggling and struggling was required to feed and house new members.

Peter Jenkins observed that a "less determined group of people would have jumped into their painted buses and gone back to San Francisco but not Stephen and his followers. Sticking together was a very important part of the Farm's trip."<sup>13</sup> Michael Traugot said that people had to be sincere about their values in order to adopt such a simple lifestyle. This applied especially to those with college degrees who might have had much more on the outside. Michael said,

You couldn't just come here and laze around and not do anything. What attracted a lot of people was not the gracefulness of lifestyle but that it was an alternative and we were juicy and the whole great thing. The fact that being as poor as we were, that we could pull off a thing like this attracted people, appealed to their imagination, and a whole generation was going through that--rebellling against authority of old.<sup>14</sup>

As The Farm grew, they introduced new programs and developed earlier ones. Plenty USA was launched in 1974. It was based on their philosophy that all people are members of the human family and if each person used fewer of the earth's resources, there would be plenty for everyone. Since its founding, volunteers have gone into twelve countries on four continents, lived among the natives, and taught the native population skills which lead to a healthier life. Funds for the support of Plenty projects come from donations by individuals and corporations and from charitable

organizations.<sup>15</sup> Plenty still exists today and has been one of the lasting contributions of The Farm toward helping others have a better life.

The school, which was an integral part of the community, also expanded. More people arrived with school-age children and the birth rate within the community soared. Established in 1971 with fifteen pupils in a one-room structure, it had an enrollment of 144 students by the end of 1973. At that time it consisted of two buildings located on a small campus. Since only about half the hours in the school day were required to complete the requirements for the Tennessee curriculum, students took vocational courses in which they went to the site of the various activities and learned specific skills such as farming and mechanics. The purpose of the schooling was to prepare the students to live in a peaceful non-competitive society and to reach their greatest potential through developing self-discipline and responsibility.<sup>16</sup>

Another sign of growth for the community was the acquisition of an additional 795 acres of land. The trustees bought the land for seventy-five thousand dollars and made a \$17,500 down payment. The remainder was to be paid over an eight-year period. The trustees at the time of the purchase were Bernard Cohen, Mark Wiley, and Michael O'Gorman.<sup>17</sup>

The rapid, unplanned growth caught Farm members in a trap of their own making. On the one hand they wished to

demonstrate to the world a superior lifestyle and include as many people as possible in it. The growth brought publicity, which in turn brought more people. But on the other hand, their resources became more scarce with each additional member. And too, a new type of immigrant was entering the premises. The core group consisted of a smaller number who had been together for several years and learned their lessons directly from Stephen. Some of the new arrivals were tired of working nine-to-five jobs out in the world and saw this as a place to smoke marijuana, talk philosophy, play music, and escape from the pressures of the outside world. The burden of taking care of these and the large number of visitors, in addition to an increasing number of mentally ill members, was a constant drain on the limited resources of the commune.

All in all, instead of stabilizing and improving, they were forced to stretch their meager resources to provide a barely subsistence level of existence for their ever-growing numbers. As a result, they decided to concentrate less on agriculture and look to more profitable enterprises. Consequently, they lost some contact with the land. Peter Jenkins wrote that most of the resources were used to provide food and to print and distribute Farm publications. When he was there in 1974, he wrote that the farming crew chief would call the crew together each morning and assign tasks. This reminded him more of the military than a commune. Since they worked from daylight to dark, their working life and social

life were combined. They made up games such as "bite the pepper" in which the one who could eat the most jalapeno peppers won. Tractors were being used around the clock to cultivate more than five hundred acres of land from which came eight-five tons of potatoes, forty tons of sweet potatoes, sixty-five tons of soybeans, 1,355 bushels of yellow corn, one hundred and sixty-six bushels of cabbage, twenty-five tons of tomatoes, and eight hundred bushels of spinach.<sup>18</sup>

Stephen, accompanied by The Farm Band, conducted a lecture tour around the country for several months a year. The purpose of the tour was to publicize the commune, promote the band's records, recruit members, and raise money. Consequently, as the prime promoter of The Farm's merits and its spiritual leader, Stephen rarely involved himself with the financial problems of the community. A notable exception was a plan he and a group of leaders devised after his release from prison in 1975, to launch an ambitious farming venture which necessitated buying expensive farm equipment, adopting a more commercial approach to agriculture, and leasing land, some of it as far as forty miles away. It was financed by a \$250,000 loan and its dismal failure was a devastating blow to the commune.<sup>19</sup>

Originally the group had planned to farm organically in order to protect the environment, but this conflicted with the goal of setting an example of how to feed the world's



hungry. After failing to produce enough food even to feed themselves, David Brown said they went to the other extreme with the huge machines, the use of fertilizer and pesticides, and land-lease practices. There seemed to be no middle ground. When David protested these methods, he was called "flowery-childy." He spoke of the failure of the large-scale farming attempt. He said that instead of growing the hand-cultivated vegetables on The Farm, they had to load workers on buses and transport them to the distant fields. Once there, they only had time to gather the "cream of the crop" and the rest rotted in the fields. Perhaps in reaction to their own naivete, they later returned to more environmentally-friendly methods of farming.<sup>20</sup>

The number and types of jobs available gives one some idea about the wide variety of economic activity which was taking place during this period as The Farm took on the appearance of a small town. Members' names and their duties were recorded on file cards. The crew bosses made up the board of directors for the corporation. Several of the residents spoke of their tasks on The Farm. David Brown first worked with the farming crew, then later his compost crew collected garbage and turned it into organic fertilizer. As there was no running water during the early years of this period, he also delivered water to the households in a one-thousand-gallon water truck which was filled from one of the two five-thousand gallon water towers on The Farm.<sup>21</sup>

Kim Trainor, who had a small daughter and was pregnant, cooked for the three hundred members of the farming crew in the morning and worked in the fields in the afternoon. She helped build the new passive solar school and, upon its completion, taught art there. Mary Ellen Bowen, the present director of the school, helped prepare lunch for two hundred children in the school kitchen. Barbara Wallace worked briefly in the greenhouse before going to the Book Company, then the law offices. Sue Castor helped in the grade school and worked on the new school building. Elizabeth Barger was on the farming crew, kept children, taught, and ran the laundromat. Dez Figueira worked with the horse crew, was a secretary, worked in the print shop and cooked breakfast for the five to seven hundred members of the off-The-Farm farming crew.<sup>22</sup>

Joel Kachinsky, a lawyer, helped build the motor pool, worked on the farming crew, assisted another lawyer with "legal stuff," and worked at The Store which was located in two tents. His major responsibility for several years was to buy food and supplies for twelve hundred people. Farm members began to make tofu and develop tempeh during this period, and through their international relief organization, Plenty, members developed soy technology in Third World nations as well as on The Farm.<sup>23</sup>

No one used money on The Farm. All expenses were borne by the corporation. At The Store, located at the Head-of-the-Roads, one simply chose what was needed and took it home in

recycled bags. Some things, such as margarine, were rationed. Because The Farm bore all the expenses for its members, it needed money for supplies bought elsewhere. Consequently, large numbers of residents would go off The Farm and work at money-making jobs for two or three days a week. They would rise at four o'clock in the morning, and in crews of ten to fifteen people, go to Manpower, a temporary employment agency in Nashville, and secure employment on a daily basis. They would work all day then return to The Farm. Later, an agency called "Farm Hands" was established to secure off The Farm employment.<sup>24</sup>

In a New York Times Magazine article, personnel manager Richard McKinney was quoted as saying, "Folks have come here thinkin' it's a hippie retirement home and it ain't. This is a school of working," and "nobody had to work at something they did not like," but all were expected to work. In the same article, Kate Wenner described the developing economic system in the following manner:

The food crew has 14 subdivisions. . . . There are the carpentry crew, the farming crew, the telephone crew, crews to run the grammar school, high school, kindergarten. There are the tape company that prepares audio tapes of Stephen's sermons, the video crew, the book company with its publisher, editors, designers, printers, salesmen, the Farm band that travels cross-country doing "free gigs" to accompany Stephen's lectures. Another crew runs a ham radio station which keeps the community in touch with other Farms as well as the relief outpost in Guatemala, where, after the earthquake last year, 40 Farm-trained carpenters, mechanics, radio technicians and midwives went to help.

. . . The Farm's fully equipped clinic is staffed by trained technicians, nurses, midwives, home nurses and a

24-hour ambulance crew. . . . It takes \$7000 per week to run The Farm (\$364.00 per person per year) which pays for such things as electricity, propane, and bank loans.<sup>25</sup>

There were three major sources of funds: off-The-Farm labor, inheritances and contributions by new members, and the Book Publishing Company. While the best-selling books were The Big Dummy's Guide to C. B. Radio and Spiritual Midwifery, other publications on natural birth control, tofu cooking and books of Stephen's teachings had good sales.

By 1977, The Farm "town" had its own school, church, telephone system ("Beatnik Bell"), water system, laundromat, clinic, canning and freezing facilities, and several businesses. The haphazard structures reminded one of the mining towns which sprang up in the American West over a hundred years before. But like those towns and towns everywhere, The Farm had its problems.

Life on The Farm was like a step back in time to the early 1900s. A few houses had been built and more were under construction but most people still lived in tents and buses. People were packed into the existing structures. Since home, children, and families were the center of their lives, families with children moved into the multiple-family houses. This arrangement relegated couples and singles to the tents and buses. All the houses were built of recycled materials and were never finished. None of the earlier ones had indoor plumbing. They were given names, some whimsical in nature-- Laughing Creek,

Philharmonic Hall, High Rise, Adobe Apartments, Itza House, and The Ark.

Despite the whimsy, there were many problems in housing. David Brown said men and women lived together in tents but that soon ended because the women called the men "slobs" and demanded separate space. David described difficulties in singles' tents,

What happened was the people who would become couples and got engaged would get some kind of social position in the tent and start running the scene. . . . They were condescending toward us; like if we had it together, we could get married too. Anything weird that happened on The Farm would happen at the singles' scene . . . because families don't have time to be crazy. It came to be the agreement after a while that all singles had to be incorporated into families in order for it to run sanely.<sup>26</sup>

Home for four couples was a two-story tent which was lighted by three kerosene lamps and heated by a wood stove. The piped water came by gravity flow from an outside tank which was filled every other day by the water truck. Peter Jenkins slept in an old bread truck set on blocks, a relic from the caravan. A new tent-house was built for Stephen, his wives, and children. Mary Ellen Bowen and her three children moved in with twenty-three adults and seventeen children. She said it was fun once "you got away from being attached to your own way." Dez Figueira lived in Laughing Creek, which she described as being the first intentional household. This meant that the people there had chosen to live together. An organic household, she said, was one in which someone moved in when a vacancy occurred. Here, living

in poverty, couples had their own rooms and singles lived in the loft, women on one side and men on the other. She said that one of the constants on The Farm was change and that households were in a state of constant flux.<sup>27</sup>

Elizabeth Barger, who had lived in a bus, in a house in Nashville, in the Gate house, Laughing Creek house, and Tower Road house, was allowed to move to Dogwood Blossom following the birth of a child. Here, she, her husband and four children shared a room with another family. She, too, said that households were always changing and that, in many instances, the reason was dissension. For example, she left Laughing Creek because some of the people who moved in "took over." She said they were impossible to live with because "they were higher in the hierarchy they thought, and they were very much into social position and their daughter treated my kids awful and I was having to fight her off."<sup>28</sup>

Kim Trainor lived in buses and "hents." Her daughter, Lily, was born in a tent. Later she was in a house with fifty people, twenty of whom were infants. Home for Sue Castor was a two-story house named The Ark. After a week of borrowing space or camping out, Barbara Wallace and her two children moved into a medium-sized room with five other women. She recalled that it was always a struggle to keep one's household in food, warmth, and hot water, and that some households had more than others.<sup>29</sup>

After Joel Kachinsky married in March, 1973, he and his wife lived in a tent where they were warm even in the coldest winter with good fires in the stoves and plenty of blankets. Joel insisted that he "loved every minute of it," and never felt that it was a hardship because he was happy and believed in their mission. Michael Traugot said that with so many people in every house, one got to know others very well and that some of his best friends are those with whom he shared living quarters. The main disadvantage, he thought, was raising your own children to meet other peoples' standards.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the inconveniences in housing, many believed shared living made positive contributions to their lives and moderated individualism and attachment. Obviously, with so many people confined in such a small space, one had to alter and adjust his personal habits so as to fit into the larger scheme of the community. Residents also had to be extremely conscious of sanitation procedures in order to prevent diseases which thrive under those circumstances. Shortages of the basic necessities: food, clothing, and shelter, were constants as The Farm was beginning to peak in population during the latter part of this period.<sup>31</sup>

In describing conditions in the community during this phase of its development, Mary Ellen Bowen said that there were always good people to work with and interesting things to learn, do, and discuss. Even though the mainstays of their diet were soybeans and sweet potatoes, and some foods

were rationed, Mary Ellen believed she received much more than she gave. Dez Figueira said she never felt deprived because life was so exciting and busy that food did not hold the same attraction as it did on the outside. Elizabeth Barger said that although she never felt deprived, her son felt that he did not get enough to eat.<sup>32</sup>

The Farm was a virtual "beehive" of social activity. A constant stream of visitors from all over the United States and Europe stayed in the homes of the members. James T. Baker, a visitor to The Farm in 1974, wrote that "everything we told them about ourselves met with the unison roar of 'far out'--a phrase we had not heard out in the world for four or five years." Sue Castor said all activities were social--living together, preparing meals, caring for the children, cleaning house, and all along integrating hundreds of strangers into the community. Every weekend there was a rock-and-roll concert by one of The Farm's bands in the store or meadow or band tent. To Bonnie Holsinger, at first, it was all "like a big frolic." At twenty-one, with a baby, life seemed very exciting to her. When she had questions about rearing her child, she could turn to Stephen, Ina May and others. Bonnie said the key to good parenting was to unsentimentally relate to children as people, use common sense, and expect them to do as much as they can.<sup>33</sup>

Speaking of multiple marriages on The Farm, Stephen said they had experimented with them but were no more



promiscuous than most hippies and probably less so. He said that even though he broke up some of the multiple marriages, most failed of their own accord because more than two "is like geometric progression and can create more crazies than one can deal with."<sup>34</sup>

The Farm's code of conduct included honesty, non-violence, a vegetarian diet, no alcohol or smoking, no jewelry, and no shaving or cutting hair. Government welfare, artificial birth control, adultery and homosexuality were forbidden. No document containing the rules existed but they were understood as religious beliefs and were enforced by common agreement. Stephen, as the spiritual leader, was the major authority during the early part of this period. Every question or dispute was answered with "Stephen says. . . ." However, in time, enforcement of the rules was more lax. A lackadaisical attitude developed, at least toward some of the more trivial ones. Despite the fact that individuals originally agreed to give all they had to the community and share equally in the distribution of the commune's resources, an embryonic social hierarchy came into existence during this period. Some received more goods than others. And, as could be expected in this situation, disagreements arose.

Relinquishing the ego may be the most difficult part of living in a commune. Kate Wenner wrote, "In order to get along there you have to drop that part of yourself that is not in agreement with the place. Whatever you want to call

it. Some people call it ego." Dez Figueira agreed, saying, "You have to get rid of that ego. The more ego you have, the more trouble you have hearing the universe. So you wouldn't have problems about your self-importance to clog up and keep this thing from flowing. That is what makes us The Farm, that telepathic sense." Ego was no longer as important as it had been in the old society because in the new order they had agreed to take care of one another and work for the common good; therefore, ego was dispensable--they thought.<sup>35</sup>

David Brown recalled that they emphasized the importance of non-attachment. "Attachment," in this sense meant addiction to anything or anyone on which one's happiness depended. They were acutely fanatic and purists concerning what went into one's mind; for instance, the kind of music one listened to. And if music was playing, one was supposed to do nothing but listen. The members were not allowed to watch television. Hair could only be shampooed and combed, and wearing the colors red and black was forbidden because they believed them to be satanic. He thought some practices were extremely cultish and chafed at the seemingly programmed response, "Stephen says this, Stephen says that; Ina May says this, Ina May says that." However, by 1975, he said much had changed so that they were no longer as rigid about inconsequential things and had begun to watch television.<sup>36</sup>

From interviews with present and former members, it is evident that there were definite roles for men and women during this period of development. There are two ways one might consider this: one has to do with specific types of work and responsibilities; and the other deals with a more subtle kind of power such as which sex was more influential in developing The Farm's agenda and seeing that it was carried out. Dez Figueira, perhaps more than any other member interviewed, clarified this ambiguous situation. She said, "At first I thought women were oppressed and fought against it. All women had to do the kids and the home. It seemed that all the women were confined. . . . The men were being taught to take care of the women. The women had the ideas and the concepts and the men had to make it happen."<sup>37</sup>

David Brown said that it was the women who defined Farm policy. He said that men's meetings were usually called in order to try to get the men to "straighten up," but if the women called a meeting, they dealt with issues such as lifestyles, present conditions of the community, and the direction in which the community should move. Whatever they decided in their meetings became "law." While lamenting the fact that women were not as aggressive as they could have been, David said, "They'd make policy decisions about anything from people's general responsibility to political matters and when they could come to a decision about anything, we'd all hear about it."<sup>38</sup>

Elizabeth Barger agreed that although there was a great deal of sexism on The Farm and that men and women were pushed into specific roles, in time, the problem solved itself. She perceived it as being "something we had to go through and understand." Elizabeth explained another facet of this issue was that the men on The Farm were more involved with caring for pregnant wives and their children than were most men in the larger society at that time. Thus some men felt as confined by the restricted roles into which society has cast them as did women. Stephen said that they had always had women members on the board and in administrative positions, but a reporter from the New York Times who visited The Farm saw only that housework, health, food, and childcare were the exclusive responsibilities of the women while "manual work, leadership, and administration" were the duties of the men. Ms. Wenner explained, "By exalting marriage and child-raising, The Farm has steered around two big commune stumbling blocks of the 1960s--sexual freedom and women's changing expectations."<sup>39</sup>

At the end of Fifth Road, in the midst of the trees, one finds the community's cemetery. Even a place so vibrant and surging with life as The Farm must provide some place for the interment of their dead. It seems to be, in reality, a place of rest. Amid the tombstones one finds flowers and benches where one may sit and meditate in the quietness of the woodland setting. Kim Trainor spoke of death on The

Farm. Sounding reminiscent of colonial times, she said that unless an autopsy was demanded, family and friends washed and prepared the body for burial in a coffin the friends built from pine boards. They had a funeral and grieved just as all people do who have lost a friend or family member. Kim saw the cemetery as the sign of faith in the future. The fact that this was home and they buried loved ones nearby seemed to indicate that they were not just passing through but intended to stay.<sup>40</sup>

The most important gatherings on The Farm were the Sunday morning services. All were required to attend because Farm members believed in direct democracy and these meetings were analogous to town meetings where everyone had a right to voice his or her opinion. It was here that much of the policy was formulated and business decisions were made. In this respect, the meetings contained political and economic as well as religious elements. Early in this time period, everyone accepted Stephen as their spiritual leader.

David Brown said Stephen mainly preached at the meetings and "gave us a general philosophic idea of what we wanted to do." When Stephen was in prison, Ina May would lead the services, or Joel Kachinsky, or some of the others. The meetings were a "kind of democratic anarchy" in that there was very little organization. They were conducted along the lines of a Quaker service where anyone could speak.<sup>41</sup>

It was here that they smoked marijuana as a religious sacrament in order to open their minds to other ways of thinking, and to have a closer contact with God through a heightened level of consciousness. Stephen explained, "We're not just grass smokers. We also smoke grass but we're also lots of other different types of yogis in that we respect Jesus Christ and follow the Ten Commandments and we respect Buddha and follow the Noble Truths." He added that they would not have been able to survive in the South if they had not been truly religious.<sup>42</sup> Although marijuana is an illegal drug under Tennessee law, the commune appealed to the United States Supreme Court asking it to approve the use of marijuana as a religious sacrament. The Court declined.

Religion was not just a mantle they put on Sunday morning; it permeated every level of their existence. "Everything from picking tomatoes to delivering babies to multiple marriages was a part of the Farm's ever-evolving spiritual life," wrote Peter Jenkins. In his opinion, their main reason for being was to save the world, feed the hungry, and "spread the gospel according to Stephen."<sup>43</sup> Thus the members worshipped in their work, in raising their families, in taking care of others, and in their entertainment.

Believing that childbirth was a holy sacrament and that natural childbirth was a superior method for both the mother and baby, midwifery on The Farm was an integral part of their religion. An advertisement placed in the New York Times

invited expectant mothers to come to The Farm and give birth rather than have an abortion. Many pregnant women took advantage of the offer. As the head midwife, Ina May had the responsibility of training the other midwives. By April, 1974, Ina May had delivered eighty babies. At that time, the group had not lost a baby or mother. Ina May said, "Doctors can't be very good baby deliverers because they have lost their respect for life force and because they charge money for their services. This is why spiritual midwifery is free."<sup>44</sup> In 1975, they published a book in which mothers and fathers told of their joyous experiences during childbirth. Some described "golden auras" and visions. Many births were videotaped.

By the end of 1975, they had delivered 372 babies and were averaging two deliveries per week. Four of the infants died--one was stillborn, one died from "crib death," and two from hyaline membrane disease. Midwives did not use forceps and were appalled that they were used in thirty-two percent of hospital births. There were seven midwives and two medical doctors, Jeffrey Hergenrather and Gary Hlady, on staff in 1977. A disagreement developed between Dr. J. O. Williams, the back-up doctor, and the midwives about anesthesia use and episiotomies in the delivery of breech babies. Finally, after much debate, he agreed that it would be possible to dispense with the anesthesia but believed episiotomies were necessary. Later he agreed to allow the

mother a chance to deliver without an episiotomy and in fifteen breach deliveries, only four required episiotomies. There was no policy on circumcision so the decision was left to the parents. If both parents agreed to have the child circumcised, it was performed as a religious rite by a midwife. Farm members tried to limit their families to two or three children through the rhythm method of birth control, which was about ninety-five percent effective.<sup>45</sup>

Although Stephen's role began to diminish by the end of this period, in 1973, he was still the indisputable leader of The Farm. All deferred to him in the realm of policy and practice. He articulated the beliefs and ideals of the group and spoke with one voice for the whole community, because he seemed to have the ability to understand and verbalize ideas which were obscure to others. Dez Figueira thought Stephen was the avatar of a spiritual awakening which was sweeping the planet. She said, "He was the driver of the bus we all rode in because we had an agreement that he drive the bus. His job was to see the truth and speak it." In a 1973 interview Stephen agreed that he spoke for the group but his position entailed more than that. He said, "But what I really do, I vibe. I be telepathic and if folks will be with me and be a little yen and let the juice flow, I can show them an experience which they'll never forget."<sup>46</sup>

All those interviewed believed that Stephen was the catalyst who made The Farm a reality. They spoke of



the characteristics which qualified him for leadership and described him as charismatic, intelligent, energetic, creative, articulate, understanding, loving, compassionate, and optimistic. Thomas Heikkala said Stephen taught him important things such as how to discover qualities and gifts one had, admonishing them not just to take his word for something but to test his advice and see if it proved viable. Kim Trainor said Stephen and Ina May were like members of her family who had helped her through life and death situations because they were not afraid to be involved in someone else's life. When asked what others saw in him that encouraged them to accept him as their leader, Stephen said that he thought they saw courage, that he "didn't roll over for the big bad guys and that I wasn't a big bad guy myself." He believed others sensed that something other than physical strength gave him courage to stand for his beliefs.<sup>47</sup>

Peter Jenkins wrote that he had never known anyone like Stephen in terms of his teachings and the members' reaction to him and his beliefs. Wherever Stephen went on The Farm, he was the focus of everyone's attention and received a tumultuous welcome. For instance, when Stephen drove by in the only new car owned by the community, one that was equipped with a C B radio, the workers in the field stopped their labor in order to wave to him. Stephen taught that if one believed in the notion that each person was God, it followed that each should be willing to surrender his ego

and ignore his individuality in striving for the good of the whole community. He felt that this would eliminate any competition for power or individual possessions. Jenkins wrote, "He was like a powerful and persuasive guide who could take you to another world before you realized you had bought a ticket." He described how hundreds of members would make their way down the trails through the woods to congregate on a hillside called Meditation Field for the Sunday worship service. After all were gathered together, Stephen, dressed in white and accompanied by his two wives and several children, would arrive for the hour of meditation and then deliver a melange of rambling stories, religious beliefs, and personal experiences. Following the service, Stephen performed wedding ceremonies for those who wished to marry. Jenkins summed up his feelings about Stephen in the following way,

I felt as if Stephen was dangling sacred carrots in front of his people so he could keep his followers full of far-out explanations for God and the Universe. The more Stephen and his select assistants talked, the more psychedelic it got. . . . Stephen could be so definite about work and performance, but so vague about other areas. Someone asked Stephen if there was a devil. He replied, "If you want . . . there's anything you want."

In a magazine article in 1977, Kate Wenner reinforced Jenkins's statement that Stephen was the center of attention wherever he went on The Farm. It was apparent that members were still drawn to him as iron filings are to a magnet. The article also substantiated accounts of the members'

adulation, telling how they would leave conversations unfinished, drop their implements of work or play to coalesce around him when he appeared. One wonders at times how much of his behavior was real and how much of it was a performance for the journalists. The reporter wrote,

He looks up and singles out a blind girl from the crowd, calling her name and reaching out to hold her close. "I've been saving a special joint just for you," he tells her, taking a cigarette from his breast pocket. "I want you to hang on to it until we can smoke it together." She cradles her hands to receive it, her eyes unfocused, a beatific smile spreading across her face as Stephen makes an almost imperceptible inventory to gauge the impact of his action on the quiet assemblage.

During these years three phrases were heard repeatedly on The Farm. They were "Stephen says . . . ," "agreement," and "helping out." Those schooled in human nature realize that this was a way of restructuring an individual's perception of himself, his relation to the group, and his values. Some believed that it was just one of several ways in which all were benevolently coerced into adapting their behavior so that they, by relinquishing their individuality, could be molded into a non-competitive society. If such a condition is achieved, then it is possible for one strong leader to emerge and represent the group. One of the problems in a situation in which there is one supreme leader is that others might aspire to that position. In order to prevent this from occurring, some way must be devised in which ambitions for the group are substituted for personal

ambition. With a great deal of insight into human nature and the acquisition of power, Kate Wenner wrote,

This translates into ambition on behalf of God, or in a more immediate sense, on behalf of Stephen. This is potentially quite dangerous since it operates without the check of each conscience. . . . Exporting its own philosophy and making a community project out of spreading Stephen's teachings have protected the commune from two internal threats it would otherwise have faced: the boredom of life without individual achievement and the internal conflicts that would arise if ambitions were not severely channeled. Stephen understood this dilemma when he tantalized Farm members at a Sunday morning service: "Someday, a lot of you might be running shows as big as this one."<sup>50</sup>

Some waning of Stephen's power was observed in these years. During this period, in February and July of 1973, Stephen and the band had two concerts in Nashville at Vanderbilt University. After singing along with the band, he delivered a rambling discourse, pausing often to think of what to say next. Approximately five hundred attended the second concert. David LeDoux, Professor of Art at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), attended a concert given on that campus. The main thing he remembered about the band was that it was loud, but Stephen spoke after the concert. During the question and answer session that followed the lecture, he was so harshly treated that Ina May intervened, saying, "Stephen is a good man. Why are you questioning him like this?"<sup>51</sup>

As time passed, a more critical, questioning attitude emerged on The Farm toward Stephen and his role. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that many began to realize that

even though he was their spiritual teacher, he was not infallible in all areas. It was even possible that his judgement was flawed as in the decision to borrow money to launch the large commercial farming project. He was by agreement the spokesperson and Elizabeth Barger said that Stephen enjoyed the role. Anthony Gaudio said that by 1977, Stephen no longer played the role of guru. Gaudio remembered that several times Stephen deferred to his greater knowledge in an area saying that his role was that of a country preacher in that he presided over services, marriages, deaths and articulated the faith of his congregation. John and Beverly Golden recalled that many Farm residents undermined Stephen's idealism. One specific example they gave was that marijuana was secretly being grown on The Farm even after Stephen had gone to prison for an earlier incident concerning growth and use of the illegal substance.<sup>52</sup>

The reasons for Stephen's decline after 1977 were multi-faceted. One explanation is that when certain economic decisions proved to be failures, some people began to realize his fallibility. Perhaps a second cause could be found in human nature. Psychologists tell us that very few people are capable of completely abandoning their sense of self in order to surrender their egos to the common good. This might be possible, en masse, for a short period of time; but in the long term, most likely only a small number could succeed in subverting their egos. A third possible explanation for the

beginning of Stephen's decline grows out of the fact that large numbers of new people who did not know his religious and philosophical teachings were constantly arriving on The Farm. Whereas in earlier times the group was much like a family or tribe, by 1977, it had become so large and unwieldy that Stephen could hardly know them as individuals. And then, he was incarcerated in the Tennessee State Prison for a year. During this time, The Farm survived without him and learned that he was not indispensable.

One of the commune's legal problems was the violation of Tennessee's Drug Control Act. Stephen and the three men who were arrested for growing marijuana were tried and convicted of a felony and sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to three years. Stephen argued before the Tennessee Supreme Court that the Tennessee law violated the community's right to privacy and that the punishment was cruel and unusual. Since the state of consciousness developed through the use of marijuana was central to their religion, the Church of The Farm's religious freedom was being denied. In February, 1973, by unanimous vote, the Tennessee Supreme Court upheld the conviction of Stephen and the three other Farm members ruling that the use of marijuana in religious services legally fell into the same category as snake-handling, bigamy, and perhaps even human sacrifice. Writing the opinion of the court, Associate Justice George McCanless cited an earlier precedent that "laws are made for the

government of actions, and while they cannot interfere with mere religious beliefs and opinions, they may with practices."<sup>53</sup>

Not willing to abandon what they considered their legal right to use marijuana in religious ceremonies without exploring all legal avenues, The Farm appealed the conviction to the United States Supreme Court. The nation's highest court refused to hear the case "for want of a substantial federal question." Despite appeals to the Tennessee Supreme Court and the United States Supreme Court, District Attorney General Elmer Davies, Jr. directed Sheriff Carroll in October, 1973 to bring the four men to the state prison to begin serving their terms.<sup>54</sup> After another appeal was turned down in Lewis County courts, the four convicted men began serving their sentences on February 22, 1974.

Before his imprisonment Stephen made arrangements for a six-member steering committee to govern The Farm. The members stayed in touch through the weekly visits of his wife, Margaret, and Joel Kachinsky who was attempting to persuade Governor Winfield Dunn to pardon the men. Stephen said that he had been delegating authority for the management of The Farm for some time, but that there was no one who could replace him as the teacher. He viewed his prison stay as an educational experience and saw it as an opportunity to improve conditions for other prisoners. He said, "A lot of folks come in here and remain anonymous. I'm not anonymous

and folks outside will be aware of what happens to me which should make things better for other prisoners." Later Stephen wrote a book about his experiences taking the title, Rendered Infamous, from the court's sentence in which it ruled that "said defendant be rendered infamous, and incapable of giving evidence in any of the Courts of this state or of exercising the privilege of the elective franchise."<sup>55</sup>

The community again received widespread attention when a member pleaded guilty to second degree murder in October, 1974. The incident occurred in July, 1973, when, according to Stephen, a young woman resident suffering from post-partum blues smothered her six-week old baby. Since the baby had already been buried in The Farm cemetery, Sheriff Carroll said that no one would have suspected anything illegal if a community member had not told him the mother had killed it. He called the TBI, the body was exhumed and an autopsy revealed that the baby had indeed been smothered. Sheriff Carroll said, "She told us that it was afflicted and she intended to kill it then she decided she wouldn't and commenced trying to revive it. She sent it to Maury County Hospital and it died." Stephen said, "She had a scruffy baby and thought something was wrong with it and there was nobody close enough to talk to her about it." After her arrest, the mother was taken to Central State Hospital in Nashville for observation. Judge Elmer Davies sentenced the woman to



prison, where she served four years of a ten-year sentence. Stephen said he would never forgive the judge as she needed psychological treatment instead of jail. He said that Farm voters voted against him in the next election.<sup>56</sup>

The statement that there was no one close enough to the mother to talk to her after the baby's birth suggests the conditions on The Farm brought about by the arrival of such large numbers. There was growing anonymity and the family closeness was being lost as early as 1974. In a place where one could be oneself and be loved as a fellow human being and find the closeness of family, there were many who were not readily accepted or assimilated into the "tribe."

The overwhelming growth also contributed to health and sanitation problems. Kim Trainor said that people came "in droves," and many refused to follow standard sanitation practices because they believed them to be "square" values. As a result she, her small baby and daughter, along with many others, had hepatitis.<sup>57</sup> For two years in a row the community suffered from sickness largely caused by overcrowded, substandard living conditions and careless sanitary habits.

Another problem which began here and grew in the following years was the emergence of a hierarchy. This development undermined the dream of a classless society to which all members would contribute to the common good and labor for the group as a whole. By 1977 an embryonic class

system was in existence. Elizabeth Barger said, "We say we don't but sometimes it happens. Human nature assumes that. We try to avoid it." Dez Figueira explained, "It happens organically. Some people are more energetic than others and naturally gravitate to positions of effectiveness." Jack Shields agreed.<sup>58</sup> These developments, along with the economic problems associated with the tremendous increase in numbers and the failed large-scale farming venture, caused some of the group to question the wisdom of admitting more members and beginning more ventures.

While problems on The Farm increased over the years, their ties to their neighbors grew stronger. By 1977, the neighbors had observed the settlers closely and decided that they were "up to no harm." Most from the surrounding communities had, by this time, accepted their presence among them and the general opinion seemed to be that although they were different, they were kind, gentle people who were willing to help their neighbors. All of those interviewed could tell at least one way in which they had assisted their family or friends. For instance, Carmen McClain Jones said a Farm resident named Robert, upon hearing of her mother's illness, brought her some soup. Although her mother, Minnie McClain, a resident of the West Fork community, did not care for the soup, she was gratified by his thoughtfulness and caring. Ms. Jones said that one of her mother's favorite

activities was to drive to The Farm to "see how the hippies' crop are doing" on Sunday afternoons.<sup>59</sup>

Helen Williams said Farm crews had repaired their house, brought them water on their water truck before they had a well, and treated her at their clinic. She said, "They've doctored on me and I've never had anybody be so nice to me. They come here to the house, the nurses has, and the doctor and doctored me here at the house. I've never had nobody do it before." All this, as well as their ambulance service, was provided free of charge to their neighbors. Gene Williams said that another thing he liked about them was the way they protected the wildlife.<sup>60</sup>

Forrest McClain said that as he and Dennis Whitwell became better acquainted with the folks on The Farm, a friendship and a sense of trust developed. In fact, this developed to the point that McClain and Whitwell allowed some of the residents to borrow a new tractor. McClain said that Whitwell possibly had an ulterior motive for this since he was running for constable and wanted their votes. When asked his opinion about why acceptance replaced the early hostility, McClain said their willingness to support themselves through hard work was a factor. He said the simple lifestyle on The Farm was much like that of the people who had inhabited the area for generations.<sup>61</sup>

One thing that did worry some local people, especially the politicians, was the growing Farm vote. Some feared that

Farm members, voting as a bloc, would control county politics. There were rumors that the FBI was investigating them to determine if they were trying to take control of the county politically as the Rajnesh had done in Oregon. As early as 1974, an article entitled, "Farm Commune's Vote Seen Swaying Lewis Elections," appeared in a Nashville newspaper. J. Howard Warf, chairman of the Lewis County Election Commission, was quoted as saying that he thought The Farm vote affected the outcome of elections, especially for sheriff and trustee. For example, returns showed Garlon Bennett defeating Kenneth Anderson for sheriff by 427 votes. The vote for Bennett in The Farm precinct was 426. Margaret Gaskin, Stephen's wife, said that there were only 371 registered voters from The Farm at the time. Although they did not wish to have undue influence, they did educate themselves concerning the issues. As to why they voted for specific candidates, she replied, "They're all friends of ours. We voted for them cause they've treated us very good in the past." T. C. Carroll got the Farm vote anytime he ran. When Carroll ran for judge in 1974, he received four hundred seventy-two votes from The Farm's precinct.<sup>62</sup>

Kim Trainor said that as the neighbors came to know them better there was acceptance and they helped each other. When the neighbors saw they could farm, build, and did not walk around "glassy-eyed" all the time, that was enough for them. Stephen explained their acceptance in this way, "We

are a pretty sane bunch. We don't put a lot of weird stuff on them and we be far-out. We're beatniks, and we're far out but we don't want to be far-out in any direction that hurts anybody."<sup>63</sup>

During this period, life on The Farm was evolving and ongoing. There was a constancy in some areas, most notably in a large group that continued to care for and look after each other. Changes were evident in other areas, such as their approach to farming and the way new members were processed. Already there was evidence that The Farm was by no means immune to the strains, distortions, and fissures that always affect the human condition.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kate Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," New York Times Magazine, May 1977, 74.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Jenkins, A Walk Across America (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1979), 216-17.

<sup>3</sup>David Brown, interview by author, 29 October 1989, Nashville, TN., tape recording.

<sup>4</sup>Dez Figueira, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>5</sup>Kathy Woodside, written interview by author, 31 January 1990, Corvallis, OR., written questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup>Kim Trainor, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>7</sup>Sue Castor, written interview by author, 25 January 1990, Norman, OK., written questionnaire.

<sup>8</sup>Mary Ellen Bowen, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>9</sup>Barbara Wallace, written interview by author, 10 February 1990, Cameron, ON., Canada, written questionnaire.

<sup>10</sup>Anthony Gaudio, written interview by author, 31 January 1990, Tallahassee, FL., written questionnaire.

<sup>11</sup>Brown interview; Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Joel Kachinsky, interview by author, 26 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>13</sup>Kachinsky interview; Jenkins, Walk Across America, 211.

<sup>14</sup>Traugot interview.

<sup>15</sup>The Farm, "The Farm," pamphlet, Summertown, TN., (n.d.).

<sup>16</sup>Tennessean, 22 October 1973; The Farm, Hey Beatnik! (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1974), 69.

<sup>17</sup>Lewis County, TN., Warranty Deed Book 50, (23 April 1973), 526.

<sup>18</sup>Jenkins, Walk Across America, 208-10.

<sup>19</sup>"NBC News," 12 August 1973; David Brill, "Down on The Farm," Tennessee Illustrated, January-February 1989, 32.

<sup>20</sup>Brown interview.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Trainor interview; Bowen interview; Wallace interview; Castor interview; Barger interview; Figueira interview.

<sup>23</sup>Kachinsky interview; Thomas Heikkala, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>24</sup>Jenkins, Walk Across America, 210; Kachinsky interview.

<sup>25</sup>Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," 83.

<sup>26</sup>Brown interview.

<sup>27</sup>Jenkins, Walk Across America, 208; Bowen interview; Figueira interview.

<sup>28</sup>Barger interview.

<sup>29</sup>Trainor interview; Castor interview; Wallace interview.

<sup>30</sup>Kachinsky interview; Traugot interview.

<sup>31</sup>Gaudio interview.

<sup>32</sup>Bowen interview; Figueira interview; Barger interview.

<sup>33</sup>Gaudio interview; James T. Baker, "Revisiting 'The Farm': From Commune to Suburb," Christian Century 104(21 October 1987):57; Castor interview; Bonnie Holsinger, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>34</sup>Gaskin interview.

- <sup>35</sup>Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," 83; Figueira interview.
- <sup>36</sup>Brown interview.
- <sup>37</sup>Figueira interview.
- <sup>38</sup>Brown interview.
- <sup>39</sup>Barger interview; Gaskin interview; Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," 81.
- <sup>40</sup>Trainor interview.
- <sup>41</sup>Brown interview.
- <sup>42</sup>"NBC News," 12 August 1973.
- <sup>43</sup>Jenkins, Walk Across America, 212.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., 211-12; Tennessean, 16 April 1974.
- <sup>45</sup>Ina May Gaskin, Spiritual Midwifery, 2d ed., (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1974), 15-18; Ibid., 15-18, 102-113, 272; Tennessean, 9 December 1975.
- <sup>46</sup>Figueira interview; "NBC News," 12 August 1973.
- <sup>47</sup>Heikkala interview; Trainor interview; Gaskin interview.
- <sup>48</sup>Jenkins, Walk Across America, 212-15.
- <sup>49</sup>Wenner, "How They Keep Them Down on The Farm," 80.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., 83.
- <sup>51</sup>Nashville Banner, 10 October 1973; David LeDoux, interview by author, 1 November 1990, Woodbury, TN.
- <sup>52</sup>Barger interview; Gaudio interview; John and Beverly Golden interview.
- <sup>53</sup>Tennessean, 1 March 1974.
- <sup>54</sup>Nashville Banner, 9 October 1973.
- <sup>55</sup>Tennessean, 4 March 1974; Gaskin interview.
- <sup>56</sup>Carroll interview; Gaskin interview.



<sup>57</sup>Trainor interview.

<sup>58</sup>Barger interview; Figueira interview; Shields interview.

<sup>59</sup>Carmen McClain Jones, interview by author, 21 May 1990, Nashville, TN.

<sup>60</sup>Helen and Gene Williams interview.

<sup>61</sup>Forrest McClain, interview by author, 21 April 1990, Lebanon, TN., notes.

<sup>62</sup>Nashville Banner, 7 August 1974; Carroll interview.

<sup>63</sup>Trainor interview; "NBC News," 12 August 1973.

CHAPTER V  
THE CRITICAL YEARS, 1978-1981

The years 1978-1981 were critical ones for The Farm. While continued growth, financial difficulties, and change had been experienced throughout the various stages of development, by this time, living conditions had so deteriorated that the whole enterprise was in jeopardy. Dissension over solutions ultimately resulted in a mass exodus of members. The major emphasis in this chapter will be on the mounting problems of the community.

The Farm population peaked somewhere between fourteen or fifteen hundred in the early 1980s, maintaining its position as the largest commune in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The commune also drew hordes of visitors, often as many as six thousand a year. Some who came during this time, John and Beverly Golden, Dale Evans, Frances DuCrest, and Arthur Seidner, became members. Dale Evans and Frances DuCrest continue to live there today. A look at their experiences may create an impression of this period.

Dale Evans did not come to The Farm until 1978 even though she had attended some of the Monday Night Classes in San Francisco. In the meantime, she had married, had a child who had died, and divorced her husband. Needing something to give her life meaning, Dale decided to visit The Farm. She

was attracted by the spiritual life, collective living, vegetarian diet, and the large number of small children. Upon seeing the conditions first hand, Dale said that she realized she would have to endure many hardships, but believed she could survive as long as she was not required to "kiss Stephen's feet." Emphasizing that she did not come as a student of Stephen's, she said that it was the sense of community that attracted her. When she joined, she signed a vow of poverty and gave her share of the equity in the farm she and her husband owned to The Farm. Later, when her parents died, she gave a twelve-thousand dollar inheritance to the community as well.<sup>2</sup>

After reading Stephen's books, Arthur Seidner felt drawn by what he perceived to be a "shared understanding of what life was all about." He came to The Farm in 1978, stayed for a year and a half, left, and then returned for another six months in 1981. John and Beverly Golden, employed by the United States Foreign Service in Zaire, were airlifted to The Farm in July, 1981, in order to take advantage of the midwife program. After their baby was born, they left The Farm in October, 1981, but returned for the birth of a second child in August, 1983.<sup>3</sup>

Frances DuCrest, a single mother of two children aged ten and fifteen, was a registered nurse and almost forty years old when she came to The Farm in 1980. After visiting The Farm, Frances decided to join because she needed the

spiritual aspect to replace the Catholicism she had given up. Also she wanted her children to grow up in a rural area in the event of economic collapse. Prior to becoming a member she attended "soakers" meetings where, she said, "Stephen looked you in the eye and talked to you awhile and figured you were authentic and that you would more or less fit in." She signed a vow of poverty and became a member.<sup>4</sup>

An important facet of communal life is the decision allocating work among the members. In an attempt to be fair and to prevent attachment to a particular task, the members of the Oneida community assigned jobs and each member rotated to a different job each year. Keith Melville, in his study of communes, found that many used sign-up lists for the general tasks. How jobs were allocated on The Farm varied. Women usually were not assigned specific tasks and could go to the strawboss and request a job or volunteer, but the personnel director assigned jobs to most men based on skill and demand for labor. Because it brought in the most money, many were assigned to the construction crew. And, too, a wide variety of jobs were available on the premises, which reflected the growing economic sophistication of The Farm. A partial listing of the types of work available include : photograph developing, book publishing, banking, cabinet-making, dental assisting, teaching foreign languages, clerical and legal work, supervising Farm businesses, and switchboard operation.<sup>5</sup>

The lack of money was a continuing problem on The Farm. By 1978, conditions necessitated the compromising of some of their original ideas in order to maintain economic solvency. When it became evident that they could not support the community through agriculture, they began to channel their efforts into creating business enterprises with the goal of profit maximization. For example, The Farm's \$170,000 Solar Electronics Company manufactured radiation detectors, called "Nuke Busters." These were designed by Mark Long and hailed as a showpiece of hippie ingenuity. For safer home births, they developed an ultrasound fetal heartbeat-monitoring device. Other money-making products were the eight-foot satellite dishes, Farm publications, and Farm Foods, which included tempeh, tofu, and a soymilk ice cream marked as "Ice Bean." On Twenty-First Avenue in Nashville they sold fresh fruits, vegetables, and bedding plants at "The Marketplace." Stephen explained that a business was established, "when someone ups and takes an interest and does it."<sup>6</sup> All profits were deposited in the community's treasury as is typical of collectives.

It is ironic that when they established the commune they deplored competition and the profit incentive of the business establishment. Now, in order to survive, they became profit-oriented entrepreneurs themselves. Participating in the free enterprise system as capitalists

compromised their idea of the "seamless life" and, their dream was tainted in the process of trying to preserve it.

In 1979, according to Stephen, the commune grossed \$1,500,000 from all their business ventures, but this was not enough. Financial conditions had reached such a critical phase that Joel Kachinsky, President of the Foundation, and the trustees, Michael O'Gorman and Bernard Cohen, mortgaged 795 acres of land as collateral for a \$103,000 loan from the Hohenwald Bank and Trust Company.<sup>7</sup>

Frances DuCrest said there was never enough money for all the things they needed. Although The Farm was still growing large amounts of food and canning much of the produce to be distributed in the winter, as the population grew, they could not produce enough food. Hence, by February, flour, soybeans, salt, yeast, and baking powder were rationed and the supply of sugar and oil was depleted. Dale Evans, who was the "bank lady" in the central office where all the revenue came in and all expenditures were made, gave more insight into the commune's financial struggle. Shortages of items that most people take for granted such as toothpaste, shampoo, and shoes were ever-present. In her experience, she said, everyone in the community was seriously lacking in some basic need but that it was different for each family. For instance, one family might have toilet tissue but no shampoo while the situation was reversed for another family.<sup>8</sup>

In 1978 Dale helped draft a budget, the first one they ever had. Preliminary figures showed that ten thousand dollars a month was needed to balance the budget, but revenue, fluctuating from two thousand to seven thousand dollars a month, fell short of the targeted amount. The average expenditures, per week, were: two thousand dollars for food, eleven hundred dollars for medical supplies, one thousand dollars for propane, and between six and seven hundred dollars for gasoline. Dale emphasized that these were basic items. Since expenditures exceeded revenue, the group had to either earn more money, reduce expenditures, or borrow to finance their deficit. The shortage meant "that people had only one pair of shoes and if they got wet, then they had to wear them wet; and when there wasn't enough money to buy toilet tissue, people had to get out the old Sears catalog and just make do." As "bank lady," Dale took individual requests from members for items they needed. Since there was never enough money to meet their needs, she learned to say no in a thousand ways. When asked how she made the decision as to who got what, Dale said that she personally knew a number of members who received "care packages" from their families. Thus, she was less likely to fulfill their request than those from families who received no outside help.<sup>9</sup>

In 1980, during the time that The Farm was experiencing severe economic difficulties, its international relief

organization, Plenty, was awarded the first Right Livelihood Award. This was a \$50,000 Swedish prize given for helping people in poor nations find practical solutions to their problems. The Farm also launched projects in Lesotho, Guatemala, and Bangladesh, through which they hoped to share the knowledge gained from their experiences with lesser developed countries. The group received national media attention for providing free, twenty-four hour ambulance service to the South Bronx, a poverty-stricken area with one of the highest crime rates in the country. A group of thirty-five members started the project in 1977 with two ambulances, two licensed paramedics, and ten emergency medical technicians. They had an average response time of seven minutes as compared to thirty to forty-five minutes for city ambulances. This project also included a training program which graduated 150 state-licensed emergency medical technicians.<sup>10</sup>

With growing numbers on The Farm, there was growing dissent. Ideally each member of a commune will internalize the group mores and subvert his individualism to the extent that there is no major area of dissent. But in case some individuals do not internalize the norms and threaten group unity by violating the agreements, the organization must have some means of dealing with deviant behavior. In the Oneida community the individual willingly surrendered to the group the right to chasten him through a method called "mutual



criticism." On The Farm, Dale Evans said there was a great deal of pressure to conform and be like everyone else. David Brown, himself a dissident, said there were always some "hard-core conservatives" who would intimidate others to get them to live up to the agreements but the most extreme measure was to expel those who did not conform to group standards or violated commune principles.<sup>11</sup>

David's account of his expulsion provides insight into how The Farm dealt with deviant opinions and actions. David admitted that he was bad-tempered, strongly opinionated, distrustful, and alienated because he concluded that most of the members were a "mindless, materialistic, cultish mob." He was constantly engaged in confrontations with the head of the farming crew, whom he believed was harassing him over trivial matters. After several near-violent incidents, The Residency Committee met to determine if David should be allowed to remain a member. Although they accused him of giving peyote to a disturbed girl who later "ran across the cornfield naked," he believed the real reason for the resentment against him was that he and his girlfriend, whose father was wealthy, left The Farm in 1979. After he returned, he felt that in addition to his personal transgressions, they blamed him for the loss of a valuable member whose father, he suspected, had made financial contributions to the organization. After two days of deliberation, the committee informed him that he must

leave, but if he would go on a six-month yoga and bring some tangible proof to show that he really wanted to be there, he could return. At the time David thought the members were narrow-minded and hypocritical in their intolerance for divergent beliefs, as "doing their own thing" was one of the primary reasons why they came to The Farm. Later he realized that there were also many good people with genuine ideals.<sup>12</sup>

During this period, residents became increasingly frustrated with crowded conditions in housing. Although there were positive benefits in living in multiple-family dwellings, many began to crave more privacy. In 1979, The Farm had approximately fifty houses, some sheltering as many as forty-five people. Although most had running water, electricity, and showers by this time, they still had out-houses. Everyone shared the kitchen and main living area but usually each family had its own room.<sup>13</sup>

A number of members spoke of the problems they encountered in these living conditions. When Sue Castor joined the community in 1977, she said she had "to loosen up about my material plane--what belonged to me and what I could cut loose of psychologically or physically." Dez Figueira said that in order to escape the tumult and din in the crowded households, she took long walks in the woods. She finally moved out of one house because she was unable to deal with the noise. Dale Evans said it was unsettling to share a house with thirty other people, fifteen of them children

under ten years of age, with the telephone constantly ringing and the television set blaring. John and Beverly Golden believed that living conditions were improving as many moved from tents to houses which had telephones and running water. But Jack and Billie Lou Shields said that living conditions had not improved because even though they continued to build more houses, they "crammed" more people into them. Frances DuCrest lived in a succession of shelters, moving every few weeks. She spoke of annoying problems such as being five feet tall and sharing a kitchen with tall women, and coping with other couples' undisciplined children.<sup>14</sup>

Living on The Farm required constant adjustment. Validating findings that communes tend to be inefficient because individual achievement is not stressed, Frances spoke of the time and energy that were wasted. For instance, it could take one hour to gather the tools needed to perform a simple task. Since, they never organized a delivery system, every household had to send someone, on foot, for supplies. Multiply these examples by every facet of their existence and one may estimate how pervasive waste and inefficiency were.<sup>15</sup>

Frances remembered that the commune was on the "downside of high energy" when she joined in 1980. Although they worked from early morning until late at night, sharing the work helped cement the bonds of familial relationships. The disadvantages paled in comparison to the satisfaction she experienced there. And though she realized the commune was

incomplete and imperfect and likely carried the seeds of its own demise, Frances said she was still impressed by what she found.<sup>16</sup>

There were changes in the religious climate. The Farm still claimed to be a spiritual community even though some said that they saw very few religious practices aside from the Sunday services. Others observed that religious practices had become less conservative and the services more political. When asked on a national television show in 1980, specifically what the group's religious beliefs were, Stephen replied, "We're flower children and closely associated with granola. . . . A religious awakening is happening all over the world right now and we are not a cult; we're part of a planetary sub-culture which is coming off over the whole world." When asked if he believed in one God and a hereafter, Stephen said that it was evident there was only one since God was the totality of everything, and as to a hereafter, "now is important." In his book, Mind At Play, Stephen wrote of his religious beliefs,

I think the real proper practice of religion is a balance between honoring the old juice and recognizing the incredible dedication of trying to pass something hand-to-hand for 2000 years . . . we must have native, home-grown Holiness of our own which comes from these hearts . . . which are as good as any hearts, any time, anywhere. . . . Jesus' church was never an exclusive social club. He said, 'Be ye fishers of men.' An open-gate policy.<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth Barger remembered that the community went through a period of being very dogmatic which she feared

would lead to abuse, oppression, and separation from God. She said, "The beam of Christ-consciousness that shows you the truth is so straight and narrow that you can get off it very easily and I think dogma can lead you off of that quicker than anything. You can get back on easier from anything than gross indulgencies of dogma."<sup>18</sup>

Despite problems in other aspects of life on The Farm, the midwifery program developed into a viable practice. It became one of The Farm's main attractions. The members opened an up-to-date clinic which included an infant intensive care facility equipped with incubators, bilirubin lights, and an oxygen unit. The facility was staffed by two medical doctors who were members of the commune and several midwives. No anesthetics were used for pain and the husbands played a vital role in the delivery. They were encouraged to massage their wives and kiss them during contractions, called "rushes," in order to increase secretion of hormones. This speeded up the birthing process. The Farm midwives, in 1979, pointed with pride to their record of only fifteen caesarean deliveries in a nearby hospital as compared to a rate of fifteen percent caesarean sections in the outside population. And among the 1,015 births, they had only fifteen fatalities. Ina May attributed the success rate to the fact that they did not charge for their services. Neither do they rely so extensively on modern technology. For instance, in a speech to medical students attending a seminar on rural

and community health at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Ina May said that doctors should return to "hands on" medicine instead of relying to such an extent on "sophisticated, tempermental equipment."<sup>19</sup>

Largely through the publication of their book, Spiritual Midwifery, the program's reputation spread across the nation. Thirteen percent of the 1150 women delivered by 1980 were from Germany, Austria, and New Zealand. John and Beverly Golden, who came from Zaire to The Farm in 1981 in order to take advantage of the birthing arrangements, claim that it was the best place in the country to have a baby at that time. Many pregnant single women from across the country continued to take advantage of The Farm's promise to deliver the baby free and keep it for them if they preferred as an alternative to abortion. As of 1979, only six mothers had left their babies there. Instead, a large percentage of the women chose to stay and rear their children on The Farm. Sue Garretson said a few expectant mothers from the surrounding area also used the commune's facilities. Since they only paid for supplies, it was more economical.<sup>20</sup>

Midwives on The Farm held a prestigious social position. Although all could aspire to such a high calling, only a few were chosen to be midwives. David Brown said his girlfriend left because she was not allowed to be a midwife because a requisite was that one must be married and have children. In speaking of their privileged position, Dale

Evans said that midwives did not have to take care of their children or do household chores. They, because of their calling, were believed by many to be more sensitive to marital relations. Thus, they often served as marriage counselors as well as midwives. Even though it was generally believed that everything they said was correct because they had a spiritual aura around them, Dale Evans said that not all their advice was good.<sup>21</sup>

Among the new buildings on The Farm was one of which they were especially proud, the modern, solar-heated, brick schoolhouse. This was the showplace of the community. In 1979, school officials from across the state, interested in saving energy and reducing operating costs, came to inspect the building. As a result of the tremendous influx of new people and the high birth rate on The Farm, the 210 students attended classes only half a day. During this time the curriculum requirements of the state were fulfilled. High school students were enrolled in vocational classes where they could learn a trade by working in one of the commune's businesses for the remainder of the school day. In addition to the state-required courses, the curriculum included several foreign languages, sign-language, The Farm history, and community values, with emphasis on cooperation rather than competition. The staff was composed of twelve certified teachers and several teachers' aides.<sup>22</sup>

A testament to the success of The Farm's educational program was the fact that many excelled in continuing their education and competing in the national job market. Mary Ellen Bowen said that many graduates of The Farm school have very successful careers. For example both her daughters live in New York City where one is comptroller of a Jewish school in upper Manhattan and the other is vice-president of a major New York production company. Mary Ellen attributes their success to the skills and self-confidence they learned on The Farm. She said that they were creative because of "having to make something out of nothing and are not afraid to get out there and try."<sup>23</sup>

As the feminist movement gained strength, Americans became more concerned with sexual discrimination. Melville found that many communes of the 1960s and 1970s designated certain jobs as "man's work" and "woman's work," ignoring the women's liberation controversy being waged in the larger society. David Brown and Dale Evans spoke of "women's work" and "men's work" on The Farm. David said that he would have preferred staying in one of the households and keeping the children rather than working on the farming crew. One episode, related by Dale, is very telling about sex roles at that time. Dale said that one day when they ran out of propane while cooking lunch, one of the women said that someone must get a man to change the tank. This would entail a thirty minute walk to the field, thirty minutes for him to



come to the house and another thirty minutes for him to walk back to his job. Dale, not wanting to waste so much time, got the wrench and changed the tank. She said, "The two other women were totally amazed. Then I actually relit the water heater and they were totally overwhelmed by my great expertise and knowledge. This was man's work, not woman's work." Women did not participate in business, except the "bank lady," or work on jobs that required physical strength. Neither did they drive cars. Many who came to The Farm when they were young did not know how to drive. The jobs categorized as "women's work" were telephone operators, cooking in the community kitchens, working at the Book Company, picking, planting, and processing the produce, working in the clinic, and tending to the children. In 1978, only one woman, a registered nurse, worked off The Farm.<sup>24</sup>

Although this may appear to be extremely sexist by today's standards, one cannot necessarily conclude that women were treated badly or assigned an inferior status. Women were respected because they bore the children. As mothers they occupied an exalted position. Actually there is evidence that women exerted a great deal of influence over their husbands by setting the agenda and pressuring the men into living up to the communal agreements. But regardless of how benevolent it sounds or practical it seems, any sincere feminist would be appalled by the term "women's work."

Community relations continued to be good during this time. The neighbors, by now, had learned that they could depend on the residents to help in a crisis. All the neighbors interviewed had positive comments about them and at least one episode to demonstrate their helpfulness. William Campbell said that the hippies built an addition to one of his sisters-in-law's house. When another sister-in-law and her husband were both ill, they cleaned their house. Tressie Black said her daughter-in-law carried her babies to The Farm clinic for medical treatment. Linda Tonguett said that when her father-in-law fell while building a tobacco barn, they took him to Maury County Hospital in their ambulance. T. C. Carroll told that they sent their water truck and a number of men to extinguish a forest fire behind his house. They provided their services free, but accepted donations to offset the cost of supplies.<sup>25</sup>

Being a good neighbor did not come about accidentally. The group made a conscious effort to live in harmony with their neighbors. As an example of this, Frances DuCrest, obviously braless, for propriety's sake, wore a loose shirt over her tee shirt when she went to Lawrenceburg. She said, "We make big efforts to be cool with neighbors, like it's hot to wear a shirt but I have just come from Lawrenceburg and I wore a shirt. We do little things to fit in."<sup>26</sup>

The commune was also sensitive to community relations concerning politics. Knowing the resentment and hostility

some communes engendered when they moved into areas and threatened political control, they treaded softly. They did this even though they had enough registered voters to control elections in their districts and to have a significant impact on county elections. Stephen said that they had seventy-five percent of the vote in their district and could have elected all three representatives. Instead, they chose to select only two, allowing the other residents to choose one to represent them "so you won't have to be represented by hippies if you don't want to." Stephen talked about the important role The Farm played in a leadership struggle that was going on in Lewis County politics. He said, "Democrats were trying to get out from under the old political boss who ran this county so we were in an already existing sort of Democratic revolutionary group that was trying to get rid of Mr. Warf. . . . So we have the gratitude and worked with the local Democrats on that."<sup>27</sup>

Candidates for county offices were cognizant of the political strength of the commune. T. C. Carroll said, "Well, I got about all their votes. They had about fourteen hundred people at one time, had six or seven hundred votes." Candidates running in state-wide elections also found The Farm voting bloc too potent to ignore. As evidence of this, a Nashville newspaper published a picture of State Senator Anna Belle Clement O'Brien, a Democratic candidate for

governor, and Stephen eating "ice bean" when she made a campaign stop at The Farm.<sup>28</sup>

William Campbell admired the group because they defended their rights, such as the right to serve on the jury. This right was recognized after a Lewis County man, convicted of incest and sentenced to a ninety-nine year term in the state penitentiary, was released from prison because the hippies were omitted from the county's jury list. After Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Martha Craig Daughtry ruled that "systematic exclusion of an identifiable group in the community" had violated the man's Fourteenth amendment rights, members from The Farm were called for jury duty.<sup>29</sup>

In The Farm, as in other communes, the excitement of building a new society compensated for the "loss of getting what you earn," during its first few years of existence.<sup>30</sup> While Farm members, predominantly young and idealistic, glorified deprivation in the early years, even then, they saw it as a transitional stage in the development of the commune. However, by the late 1970s, it became evident that the system was overloaded and conditions were not improving. Many members who had poured all their energy and resources into it for years, could detect no progress. In fact, they saw only retrogression. There were a host of problems: legal difficulties, inability to pay for medical care, accepting too many dependent people, feelings of alienation and inequality among members, some disgruntlement with the

leadership, and financial mismanagement. The time for "getting a handle on these problems" and finding solutions could not be delayed much longer if the commune were to survive.

In an event which is still celebrated annually as Ragweed Day, state and local law enforcement officials, with extensive media coverage, launched a massive midnight raid on The Farm on July 11, 1980. When two prospective members of The Farm reported that marijuana was being grown, Tennessee Highway Patrol helicopter pilot Mike Dover, whose extraordinary proficiency at identifying marijuana from the air had led to forty arrests and convictions, overflew the commune. He said he spotted the illegal weed growing in two large fields. A search warrant was issued because continued air surveillance showed a great deal of activity in the field that evening. The authorities began the search at midnight and it lasted until past dawn, but not one leaf of the plant was found. Instead, the officers found only ragweed growing in the melon patch. Stephen, claiming the raid violated their civil rights, tarnished their reputation, and damaged the commune crops, threatened to ask for a federal investigation if Attorney General Elmer Davies did not retract accusatory statements he had made. Davies said that he trusted the expertise of Mike Dover in identifying the weed, that it was evident that something had been pulled up, and he

was considering asking the governor, Lamar Alexander, for permission to conduct a soil analysis test.<sup>31</sup>

A report surfaced that an employee of WNGE, a Nashville television station, had "tipped them off" about the raid, giving them time to destroy the crop. And in fact, Lee Bailey, news director at WNGE, did confirm that a reporter had been suspended pending an investigation into the matter. Bailey insisted, however, that the station was not informed of the pending raid until 9:00 p.m. As the debate continued, Stephen said that they needed no "tipoff" since the helicopters had been flying over all afternoon, but that they could not possibly eradicate ten acres of marijuana in a few hours. Davies said with the large Farm population, it was possible.<sup>32</sup>

Nine years later, in talking about the raid, Stephen said that they did not grow "grass" on the property because they understood that their property could be seized if they were convicted of such an offense. Since they had paid for the property by "the sweat of our brow," they would never put it in jeopardy. He said,

Mike Dover was an old ex-Vietnam Huey. The thing is, the press said Dover has never missed. He's got forty in a row. I said he's going to have to call it 40-1 now, and they did. The truth is, the field will be spotted by someone on foot or a snitch, or some other way and they will send the helicopter and let the helicopter come and pretend they found it. . . . That's why they have such a great record. . . . I told Davies, 'you oughta teach that helicopter driver what marijuana looks like.' He didn't like that lip.<sup>33</sup>

So the debate goes on. Members of the commune maintain that it was only ragweed. Law enforcement officials contend that marijuana was growing, and the members had time to remove it from the field. There are rumors that they pulled the plants up, loaded them in the tank of a water truck, and drove by the raiding party. Be that as it may, the anniversary of the raid is still celebrated each year and members, former members, and neighbors gather at the swimming hole to celebrate.

Another problem the commune was never able to overcome was hospital care for its members. There was a lengthy struggle with Maury County Hospital in Columbia and Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville over unpaid bills. Joel Kachinsky said, "We'd write and say, 'we intend to pay but . . . ,' and that worked for several years." An agreement was reached with Maury County Hospital for Farm personnel to repay the debt by working on the grounds crew. But Vanderbilt refused to recognize the commune as a health care facility entitled to discount rates. Vanderbilt officials also refuted the commune's accusation that the hospital had not complied with the Hill-Burton Act. They demanded that The Farm post the original one thousand acres of land as collateral for the debt and sued five members for thirty-eight thousand dollars. After a period of three years, an accord was reached on the amount owed and how it was to be paid.<sup>34</sup>

Despite these problems, the main difficulty at The Farm continued to be the great influx of new people. By maintaining an open-gate policy, The Farm accepted almost anyone who came. Many of these, alcoholics, psychiatric patients, and single women with small children, drained the resources of the community. As the population swelled to fifteen hundred, resources were stretched to the breaking point. Albert Bates, a lawyer on The Farm, said "We were so poor that it was stupid. We were at the level of poverty that was so inefficient and people became dissatisfied with how untogether we were." Perhaps the memory of seeing small children "limping through their early years with small toes protruding from tattered sneakers" more than any other one thing allows one to visualize the extent of their poverty. So rather than cooperating, members had to compete for limited resources.<sup>35</sup>

The massive numbers also contributed to another serious problem which weakened the foundation of the structure and eroded the "one for all, all for one" aphorism. The commune, inundated by so many new members and visitors, had grown so large that it had lost its sense of cohesion. Many members felt forgotten and neglected. For instance, David Brown spoke of the regimentation and conformity required for such a large number to live together and the problems he had in trying to find a niche in the community. David said he felt lonely and isolated and,



Others felt sort of left out too. . . . I thought, 'You'all are just stupid; to hell with you.' I was impatient, intolerant. Nobody cared what I thought; they just cared about what I could produce based on their ideas. . . . Felt like sheep being led around. Found out they weren't who I thought or they had changed; become more middle class, craving things they had left in society, Coca Colas, margarine, sugar, Snicker bars. Reaction to having been so naive.<sup>36</sup>

Since most communes offer a more egalitarian social order, and emphasize the equality of individuals as a basic tenet, distinctions in position can seriously undermine the structure of the community. The tendency to form a social and political hierarchy, which was latent in the preceding period, had become full-blown by this time. Evidence of this is found in the comments of several members. For instance, Peter Else remembered that after an independent audit of The Farm's business practices in 1978, business leadership began to change. A power struggle developed between those who wanted to decentralize power and the power elite. The elite felt threatened and clung voraciously to their positions. Jack Shields also stated that although all were supposed to have a voice in the decision-making process, a hierarchy developed in the organization because some people felt that "they knew where it was at" more than others. Sue Castor observed that "it seemed the people who were the most articulate, educated, verbal had the most social position. We all wanted to be equal." Thomas Heikkala said, "People who were extroverts had more access to things than people who were shy and had less skills. Just because of the nature of

their work, they were able to get more 'chocolate cakes' than the rest of us." An unidentified resident, in a magazine interview, summarized the situation in this way, "Although we were equal, it turned out that some people were more equal than others."<sup>37</sup>

Another problem was a disenchantment with Stephen and his leadership. Although Stephen's importance had begun to diminish by the time of the suicides of Jim Jones's cult in Guyana, many reporters came to The Farm to interview him as the "leader of a cult." His explanation of the catastrophe was very simple and to the point: "They needed some acid down there real bad." Later, in considering the calamity and how Jim Jones was treated by his followers, he wrote that he, too, could have had "rose petals under his feet," but he always tried to live simply and resist that kind of practice.<sup>38</sup>

Some of the members spoke of how Stephen's role changed during the 1978-1981 time period. According to Bonnie Holsinger, Stephen's influence began to decrease after the first five years. With the passage of time, his authority deteriorated to the point where he was just another member of the community. Some saw this decline as part of the natural developmental process. Mary Ellen Bowen said that as the community grew, the members became committed to the land and the sanctity of the community rather than to one person. Michael Traugot, too, expressed the sentiment

that the community had to outgrow one person.<sup>39</sup> Also as the community population increased, individual members had less personal interaction with Stephen. They were not his disciples in the sense that the original members had been.

Other members attributed Stephen's loss of prestige to his hunger for power, erroneous decisions, and failure to deal realistically with problems. For instance, Peter Else wrote, "By the end of 1980, I was physically sick of Stephen's domination of peoples' minds and lives." He "exhibited the traits associated with divine right power--overbearing, egotistical, and authoritarian." Thomas Heikkala said, "The way power does corrupt individuals in situations, I think he was a victim of that. Sort of an ego trip, . . . as much as anything you want to do badly and put your whole life into. It's hard to separate your ego at that point, not as if you can just throw it away all of a sudden." Thomas believed that Stephen's good qualities were overtaxed by the overwhelming growth of the community. Although Jack Shields left before the commune reorganized, he wrote that he heard Stephen's "ego got too big and he didn't listen to others." He softened this statement by adding that it "must be difficult not to believe one has all the answers when one had as much power as Stephen did." Kathy Woodside wrote that allowing himself so much power over other peoples' lives was one reason for his decreasing role. And Arthur Seidner believed that although he did not claim to be a guru, that

"it is a very delicate role, that of a leader of men . . . and trying to be all things to all people brought him and The Farm difficulty."<sup>40</sup>

As members matured and had families of their own, they were no longer willing to be treated like children learning at Stephen's knee. Many of those who had been with him since 1970, felt that, by now, they had learned all that he had to teach them. Joel Kachinsky said that their relationship had reached a point where Stephen was insulting his intelligence. Joel asked, "Isn't there a point where you have taught the student, a good student, everything you know and the relationship changes and you become more like friends?" Perhaps the kindest way to explain the schism is to say that although Joel outgrew the relationship, Stephen was unable or unwilling to accept him as an equal.<sup>41</sup>

Both Frances DuCrest and Dale Evans, who had studied various philosophies and religions, concluded that Stephen's teachings were not original but a synthesis of already-established thought. They had learned much of what he taught through personal experience, meditation, and study. Frances said, "I don't think he made up anything wonderful out of whole cloth or got anymore of a revelation than lots of people in the sixties did. . . . After I met him, I realized that he was a very nice, middle-aged, ex-English teacher." Dale spoke at length about the nature of Stephen's leadership and the reasons for the erosion of his power. She pointed to

the fact that Stephen was a great deal older than most of the members, many of whom had joined the commune as high school or college drop-outs with no practical experience in living on their own and no history of intense thought about many ideas of a serious nature. Of course, untrained as they were, when Stephen professed profound ideas, many believed that Stephen must have a personal connection to God in order to possess such astounding knowledge. As a result, Dale said, they treated him in a God-like manner. Being human, he came to believe he was worthy of the adulation. The disillusionment set in when it became evident that many of the things he said and decisions he made were obviously flawed. Examples were the economic disaster which resulted from the failure of the large commercial farming venture, the speaking tours with the band which depleted The Farm treasury, and the unsuccessful early Plenty projects in the Caribbean which were launched with no research or planning. Many followers began to question how, if he was the omnipotent master, could he be so wrong? Dale said that when someone used the phrase, "the Emperor has no clothes," Stephen was greatly insulted. And, as could be expected, those who placed him highest on the pedestal, rejected him more violently than those who had always known that he was only a man.<sup>42</sup>

With the erosion of the original values of The Farm, a divergence of views became apparent. David Brown said that

those making the most money said, "To hell with all you freeloaders. I want the fruits of my labor, my own washing machine, my own flush toilet, and I'm tired of putting up with all you people." On the other hand, there were members who still hoped to salvage the dream. Their view, according to David was, "We need to stick together and stick to our ideals. This is a way communities all over the world can live. We need do this all together."<sup>43</sup>

Over the years problems had accumulated and lack of management, especially fiscal mismanagement, threatened the commune's survival. Many members became disgruntled and left. Yet other intelligent and talented members, disgusted with their impoverished condition, took hesitant steps to reorganize the community's decision-making process. They established a more formal governmental body, the Council of Elders. But this step was inadequate. It was only a matter of time until The Farm collapsed under the weight of over-population, mismanagement, and poverty.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ingrid Groller, "On 'The Farm' With the Flower Children's Kids," Parents, July 1979, 68.

<sup>2</sup>Dale Evans, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur Seidner, written interview by author, 29 January 1990, District Thana, Maharashtra, India, written questionnaire; John and Beverly Golden, written interview by author, 2 February 1990, Iraklion, Crete, written questionnaire.

<sup>4</sup>Frances DuCrest, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>5</sup>Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Communes: Creating and Managing the Collective Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 114-15; Keith Melville, Communes in the Counterculture: Origins, Theories, Styles of Life (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972), 129; Sue Castor, written interview by author, 25 January 1990, Norman, OK., written questionnaire; Barbara Wallace, written interview by author, 10 February 1990, Cameron, Ontario, Canada, written questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup>Diane Simmons, "Some Hippies Find That High-Tech Industry Can Keep Them Happy Down on The Farm," People, 31 May 1982, 96; Nashville Banner, 16 June 1980.

<sup>7</sup>"Communes: A More Businesslike Style," U.S. News & World Report, 3 March 1980, 67; Lewis County, TN., Deed of Trust Book 46, 17 September 1979, 305.

<sup>8</sup>DuCrest interview; Evans interview.

<sup>9</sup>Evans interview.

<sup>10</sup>Mother Earth News, "Stephen Gaskin and Plenty," May-June 1981, 50; "CBS News," 21 April 1981.

<sup>11</sup>Kanter, Communes, 117-20; Evans interview; David Brown, interview by author, 29 October 1989, Nashville, TN., tape recording.

<sup>12</sup>Brown interview.

<sup>13</sup>Groller, "On 'The Farm'," 70.

<sup>14</sup>Castor interview; Dez Figueira, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Evans interview; Golden interview; Jack and Billie Low Shields, written interview by author, 9 February 1990, Mt. Ranch, CA., written questionnaire; DuCrest interview.

<sup>15</sup>Kanter, Communes, 122; DuCrest interview.

<sup>16</sup>DuCrest interview.

<sup>17</sup>Golden interview; Peter Else, written interview by author, 2 February 1990, Tucson, AZ., written questionnaire; The Phil Donahue Show, 22 May 1980 (Videotape, Learning Resource Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.); Stephen Gaskin, Mind at Play (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1980), 57-65.

<sup>18</sup>Elizabeth Barger, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>19</sup>Groller, "On 'The Farm'," 70-77; Nashville Banner, 1 November 1982.

<sup>20</sup>The Phil Donahue Show; Golden interview; Groller, "On 'The Farm'," 70; Sue Garretson, interview by author, 8 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>21</sup>Brown interview; Evans interview.

<sup>22</sup>Groller, "On 'The Farm'," 71-73.

<sup>23</sup>Mary Ellen Bowen, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>24</sup>Melville, Communes in the Counterculture, 154; Brown interview; Evans interview.

<sup>25</sup>William Campbell, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Tressie Black, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Linda Tonguett, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., tape recording; T. C. Carroll, interview by author, 14 July 1990, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>26</sup>DuCrest interview.

<sup>27</sup>Gaskin, Mind at Play, 47; Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>28</sup>Carroll interview; Nashville Banner, 27 July 1982.



- <sup>29</sup>Campbell interview; Nashville Banner, 30 June 1980.
- <sup>30</sup>Kanter, Communes, 273.
- <sup>31</sup>Nashville Banner, 11 July 1980.
- <sup>32</sup>Tennessean, 13 July 1980.
- <sup>33</sup>Gaskin interview.
- <sup>34</sup>Joel Kachinsky, interview by author, 26 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.
- <sup>35</sup>David Brill, "Down on The Farm," Tennessee Illustrated, January-February 1989, 31-32.
- <sup>36</sup>Brown interview.
- <sup>37</sup>Kanter, Communes, 6; Else interview; Shields interview; Castor interview; Thomas Heikkala, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Brill, "Down on The Farm," 32.
- <sup>38</sup>Tennessean, 4 February 1979; Gaskin, Mind at Play, 46.
- <sup>39</sup>Bonnie Holsinger, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Bowen interview; Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.
- <sup>40</sup>Else interview; Heikkala interview; Shields interview; Kathy Woodside, written interview by author, 31 January 1990, Corvallis, OR., written questionnaire; Seidner interview.
- <sup>41</sup>Kachinsky interview.
- <sup>42</sup>DuCrest interview; Evans interview.
- <sup>43</sup>Brown interview.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHANGEOVER AND THE COOPERATIVE, 1982-1989

As solutions to their various problems were not found, conditions worsened, leading to the disintegration of the collective in 1983. The purpose of this chapter will be to examine the manner in which these problems led to the changeover to a cooperative.

As members were unable to come to terms with the problems mentioned in the last chapter, their situation became untenable. Some, taking a pragmatic attitude, wanted to make the changes and sacrifices necessary to save the collective. Others were indecisive, content to "drift along" hoping that some miraculous event, such as receiving a large inheritance, would save them. Others procrastinated because they realized it would take a herculean effort to solve the problems. Bonnie Holsinger recalled, "We knew how it was going and it would be a big struggle to try and change it, so we put up with it." After all, they had lived with the urgent problems for some years and the commune was still intact.<sup>1</sup>

Several of the members spoke of their feelings about the weaknesses, their causes, and how change was instituted. Most of those interviewed failed to mention the amount of "hype" or deception practiced by the group or to see it as a

big problem. The norm was to exaggerate accomplishments and ignore failures. This was beneficial in one way, for it served as a source of inspiration and encouragement during difficult times. But it was harmful in that, as many came to believe the myth, it interfered with their ability to deal realistically with problems. Frances DuCrest characterized this proclivity in this way:

We were trying to make everything we were doing sound a little bit bigger and better and finished and more real than it was. But you can't lose track of the truth and we got a little bit more into hype and bragging, like an 'alligator mouth and a hummingbird tail.' Not terribly but just enough to keep us confused and make truth and strength a little hard to come by. I'm not talking about out-and-out lies, just emphasis and stuff.

Frances believed the FBI weakened the underpinning of the commune. She was convinced that, because they suspected The Farm of being a subversive organization, they had infiltrated it in an effort to destabilize it. Stephen said he knew the FBI had "been through them a few times," but they had a "clean rap sheet."<sup>2</sup>

And too, the tribal atmosphere was undermined as people became suspicious of one another. Estrangement and enmity developed. As fierce competition for the limited amount of goods and for position increased, they no longer focused on taking care of each other. While speculating about the outcome of on-going negotiations, some made plans for the collapse of the commune while others pretended it was going to last forever. Many, fearing bankruptcy, began to leave because of the uncertainty. During the time immediately

preceding the change, Elizabeth Barger described the highly charged atmosphere as one of "heavy anger and despair and the whole gamut of hatred-love, absolutely will not, take my ball and go home . . . because that's the way people do it."

Frances DuCrest described the situation at the time of the change as "people pushing and shoving at the trough. Real hard."<sup>3</sup>

A problem of a more serious nature was lack of planning and organization. In her study of communes, Rosabeth Kanter states that "the problem of establishing a viable and satisfying system of power, authority and decision-making is among the most difficult for communal orders."<sup>4</sup> Her statement certainly applies to this group who, typically hippie, never had any formal, stable apparatus for governmental decision-making. Perhaps the main reason was that a managed, disciplined commune would be "anti-hippie" in principle. Instead, the machinery of government evolved. Whenever there was a catastrophe, they would form a committee to deal with it. Over the years there had been a succession of committees, all ineffective. Only the names changed. Among them were the Board of Managers, the Council of Elders, and finally, the Board of Directors. Each one served with great enthusiasm for a period of time until members lost interest and that committee became defunct. Later, when they again faced disaster, they would elect another committee.

The practice of admitting almost anyone who came was another weakness. Studies show that this characteristic is typical of hippie communes during the formative stage, but they close the gates and institute more stringent admission standards as they become overburdened with new members and visitors. The Farm did not move to limit admissions soon enough. Even though they could not provide a decent standard of living for the ones already there, the gate remained open and new members and visitors continued to pour in. With a resident population of twelve hundred and with three hundred visitors, the open-gate policy became the basis for much discontent. For example, those who drove to Nashville to work six days a week resented supporting the large number of "hangers-on." Many of them, tired of the impossibility of the struggle, decided to leave. Bonnie Holsinger said that Stephen did not want to close the gate although they were so poor that they were subsisting on two to four hundred dollars per person annually. Elizabeth Barger said that even before the changeover in 1983, they lost about a third of the members because they "were tired of carrying everybody." She said, "We tried to bring everybody in and that's what almost blew it away." By the early 1980s those who were working grew tired of living in abject poverty, especially when they saw no hope of improving conditions so long as many people did not contribute to the effort.<sup>5</sup>

Overcrowding was not the only problem. In the beginning the hippies had a dream that they could be an example of how to create a better way of life, but sometimes dreams cannot stand up to the stress of everyday reality. Many of the residents had been on The Farm since its beginning and had made more incredible sacrifices to preserve their ideals. Perhaps they would have been willing to give the dream more time to succeed had it not been for the children. While willing to make sacrifices themselves, they were unwilling to have their children suffer such deprivation. Dale Evans said the hard life was a character-building experience for the adults, but the deprivations became intolerable when they saw that their children lacked the basic necessities. Dale said, "The hard thing was, people didn't like to see their kids having to go through it." Joel Kachinsky was willing to live in poverty and dedicate his life to serving humanity but realized it was unfair to force this kind of life on his children. Joel said, "But as the money got thinner, I saw what my kids were missing and it really started to bother me. There was so much available to them in this country that I had cut them off from. I wasn't being fair." Frances DuCrest, too, thought one of the main problems was that although adults, while in the grips of religious fervor, were willing to temporarily forego the "trappings of a middle-class existence," they were reluctant to subject their children

to a life of poverty. Frances said, "We had a lot of people who felt very sentimentally heartsick that they had never been able to give their kids a whole candy bar or a box of eight crayons with new points. A lot of our old middle-class habits came back."<sup>6</sup>

Faith and trust in the leader is often the cement that bonds a commune together because the leader serves as the inspiration for the members and is the embodiment of their ideals. Thus, another reason for the failure of the commune was widespread disillusionment with Stephen. As noted in the preceding chapter, he had become overbearing and egotistical, and had made some unsound decisions such as refusing to close the gate and opposing plans for reorganization. This being the case, much of the preliminary planning for the changeover occurred while he was on a Plenty project in the Caribbean. According to an article in Tennessee Illustrated, when he returned, he vociferously opposed the changes and "in doing so allowed members to glimpse a different (Stephen) Gaskin, a man full of bitterness and anger." Stephen said that it was not so much that he opposed the reorganization, but that he was troubled by the precipitative nature of it. It occurred so quickly that many good, hard-working members were forced to move off The Farm because they did not have time to make other plans or find a job which would support them. He said the change was aimed at "shaking the freeloaders loose" even though he did not perceive them as being "freeloaders."<sup>7</sup>

The double burden of imminent economic collapse and loss of faith in their leader was so great for the commune to withstand. Problems with lack of resources and financial mismanagement had been such that their standard of living had never risen above the poverty level, but always before they had received inheritances and donations or borrowed money. By now, seemingly, with the enthusiasm for alternative communities a thing of the past, inheritances and contributions diminished. Their line of credit was exhausted. Michael Traugot said that since all the money went into a common treasury, a person simply requested money when needed. When asked if the request was fulfilled, Michael said, "Depending on what it was. After a while it was hard to get a pair of shoes--spread too thin, not well-managed." Mary Ellen Bowen said that they had always said, "Oh, we'll figure it out, something will come in. It worked that way for a number of years but, of course, we should have figured it wasn't going to last quite that way. We could see we were going to have to make some kind of drastic change to address the practicality of life." Stephen said one of the reasons the community had so much trouble was that someone would decide to start a business, get a checkbook, go to town and buy supplies. Consequently, in the absence of an established fiscal policy, there were dozen of checks written on The Farm account.<sup>8</sup>



Another factor contributing to their financial problems, according to Dale Evans, who was on the Council of Elders in 1983, was that of the twelve hundred people who lived there, only about one hundred actually earned wages and contributed their incomes. Others, who worked on The Farm, contributed but their donations were meager considering the many people who worked in these enterprises. Since the businesses were not getting enough capital investment to survive, it became necessary to borrow again. In November, 1982, a portion of their land was used as collateral for a \$60,000 loan from the Commerce Union Bank in Columbia.<sup>9</sup> By 1983, burdened with a debt in excess of \$300,000, The Farm had to make changes.

When the Oneida collective converted to a joint-stock company in 1880, not a day's work was lost. The industries continued operation as they had before, and an attempt was made to distribute ownership of the property fairly. Provisions were even made for the education of the children. Michael Traugot said that when the changeover came to The Farm that there was not time to do anything as refined as Oneida did. It was just, "if you can't contribute, you have to leave." Frances DuCrest hoped that they could change the economics of it and leave everything else alone. But when it became evident that the economy was so integrated with the commune's existence that it was impossible to reorganize the economy without changing the whole structure, she knew it

was not going to be fair. She said, "There's no way because there wasn't there wasn't enough pie to cut everyone a full piece. It had been going on faith and inspiration, and when you take those out, what was left wasn't a whole lot." She spoke of having to go off The Farm to nurse at the same time they closed the school. Thus, she and her daughters were disconnected from the negotiations, as they only "passed through" on their way to and from work and school.<sup>10</sup>

Knowing that change was mandatory, the members elected yet another committee, this one a nine-member Board of Directors. The board asked all able-bodied adults to work outside the community and contribute \$150 per week. Some responded to this appeal and found revenue-producing jobs, but many made lame excuses to stay on The Farm. Meanwhile the directors negotiated with the banks to stave off bankruptcy. Michael Traugot said that in the process of working out things with the banks, those in charge assumed the corporate mindset and "it took away something from it. In a way, we came here to get away from that sort of thing."<sup>11</sup>

It was the Board of Directors that decided to reorganize. Frances DuCrest said that once the board realized they could be sued by creditors for allowing money borrowed to start business to be spent on "exciting things like pinto beans, oats, peanut butter, and soy sauce," they instituted the change. The board met in July and issued a

"ninety-day threat." Because many refused to find jobs off The Farm when previously asked, the board decided, in September, that the only way to get people to take the situation seriously was to make people responsible for their own livelihood. Believing that personal incentive was the only thing that was going to get people to reassess their priorities, the board officially announced in October that in a month, the collective would become a cooperative. Frances DuCrest said a boy on a bicycle delivered a paper to her home which informed her that as of the next Friday, the collective would cease to exist and everyone would have to be self-supporting.<sup>12</sup>

After the change, another third of the population left. People decided for themselves if they would stay or leave. If they wanted to stay in a cooperative and could support themselves, they could. Because Lewis County is one of the poorer counties in Tennessee, many had to leave the area to find employment. Michael Traugot, who had previously worked on The Farm, found employment in a trailer factory. He said other workers could not understand why someone with a degree from Harvard was working there. Others left because, on principle, they refused to live in a place that "wasn't completely spiritual with everyone sharing exactly." A few were just tired of the struggle and wanted to get on with their lives as did John and Beverly Golden. They wrote, "We

saw The Farm as a school. We graduated." After the change, only about 250 residents remained.<sup>13</sup>

To reflect the change in organization, the charter was altered in September, 1983. By a two-thirds vote of the membership, Amendments I and II of the 1972 charter were repealed. A third amendment was added which provided that "upon dissolution or final liquidation, the assets of The Foundation shall be distributed to its members." However, the cooperative experienced some problems in dealing with former members. For example when trustees Peter Hoyt and Earlynn McIntyre left The Farm in 1984, they refused to resign or sign warranty deeds transferring all "right, title, claim and interest to the trustees of the church." In two separate instruments entitled Removal of Trustees and Appointment of Substitute Trustees, dated April 4, 1986, these two former trustees were removed by a two-thirds vote of the membership. Leslie Hunt and Michael Lee were named as trustees, with a third one to be elected by the membership.<sup>14</sup>

But the members had to deal with the changed situation, not only legally and economically, but also spiritually and psychologically. They asked themselves: "Was it a total failure? Were their ideas in error all along? Had they sacrificed the best years of their lives for nothing? Mary Ellen Bowen says that it took some time to realize that they were not wrong but that "it's just growth and development and

evolution of the thing and we didn't have to feel so guilty. Looking back, it makes sense. It's just change, that's all." Michael Traugot said that he believes the ideas were and still are right, but "we as individuals couldn't live up to them. Take a bunch of Americans raised to be competitive, to own your own home and take care of your family. We tried to be like a tribe welded together for a year or two. It was hard to undo people's unconditioning." Joel Kachinsky realized that it was going to take more than his lifetime, and perhaps even hundreds of years, for their ideals to be realized. Joel said, "I still have some beliefs and ideals and personally I have had to compromise some of those ideals. I believe that mankind can have a cooperative, non-violent society to the point that he realizes war is obsolete and gives up war." He then spoke of Buckminster Fuller and his philosophy, and sorrowfully added this caveat, "I don't have ultimate faith that man is going to make it and we could destroy ourselves and the next ten to twenty years may decide."<sup>15</sup>

The legal status of the Farm remains unsettled. After the changeover members had to confront new problems, such as implementing a budget, deciding who owned what, and determining the status of former members. The annual budget is decided at town meetings in which all residents may participate. Each adult must pay fees of \$110 per month to pay for road maintenance, health services, water. Because

it is no longer designated a monastery, property taxes must be paid. The land and houses are still owned by The Foundation. However, if members move from a house, they are allowed to "sell" it for the amount of the improvements they made. Because individuals have paid for the upkeep on their houses for a number of years now, most of the equity belongs to individuals; however, there are no deeds yet.<sup>16</sup>

Since 1983, Farm members have attempted to establish a land trust under which individuals could own the houses and have a long-term lease on the land. One factor delaying the conversion to a land trust is that the Internal Revenue Service has not issued an opinion on their status since the organizational change. Another factor delaying resolution of this issue is that some wish to preserve the nature of the group effort by keeping the land out of private ownership. Michael Traugot said, "Well, we're not going to divide it up cause then it would be too easy for people to get hold of shares; but it can't totally be like some club; you gotta feel like you're secure here. . . . We have had meetings for three years but haven't reached a decision, just discussed options."<sup>17</sup>

The affairs of The Farm are now in the hands of a seven-member Board of Directors and a Membership Committee. Members believe these are needed to manage the business aspect. Meetings of these groups as well as town meetings are open to all. However, Mary Ellen Bowen said that their

responsibilities were minimal since "no one wants to be governed in particular, but we need committees to handle various business because not everyone can do everything."<sup>18</sup>

The status of former members must also be addressed. Are those who contributed their labor and sacrificed all their material possessions also owners? Dale Evans believes they are not "because they are no longer members." Although she admitted this is a controversial issue, she said that when one joined the community, he signed a vow of poverty and when he left, he left it all behind. Joel Kachinsky said that, in his opinion, The Farm was still home to the four thousand people who came and their children. If they wanted to return and could support themselves, they were welcome. If a large number decided to move back, he said they would consider buying more land. Some have returned. Thomas Heikkala and his wife, having moved away because of their child's health problems, returned in 1988. Dez Figueira, in 1989, petitioned the membership committee for permission to return to The Farm to live for six months each year.<sup>19</sup>

In order to live on The Farm today, one must request permission from the membership committee, which meets when the need arises. This committee decides who is going to live there and if those living there are fulfilling their obligation. If potential members reach an agreement with the committee and decide to live there, they may move into a house and pay the former residents or The Foundation for the

improvements made on it. Some of the last families to move into the community built their own houses or brought in mobile homes. In 1988, one new family moved to the community. In 1989, the McNews, a business consultant and his wife, moved there to raise quarter horses. Stephen said the McNews met with the membership committee, talked to a few people, and "made their deal and just hauled up a trailer and put in a septic tank, and built a barn and fences, and set up shop." Now the community appeals more to settled families than it does to young, single people because there is not a great deal of play and excitement. Most are busy earning a living.<sup>20</sup>

How has life on The Farm changed in the years since 1983? Teresa Rizzo, a teenager who was born on a connecting farm in Wisconsin and now lives in Melbourne, Florida, spoke of changes in conditions since her family left in 1984. She said, "It used to be that everything was free; now it costs a lot of money to live here. They had money problems and things changed. It was like one big family here. Everyone knew everybody and they cared about each other." James T. Baker, a history professor at Western Kentucky University, who had visited the commune in 1974, observed many changes when he returned in 1987. He wrote that instead of a throng of hippies meeting him at the gatehouse, there was only a single worker on duty and "there were no multitudes of hippies wandering the fields, no tents for temporary housing



and no hundreds of hungry mouths to feed." Instead, he found a stable community of 230 ambitious people working mainly at off The Farm jobs and bent on making a profit. He described The Farm as "merely a post-hippie suburb."<sup>21</sup>

The standard of living has improved. The average per capita income rose from four hundred dollars in 1984, to two thousand dollars in 1989. Now families live in single-family houses, and almost all own or have access to the trappings of middle-class America--computers, satellite dishes, television sets, video cassette recorders, and cars. Some of the members told of "selling out" their idealism for materialistic gains. Bonnie Holsinger said that after the change to a cooperative, many were willing to compromise the basic ideals to a greater degree than she was. She said, "We're in a reactionary phase from when we were a sort of forced communal. After the change folks went rapidly in whatever direction they wanted to go. . . . We've succumbed to the paranoia generated by a system based on everybody out for themselves rather than looking out for each other." In other words, they were succumbing to the societal flaws that they aimed to change when they came in 1971. However, she observed that with the passage of time, some realized that earning a great deal of money and watching movies all the time did not make them happy. "Now people are starting to look for what are we doing here and what is community all about," she said. Others also perceived that the members

were returning to thoughts of their original purpose. Mary Ellen Bowen said that bonding still held the community together even though they no longer lived communally. They all know each other and must have shared the triumphs and sorrows through the years. As Frances DuCrest said, "They've all seen me in my psychic underwear. If I need to have a tantrum, no big deal." One ray of hope is that the children of The Farm will return there to live and raise their families. Many see this as a validation of their dream and believe that, if this happens, all the years of struggle will have been worth the sacrifices they made. Frances DuCrest pointed out that these children are "communal at heart." Mary Ellen Bowen said that the only way to get all the way through the healing process is "when we're all dead because the kids don't cop to it and they're friends, and tired of adults having hurt feelings."<sup>22</sup>

There is a vital social life. This includes such activities as: working together in the school and Farm businesses, visiting in each other's homes with potluck meals, hoeing the tomatoes they raise as a cooperative, meeting at the swimming hole, stopping at the Gatehouse to sit on the porch with Thomas and saving as neighbors travel in and out, and participating in the biggest event of all, the Ragweed Day celebration. Some have good friends who live in neighboring communities as well.<sup>23</sup>

Now that most of its debts are paid off, the community seems to be economically sound. Dale Evans said that The Farm now looks like a secure place to live for the rest of their lives. She would like to see some of the former members return so there would be more diversity, economic opportunity, and social life. Although half the adults are employed off The Farm, there is a wide variety of enterprises in the community which furnish employment opportunities. Some are privately owned while others are owned, at least partially, by The Foundation. A Farm directory lists twenty-one businesses located on the premises. Some, like the Farm Building Company, hire laborers from the surrounding area. Among the businesses are: Farm Excavating Company, Dye Works, Farm School, Farm Store, Nashville Satellite, One World Trading, Plenty USA, Electronics Company, Tempeh Lab, and the Soy Dairy. Plenty USA is a separate corporation as is the Book Publishing Company, whose stock is owned collectively by the Farm Foundation. The Foundation owns forty-nine percent of the Electronics Company. Two lawyers, Joel Kachinsky and Albert Bates, have law practices. Albert is the leader of the Natural Rights Center which is concerned with alternative energy sources and ecology. There is a clinic which is under the supervision of Dr. Charles Ball of Mt. Pleasant, who also serves as the midwife back-up. Since 1986, Michael Traugot has been co-ordinator in the national office of the National Coalition of Alternative Community

Schools, located in the Farm School. Mary Ellen Bowen, who is Vice President of the organization, edits its newsletter. Stephen and Ina May Gaskin publish The Birth Gazette, a midwifery magazine which is printed on The Farm.<sup>24</sup>

Whether or not The Farm is still a spiritual community is also a matter for debate. It has been several years since they all gathered on Sunday morning for one of Stephen's services. Instead, today, worship is an individual matter--some have family devotion or meet in small groups; others attend churches in neighboring towns. Although twenty-five or thirty of the residents still gather on Easter morning for meditation at sunrise, Stephen no longer attends. He said that though he has not conducted services recently, this may be only a sabbatical. He added that now he just wants to be with his children on Sunday morning, and "watching Charles Kuralt is religious enough for me." Kim Trainor said she still regards it as a spiritual community because "we still believe that life is precious and we're all part of the goodness of life."<sup>25</sup>

When the school was forced to close during the years immediately preceding and following the changeover, Farm children were enrolled in the Hohenwald or Summertown schools. After conditions became more settled, the school reopened. By 1989, the K-12 enrollment was eighty, with twenty-five of these being high school students. Now families are required to pay a tuition of thirty dollars

per week per child for the first two children and fifteen dollars per week for each additional child attending from the same family. As parents were allowed to pay the tuition through work exchange, there is a great deal of parental involvement. Many of the students also work in the school or in Farm industries to pay tuition. Frequently older students help teach the younger ones, and school personnel see this as an advantage to both groups.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps it would be interesting to compare certain aspects of The Farm's educational system to that of the public systems. Mary Ellen Bowen, director of The Farm high school, said some of The Farm teachers have college degrees and Tennessee teacher certification. Even certified teachers are trained by the apprentice system, because they believe that experimental orientation of teaching is the best way to learn . . . and the most important thing is a heart-felt commitment to want to do it, a desire to learn, and some background to work with." In the Tennessee public schools, teachers are not only required to be certified but must apprentice under an experienced teacher as well. Because their students switch back and forth between the Farm school and the public schools, The Farm school curriculum is designed to meet basic Tennessee requirements. However, they require twenty-four credits for graduation while Tennessee public schools require only twenty and a half. According to Mary Ellen, The Farm school provides more enrichment

activities, but their students do not have the opportunity to participate in many of the clubs and sports activities offered by the public schools which may also be considered enrichment. Both systems provide special education for the slow learner and the advanced students. Bonnie Holsinger said that Farm school students have more input into school policy, particularly in the area of the disciplinary policy, which forbids corporal punishment. And since there is no janitorial service, Farm students also have an active role in cleaning and maintaining the facilities. Mary Ellen said that Farm students' test scores are ten points above the national average and twenty points over the Tennessee average on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). She attributes Farm students' higher scores to the low student-teacher ratio and the number of well-educated residents in the community who teach special classes in their area of expertise. Without question, The Farm school does have the advantage of more parental involvement and a lower pupil-teacher ratio. Another advantage is that its school population comes from a more homogeneous group occupying a very small geographical area, so there is a close relationship between the school and the students' family.<sup>27</sup>

Two Farm residents, one a student and the other a parent, who have had experience with both school systems made the following comparisons. Jessica Rijoff, a fifteen-year old who has lived on The Farm all her life, has attended

area public schools as well as The Farm school. She said that when she went to public school, the other students treated her badly because she was different. She believes that the students in Summertown and Hohenwald have not had the advantage of the wide variety of experiences available on The Farm. Frances DuCrest said that her younger daughter did well when she attended Lewis County High School in Hohenwald. Although she found the public school education "spotty," she found education in The Farm school "spotty" as well.<sup>28</sup>

One of the controversies in public education now is whether and when sex education is the responsibility of the schools. When asked how this issue was dealt with in The Farm school, Michael Traugot, Chairman of the Social Studies Department, said that they taught sex education in junior and senior high school. Subject matter includes how one becomes pregnant or prevents pregnancy, body consciousness, stereotypes, sexuality, and emotions. Michael said they openly talk about sex because "they're going to find out about sex from you giving the whole story, or from half-truths. Many are afraid of sex education because they think it is, 'here's your condoms, now go do it.'" Pointing out that young people are exposed to sex anyway since it saturates our culture, especially in advertising, music, and the movies, and because of the maturation process, Michael believes that it is imperative for parents and teachers to "get there first with the best."<sup>29</sup>

The Farm School, since 1985, has also been the site for the "Kids to The Country" camp, which aims to "promote the growth of relationships and understanding among all children," and to provide the opportunity for inner-city children to live in a rural setting for two weeks in the summer. The program, sponsored by Plenty USA and The Farm Alternative School, is funded by donations from churches, businesses, and individuals. The cost of the program is \$225.00 per week per child. The children stay with Farm families and participate in activities such as horseback riding, nature study, swimming, arts and crafts, and computer training. In July, 1989 interviews with five of the children attending the camp, the unanimous opinion was that they liked horseback riding best and tufu least.<sup>30</sup>

Seldom have communes which have a charismatic leader survived after deposing their leader. Of course, The Farm did not continue as a collective but thirty of the original settlers and almost two hundred others are still there, as are Ina May and Stephen Gaskin. When asked about Stephen's role on The Farm today, those interviewed replied that he is just another member of the community. Stephen describes his position as that of "citizen, attractive nuisance and I'm a hippie priest which is not relevant to anyone except someone who needs a hippie priest." When not performing as a hippie priest, Stephen serves as a general manager of Birth Gazette, keeper of the home and children when Ina May is called for



midwifery duties, working on a novel entitled Violet the Frog Woman, cutting firewood, and fixing old cars. He has never been elected to the Board of Directors but did serve one term on the Membership Committee a few years ago. Politically he is aligned with the Democrats because he realizes that the Democratic Party is the only party with a chance of defeating the Republicans. He, along with others on The Farm, are strong supporters of Senator Albert Gore, Jr., who as a young reporter for the Tennessean covered Farm news.

When asked to identify his best characteristic and his worst one, Stephen responded that they were the same--his stubbornness. For instance, he said it has been useful to him but such "a hassle" to others that they probably see it as his worst quality. He said, "I've been pushed to the wall many times and I still don't get mean . . . that makes it so I can move in heavy situations with confidence. . . . Also, I'm here to play the long game. If I don't win in Game One or Game Two, I'm willing to wait for Game Forty-five or however long it takes. A lot of people won't."<sup>31</sup>

Stephen had changed as the times changed. It seemed incongruous that the hippie priest who had been so critical of technology in 1969, now proudly demonstrated his proficiency on a Macintosh computer. His two sons watched a large-screen television while his wife typed a magazine article on a lap-top computer. Later, when commenting on the lack of stylishness of his thinning braid, Stephen

laughingly told that his mother had said, "Stevie, they're not in style anymore; and I said, 'They are where I come from.'" He talked at length about the purpose of The Farm, the outstanding events, its history, and his hope for the future. At times, as he, with twinkling eyes and a chuckle, related episode after episode characterizing a better, happier time, one could feel the excitement and glimpse traces of the powerful charisma he must have had in the late sixties and early seventies. At other times one could sense his deep sorrow through the sadness in his eyes as he, seemingly experiencing the shock of the failure of his dream for the first time, spoke of the changes. David Brill quoted Stephen as saying, "I watched the reorganization like a parent might watch teenagers who think they've got it all scooped out. I didn't want to rock the boat because I was interested in the long-term survival of The Farm. I said I'd go along with this stuff because I didn't want to start a fight." In 1989, Stephen said that he was interested in following his own intellectual and spiritual path and had never really wanted to run an enterprise like The Farm because it was too much responsibility for one person. He said, "So I'm not here saying, 'Gee, I wish I still ran The Farm' because it's about time they grow up and run it and take care of themselves and let me go on about my business."<sup>32</sup>

In the aftermath of the change, members experienced a wide variety of feelings. Even though the shortages and overcrowded conditions had made life difficult, most thought that the dissension and suspicion prior to and just after the change were the worst time. Some were naive in thinking that they could change just the organization, and that other relationships would remain the same. They were not prepared for the bitterness which accompanied the change, when there were not enough jobs for all who wanted to stay. For some it was necessary to learn the basics of personal finance because, as adults, they had never had a bank account, written a check, or been in charge of their own finances. And because they had taken vows of poverty and had no money of their own, many were forced to take out personal loans in order to stay there. For instance, Stephen and Ina May borrowed \$8,000 to begin publishing their magazine. Others, like Dale Evans, received financial aid from their families. Because Dale's mother had not wanted her money to go to the commune when she died, she left Dale's share with her sister for safekeeping until Dale could have it. So when the change came, Dale had the rest of her inheritance to cushion the transition.<sup>33</sup>

Of the adults living on The Farm who were interviewed, all said they planned to continue living there, but most expressed a desire to travel. All said that they consider The Farm home since they have lived there longer

than they ever lived anywhere else, and even though they still do not speak with a soft Southern drawl, they call themselves Tennesseans now. Most felt that the way they chose to live their lives has made them smarter, richer, and more practical as well as making the world a little better. A few said they sometimes considered the choices they made and wonder what would have happened if they had journeyed down "the road not taken." In this respect, perhaps, they differ little from other middle-aged adults.

In 1989, the population was composed of ninety-six adults and one hundred fifteen children. Only about thirty of the original settlers remain.<sup>34</sup> The most visible differences since the change are the flat empty fields, a few rundown structures, deserted and in various states of disrepair, and the quietness of the place.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bonnie Holsinger, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>2</sup>Frances DuCrest, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>3</sup>Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Elizabeth Barger, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; DuCrest interview.

<sup>4</sup>Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Communes: Creating and Managing the Collective Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 143.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 22; Holsinger interview; Barger interview.

<sup>6</sup>Dale Evans, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Joel Kachinsky, interview by author, 26 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; DuCrest interview.

<sup>7</sup>David Brill, "Down on The Farm," Tennessee Illustrated, January-February 1989, 32; Gaskin interview.

<sup>8</sup>Traugot interview; Mary Ellen Bowen, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Gaskin interview.

<sup>9</sup>Evans interview; Lewis County, TN., Warranty Deed Book A-22, 24 November 1982, 369.

<sup>10</sup>Allan Estlake, The Oneida Community (London: George Redway, 1900), 15; Traugot interview; DuCrest interview.

<sup>11</sup>Traugot interview.

<sup>12</sup>DuCrest interview; Evans interview; DuCrest interview.

<sup>13</sup>Traugot interview; Barger interview; John and Beverly Golden, written interview by author, 2 February 1990, Iraklion, Crete, written questionnaire.

<sup>14</sup>State of Tennessee, Secretary of State. Amendment of the Charter of The Foundation, (1983); Lewis County, TN., Warranty Deed Book A-41, 4 April 1988, 746.

- <sup>15</sup>Bowen interview; Traugot interview; Kachinsky interview.
- <sup>16</sup>Thomas Heikkala, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.
- <sup>17</sup>Kachinsky interview; Traugot interview.
- <sup>18</sup>Bowen interview.
- <sup>19</sup>Evans interview; Kachinsky interview; Dez Figueira, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.
- <sup>20</sup>Holsinger interview; Gaskin interview.
- <sup>21</sup>Teresa Rizzo, interview by author, 8 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; James T. Baker, "Revisiting 'The Farm': From Commune to Suburb," Christian Century, 21 October 1987, 918.
- <sup>22</sup>Keith L. Thomas, "The Farm Has Changed With the Times," Atlanta Journal-Atlanta Constitution, 23 April 1989; Holsinger interview; Bowen interview; DuCrest interview; Bowen interview.
- <sup>23</sup>Evans interview.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid.; Traugot interview; Gaskin interview.
- <sup>25</sup>Bowen interview; Gaskin interview; Kim Trainor, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.
- <sup>26</sup>Bowen interview.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., Holsinger interview.
- <sup>28</sup>Jessica Rijhoff, interview by author, 8 July 1989, Summertown, TN., notes; DuCrest interview.
- <sup>29</sup>Traugot interview.
- <sup>30</sup>Bowen interview; James O'Field, Jimmy O'Field, Angel Mixon, Michael Mixon, and Shana McRae Suarez, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.
- <sup>31</sup>Gaskin interview.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.; Brill, "Down on The Farm," 33; Gaskin interview.

<sup>33</sup>Gaskin interview; Evans interview.

<sup>34</sup>Heikkala interview.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

The flourishing of The Farm and other communes represented the culmination of a social phenomenon which was sweeping America in the late 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. Its decline or change is a reflection of the late 1970s and 1980s. Even in its isolation, it could not escape the influence of society at large. Those of us who lived through this era are aware of the changes which occurred in the American culture from the early 1960s to the 1980s--greater concern for the environment and the use of the earth's resources, a more informal way of being in dress and social intercourse, a renewed emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual, concern for the poor, anti-militarism, anti-technocracy, anti-establishment, a nutritional revolution, and great strides in the areas of civil rights. And those who were not alive during this time will read about the developments in historical and cultural documents and experience the effects of those changes in their daily lives. This concluding chapter will focus on the impact the community had on members and the society at large, and consider the reasons for its failure as a collective. Finally, an attempt will be made to answer the question, "Even though The Farm is no longer



a commune, can it still be called a success or must it admit failure?"

The changeover threw some into a period of grief. Depression and mourning followed. For it was a death, the death of a dream that many had sacrificed years of their lives to achieve. Louise Caulfield, the managing editor of Farm Net News, expressed this sentiment in an editorial. She wrote, "Those who still inhabit the land are fortunate in that they will probably never know the grief and sense of loss that comes with being rendered homeless. That memory, for me is as real as any I have of the Farm. The loss of friends, of community, and of dreams are legitimate objects of grief."<sup>1</sup>

The adage, "time heals all wounds," seems to be an applicable concept since the shock and hurt feelings resulting from the changeover and its aftermath are only now ameliorated to the point that some members are capable of delving into the real reasons for events of that time. Some think that a dialogue concerning the changeover could be helpful now in relieving tensions and promoting healing. They, themselves, want to understand what went awry both for personal reasons and in order to leave a record for future groups who attempt to create an alternative society. A letter in the Farm Net News from former Farm members, Timothy and Tana Nobles who now live in Austin, Texas, supports this position. Believing that enough time has passed that

discussion would now be more healing than devisive, the queries they present to the membership are:

What really did happen to us in the hot and heavy years of The Farm's expansion and contraction? Why didn't we achieve a tribal utopian community that could support all of us that wanted to be there? To what extent were we shafted by the economic structure and the prejudices of the greater society, and to what extent did we do ourselves in?<sup>2</sup> What did we do right and what were our mistakes?

Did The Farm affect history? Did it change things? According to the members, yes and no. Some believe it has already changed the world and others say that it is too soon to tell. There is a wide range of opinions. On one hand, Dez Figueira believes that the commune, as the material plane manifestation of the spiritual phenomenon which was sweeping the planet in the 1960s, changed the world. On the other hand, Dale Evans believes that it did not have the influence that many people there would like to think it had, and that in a hundred years perhaps it will be only "one of those blips in pop culture."<sup>3</sup>

Some of the members spoke of how living on The Farm had changed them. Most agreed that they had learned a great deal about human nature through their experiences in communal living. All agree that the most positive gains have been the lifelong friends they made there and the knowledge they gained of others and themselves. Another result was a better understanding of people in the Third World who live in poverty because they experienced many of the same problems.

Several mentioned that they learned job skills that helped them find employment after they left the commune.

Following are some of the comments made by former residents concerning the influence of The Farm. Teresa Rizzo said that she is different from most teenagers because she lived in a commune. Although she has no plans to return there to live, she would like to raise her children in a similar environment. Kathy Woodside said that in the process of becoming a communal person, she learned a way of life that consists of simple living, healthy food, sisterhood, and job skills. She also learned that "middle class means having running water." From an ashram in India, Arthur Seidner wrote that The Farm had community, "a shared vision of how life was, and what was a right way to live with that understanding of life." If he could go back in time, he said that he would not go to the collective because "now I have a true Guru . . . the trust and faith I have knowing that if I give myself to the Guru, I will be totally protected and not be left out in the cold." Peter Else wrote that he acquired a proficiency with tools, more sympathy for poor people, and an "empirically-based understanding of the need to separate church and state."<sup>4</sup>

John and Beverly Golden wrote that they learned to live "much lower on the hog" after their experiences of living in poverty on The Farm and having witnessed total poverty in Zaire. Sue Castor wrote that it changed the way she thought

and ate. She is more aware of honesty in her relationships because "things were so up front on The Farm." Billie Lou Shields replied that living on The Farm strengthened her beliefs that children were truly important at a time when it was in the vogue for women to pursue careers. She still believes in living simply so there will be enough resources for everyone. Anthony Gaudio and Lyn Kittle responded that their experiences broadened their understanding of themselves and others, and Barbara Wallace said that she has no further desire to participate in a shared-life community because "The Farm fully explored that option for me." She added that living there made a difference in the way she viewed world events and that her experiences influenced her choice of a new career, that of an environmental consultant. And Dez Figueira said that living there gave her the "equipment to deal with the insanities of the outside world in a less debilitating way." She said, "I found myself, the opportunity to do and be my own true self. To be who I am. The Farm gives you tools for life that you can't get anywhere else, and I don't just mean money-earning skills."<sup>5</sup>

Former commune members who responded to a questionnaire cited a variety of reasons for their departures and indicated present-day occupations very different from the tasks they performed on The Farm. Peter Else left because he outgrew The Farm and now lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he is a research assistant at a university. John and Beverly Golden

left because although it was a wonderful place to live and have babies, there was a great deal of confusion and a "little too much re-inventing the wheel" for them. They have lived in Crete for the past two years, where Beverly is an Air Force officer and John teaches Spanish. They plan to move to a small farm in Washington where John will farm and home-school their children, and Beverly will get a "regular job" in town. After her children's father died and they were able to collect Social Security benefits, Sue Castor left. She has since graduated from the Oklahoma College of Dentistry with a Bachelor of Science degree in dental hygiene. She plans to move to Portland, Oregon and become a licensed massage therapist. Barbara Wallace said that she left because her teenagers rebelled, and wanted more opportunities. She now lives with her family in Cameron, Ontario, where she is executive director of a small, informational-educational organization and is a part-time environmental consultant. She said that she experienced a period of "heavy grief" for about three years after leaving The Farm.<sup>6</sup>

Jack and Billie Lou Shields left right before the changeover, when Jack's father became ill and needed their care. They then discovered that they enjoyed being on their own and making decisions for themselves. They now live in a rural area near Mt. Ranch, California, where they have a band. Kathy Woodside left The Farm in 1985 in order to

"reunite with my children, make enough money to feed them all, see the ocean again, have indoor plumbing, and be able to send my kids to better schools." She lives in Corvallis, Oregon, where she and her husband are raising their family. Kathy works full time as an office manager.<sup>7</sup>

Because his former wife did not want to live communally any longer, Anthony Gaudio left The Farm in 1981. He and Lyn Kittle live in a land cooperative near Tallahassee, Florida, where he is an excavating contractor. Since living there, he has been on the board of directors of a food co-op and is involved with a local housing foundation. His children attend cooperative schools. Arthur Seidner left The Farm in late 1981 because he felt his freedom was being "needlessly infringed upon." He presently lives with his Guru in Maharashtra, India. Arthur wrote, "If someone were to ask me what gives meaning to my life, I would say, 'the name of my Guru.' I discovered everything within me by my Guru's grace whose essential teaching is, 'The heart is the hub of all sacred places. Go there and roam it.'" After being forced to leave the collective, David Brown enrolled in Tennessee State University in Nashville where he is majoring in agriculture. He said he still believes in the ideals of The Farm, especially in Plenty and the work Albert Bates is doing at the Natural Rights Center, but is only now beginning to live up to them. David attends Alcoholic Anonymous meetings,

and practices Nam Myo Renge Kyo, a devotion for individual happiness and world peace.<sup>8</sup>

All those interviewed said that their Farm experience changed their lives. Many expressed the belief that The Farm's greatest influence on society would come indirectly through all the people who came there and were themselves changed by the experience. Upon leaving, they carried Farm ideals with them and transplanted them in the larger society. Barbara Wallace wrote, "The Farm as a set of teachings, a school, a spiritual experience, is and will influence history in a low-key way through the style of living of its graduates, drop-outs, and camp followers. Many of the ideas tossed about within The Farm culture have now entered the mainstream." Michael Traugot said the ripples were still being felt as the larger society became more in tune with their ideas concerning home birthings, soybean-based diets, the environment, nuclear power, music and clothing styles, and concern for the world's poor.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Heikkala believed The Farm's emphasis on soy foods resulted in a food revolution, as many Americans became vegetarians. He remembered that only a few years ago when they traveled to the west coast, they had to take peanut butter and canned beans to eat because it was so difficult to find vegetarian food. Now he says that when they travel across the country, they find tofu and soy foods all along the way. Perhaps as verification of the extent to which soy foods have invaded

American diets, Charles Kuralt, in bemoaning the closing of the automats in New York City said, "tofu and bean sprouts have replaced meat loaf and mashed potatoes."<sup>10</sup>

Anthony Gaudio said that The Farm changed their perspective about what was possible. John and Beverly Golden said that through its presence and visibility, it influenced the surrounding towns and made the people there aware of other ways to live. Frances DuCrest believes that the major impact on the world is going to be through the children reared there who are "collective at heart." Frances said, "I think we've brought these kids up enough different from the way we were brought up that they're a whole new kind of people. That's going to change the world."<sup>11</sup>

Elizabeth Barger put The Farm in historical perspective by placing it on a continuum of international communities which have existed in America. Elizabeth said,

America is sort of like utopia. Other people speak of America and have the same kind of thing that people who came to The Farm had, that we're all really closer to God than anyone else. . . . I think it's an ongoing part of history and will always be happening. Parts of The Farm are parts of the ark, and parts of the Oneidas, and parts of the Huguenots, and parts of the Amish, and parts of the New Harmony communities. We are all parts of whatever is going on. I mean this Farm is as American as apple pie--we're all kinds of faiths and non-faiths, and opinions and non-opinions. Part of the thing is that we maintain our individuality as we swim along in this tapioca. Because we're all in it together--you, me, Reagan, Gorbachav, and everybody and there's no way we can kick anybody off.<sup>12</sup>

Stephen, in considering the religious experience which changed his life, wrote, "I saw how everything worked. I saw



that one person, if he was patient enough and if he really took the time, could change the world." Thus, through changing themselves, they believe they have changed the world. Stephen believes when historians consider the important events of the twentieth century they will recognize that what took place in the "Summer of Love" as "one of the significant things that happened this century. It will be as meaningful as opening Red China or any of the heavy cultural things going on."<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps it is too early for one to gauge the impact The Farm had on society. Hardly anyone would deny that the 1960s and 1970s brought about great changes in America and The Farm reflected a part of that time. But if one accepts the premise that the communal attempts in the 1960s and 1970s changed society, then The Farm must be given a share of the credit since it was one of the most important of these attempts. The extent to which it changed the larger society and was, in turn, altered by the dominant society is impossible to measure. It seems that one can conclude that since The Farm was a natural outgrowth of a social phenomenon which was sweeping across America it was, therefore, a manifestation of the values held by a large number of young people during this period. They did come, they were changed by the experience, and most have re-entered the mainstream of society as agents of change themselves. David LeDoux, who has followed the progress of the group from the Monday Night

Class time in San Francisco, observed that "they were like a small transfusion into the larger body. The new blood more changed than the old, but the old changed as well."<sup>14</sup>

Mark Holloway utilized two criteria for determining whether or not communes were successful. They were: (1) did it prove that communism on a limited scale was feasible? and (2) whether feasible or not, were living conditions superior to those in contemporary American society? As both these queries must be answered negatively and if one accepts these as the only criteria, then it is obvious that The Farm failed. Some of the members concluded that The Farm was a failure in that they did not achieve what they had envisioned, but that it did have elements of success. Joel Kachinsky said it failed because they made naive assumptions that others would observe their lifestyle and adopt it as a better way of living. Yet they did not realize how difficult it would be or how long it would take to replace their middle-class conditioning with a cooperative spirit. Dale Evans said that as a large collective it was a dismal failure because it grew so large that the ability to communicate face-to-face in order to reach consensus was lost. As a result, a large bureaucracy developed. In her opinion, a collective the size of The Farm cannot be successful without the loss of personal freedom and expression, as these must be sacrificed for the good of the community.<sup>15</sup>

Even though they failed to achieve their primary purpose, some members identify elements of success which came out of their effort. Michael Traugot says that they did manage to have an effect on the rest of the nation, and that the ripples are still being felt. Joel Kachinsky said that they were successful in evolving to a higher level of consciousness in living together collectively and peacefully than any other group their size. He added that the things they believe in "are still on the cutting edge of the direction mankind has to go in order to survive." According to David Brown, even though The Farm failed as an important socio-political movement, it must be considered a success because the effort allowed each individual to "find" himself. It also serves as an example of what happens when a group of individuals attempt to create an alternative way of life. Its greatest accomplishments, according to Dale Evans, are the outreach of Plenty and their ability to hold on to the land which now has only a ten thousand dollar mortgage. Stephen said that when evaluating whether or not The Farm was a success, one must consider it as a piece of the greater movement which is the hippie movement. He says that as the flagship of the hippie movement, which includes twenty-five to thirty million people in this country alone, The Farm "has been a howling success from the beginning and continues to be right straight through."<sup>16</sup>

Whether the community has been a success ultimately rests on the semantics of the term. If success means that the community continues as a collective at its optimum level in numbers, influence, and spirit, then this venture is just another failure in a long history of failures in utopian endeavors. But if one thinks of success in terms of a kind of fruition in the ability of people to change their situation in a free society, then it is a success. Many of the philosophical and social ideals upon which this movement rested are still vital and alive, although their full influence is, as yet, still evolving.

If we concede that The Farm had some successes including its survival, although as a cooperative rather than a collective, then what is the prognosis for its future? Having weathered the changeover and its aftermath, The Farm will continue according to all those interviewed. Although many problems remain unsolved and some of the families there are still struggling economically, those who remain see it as a secure home for the rest of their lives. Some think that it will continue on a smaller scale because society at large is not generally attracted to the hippie lifestyle now and the hippies have adopted a more conventional lifestyle. Others believe it will survive as a loose confederation of "ex-Farmees."<sup>17</sup>

Keith Melville, in his study of communes, observed that "the test of the whole thing will be the next generation."

Bonnie Holsinger and Frances DuCrest also believe that the actions of the next generation will be crucial. Bonnie said that although a large percentage of the young people leave, some who left earlier now express an interest in returning to The Farm to rear their children. Frances said that the children who were reared on The Farm still have the land and each other, and that many will return to their roots. Stephen explained that they did not establish The Farm only for themselves but for future generations as well. He said they did not "do it just for a season and we figure it's a lasting source of change. The Farm's utility is just beginning and it's going to be doing useful things for decades."<sup>18</sup>

Still others, Dez Figueira, Elizabeth Barger, and Sue Castor's daughter, Stephanie, conceive of The Farm as an idea rather than a specific geographic location. In this sense they believe that it will continue. Dez said, "It's never going to not be here. Even if the land were to evaporate, The Farm, the concept, the idea, the consciousness, the memories, the awareness, the whole thing is always going to be here." Elizabeth expressed the opinion that "even if this were to disappear, it would be the things within people that survived." And Sue Castor wrote that her daughter Stephanie said, "The Farm isn't a place, it is a state of mind. I don't have to be there to be a part of it." This being the case, perhaps one could conclude as Allan Estlake did

concerning those who left Oneida when it ceased to be communitarian, "each and every member of it taking his spiritual conditions with him." He believed that seeds were sown which were still germinating.<sup>19</sup>

In the study of communes, considerable emphasis is placed on the quality of leadership and the fate of the community when the leader, for whatever reason, no longer leads. Studies rarely deal with the leaders themselves. Since the development of leadership and its critical importance to the community has been an integral part of this study, it is appropriate to ask what happens to these former leaders? Are they similar to General Douglas MacArthur's old soldiers who "just fade away?" Some might, but Stephen has not. Although through the years rumors have abounded that he absconded to Brazil with all the money, they are untrue. When asked about the rumors, Stephen denies them because there was never any money. He continues to live in the house in which he lived when he was the leader of the commune.

Some might expect Stephen to be a tragic figure, a reclusive, defeated, tottering old man. If one had this preconception, then he would be very surprised upon meeting him to find that at fifty-three years old, he is tall and straight and gangling. Although nearly bald on top, he continues to wear his thinning locks in a braid intertwined with a tie-dyed ribbon, has a small moustache and beard, and

wears clothing just outlandish enough to allow one to identify him as a hippie. And he still is. One may catch glimpses of the charisma of old, especially if one attends the Monday Night Class which Stephen continues to conduct at Windows on the Cumberland, a restaurant located on Second Avenue in Nashville. Here he teaches in a way that resembles his teaching in San Francisco in the late 1960s. Even though the times and Stephen have changed, his message is still the same. He continues to teach, "You are this season's people . . . if you blow it, it's blown."<sup>20</sup> Only a dozen or so attend the classes, some of whom wander in off the street and others who sit awhile, listen to the "rap," then leave.

Stephen says, "Me and Ina May just hustle along." They earn their living by making speeches for various groups and publishing the Birth Gazette magazine. He sees himself as a hippie who has not "sold out." In speaking of his situation now, Stephen says,

I think we're supposed to be like leprechauns. You know, if people like leprechauns, they're supposed to leave a saucer of milk on the doorstep for you. That's what we're supposed to do--we're supposed to keep our magic intact. . . . At this point, if I had my choice, I might have been a college professor who drinks too much, or a lawyer who has to go out and defend people who did it. So I look at where I am now, considering writing which will be one of my major tools as I grow older. I've got a nice international name and I'm in good position for a writer, nine books behind me. This is like poker. I'd play this hand. I'm happy with it.<sup>21</sup>

So Stephen deals with his fall from the leadership position as one would expect any intelligent individual

to--recognizing that some of the blame for failure must be attributable to him, accepting with dignity the reality of the situation, and finding another basis for being. There are always plans and more plans for the future. He once said, "Start a large project--like saving the world. Keeps you busy. Guaranteed for a lifetime."<sup>22</sup> Those who take great risks face the possibility of giant failures. He, at least, made an effort.

Exploring in another direction and recalling that historically those communes with the strong religious component were longer-lasting than the secular ones, it is reasonable to say that a strong faith is a positive contributing factor and loss of faith is debilitating. Thus one must consider the factors which contributed to the loss of faith on The Farm. Perhaps the first instance is the loss of faith in Stephen, their leader. There were three aspects of this: (1) as the members matured, their impressionability waned and was replaced by the harsh reality of several cold winters; (2) Stephen's arrogance and egotism, his inability to handle power in a balanced way; and (3) the loss of charismatic faith because he made a number of erroneous decisions leading them to see him as a mere human being.

Beyond that, their faith was tested because they had, on some level, believed the early deprivations were temporary. But as time passed, they found them to be not only continuing but increasing. Growing more frustrated as



the numbers increased, disgusted by the presence of so many "free-loaders," and seeing their children also caught up in the suffering, they turned their minds from the spirit toward selfish material concerns. The Farm was not immune to the materialism, selfishness, and "me-too ism" that many believe characterize the 1980s. America, "the land of plenty," lay just outside the Gate, even in Summertown and Hohenwald. If the members missed it there, it was brought in by television. The young especially, conditioned by the invasive media, wished to have, and in time did have, stylish hair cuts, high-topped Nikes, "boom" boxes, and all the accouterments of the "youth culture." The irony is that the children of the people who had sought refuge from the materialism of American society now yearned for it, as did some of their parents. Just as the parents had rejected the larger society and chosen to retreat, now their children were rejecting many of their parents' ideals and were being drawn toward those of the larger society. In just one generation, they had come full circle. It is clear that pressures from outside The Farm contributed to the weakening of communal bonds, but as Allan Estlake wrote, "Pressures from without could not break up the community as long as the true spirit prevailed within."<sup>23</sup>

Because The Farm and Oneida were American spiritual communities, a brief comparison of them is appropriate. Mark Holloway lists some characteristics of the Oneida community

which were also evident in The Farm's history. These similarities were that they regarded themselves as one family, had no written laws, adopted communism, were persecuted by the neighbors in the formative years, discouraged personal attachments, started affiliated communities, wrote books and pamphlets for propaganda purposes, and suffered deprivations in the early years. After the first generation, Oneida, too, experienced problems when many in the second generation, who "did not inherit the zeal of their parents," became agnostics and voiced their disapproval of their parents' "immoral" lifestyle.<sup>24</sup>

But then there were differences as well. Unlike The Farm, the Oneida community had strict control over business matters, a refined system of accounting procedures, standing committees and administrative departments to oversee the operation, a board which met annually to plan the work schedule, consensus decision-making, inventories of all possessions, and in time, very successful industries.<sup>25</sup>

Originally those who settled The Farm hoped to be an example to the world of a better way to live, and some sincerely believed their way would replace the dominant culture. People all over the world would live in communities patterned after The Farm. They were visionaries. They came to farm but had little knowledge of or skill in farming. They wanted to be an alternative to the existing society but

lacked the wisdom, skills, and discipline needed to create a new society. As is the case of most visionaries, at some point they had to pay for the impracticality of their vision. Although it lasted only thirteen years as a commune, many would agree with Judson Jerome that it was the experience which was important, not how long the commune existed. He wrote, "The experience was a thing in itself. It was what it was. That it ended is not failure, but another manifestation of the natural process."<sup>26</sup>

By the 1970s, many of the communards had learned that they could not create an alternative society because the sacrifices required were too great. Also, as the times changed, their beliefs no longer attracted large numbers. With the realization that they must work from within the existing society if they wished to alter it, many communes went the way of The Farm and converted to cooperatives. Although no longer in its original form, The Farm still exists. The members still own three square miles of territory. There and elsewhere, they continue. As Elizabeth Barger said, "The people who puffed up like dandelions and planted parts of The Farm all over the world are still doing it."<sup>27</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Louise Caulfield, "The Perils of Publishing," Farm Net News, March-April 1989, 10.

<sup>2</sup>Timothy and Tana Nobles, "Dear FNN Community," Farm Net News, July-August 1989, 4.

<sup>3</sup>Dez Figueira, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Dale Evans, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>4</sup>Teresa Rizzo, interview by author, 8 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Kathy Woodside, written interview by author, 31 January 1990, Corvallis, OR., written questionnaire; Arthur Seidner, written interview by author, 29 January 1990, District Thana, Maharashtra, India, written questionnaire; Peter Else, written interview by author, 2 February 1990, Tucson, AZ., written questionnaire.

<sup>5</sup>John and Beverly Golden, written interview by author, 2 February 1990, Iraklion, Crete, written questionnaire; Sue Castor, written interview by author, 25 January 1990, Norman, OK., written questionnaire; Jack and Billie Lou Shields, written interview by author, 9 February 1990, Mt. Ranch, CA., written questionnaire; Anthony Gaudio and Lyn Kittle, written interview by author, 31 January 1990, Tallahassee, FL., written questionnaire; Barbara Wallace, written interview by author, 10 February 1990, Cameron, Ontario, Canada, written questionnaire; Figueria interview.

<sup>6</sup>Else interview; Golden interview; Castor interview; Wallace interview.

<sup>7</sup>Shields interview; Woodside interview.

<sup>8</sup>Gaudio and Kittle interview; Seidner interview; David Brown, interview by author, 29 October 1989, Nashville, TN., tape recording.

<sup>9</sup>Wallace interview; Michael Traugot, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Heikkala, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Charles Kuralt, CBS, Sunday Morning, 14 April 1991.

<sup>11</sup>Gaudio and Kittle interview; John and Beverly Golden interview; Frances DuCrest, interview by author, 28 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>12</sup>Elizabeth Barger, interview by author, 13 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>13</sup>Stephen Gaskin, This Season's People (Summertown, TN.: Book Publishing Co., 1976), 165; Stephen Gaskin, interview by author, 11 August 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording.

<sup>14</sup>David LeDoux, interview by author, 11 July 1989, Woodbury, TN.

<sup>15</sup>Mark Holloway, Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America 1680-1880 (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 222; Joel Kachinsky, interview by author, 26 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; Evans interview.

<sup>16</sup>Traugot interview; Kachinsky interview; Brown interview; Evans interview; Gaskin interview.

<sup>17</sup>Golden interview; Else interview.

<sup>18</sup>Keith Melville, Communes in the Counterculture: Origins, Theories, Styles of Life (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1972), 153; Bonnie Holsinger, interview by author, 12 July 1989, Summertown, TN., tape recording; DuCrest interview; Gaskin interview.

<sup>19</sup>Figueira interview; Barger interview; Castor interview; Allan Estlake, The Oneida Community (London: George Redway, 1900), 15.

<sup>20</sup>Gaskin, This Season's People, 3.

<sup>21</sup>Gaskin interview.

<sup>22</sup>Gaskin, This Season's People, 111.

<sup>23</sup>Estlake, The Oneida Community, 7.

<sup>24</sup>Holloway, Heavens on Earth, 182-89; Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Communes: Creating and Managing the Collective Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 9.

<sup>25</sup>Holloway, Heavens on Earth, 192-95.

<sup>26</sup>David French and Elena French, Working Communally: Paterns and Possibilities (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1975), 75.

<sup>27</sup>Barger interview.

## APPENDIX

This dissertation will be a valuable teaching tool in the social sciences. The materials included here and the subjects which are addressed lend themselves to the teaching of sociology, economics, and American history. Following are suggestions for the use of this material in teaching courses in those subject areas.

Most general sociology courses deal with subcultures. A subculture, although it shares many of the values, norms, and behavior patterns of society, has unique characteristics that are in some ways so different from the dominant culture that it is identifiable as a separate component. When a subgroup rejects the values, norms, and beliefs of the mainstream culture, then it becomes a counter culture. So the youth movement of the 1960s is an example of a counter-cultural movement. Since many of these young people chose The Farm and other communes as a place where they could practice their beliefs, its early history serves as an example of this phenomenon. This paper contains information applicable to the study of dissent and deviance, group dynamics, group cohesiveness, and the development and nature of leadership roles, as well.

Ms. Judy Sides, sociology teacher at Oakland High School, has read this dissertation and plans to use segments

of it in her classes, particularly the information dealing with the counterculture. In outlining her teaching objectives for the unit on the development of a countercultural movement in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, she plans to identify specific characteristics which the hippies exhibited as being broad characteristics of this movement. She would designate some students to be members of the countercultural group while the rest of the class would represent members of an established, somewhat conservative community. During a period of role-playing, she would give the two groups a chance to interact. They would attempt to deal with the differences in religion, work habits, family structure, economic organization, and ownership of property. The students would identify the areas in which there could be no accommodation of the other group's views as well as the areas in which there could be some acceptance. The teacher would ask the following questions: "How did you feel about the other group at first sight? What characteristics were immediately repugnant to you? How much did you understand about the other group's lifestyle before the interaction? Did you find any positive, admirable qualities in the members of the other group? How does it feel to be stereotyped and totally misunderstood? Other issues would be discussed as they arose during role-playing. To make the lesson even more enjoyable and vivid for the students, the countercultural group could dress and talk



like hippies and the group of neighbors could dress and talk like people from Drakes Lane.

Ms. Sides has shown segments of the videotape which I obtained from the Vanderbilt Television News Archives. She also used this in connection with the unit on counterculture. After showing the videotape to the class, she led a class discussion on some of the characteristics the hippies exhibited that set them apart from the dominant culture.

When teaching comparative economics, one can identify characteristics of traditional and command economic systems in The Farm's organization. In teaching a unit on comparative economics, one would first identify the four economic questions that every system must answer. They are: What and how much will be produced? Who will produce the goods and services? How will the goods and services be produced? Who will share in the production of the goods and services? Next, one would define a market system, a traditional system, and a command system and ask the students to speculate about how each system would answer each of the four questions. The teacher would need to explain that a command or controlled economic system is one in which the individual has little influence in how economic questions are answered. Since the government controls the factors of production (land, labor capital and entrepreneurship), the government--one person, a small group of leaders, or a group of economic planners--decides the answers to the economic

questions. The teacher would then distribute a copy of the applicable sections of Chapters III and IV to each student to read. The students would be asked to identify, from reading these sections, the characteristics of a command system present in the economic structure of The Farm. For example, in the beginning Stephen and a group of "planners" made the decisions about what goods and services would be produced, how they would be produced, who would produce what, and how they would be distributed among the members. The students will realize that The Farm's organization and the way the four economic questions were answered bear a close resemblance to the Marxist idea of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

One needs only to observe the hippies' farming methods and their lifestyle in the early years to identify elements of a traditional economic system. Here, the answers to the four economic questions are passed from generation to generation. This, of course, is not true for The Farm. But other characteristics of the traditional system are present. For instance, they were engaged in primary economic activity during the early years. Using hoes, rakes, mule-drawn plows, and organic fertilizer, they engaged in subsistence farming in a mode similar to that practiced in the traditional economies of many third-world nations and in America in earlier years.

Finally, looking at the change from a collective where the members held all things in common to the cooperative in which each family was responsible for its own welfare, one can see in microcosm some of the tremendous problems confronting the former Soviet Republics today as they attempt to move from a command economy toward a market system. When studying the current economic upheavals in the former Soviet Republics, the example of The Farm's "changeover" will offer students a small-scale example of how political, social, and economic systems are so interwoven that it is, as Frances DuCrest said, impossible to change the economic aspect without changing the whole. One method for teaching about this change is first to place various countries on a continuum drawn on the chalkboard. To the far right, one would locate the countries with the free market economies with Hong Kong being the most extreme and the United States located slightly further to the left. The countries which had command economies would be placed to the left of center. Cuba, The People's Republic of China, and North Korea would be placed to the far left with the former Soviet Union located slightly to the right of them. Students would know the characteristics of a command economy and a capitalistic economy. The teacher would ask questions such as: "What has happened to the former Soviet economy? What characteristics did it have before 1991? What are some of the problems confronting the newly independent countries as they attempt

to move to the right? Who owns the land now? Who owns the factories? Suggest ways of solving these problems."

The material in this paper may also be helpful in the teaching of American history. When dealing with the subject of nineteenth-century communitarians, something which has an immediate appeal to most young people, it is possible to draw parallels between their development and that of The Farm, which is detailed in Chapters I and II. For instance, many people in earlier periods yearned for the simple, traditional values of the past that seemed to be threatened by the onslaught of machines, railroads, and factories. In an attempt to recover past values and restore social unity in the midst of the disorder, they launched programs for improving society by changing themselves. Many of these attempts had religious overtures. Much of this is echoed at the Gaskin Farm. The reformers, like the hippies, often rejected materialism and chose to withdraw from the mainstream of society to build communities of their own where they could live apart and pursue their ideals.

The movement to create an alternative society by withdrawing and forming communes which swept the nation in the late 1960s and early 1970s gave birth to The Farm. In this way, The Farm is a part of the historical record. In addition, it suggests alternative ways in which people can live together. The counterculture movement which drew young people in from all geographic areas of the country and

all socio-economic classes led them to form unusual groups. It was a youth society in conflict with the general culture. Born in an era during which questioning the nation's values, protesting inequities and war, and striving for an alternative way of achieving the American dream, it was, in fact, a group dream of a better society. Thus, The History of a Hippie Commune is an excellent reference for teaching about the creation of a counterculture and, within this movement, yet another example of a utopian community.

Here, then, are a few of the possibilities for using this dissertation as an educational tool. Some of the material has already been used in classes at Oakland High School, Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Students there have demonstrated interest in such an undertaking. Since the study is current and The Farm is alive and on-going in their lifetimes, they feel an immediate affinity to many of the ideas.

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