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Cultivating a Movement: An Oral History Series on Sustainable Agriculture and Organic Farming on California's Central Coast

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Jim Nelson



Jim Nelson with his granddaughter, Kyla. Photo by Towhee Nelson Huxley.

Camp Joy Gardens

Jim Nelson runs Camp Joy Gardens, a sunny, redwood-ringed 4.5-acre farm in Santa Cruz County's San Lorenzo Valley. One of the Santa Cruz area's first farms to shun chemical pesticides and fertilizers, Camp Joy was inspired by the example of Nelson's mentor, Alan Chadwick. Employing biodynamic principles, the farm grows a bountiful harvest of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other products using home-grown hay mulch, cover crops, fertilizer from on-farm goats and chickens, and other organic inputs. A community supported agriculture program distributes weekly produce baskets to twenty-five local families.

As a non-profit educational organization, Camp Joy offers tours and programs for local schools, presents workshops for adults, and hosts apprentices from all over the world. Locals flock to the annual spring plant sale and fall open house to wander the colorful orchards and gardens and to buy seedlings, fresh bouquets, dried wreaths, honey, jams, candles, and other farm products.

Nelson was an early protégé of Alan Chadwick at the UCSC Garden, where he met his first wife, Beth Benjamin. After leaving the Garden, the couple briefly experimented with farming in Canada. They eventually returned to Santa Cruz, where one day Chadwick shared with them a letter he had received from a Boulder Creek landowner, Cressie Digby, who expressed interest in providing four acres for young organic farmers to cultivate. In 1971, Nelson and Benjamin established Camp Joy Garden on Digby's land.

In this interview, conducted by Sarah Rabkin in Jim Nelson's home at Camp Joy Gardens in Boulder Creek, California, on August 20th and October 23rd, 2008, Nelson talked about the founding and early days of the UCSC Garden, his experiences with Alan Chadwick, the creation and evolution of Camp Joy, and his philosophy as a farmer-educator. Two farm dogs slept nearby on the living-room floor, and the scent of ripe pears drifted in from the kitchen, which was filled with crates of newly harvested fruit.

Additional Resources

Camp Joy Gardens: <http://www.campjoygardens.org/>

See the oral history with Beth Benjamin in this series.

Christina Waters, "Bee Here Now," *Metro Santa Cruz*, April 10-16, 1997. Article about Jim Nelson as a beekeeper.

Colleen Sell, "Gurus of Organic Gardening," *Good Times*, Home & Garden column, 1991

The Chadwick Garden Anthology of Poets (Friends of the UCSC Farm and Garden, 2009). Introduction by Beth Benjamin.

Christina Waters, "Fire in the Garden," *Metro Santa Cruz*, Oct. 2-8, 1997, <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/cruz/10.02.97/chadwicks-garden-9740.html>

Beginnings

Rabkin: This is Sarah Rabkin. I'm at Camp Joy with Jim Nelson on August 20, 2008. And Jim, I'm going to start with some really basic beginnings from your own life. Where and when were you born?

Nelson: I was born in 1945, in October, in Hollywood, Los Angeles, at Children's Hospital.

Rabkin: And where did you grow up?

Nelson: I grew up in many different places. I had some significant times when I was very young in the Los Angeles area, in Hollywood, and a little bit in the Burbank area. In fact, whenever I think about where my first—like, how did you get into gardening?—one of my oldest memories is this side yard at this house that we lived in. It was at a place called Sunny Nook Drive, which is kind of poetic. My mother had a vegetable garden on the side of the house. I can remember going out there with her and pulling carrots out of the ground. They were magical, orange, delicious. Kids tend to like carrots. So that was kind of a bonding experience. I didn't put much significance on it until many years later when I started thinking about some of the reasons that I responded to this opportunity of working with Alan Chadwick, and how it led to various chains of events.

Rabkin: You were a toddler at that point?

Nelson: I don't really know. I was probably four or five at the most, three or four even, because of other family events that I would mark that with.

And then, we had relatives on my father's side that lived in the LA area. My grandfather and grandmother on my father's side had an acre and a half of land with an old house on it right on Vermont Avenue, right near one of the freeways in the middle of Los Angeles. They had a big yard with a rose garden and avocado trees and citrus trees and chickens and compost heaps and a little workshop and a barn. It was kind of a homestead. That [experience was] really formative, because Camp Joy is a small, mixed homestead operation and enterprise.

I loved that time and I loved my Grandpa a lot. I was afraid of my Grandma. She was kind of fierce. But anyway, that was interesting. Now it's a big apartment building complex, of course. But it was sweet. They had fig trees, and they always canned pickled figs with this special recipe. Swedish. It was a Swedish family. They had these bins that had bulk flour in them, right in the kitchen, you know. You tipped it back. They would make bread. There were bulk grain bins. We went through a historical period where that was all lost, or nearly lost, and processed foods [came in]. There was a deterioration. But I had those kinds of experiences. That was very wonderful.

When I ever got asked the question later in life of, where did you grow up, my answer was always Mill Valley [in Marin County, just north of San Francisco]. It was the short answer. We moved around a lot, my mother and stepfather. He dabbled in many businesses that were kind of creative, but none of them really

worked out too well financially. So we were always moving to the next town. Who knows whether we were running away from bills, or whatever. But my favorite home during that whole period, from say, four or five to twelve, was Mill Valley. We lived there for two years. Mill Valley was a really small little town at that point. I lived in this old house which is still there. Now there's a beautiful little garden right next to it and a Buddhist retreat center. It's kind of amazing. I just discovered this about three years ago. With old English tools and a rose garden and raspberries. It was in the little neglected yard of shrubs and bushes that I used to play in. I looked at it and said, wait a minute. What's happening here? How did this happen? There's a garden like the kind that I love, right in this place that I came from. It was right on the creek and there were wild plums, and blackberries and loganberries, and the forest. That was my favorite childhood home. I feel like I grew up there. But we also lived in the desert near Las Vegas for a couple of years, on the outskirts of Las Vegas, when Las Vegas was a small town. (laughter) It's not the same anymore. I tried to find that place and I couldn't even find it.

And then, starting in junior high school, I moved back to Southern California, and grew up in Orange County during junior high school and high school. And went off to college and ended up in Santa Cruz and am still here.

Rabkin: You came to Santa Cruz, to UCSC, for college?

Nelson: Yes. Not directly. At first I went to an engineering college in New York for a year. I was strong in math and science.

Rabkin: Which school was that?

Nelson: Webb Institute of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. It's a little privately endowed school on Long Island. I heard about it by chance through a favorite teacher in high school, and got a scholarship to go there, and checked it out. I didn't like it. It was very confining, and there wasn't much humanities in the curriculum.

The best thing about being in New York was I had gotten very interested in early folk music in high school: Woody Guthrie and the people who followed him, Ramblin' Jack [Elliott] and Cisco Houston and all those early recordings. And then Bob Dylan. Before his album was even released, in LA the Les Claypool Show used to play Bob Dylan songs. Folk music had a lot to do with teaching us how to live for, I think, a lot of us in that generation. That's where you found some truth in terms of political and cultural and social pride in being a working person. All those sort of things came out of that folk revival. So when I went to New York, I went for Bob Dylan's first concert at Carnegie Hall. And then Town Hall had these series of ninety-nine-cent hootenannies for students and working folk, they called them. I got to see Buffy Sainte-Marie there, and Peter La Farge and Phil Ochs.

Rabkin: Wow.

Nelson: All these people. It was amazing. I went there about four times. Buffy was introduced by Pete Seeger, who was there too. It was her first public performance. That was really very memorable, that part of New York.

Life is about finding out what you like to do and what you don't like to do. I transferred into UC Riverside, which at that point had the best reputation for

being a smaller UC campus that specialized in liberal arts. I had a family connection nearby that I could stay with for the first year, people who were into the Sierra Club and mountaineering and music. I was there for almost three years and then I transferred to Santa Cruz. By that time I had become an English literature major.

Coming to Santa Cruz and Meeting Alan Chadwick

Rabkin: What year was this?

Nelson: Fall of 1967, I think, was when I went to UCSC.

In my case, exposure to Alan Chadwick as a mentor came out of a period where I already was thinking about homesteading and the back-to-the-land movement and changing my diet. We were eating lower on the food chain, and cooking our own foods, and learning a little bit about vegetarianism, and Krishnamurti and Gurdjieff and some of the spiritual teachings that were going on. I started to think of wanting to live on the land more directly. The idea of a traditional career was starting to exit stage left. I was also interested in Canada. That related to the Vietnam War that was going on, and the insanity of war and consumerism and everything. There was some kind of sense that maybe it would be different in Canada. We could question [that]. But it's all the same, no matter where you are. It's the same task. It's just a little Planet Earth, is the way I figure it. But that's another story.

But anyway, I was expressing to a friend about wanting to homestead and maybe going back to Canada because land was affordable and everything. And

he said, “Well, you should go check out this guy, Alan Chadwick,” who had just come to the university. He had only been there for a couple of months. I had kind of noticed him out of the corner of my eye. This fellow (he was a drama student) and Alan had been involved with drama a little bit at UCSC. He suggested that I go up to the Garden, which I did, because Alan knew a lot about growing things.

So I went up there and got charmed by Alan, and little by little, over a short period of time, kept going more and more. I ended up taking a leave of absence (and this was in my final year in school), to work full time in the Garden, because that became what I was most vitally interested in. There was so much to learn there.

I had this idea of teaching, and I ended up teaching gardening and horticulture. But the opportunity at that moment was to help Alan, because it was just beginning and he really needed people to collaborate with him to create that garden. It just sucked me in, and after a while we were sleeping in the woods behind the garden so we didn’t have to drive home, and working there every waking hour that we could find.

Rabkin: Did you have some gardening knowledge and experience from having had exposure to your family’s gardens, when you came to Chadwick, or did you think of yourself as a neophyte gardener?

Nelson: A little bit of experience. I mentioned my mother’s vegetable garden. [My parents] separated when I was very young. So when I went back to live with my father, he loved to grow flowers. He always had a zinnia patch and he had begonias in the little shade house and succulents. I was always helping him in

the garden. And then I had a little job during high school. I had three houses and I took care of their [gardens]: water, trim, sweep, weed a little bit. But I never thought of it being a profession. It was always just a sideline. So I did have some connections with all that.

I encountered Alan and started listening to what he was saying and what he was doing. There was a synchronicity [between] what he was [doing] and what was being built there at the university (which grew into CASFS) that seemed so relevant to the problems of the time. I began to see that, oh, this is an honorable profession, horticulture. It wasn't on the track that the adults were advising, but I saw it as being something that was really important to do, and that I responded to. So some gardening experiences, but not farming. I think we all have that. If you go back enough generations there are farmers in probably everybody's family.

Chadwick as a Mentor

Rabkin: What did you learn from Alan Chadwick?

Nelson: Well, that's a huge question. I've been thinking about that in the last couple of days because I knew you were coming. One overview thought I have about that is that when you have a mentor, there's a two-way street. It's a symbiotic thing. What you hear, and what you learn, and what's valuable has a certain amount to do with what you bring there. Alan touched so many people. It's hard after a while, especially now forty years later (and I've been doing a similar thing ever since), to remember exactly what of this did I learn from Alan? I might have an answer to that: He inspired and empowered with technique. But

he also illuminated stuff that was already in me. I think that's really important. He came at a time when there was a birth of ecological consciousness, and a birth of concern about food and consumerism and deterioration of natural systems. All those things were kind of born in that same time. So that's why Alan's teachings fell on fertile ground and on fertile ears.

And then another way to answer that question that occurs to me: somebody sent me a link recently to a YouTube talk from Michael Pollan, who is quite big in terms of his impact of his books. He's a good speaker. It was this little talk that he gave, and it was about the inspiration that he got from Joel Salatin, who is trying to show a proper way to raise eggs and meat in a non-industrial model.¹ Michael Pollan's whole point was that the vision that Joel Salatin was showing is that you could produce food from land and leave the land in a more fertile condition than it started out with. If you did it with layering and cycling of the animals, if you didn't overdo it, and you sequentially used these practices, the land would improve. It struck me so much, because that was one of the things that was the most exciting that we felt we learned from Alan. That was a premise behind everything that he did and talked about. It was such an antidote to this despairing sense of ecological doom, the deterioration of natural systems. In the late sixties, it was easy to feel like just being alive you were part of the problem of overpopulation and consumption and everything. Alan came along with this practical, rooted antidote to that, in a way. We could actually be part of a solution. Yes, we are impacting the earth, but if we act mindfully then we can improve the fertility, make our gardens be sustainable and ecological and enhance fertility by being a custodian of nature, rather than just a user of nature.

Like I say, I don't know if I really specifically learned that from Alan. I already knew it to a certain extent. Rachel Carson's work—I partly read it and it was just being talked about. And through the Sierra Club and some readings of John Muir, and experiences in the mountains, I was acutely aware of ecological interactions. You see plants, trees growing out of cracks in the rocks and little lichens and mosses, and all this symbiosis that's going on, all that. I was prepared for Alan's insights by those other awarenesses.

Alan was very dramatic and concrete in teaching us that the soil was alive, and it was fragile, and it was complex and delicate. Those are huge lessons of how to care for the earth. Sustainable agriculture is steeped in those. Knowing those dynamics, how do we work with it? And also, just the careful care.

Alan, in a lot of his talks, he'd start out talking about plants and how plants give us everything. They give us our food, and our fiber, and our building material, and our very air, because they are breathing CO₂ in and giving oxygen out, the opposite of what we're doing. There was such reverence and appreciation for plants. That was another huge lesson. And also, he always talked about being obedient to the laws of nature, which becomes a little bit of a cliché. It could turn you off a little bit, but it's totally true.

I got this book recently from a friend called *Original Instructions*. It's based on talks by mostly Native Americans (North Americans), but some African and South American writers too, at the Bioneers Conference, and it's all edited by a friend.² And the very first thing is a ceremony or an opening blessing that John Mohawk gives, where's he's talking about our relations, the four-legged people

and the plants, and giving thanks to the winds. So it's this ecological consciousness that comes out of those Indian voices that have survived almost extinction by this other consciousness. And I went, oh, this is the same kind of awareness and gratitude and acknowledgement that Alan participated in. It wasn't some new idea that he thought of. He talked about: just listen to the wise voices of our elders. It was a truth that he articulated.

Later in this book there's this essay also by John Mohawk about how in California, for instance, for hundreds of years there were all these little regional tribes that stuck in one place, and they lived with the animals and plants of that region. They traded with other tribes. Each one had their own dialect, but they were rooted in appreciation of local food and local self-sufficiency. This completely dovetails with the current awareness and energies, the Slow Food movement—all these things that are at the cutting edge now are these truths that go deeper. So when you talk about the beginning of sustainable agriculture, well, gee, you gotta go way back.

Rabkin: It sounds like you've pulled out two threads. One that you've been talking about a fair amount is the way in which Alan was the right person at the right time: that he arrived on extremely fertile ground, so to speak; that people were really ready and receptive for what he had to offer, what he had to teach. You also mentioned (and this is the other thread) that you were charmed by Alan. I'm interested in hearing a little more about Alan as an interactive person and the ways in which he worked as a teacher. What were the qualities that Chadwick brought to the teaching process that you think were significant?

Nelson: That's a really good question. There were these particular techniques that we learned from Alan—how to sow seeds just so and cover them just so, and then all of a sudden with these anemones that are really difficult [to grow] he would germinate things that— Everybody would go out and buy the corms but we'd sow them from seeds, and then transplant them to another container, and then another container. Pretty soon we had six beds full of them and they all bloomed. It was very empowering, the fact he had horticultural techniques that he taught.

My learning from him was so three-dimensional compared to any other professor or teacher that I've ever had. The very first time I went up there to work (I can remember it specifically), [I asked], "Is there anything I can do to help today?" He said, "Well, would you like a light job or a heavy job?" Pretty soon he put me to work cleaning up a Swiss chard bed, which meant breaking off the older leaves and tidying it up a little bit. Then he sent me home with a bunch of Swiss chard. Well, I'd never even heard of Swiss chard at that time.

Rabkin: Was that a light job or a heavy job?

Nelson: That was a light job. (laughs) A heavy job would be pick-axing the hard soil that we had up there. It was really hard. So then he sent me home and told me how to cook [chard]. He said, "Well, do you know how to prepare it?" I said no. It had to be a stainless steel pan. If I didn't have a stainless steel pan, then forget it. It was this attention to detail. I mean, that's what fine cooking is all about. That was my first exposure to those things. It had to be olive oil and garlic, and just so, and how to do it. Cook the stems a little longer, and all that

sort of thing. And then he said, “Oh, and by the way, if you come back tomorrow afternoon we’re having a brunch here in the Garden and you’re welcome to join us.”

I came up the next day. Nancy Lingeman was there. She’s a wonderful, important person. And Alan had made a little barbeque out of just some rocks. He had some manzanita burl that was busted up, and built a fire and cooked a salmon. There were fresh vegetables and everything. There was a makeshift table set up on the road. The little chalet wasn’t there [yet]. There was the fine meal. There was the appreciation for food, and the celebratory nature of that, the beauty of it, the graciousness of it. That was what was charming about him. It wasn’t just like, “Okay, read this and we’ll have a paper next week.” It was three-dimensional. I was so interested in it.

So I started coming. Those were very fortunate days to be there, because it hadn’t become famous in any way. It had gotten hardly any attention at all. It was just this idea (and we could talk about where the idea came from) that had been fostered by some professors in a little dialogue that had occurred in the early days of the university. Then all of a sudden, here was Alan, who was the one who was invited to come and try to have a student garden project.

He talked about: you manifest something and then people will learn from it. If you tell them about it ahead of time, they won’t really understand what you’re saying. That was his method of operation.

So it just kind of quietly started. It started to be a really nice garden, and it had beautiful food. I was invited to lunch, for instance, and there were carrots, and a

salad, and tomatoes. It was in the fall, so I'm sure we had all those things. A beautiful salad with little edible flowers in it, and a nice gorgeous bouquet on the table. You didn't even have to say anything. It was just obvious that this was, "Oh, I could learn how to do these things." And he had this thing where you grow the food, you cook the meal, and you put the meal on the table and then you invite the people to come and partake in it. If you tell them ahead of time that they're going to have a [meal]—they'll say, "Well whatever. Call me." They might not even see it. So that was this other thing that was really different than any other educational experiences I'd had.

Alan refused to call himself a teacher. "I'm not a teacher. All I can do is set an example, and show you techniques, and teach you to be sensitive and observing." That's interesting because of Alan being such an artistic, temperamental person. He had a temper and a rage. He turned a lot of people off, too, and a lot of people were suspicious of his "non-scientific" approach to horticulture and everything. But what he told us in those early days was, "The only thing I can teach you is sensitivity and observation." That's the basis of empirical science. So what was so scary about that?

He did talk about natural rhythms. Our sowings of seeds was tuned into a period just before the new moon, and then our transplanting— Anybody from the outside would hear that and go, "Oh, he's teaching people all this hodge-podge about the moon." People would want to brush that off. But once again, the truth of it was it wasn't superstition. It was just attuning your work with natural rhythms which truly exist in the world. The idea of eating in season comes out of

the same kind of awareness. And the moon does affect the tides and people's moods.

There was another teacher at the university in those days, Jasper Rose, who was an art historian, and then Mary Holmes, who I never had the opportunity to learn from, but so many people spoke so highly of as the years went by. I ran into Jasper Rose one time on Ocean Street Extension when I was learning pruning from the next teacher I had after Alan, [who was] this man named Richard Crandall who had been an orchard man in Santa Cruz. He was born in Santa Cruz and lived his whole life there, and I hired myself out to him for \$1.65 an hour pruning plum trees.

Rabkin: He had an orchard on Ocean Street Extension?

Nelson: Well, he took care of them all for other people. He didn't really have his own land. He was a handyman and a worker, a very simple man, very different than Alan. A good counterpoint, though.

Alan was never recognized, because he had no credentials. He was, in the end, brushed aside. But also, he didn't stay put too long. He was a pioneering type. He went off to do other things. Jasper Rose said, "Well, the university never realized what they had in Alan Chadwick. He was so inspiring and such a genius in terms of his impact on people." He put him way up high in a short list of inspirational people.

Alan wasn't a professor, but he was there in an inspirational capacity. He was a storyteller. He appreciated beauty. Those were the things that were charming

about him. He told stories of world travels. He was always coming up with things. Some of it was just poetic fabrication. When somebody tried to do a biography of him, there were some gaps and falsehoods. Alan was making up a lot, but there was no intent other than to wake people up and make them appreciate the beauty of the earth, and that you could produce product and have it be beautiful at the same time. Because [in] agriculture at that point, and industrial agriculture still—there's no correlation between productivity and health or beauty. For Alan, they were intertwined, one thing.

Rabkin: Who else was actively working with Alan at the time, that was in the circle that you were moving in?

Nelson: It was a couple-year period. Well, Steve Kaffka; Beth Benjamin; Jim Peutherer, who had a career as a Waldorf teacher.³ Nancy Lingeman; Steve Decater, who is now still farming. Sheri Slaughteroff, who is now Sheri Wildfeuer, who is very active in the biodynamic movement in Kimberton Hills in Pennsylvania, she was there. I'm sure I'm forgetting a bunch of other people, but those are the ones that jump out from the period that I was there. It was a small collection, and a lot of volunteers.

Another thing that was very interesting to me when I talked to Jim Cochran⁴—who is the Swanton Berry Farm man, and has been very important in developing organic strawberry growing, a very innovative person, and in social justice and in caring for the farm families in an equitable, fair way—Jim is a very integrous person. He told me that (I forget what he was studying) just driving by the Garden and seeing it, and then seeing the produce and the flowers that we were

putting out in the little giveaway cart that we had in those days, it was just that impact that made him have the idea that, oh, “Well if Alan Chadwick and if this little garden project can grow beautiful vegetables and flowers organically, then I must be able to figure out how to do strawberries that way.”

So that’s really interesting to me. [Cochran] never worked [at the Garden], and yet he got this very important inspiration to pursue his life’s work out of it too, just by its example. So you never know. Camp Joy has probably been like that, too. Some people walk through and they go, wow! But they wouldn’t come up on my list of people who have worked there, if you see what I mean.

Rabkin: Yes. When you look back on your time working with Alan at the Garden, are there any experiences that stand out as most memorable or influential, any particular moments?

Nelson: Oh, I’m sure a bunch of them, really. It was a long period of time. I started working there in the fall and I worked there a lot. Then winter came and faded out. And then in the spring I started working there full time and worked all through that season. We were going to go to Canada, but we put it off for a whole year. And then we left in the early, early spring of the following year, Beth, my first wife, and a friend, Rory—Rory Chris—worked with Alan during that time too.

Rabkin: And Beth [Benjamin] was also working with Alan.

Nelson: And Beth. That’s where we met, working at the Garden together. Yes, she worked there. So we went off to Canada. It was kind of a turbulent time.

Alan wasn't sure that he was really wanted there and if the Garden would really succeed. I think you interviewed Steve Kaffka and he talked a lot about those critical periods when the chancellor came on board to really support it.⁵ But at first it was a really shoestring operation. Who knew whether it would succeed or not?

So we left and then we came back and worked there again. What stands out as significant memories are a lot of meals, a lot of fun thrown into it. My experience with Alan was very (or at least the parts that I choose to remember), it was very upbeat and very positive. Later, when Alan was in a lot of pain and he was cranky— Wendy Johnson⁶ talks about Alan, and she didn't have the same kind of somewhat lighthearted, friendly, almost peer relationship that some of us in that early group were able to have because of the fact that it wasn't weighted. There wasn't too much attention and pressure on Alan. Those were good days for him too, when they were good. I remember him playing King of the Mountain on the compost pile one time, after we were catching rats, because there was a rat infestation.

Rabkin: [laughs] The true kings of the compost pile.

Nelson: Yes, he had us all out there cornering rats and whacking them with forks and setting traps. And we would go on hikes, and sometimes he would throw a little dirt clod at you and then duck down behind something, and you'd turn around and there'd be nobody there and then he would laugh.

I remember him talking about observing most of us and seeing that we had some inner connection with it, and giving us the space to discover how to take care of

plants or what the insights were by giving us some space to do that, and not being overbearing with us.

Of course, as soon as I'm saying this, I'm not sure if I really believe it, because he gave us the strong sense that there was only one right way to do things, and only *he* knew what it was. He was constantly checking in to make sure that you were doing it. Later on we figured out that everything that Alan said wasn't necessarily right or wrong. Sometimes he had the wrong names for plants, and sometimes he would insist that you would do something a certain way. And then as the years go by, especially at Camp Joy, you'd start to think, now wait a minute. This is a lot of work. Isn't there some other way to do this? So we questioned that. But I felt like he taught me to question. But I think I came to the experience [as] a questioning person. I don't think I was too vulnerable to getting swept into a regime. And Alan was the same way as an individual, but he was very strong-willed in his leadership. Alan didn't really attract too many people who just followed him like disciples. He insisted he wasn't a guru. He hated the word. He taught us to think for ourselves.

Of course, I remember a couple of moments of conflict with Alan which were my stubbornness bumping into his stubbornness. And then at the end I got booted out of there. That's the way a lot of people graduated from being a student of Alan's, by being kind of thrown out, in a sense. Because if you started to question too much, then— See, he had this perhaps tragic flaw in that he couldn't share the leadership very well. His projects would get to the point where he didn't know how to share the running of them. So they got to the point where they couldn't exist with him anymore because he couldn't take the next step. The

Garden couldn't continue with him, or even seemingly without him, but then when he would leave and there would be a crisis, then—

The whole thing was inspirational to so many people, and that's this whole process of just doing the hard work and digging in deeper. If you study the history of the Farm, it was just befraught with problems for decades. It's the credit to all the different people through the times who believed that the work was important in that bigger context than Alan, in the bigger context of ecology. If we're going to, as a human race, survive on the Planet Earth, we have to learn how to live more lightly. Reforming agriculture is one of the core tasks. Those of us who are doing that have been inspired by various things to keep doing the work and sticking with it.

Other Mentors

There are other people [who inspired me]. Alan was one of my main inspirations and mentors, but there was the orchard man, Rick Crandall, who was a fabulous influence, and there was a goat keeper out on Old San Jose [Road] who I met—we went there with Alan to talk to him about chickens and goats and I met this guy Elmer Linder. He was very inspirational in terms of animal husbandry. [He was] a man who was of the earth. His dad was a farmer and he was a farmer. His dad was a prune farmer in Gilroy. Elmer had raised chickens for thirty-five years, and then had a health crisis and nursed himself back to health by drinking goat's milk from his one goat. When I met him he had about a hundred and fifty goats, and he was selling milk by doctor's prescription only, raw milk, and then the rest to an evaporator. He was so wise in this earthy way. Elmer was amazing.

It was very interesting to go there with Alan. And then I went back there after I started Camp Joy and kind of reintroduced myself and reminded him that I had met him when I was with Alan Chadwick. What did he say? He said, "Yeah, I've chewed the fat with Mr. Chadwick on a couple of occasions. He's a very wise man. I'd advise you to listen to him. He knows a lot." And then he went on to say, "But one day he came out here and he tried to teach me something about chickens." He says, "Now, I'll tell you right now. There's not many people alive that know as much about chickens as I do, and Mr. Chadwick was wrong about a couple of things that he said."

Rabkin: [laughs]

Nelson: I learned a lot from Elmer. I spent quite a bit of time over about three years with him. And Rick Crandall before that. I learned pruning from him. Rick had a certain kind of contentment and acceptance of life that Alan didn't have at all. Alan was pretty turbulent and temperamental and kind of tormented in a creative sort of way. Rick Crandall was kind of the opposite of that, just somebody who had been content to work in a simple way for most of his life. He'd had interesting [Great] Depression experiences. They lost their family land during the Depression. They had a farm and then they had a lodge. He would go take the horse and the cart down to the train station in Santa Cruz, and pick up the guests and take them to his mother's lodge, where they would stay for a few days and have meals provided. The hard times in the Depression led to them making a choice of which to sell, and they sold the farm. And then it got even worse and the people stopped coming, and they lost the lodge. But he was a good influence.

Lots of other things. I think after working with Alan, somebody showed me the writings of Sir Albert Howard, who was considered to be one of the founding fathers of organic agriculture, and hence sustainable agriculture. His books were totally inspirational to me. They are kind of out of print and hard to find. *The Soil and Health*⁷ and *An Agricultural Testament*⁸, two very similar books. Very English. He had a way of talking that made it sound like this is the irrefutable truth. Alan was like that too. Then later on you found out maybe it isn't all true, but it's a nice stance.

Imagination and Play

I think in terms of that question of special times in the Garden, there were a lot of times. Like, just to experience certain fruits and vegetables for the first time, and then eat them and watch them and see how beautiful they are, I mean, just fine varieties of lettuce. It wasn't very long before that when iceberg lettuce was about all you could ever buy at the supermarket. It isn't like now. It wasn't like that. Flower shops were all these kind of formal places for funerals and weddings. There weren't charming little cottage "flowers in buckets" shops. That didn't happen. Who knows how much Alan inspired that, or how much it was just coming, sparking here and there and everywhere. There were a lot of people who wrote beautiful books through the next decades, including the Nearings in Northern New England and the biodynamic writers. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, for instance, didn't work with Alan. There were a few people hidden in the woodwork—Wendell Berry, in that case a writer, an inspirational poet or spokesman of the values. And then the practical people that you happened to

meet who were scattered all over the country. The people who started the Seed Savers Exchange⁹ had their elders that they met who were growing beautiful heirloom varieties of vegetables that led to that whole preservation [movement]. And Alan had his favorite varieties that he remembered from growing up in Europe. He brought European sensitivities to the United States and Santa Cruz in terms of food (snow peas, runner beans, French shallots) and varieties of flowers and fruit. I remember a lot of little instances of falling in love with a particular plant or flower—old roses, *Phlox drummondii*, Dianthus, or [hearing] Alan talk about, “Now, we’re going to grow a runnuculus here! And they’re like carnivals.” He would tell you what colors they were going to be. You had no idea what he was even talking about. And then, three months later, there it was and you went, “Oh, wow! That’s what he was talking about.”

Rabkin: Like a carnival.

Nelson: Yes, because they were all yellows and oranges and reds. Layers and layers of petals. Alan talked about imagination and how important that was. It was playful and it was kid-like. It was like meeting a person who never grew up, in a kind of a wonderful way. Why should you? He loved South Africa and he told this story about how children—this might be something he made up, but that the African kids were more— It was the opposite of what he observed in our culture where grown-ups were very serious and kids were full of play. He said that in Africa the kids were kind of serious because they were supposed to be learning how to do all the things, and the grown-ups would have all these ceremonies to sing the sun up in the morning, or to celebrate. They were more playful, and that was what Americans had forgotten: how to be playful.

Women Apprentices and Chadwick

Rabkin: People have said that it was often difficult for women to be mentored by Alan, that he wasn't as accepting of as many women as of men. Was that your experience?

Nelson: Well— Not really, in terms of my firsthand experience. I mean, there was one woman who came to Camp Joy, when we first started Camp Joy, Molly, who was a very strong woman with a feminist consciousness. She went up there [to the Garden] because she was interested in it, and she couldn't handle the authority. Yes. What you're saying was probably true for her. But then she came here and learned from Beth and me. Beth gave a talk in the morning at the fortieth reunion last year [the Back 40].¹⁰ I remember because in the parking lot Nancy was smiling and telling Beth, "What you said today, it was just like that for me. We were trying to work really hard and push our own wheelbarrows and take care of things because we were trying to prove to Alan that women could do it too." So I think Alan was a little bit— He had some false assumptions about women. But there were women who didn't get repelled or turned off by whatever that was. And the fact that he was kind of authoritarian and kind of heavy-handed with the way that he directed everything, they were willing to not be distracted by that, or to take that on, because there was so much to be gained by it. And then I think that Alan gained respect for—that women were fully capable. Because there were other women later. Some of his closest allies and friends in those years were women who became his cohorts, or were mentored

by him and helped him, and back and forth. So it's an oversimplification to say that. But I think there's some truth in it.

Alan scared people out of the Garden sometimes. He would scream at people because they were walking in the wrong place, and they would run out the other way because he seemed like he was a madman. So they never saw this playful, charming, storytelling part of Alan.

Leaving the Chadwick Garden

Rabkin: How did you come to make the transition out of the UCSC Garden and into Camp Joy?

Nelson: I was so taken with the task down there. Because Alan was saying, and Page Smith too, that there was this sense of purpose and mission.¹¹ Page Smith talked a lot about the moral equivalent to war, and the William James Foundation.¹²

How I left the Garden and how I transitioned to Camp Joy—there was an incident of disagreement about restructuring of the Garden that was announced to us when we were working there. I had really bought into this idea: “Change the world. It needs it” (which is a line out of a Bertolt Brecht play that I was part of). We were transforming the nature of the university somehow by doing this garden. There was this huge sense of purpose, of changing society, which was really big in the sixties. I completely took that on, changing the way we grow our food, to make it more ecological. I probably wasn't capable of leaving the Garden because I was enamored with that task.

So I basically got thrown out of the Garden because I disagreed with the restructuring idea in an active way, and, along with Jim Peutherer, called for a review of the decisions that were announced to us by the student council. Because by that time, Beth and I were official volunteer employees of the Garden. We'd signed in at Central Services [UCSC's administrative offices dealing with student employment, and the like]. So we had some legitimacy. We weren't just drop-outs, which was a concern—that these good, smart students were leaving the university to work full time in the Garden. I mean, you could see that didn't sound like the right thing to the administration. It was the right thing for me and led to my life's work. So it wasn't really a problem for me. But it was a concern. But anyway, there was a restructuring. We disagreed and we wanted it to be reviewed in a democratic sort of way. Well, you know, it wasn't a democratic thing. Policy is set by the [UC] Regents or by the administration (or Alan Chadwick and Steve Kaffka in this case), and it's not up to the students to decide this.

So anyway, I got thrown out of the Garden and then had two years of doing a big backyard garden on a vacant lot in Santa Cruz, and transitional stuff. But then we were having to leave our house in Santa Cruz, so I wasn't going to be able to carry on with this vacant-lot garden. And it wasn't really enough for me anyway. It was a good transition but I wasn't content there. I wanted to either go back to Canada, or find some land where I could plant some fruit trees and do a bigger thing.

So I went up to visit the Garden and by this time we had amended our relationship with Alan. We were friends again. And there was a letter pinned to

the bulletin board up there from a woman in Boulder Creek, who grew up right across the street from Camp Joy. (I have it in a file somewhere.) It said, "I have four sunny acres in Boulder Creek and I've read about your garden project and I'm very impressed." *Sunset* and *Life Magazine* both did articles. "And I have a piece of land that would be perfect for young people wanting to start from scratch and would be interested in talking to you about it." It was pinned up there. And Alan, in his handwriting, had written, "What reply?" on it. It was right at the time when they were negotiating to get more land to start the Farm. So I asked the young people who were working most closely with Alan if there was anybody pursuing this. I had noticed that letter, because I was looking for an opportunity. Then I talked to Alan about it. But I had told him I was moving back to Canada. So he kind of interrogated me about my intentions and said, "Well, this is an opportunity. You're going back to Canada and I can't just turn this over to you. It has to be somebody who is serious." But I kind of talked my way through that and said, "Well, yes, I might go back to Canada but maybe I can get this started for someone else." So he handed this letter to me and I got in touch with the lady, and then Camp Joy unfolded from that opportunity.

Rabkin: What was the landowner's name?

Nelson: Cressie Digby. Cressie Huntington was her maiden name. She was an organic gardening enthusiast. Her father had a nursery and raised starter plants in the town of Boulder Creek back in the thirties.

So when she reached retirement age, she inherited the family home, and moved here. The four-acre field across the way came up for sale and she snatched it up

and bought it. She was also involved in real estate and maybe initially she thought about subdividing it. It could have been four one-acre house sites. But instead she read about the Student Garden Project, and she responded to that because she loved gardening. So I got connected up with this opportunity directly from the positive publicity connected with Alan Chadwick's Garden.

The other thing [was that] Joe Williamson, who was the editor of *Sunset Garden Magazine*, he came to the twenty-fifth reunion of the Chadwick Garden and gave a talk. Two things I remember him saying. One was that it was only because of seeing Alan Chadwick's Garden— He got taken there by Dean McHenry. Joe had come to cover some gathering of the Camellia Society, or something like that, which was meeting in one of the university buildings. And Joe said he couldn't even remember anything about that, but at lunchtime McHenry said, "Come with me. I want to show you my garden," and took him over and showed him and introduced him to Alan. Then they came back and did their photo essay about it,¹³ and saw beautiful flowers and beautiful vegetables, and it was done organically without pesticides and all without chemical fertilizers. And shortly thereafter they came out with an editorial saying, "DDT should be banned. We can't use this anymore." Rachel Carson had been campaigning for that for some time, quite a few years. But Joe said, and I'm sure it's on the tape from the twenty-fifth [anniversary], that if they hadn't seen Alan Chadwick's garden, they wouldn't have had the courage. It gave them the courage to make that editorial stance, because they saw a manifestation that yes, you can— Because organic gardening at that point was really anecdotal. Nobody took it much seriously.

Everybody assumed that it meant you'd have scabby, funky-looking apples and bug-eaten flowers, which is not true at all.

Rabkin: Even with the influence of Rodale at that point?¹⁴

Nelson: Rodale— Yes, I think it's safe to say that. I think Rodale as a publication didn't have at that moment, at that time—it just didn't have a status that was truly respected by *Sunset Magazine*, or by the mainstream garden[ing] media. It hadn't really broken through. And Alan's garden and that visit that Dean McHenry brokered to Alan, was a turning point in *Sunset Magazine* starting to embrace organic gardening.

Sunset Magazine helped us out here at Camp Joy. We got into hot water. We were living in teepees and a geodesic dome and an old converted barn. We had no code house. We had a septic tank and a little toilet building that looked like an outhouse. And we got involved in local land-use politics. The county kind of—at that point the health department and the building department came here and red-tagged us and everything. And Joe Williamson wrote a letter to the county of Santa Cruz on *Sunset Magazine* letterhead stationary saying, "We at *Sunset* are closely watching the Nelson project in Boulder Creek as being one of the first proving grounds in the private sector for Alan Chadwick's organic gardening project which we reported on in 1969." And that was huge, that letter, in terms of getting the county to slow down enough to work with us. So that was cool.

Rabkin: Amazing.

The Genesis of the Idea for the Student Garden Project

Nelson: There's an interesting story of how the Garden Project at UCSC came to be. I always try to tell this story to new apprentices. For years I've told this story. I heard this story twice from Alan, and both times during turbulent times when it looked like the Garden wouldn't continue, for one reason or another. He would reach deep, and tell us why he was there and how he'd come to be there. I also heard Page Smith tell this story.

It was in the very early years of the university. The university was two or three years old. And at that point in time, the concept of UC Santa Cruz included a lot of innovations, a new idea of cluster colleges each with its own major emphasis, a liberal arts kind of model. Page Smith was really central to the whole thing, Page Smith was very important in all this happening. And there was a poetry professor named Donald Nicholl from England who was there initially. He was a writer and had a reputation. Norman O. Brown was there. Norman actually talked about that too, at the twenty-fifth reunion. He talked about the origins from his point of view, of the Chadwick Garden and how it was innovative and everything. He wasn't really a central player in its coming about. He was there and then wrote about it.

Donald Nicholl gave a talk. The name of his talk, I believe, was "A Sense of Place." Now that's a pretty well-known phrase, but I have the sense that that was just being coined, that sense of a sense of place. I wasn't there for the talk, but he gave it. And there was a concern about the relationship between this growing university complex on the Cowell lands that it had acquired, and the history of the Cowell lands, and the history of the Native Americans. There was a concern about how this university was going to maintain its sense of place. The

connection with the uniqueness of the land, I think, was what brought up that very question. If it had just been in the middle of Modesto or something— Of course, it would still be relevant as to how does this fit into the Central Valley agriculture. But it had to do with how does [the university] fit into this beautiful forest land on the marine terraces.

Donald Nicholl had given talks about a poet named David Jones. David Jones was an English poet, who, in the form of an epic, had written a story about reconstruction after the devastation of the Second World War. And in this epic, there was an image of a man coming to plant gardens. So that was wound into his sensitivity and probably was mentioned in the talk. At the end of the talk somebody asked, “Well, how can we develop this sense of place here?” (I think maybe his talk was on a sense of place in a bigger context, and wasn’t necessarily applied to the university. Maybe it came out of the questions.) And he laughed and said, “Well, there are three ways—and I always say that when somebody asks me a question, because it gives me a little more time to think.”

Rabkin: [laughter]

Nelson: And the third one was: plant a garden. In the audience listening to this talk was Page [Smith], of course, and Paul Lee, and also a woman named Freya von Moltke, who was living with and taking care of a very prestigious professor named Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy.¹⁵ He had been one of Page Smith’s mentor professors at Dartmouth. He was a German Jewish man who had fled Germany during the rise of Nazism and Hitler. He was a religious person at a time when there was a lot of academic, intellectual conflict between science and religion.

Rosenstock-Huessy tried to keep them together and openly spoke of his religious faith and spiritualism, and was a voice of that. So he was in the audience.

After this talk, there was this dialog that developed. An idea came up of starting a garden, a student garden. So then Freya von Moltke said— Well, going back in time, the fact that she was there was auspicious, because her husband, the Count [Helmuth James] von Moltke was also a German man who was involved in politics and religion in Germany and had connections with Steiner and those people in Germany.¹⁶ And he didn't flee the country. He stayed and tried to oppose the rise of Hitler and eventually was arrested and implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler, and imprisoned and tried, and got to speak about God and this whole conflict [of science and religion] in the trial, which was apparently very meaningful to him. But he was eventually executed by Hitler. And in the last months of his life the only person that was able to see him was this [prison] chaplain, who then communicated back and forth to his wife [Freya]. And one of his last wishes to his wife was that, "I see this great shadow, this darkness coming. And when it eventually passes, go somewhere, find somewhere in the world where you can start a garden, where young people will learn of creation, because there's so much destruction in the world."

She held that wish in her mind until 1967. And then Don Nicholl [was] talking about a garden, and a sense of place. All of a sudden they were talking about a garden. So she said, "Well, I know the perfect man to start this garden." Alan Chadwick had been a longtime friend of hers. They had spent time together in South Africa in relation to classical drama, and the British Admiralty Gardens, which Alan ran. I found out more recently that Alan had mentored her two sons.

Because of his ability to connect with people and find out what they're thinking, he had inspired her two sons in some significant way that made her realize that he had that quality in him. And she knew that he was a consummate gardener and was committed to his vision of beauty and health, and maybe organics. So she wrote him a letter and asked him to come and start this garden.

Then of course the stories that I heard from Alan, and maybe through Page, was that when Alan came he was skeptical because he saw the university as a place dedicated to science and serving industry. It wasn't serving a vision of wholeness and beauty. He said something about: "This university is a place of science and destruction." If that statement got around, then you can kind of understand why people didn't like Alan, some of the people. There was some truth in that, but it was kind of a pretty black-and-white statement. But she said, "No, no. Wait until I get there. I think this is the right place," I think probably because she knew this handful of inspired professors, and the vision of innovation of the campus. So she said, "I know it will be very difficult. It will be an uphill struggle. But if we succeed, it will endure."

So that's how he came. Alan had so much will and charisma and force in his character. Who knows? I don't know if it would have taken if it hadn't been somebody like him with that much personal power and commitment and vision.

Alan told that story probably to reinvigorate his own commitment to it, and ours, because both times he told this story the garden's future was uncertain. One time was when they were going to take away the whole nursery garden for a

provost's house and we were trying to decide whether to move the whole garden.

That [story] links it back into history, and it links it into this human struggle to develop a more right way of living on the planet. That's a pretty interesting story, and I always love to tell that story to the current apprentices.

The current Farm and Garden [is] a much more fully developed teaching example and facility than it ever was in those early days. It *is* serving in that function of trying to change society and change industrial agriculture. But it comes out of those origins that are pretty interesting and important. So anyway, that's that story as best as I can tell it off the cuff.

Rabkin: Thank you. I'm so glad you told that story.

Choosing a Site for the Garden

It makes me wonder whether you know anything about the siting of the Chadwick Garden, the choosing of that site.

Nelson: A little bit. I mean, I've heard the story. A guy named John Powell Alan arrived, and I don't know if there were any preliminary ideas of where this garden could be, but they all walked around and visited several sites. One of them was right in front of Stevenson College, right there where the fields come up and hit the college. That didn't take, for whatever reason. It didn't fit into the idea of the design of whatever people had in mind for the sports fields down below. Another one was there was a whole hollow in an oak grove which is now a parking lot behind Crown and Merrill. There was a hollow. That was another

site. Another site that was considered was up behind what is now called the Bay Tree Bookstore and where the Whole Earth Restaurant was. Before that it was The Kite. The Kite was a little coffee shop, and then it was the Whole Earth Restaurant. And the [Upper] Quarry is off to the right. Well, up above that was another site. That wasn't really available because whatever is up there now was sketched in. And then another option was the one where it is now. Alan liked that one because of its extreme visibility. I think he also liked the challenge of building the terrace there. When we started doing stone work there, I remember Alan mumbling something about wanting—I mean, he had these aspirations of: "This is going to be one of the largest examples of hand labor stonemasonry." He liked the Herculean task.

That was a horrible site in many ways. Orin [Martin]¹⁷ will tell you that, too. It was hard, rocky, abused soil. There was a little road to the electrical plant, which was always a nemesis to Alan. He hated that electrical plant. (We always wondered whether that kind of drove him crazy. Because it hums all the time and who knows what kind of electromagnetic rays it is giving off.) But it was the road up to it, and then when they carve a road they just shove all the soil down the hill. So there was all this subsoil on top. And then at the bottom was another drainage. There was the road cut down to the road, and on top of that was another little drainage gutter. So there were areas there that we watered as best we could. The water wouldn't soak in very well. And then we had to pick-axe to break in the first foot. But he loved the sun exposure, and the visibility from the road so that everybody would see it when they came up there. I think he was happy with that site.

There was a clump of madrone trees that eventually died. I think they hated the fact that there was watering and gardening going on all around them. So it wasn't completely benign in terms of its impact. But it basically did turn somewhat of a sore-thumb, shrubby piece of land into something that is beautiful and historical at this point, and very productive. The soil is amazing. All that work and time. So that's what I remember about the site.

Rabkin: Was the steepness of the slope a challenge?

Nelson: Oh, yes. Definitely. Alan liked it because it was like a solar collector. During the fall and spring and winter months the sun [exposure] would enhance photosynthesis and that sort of thing. It was prone to erosion because if you watered for any time at all, the water started running down the path and pretty soon a little bit of soil would come down the path. So they were constantly gathering that soil. It wouldn't leave the property, rarely, unless it was some torrential event. But it would accumulate on the main path, and we would scrape it all up and put it in wheelbarrows and then roll it back up and dump it in the top of the bed again.

Rabkin: [laughs]

Nelson: And then Gilbert de Silva came along, and Steve [Kaffka] maybe, working to redesign the whole garden so that it was more contoured, the upper garden. And then later, Orin or somebody came along and wanted to restore it to the way Alan had it. If it's carefully managed, I think that its susceptibility to erosion is handled, and I think that the plants' performance is enhanced by the

fact that it faces the sun like that instead of being [oriented] east and west, so that everything would be shaded as the sun went across—

Alan always wanted to have roses and fruit trees up there, and Orin has brought that into manifestation.

The Farm was this huge, secondary undertaking. Alan had huge ideas about the Farm. He wanted to build some kind of stone royal road into it. He had this vision that all the land up to the chancellor's house was going to be included in the garden, and there was going to be a silent garden and a lake, and herbaceous borders running along the drive. I mean, his ideas were impossibly large, visionary. But just the fact that he kept spouting all these wonderful ideas was part of what we liked about him, you know?

Rabkin: Yes.

Nelson: He thought outside the box, for sure.

A Vision for Camp Joy

Rabkin: It's now October 23, 2008, and I'm back at Camp Joy with Jim Nelson for our second interview. Jim, at our last interview you told the story of seeing the letter that was posted at the Chadwick Garden, from a woman who had four acres in Boulder Creek that she was interested in having some young farmers turn into an organic farm. I'm wondering if we could pick up there. Maybe for starters, you could talk about what your hopes and goals were in envisioning what became Camp Joy Gardens. What were you hoping to accomplish?

I was looking for a place to start a garden, and raise a family, and put into practice this very exciting thing that I had recently discovered and had been doing with Alan [Chadwick] at the university. This was an opportunity to do our version of it out in the private sector, out of the context of the university, and put it to work in the world. [We wanted to grow] fresh food for local people who lived right there. We got our opportunity to try that up here. And it was a perfect piece of land to undertake that.

Rabkin: How so?

Nelson: It had good sun exposure, drainage. There was a beautiful water supply. It took us until the second year to get the gravity-flow spring water system repaired. The first year, and maybe even two, we paid for the water. That was a significant expense. Then we put this old spring system back into play. I resonated with the land. I loved it and it was beautiful here, a great opportunity in a small local community.

Actually, the first year or two when we were raising vegetables and flowers, we were selling them in Santa Cruz, believe it or not, because there was hardly any natural food stores around. There was one down there on lower Pacific Avenue. And we were selling what in essence was a little version of a CSA [community supported agriculture]. We were driving around once a week and delivering vegetables to a half a dozen of our good friends in Santa Cruz.

Rabkin: Where in Santa Cruz were you selling? Was it just these private outlets, the sort of CSA-equivalent? Or did you have a retail outlet as well?

Nelson: We had one. The Integral Yoga Institute health food store on lower Pacific Avenue bought from us fairly regularly. Then later on there was a store in Brookdale, a natural food store in this very little town of Brookdale.

All the different kinds of things which we take for granted now evolved during that same time. In time, we started selling at the Felton Farmers' Market. And the CSA, and then eventually we went more exclusively toward CSA. But [during] the interim time, the key thing [was] that we were in a community that appreciated and responded to what we were doing. A lot of the Camp Joy programs evolved out of the gradual connections with the community that we made. One of them was there was a local craft, art sale on the streets of Boulder Creek. A friend of ours was selling pottery there and we gave him some flowers to put in some of the vases that we made. It was a Fourth of July crafts and art [fair] in Boulder Creek, a once-a-year kind of thing. And during that sale, some of the local merchants who ran a bookstore, and an art supply store, and a consignment art store all combined into one thing called The Encounter—they were lively, eccentric, intelligent people. They went by and saw the flowers, and asked about them and connected with us. They said, "We would love to sell your flowers out of our store."

So we made a little cart with big iron wheels on it. In the evening they would lock it in the bookstore and in the morning they would put it out on the sidewalk. A little flower cart. We supplied flowers two or three days a week and sold bouquets there. Then that evolved also: we figured out that we could sell vegetables off that cart a couple of days a week. We started doing that. My wife, Beth, loved selling directly to local people. It was kind of a farmers' market with

one farmer attending. (laughter) People would buy things from us off the street. By the end of the season, we had a pretty good clientele that would come back every week. We sold the vegetables twice a week; we did keep bouquets there all the time. “Vegetables à la Cart.” That was our advertisement. (laughs) That was a nice little cart. So that was sweet. That worked really well.

As the years went by, there were more possibilities. Natural food stores were starting to spring up so there were more retail markets for us to go to. Eventually there was an actual bona fide farmers’ market. Farmers’ markets—there weren’t any at all in Santa Cruz in the late sixties, or 1970-71 when we started. I don’t know exactly, I’m sure you could research when they started coming back.¹⁸

Later on, the CSA concept fit really well for us. And at the time that we went there, it reminded me of what we actually did the first two years, in a sense. Although we delivered. We didn’t have people pick up.

Other connections with the community? Our first kid, and then later my daughter as well, went to local elementary schools and the teachers would get to know that our kids came from Camp Joy. They knew about Camp Joy because we got written up in the local papers and we had a presence in the marketplace and everything. So they started asking, “Oh, can we bring the class for a field trip?” So that was the very origins of that. Now that’s a fairly active program, in the spring and fall, of kids coming here, a variety of children’s programs. All those things came right out of living here.

Rabkin: When you were first starting out, did you envision an educational farm, a teaching farm?

Nelson: Yes. It was concurrent. We wanted to produce beautiful food and flowers. But we also wanted it to be educational, and we wanted it to be a place where people could come and see the beauty of it, and appreciate it, and learn by example, or learn by actually coming here and helping. I was part of a panel at Eco-Farm in 2007 or 2008 called “Quality Farm Apprenticeships.” There were three of us that presented. And in preparing for that, I realized that my experience at UCSC with Alan Chadwick was so wonderful and transformative to me, that I was kind of imprinted, in a sense, with that model of having a garden and a farm where people could come there, help, and learn. I really felt that that was something that had happened to me that I appreciated so much. I believed that there was this need or possibility in the world to create an organic movement, and that was one of the ways to share it.

I think the model of having Camp Joy be an apprenticeship farm was right there at the beginning as well. Initially, it was some of my friends that were invited to come and help, people who had known that Beth and I had worked with Alan, but they hadn’t themselves. They got to come here and learn from us. Some of them were very interested in that, and some of them peripherally interested, and were on their own related life course. We had good carpenters who would come here who really wanted to be carpenters, and that was important.

The goals included educational outreach, or sharing what we knew, and also learning how to make it work in the real world. Alan’s gardening was very philosophically ideal[istic], and a lot of claims were made about it. This was a place to make it real and find out—how does this pan out? That process was a sharp learning curve for us.

The idea of having it be a family place was strongly in there too. There was a lot of push and pull about—what is this place? Is it our home and our family, or is it a school? Sometimes [these goals] merge really well together, and sometimes they conflict a little bit. It was difficult to try to do both at once. It evolved over a period of time to find the right balance. Now Camp Joy is generational, so there're kids of the kids who used to come here; the peers of my kids who are in their thirties are bringing their kids by Camp Joy, and helping run the programs here. Outreach for kids now is a little stronger even than it was at the very beginning.

Rabkin: In the early days, were there people besides you and Beth who were core to the enterprise?

Nelson: Yes, in first half dozen years it was a core group of people that I knew through the Santa Cruz community, where I had come from, who stayed involved in a major way with Camp Joy for those first, quite a few years. We had very minimal living facilities, and in the winter people would tend to disperse and travel and do other things, connect with their families, and then they would come back in the spring. But there was a core group of people that were pretty reliable and helped build the place up. There was a change, too, from year to year. There were people who stayed just for a season. The woman who helped me start the garden and worked out there every day with me, day after day after day, just was here for one year, and then she went and started her own farm up in the Sierra foothills.

Rabkin: Who was that?

Nelson: Molly Breen is her name now. She was involved in some garden projects. She had been a UCSC student and had been intrigued with the Alan Chadwick project, but didn't connect with it. And then she heard that she could come here and learn, and that was more suited to her temperament anyway.

Steps in Establishing Camp Joy Gardens

Rabkin: Tell me about the tasks you had to accomplish in order to transform this place into Camp Joy Gardens.

Nelson: Okay. Establishing the garden was our number-one priority. That's all we really wanted to do. That was the most important thing. The garden was kind of our living room, in a sense. So the first thing was laying out the garden, figuring out a design for it that was functional, and pleasing as well. And digging beds, creating the beds. Some areas were left as fields, little fields where we grew squash and corn and cucumbers and things like that. We didn't put everything in beds. That was one thing that we realized, that there was a place for that.

The water system. The first year and a half we limped by with just San Lorenzo Valley Water District water [from the system] that had been installed on the property by Cressie Digby who gave us our start. It was metered water that we were paying for. We had to apply for a variance to use an agricultural amount of water because there were some restrictions because of a drought period that we were having. And then during that drought period we put in a well, and we also— I guess before that was when we got the spring working. That was a big job. We had to go under two roads. One road we found the old pipe and

upgraded it, and the other one, that private road, we had to dig across it and repave it. We ran the pipe through the woods and then across road number one, Irwin Way, and then across the neighbor's property, which was Cressie's property, and then into Camp Joy. We dug a network of trenches all through the whole garden and put in a whole water system. That was pretty huge.

Building the house became another important priority after that first two or three years. I guess it was year three that we started working on the house. We had built a greenhouse. We had built a barn to keep things dry, the tools and the seeds and everything. Because all there was was one dilapidated old barn on the property when we came. There really wasn't any living facility. So we had to build that as well.

Rabkin: What was the land like when you arrived?

Nelson: It was a big grassy field. People talked about it being the meadow. But it wasn't a meadow in pristine condition. It was just a big, vacant grassy field. It had probably been grazed some off and on through the years. It wasn't fenced. Cressie had it fenced and had the water put in just before I ever saw it. So that was good. It kept the deer out initially, though we had to upgrade some of the fences later.

We put in fruit trees, and of course it took quite a few years for them to come into production. The first few years I did a lot of pruning work, and there were a couple of little orchards nearby that I found out about. I pruned [those] and traded for harvesting rights, instead of charging them, because they were people

who didn't really want to pay for it anyway. So that was great. We had fruit before we had our own fruit. I did pruning work for hire too, in the winter.

We got goats right away. We got a milk goat that some local people had that they were selling. Her name was Maya. We used to have a funny song about how Maya wasn't the illusion, it was a goat. (laughs) We wanted to have good quality milk [for our children]. And then that stuck with us ever since. And chickens for fresh eggs. The concept is that a healthy, ecological agriculture includes multiple layers; an animal element is present in a fertile, sustainable soil. The model is not one of specialization, but one of diversity, in terms of vertical integration of animal husbandry and plants.

Rabkin: I'm going to ask you to talk about that a little more in a minute. But first I'd like to ask you about going to Angel Island [in San Francisco Bay] to get materials for Camp Joy.

Nelson: Can I digress for just a moment from that question?

Rabkin: Sure.

Nelson: Cressie Digby, who wrote the letter to Alan—I feel like I didn't say enough about her. She was kind of like our adopted grandmother, in a way. We were younger than her kids. Our sensitivities and sensibilities coincided so much with a dream that she had. She assisted us financially for the first two years. The first year we didn't pay her any rent at all. We did work to develop the property in lieu of rent. I kept track of the hours that I worked on the property. And then after about a year and a half we took over payments from her. We gave her

money once a month (and it wasn't very much) that allowed her to pay her mortgage payment on the property. And at the same time, we had this verbal agreement that we would buy the property from her, or more properly said, that she was willing to sell it to us at her cost if we made a go of it. So she was really a sponsor of it, not only conceptually but financially too, in that she helped us out, and wasn't trying to profit from it. She just wanted to help launch something. Later on, I was able, a couple of times, to go—once it was the Unitarian Fellowship and the other time it was a garden club—where she was in the audience and I was really happy to be able to credit her. It was our idea but it was her idea too, and we came together so nicely on it.

Swords Into Plowshares: Building the House

Now going on to the Angel Island thing. Because we didn't have any code housing, there's a whole chapter in our history, and there's newspaper articles and records in the County Building and everything about it, because we were living on the land and we didn't have a code house. That was a big issue at the time, or was becoming a big issue, and there were political dimensions of it too, in terms of a transformation that was happening in the [San Lorenzo] Valley, where people with environmental sensitivities were living in the valley and questioning development. At one point, the master plan showed that there was going to be another two-lane highway on the other side of the river, parallel to Highway Nine. Some of the vested interests in the valley were trying to facilitate development and real estate interests, a lot of big projects which were going to have big impacts, because we're in a steep, forested zone where residential

development isn't very appropriate, really. There was a lot of push and pull going on with that, with those environmental issues. We had a good reputation because we worked hard and grew a beautiful garden and people liked us, but we also started to participate in that dialogue. We spoke out, a couple of our members, through letters to the editor and everything, against—you know, let's scale this development down. As soon as we did that, there were complaints and we got raided by the County Sanitation Department, the Health Department, the Planning Department. We were red-tagged and in hot water, and it went on for about two or three years, because we had such good community support that they never really were able to shut us down. A lot of people were also writing letters saying, "We like this project. Let's try to accommodate it." So we became anxious to build a house.

We came to an agreement finally with the county at the end of this whole period that we would build a code house, and that would basically solve the problem, which it ultimately did. We were of the mind of recycling and we didn't have a lot of money to spend. We found out through one of the people who was involved here and grew up in San Francisco and heard about Angel Island, that there was some demolition going on up there. We took out a permit to take down an army barracks. On December 7, 1973, or 1974, I think—Pearl Harbor Day—we landed with hammers and pry-bars on Angel Island. We took out an insurance liability bond to cover us and we got permission to stay in the firehouse bunkhouse on Angel Island. We lived out there for seven weeks and took down a World War II army barracks in its entirety, eighty by forty feet, two stories. Pulled all the nails out, pried the wood off carefully, hammered all the

nails out, pulled them out with cat's claws, stacked it all nicely, put plastic over it, and then eventually trucked it down here using amphibious landing crafts to get the wood off the island, which was a story in itself. We got the army reserve unit to help us. Through their charter, they were allowed to do community support work. So they approved it locally. They didn't have to go get permission from a federal level. They were doing maneuvers anyway, trying to clean out some old pilings in the North Garrison, which is where it was on the island. It was all part of the process of turning Angel Island into a state park that facilitated visitation and tours and everything. The barracks were a hazard. They did preserve— at North Garrison I believe now there is one barrack that was preserved, and a memorial to Japanese immigrants, although the main immigration center is a little further around the corner, around the island.

So we took that barracks apart, and then took some parts of another barrack, and then hauled it all down here and spent a whole summer framing this house out of it. We had to get the wood all approved and inspected. The building inspector said it was better wood than you could buy. It was really good wood. So we built a very sturdy, big house out of it. A very interesting design process. The house is beautiful and wonderful. It has a few shortcomings, as any house might have. We've been changing it and fixing it and keeping it up ever since. So that was the story of how that happened. It was an amazing process. There was the "Swords into Plowshares" slogan that came about through the peace movement of that time. It fit right into that. I mean, we built an organic farmhouse out of a World War II army barracks. That felt really good. And to not have to buy new materials. We had other donations from friends of some stained glass windows,

and big plate glass to make windows, and great big countertops and stuff that people were saving in their garages.

It took two seasons to get the house built, roofed, windowed, closed in. Every spring the garden would take over again, and we wouldn't work very much at the house. The people who had been involved as a core group at Camp Joy, who were carpenters, basically were pursuing other dreams. They had left. So there was a period there where we just never moved into the house. Finally we cut back on the garden and finished the kitchen. Then we moved into the house and then continued to work— It took five or six years to finally get the final inspection on the house and really get close enough that you call it done.

Rabkin: During which time you were beginning to raise children?

Nelson: Yes. Had our second by that time, Towhee. Owner-built homes can take a long time if you have other work to do. There's no contractor that's getting paid to get the job done. My daughter was raised in a house where there were no stair rails, so we just had to watch her very carefully. We were vigilant and it worked out.

When we were feeling pressured, because of the political things—that we were living here illegally, in the technical aspects of the law—I was arguing that there should be some way you could apply for a variance if you're trying to establish a farm. Your priorities are different. There should be a transition period. We had a septic tank put in. (In fact, Cressie had that put in right at the very beginning. I didn't mention that.) And we built, it looked like an outhouse but it was a flush toilet. So when they would actually come to inspect, there weren't any health

hazards here, there were just technical— So the spirit of the law was intact, but we were breaking the law in terms of how the rules go, and simultaneously, we and other people like us were pressuring the county to be more stringent with their rules governing large-scale development. So it was an interesting dynamic to be involved in.

Rabkin: Did you make any headway with the move to get the county to treat farms differently?

Nelson: Well, that's a good question. I don't know. I think that's debatable. Maybe not. There was a big dialogue that ensued right afterwards. We formed an individual agreement with them that as long as we were making progress towards building the code house and it got inspected and approved, then we wouldn't have to vacate the premises in the meantime. Our position was that we had to be here in order to farm the place. So it set some kind of precedent in just the fact that that was able to happen. But no ordinance was ever amended, or no rules, or an addendum chapter in the book was ever added. There was an ensuing dialogue that went on for a couple of years about what they call Class K housing. I don't remember that it was ever approved. Up in some of the outskirt areas north of town there were the same issues. There was an owner-built home criterion, but I can't remember— Maybe something like that was approved in Mendocino County at some point. But I think that green building and low-impact building that's going on now, and approval of different ways of achieving that, is the carrying on of that same issue.

Ecological, Sustainable Agriculture

Rabkin: So let's move from the house back to the garden. You've talked a bit about the principles that guide you here, but maybe you could talk some more about any particular kinds of gardening techniques, or ecological systems, or ways of thinking about the system that is the garden, that you emphasize at Camp Joy.

Nelson: This whole [oral history] project has to do with the history of ecological, sustainable agriculture. That's what you're interviewing all these people about. To me it was extremely important to carry on the production at Camp Joy without using any pesticides or chemical fertilizers that were documented to be harming the environment, and instead to develop a different model of production and fertility that addressed longer-term sustainability and ecological principles. The ecology movement— I think all the people that got into the ground floor of organic gardening at that time of this revival of interest in it were people like myself, who thought that if we're really going to turn things around in terms of the environmental degradation that is going on, then at the core of it we need to learn how to grow our food in a way that's not harming to the environment. I think I mentioned that before. The startling example that we saw from Alan [Chadwick] gave us the confidence to pursue that. Now we have this network of farms and interest all over that's come out of that.

I had been steeped in mountain ecology, and reading John Muir's work, where everything is interconnected. We find a system. If you go out and take a picture of Camp Joy and then you show it on a slide show, you [can] say, Okay. Look at

this. There's intensive production. Here there are some beds. But adjacent to it are perennial and annual flowering plants that are bringing in insect balances, and attracting beneficial insects, and providing pollen and nectar sources for them. There's diversity. There's a bed of potatoes and next to it is a bed of beans. And there's a bed of two things interspersed together. You can see a few fruit trees on the edge and perennial herbs and flowers. And then, back in the background you see the animal husbandry going on. And there's the house. We're trying to create a productive farm that has all of these elements interconnected. The fertility cycles—there's nothing that ever gets wasted. It all goes back into the compost. Most natural systems that you use as a model for trying to develop a natural-systems agriculture aren't fragmented, whereas modern farming had become that. All the cows are six miles over there all together, and the cows, or the goats, or the ducks or the chickens, or the honeybees, or whatever, don't get to be part of each little farm. It sounds kind of simple, and I kind of take it for granted. But it's a fairly profound change from the micro to the macro level, fauna and flora and mycelium intertwined.

The larger scale something becomes, the more you often compromise the kind of fine care that is linked in with how you maintain fertility through also putting attention into the decay cycle, into decomposition, compost and the animal element. It's the little lessons. Okay, the water's running this way. We've got to design the fields so that it doesn't carry anything off. You design your system so that you don't have downstream erosion or leaching.

Rabkin: You also have invoked the notion of aesthetic beauty when talking about Camp Joy. And I'm wondering if, for you, beauty is an important part of that whole vision.

Nelson: Yes, absolutely.

Rabkin: How so? How does beauty fit in?

Nelson: Oh, gosh. I mean, without beauty life is just— Life isn't just this utilitarian thing. The beauty of life is music, and the twinkle in somebody's eye, or the breeze through the trees, or your grandmother's cookies that came out of the oven and stuff. (laughter) I mean, I'm being kind of silly with those kinds of examples. But John Muir said that we can't live by bread alone. He extolled people to refresh their spirits by getting out in nature and seeing the incredible beauty of the world, and the fecundity of it, and the cities that tended to become full of pestilence, or whatever. People asked him, wasn't it dangerous to be out in the wilderness, and he said, "Well, perhaps you should flee to the wilderness for your safety because all the bad things happen in cities." I wanted at Camp Joy to show the connection between beauty and productivity.

Perhaps I went a little overboard on it in some ways because I also fell in love, through Alan, with herbaceous borders and rose arbors. Some of the beautiful design aspects of Camp Joy got too difficult to maintain through the years. So now we're kind of scaling back. Okay, we can't take care of six perennial borders, but maybe we can take care of two or four of them. But then that gets into the fact that right now I'm taking out some old plantings, which is kind of exciting because now it's time to rotate through time, to come back in, and open up the

soil, and restore it, and put in cover crops. In another year, this will become a beautiful place to grow potatoes or tomatoes in a new place where we haven't grown for a while. You have to keep moving things around and sequencing the types of crops in order to keep the balance, and keep putting your attention into compost and decay, and giving back. I think that is part of what makes life rewarding—you're combining aesthetics with productivity. It's not just a utilitarian world that we live in.

Biodynamic Principles

Rabkin: In what ways do biodynamic principles influence the gardening that you do at Camp Joy?

Nelson: Well, that's integral to it all. Like I was mentioning to you, there's a book that just got published with some of Alan's lectures in it.¹⁹ I was steeped in and influenced by Alan, and he began in the last few years of his work to talk more and more about biodynamics and Rudolf Steiner's work and all that sort of thing. The fundamental principles behind biodynamics are completely integral with what I learned from Alan, and what I knew instinctually from my own intuition, and my own readings, and my connections with other things that I've mentioned before—like John Muir's writings particularly, and some poetry that I studied in college.

At the time that we started Camp Joy, there was a professor, Herbert Koepf, who taught at Emerson College in England. He was professor of biodynamic agriculture for many, many years there. Steve Kaffka invited him twice to come and give talks at UCSC. One time he came up here for lunch and saw Camp Joy

and liked it a lot. He particularly liked this herb border that we were planting above a stone wall, between the orchard and the garden. I remember him commenting on that. Well, when he would give a talk on agriculture, he had a very dry way of talking. A lot of times I'd look around the room and people would be nodding off. But I thought it was very interesting, because I was trying to take it to heart and figure out what it was. He would talk for fifteen or twenty minutes before he would [address] the biodynamic preparations, which are some of the specific fine tuning practices that are essential if you're going to become Demeter-certified biodynamic. But leading into that, he would describe a period of seven years that it would take for a farm to develop its individuality on a piece of land. The elements that he would describe of a farm were those very ones that I was mentioning before, where there was diversity in rotations, and sequencing, and farm animals that were interconnected with it, and you tried to have your soil management be predominantly on site.

It was appropriate to question inputs. In intensive agriculture—if you are sending out product just constantly, constantly, constantly, you're going to have to be importing something to balance that. Well, a biodynamic farm has a slightly different approach, in that the ideal of a farm is to include those elements of fertility *on* the farm. So you might have an area that you pasture with animals for a few years. And then eventually that would become the vegetable garden, and the vegetable garden would now be pasture, and that sort of thing. And those are the same beautiful principles of fertility management—a lot of Amish and Mennonite farmers practice the same thing.

Biodynamic principles are holistic and involve totality. And specifically with the preparations that they get into, I think that the idea is that there're subtle forces and subtle influences that are important to pay some attention to and to harmonize with. You shouldn't just brush them aside as being unimportant. You can get so specific with some of your inquiries, in my opinion, that you also lose sight of the beauty of the bigger picture too. Biodynamics, I feel in near complete harmony with it, although Camp Joy is not a certified biodynamic farm. Alan's gardens weren't either. In fact, it remains to be seen, as the years go on, and if people start studying [Chadwick] now that some of his lectures are being published, how we understand his teachings. He was an innovator. He didn't follow some of the biodynamic practices to the letter. Perhaps he was re-interpreting or re-applying them. I only worked with him for two of his many years of teaching (1967-1980). At that time he seemed to feel that you could bring the same rejuvenation and vital productivity into the farm through growing those important herbs and having them in your garden, and having an interface between the oak woodland and the farm, and the family and the farm, as well as a reverence and obedience to natural processes and subtle (un-measurable) influences. So he was very much in tune with the spirit of it. So yes, there's a close alliance between the two. And when people would ask Alan, "Well, where can we go for further study?" then he would point to biodynamics. That's what led a lot of people into biodynamics, was Alan pointing in that direction.

Rabkin: How do biodynamic principles overlap with—or depart from—the hallmarks of certified organic agriculture?

Nelson: I think the essential difference between those two is at this point defined by these specific preparations that Steiner alluded to, and were developed and refined through his lectures by practitioners. And all of them had to do with bringing herbs and mineral and an animal influence together, infused into the compost, or sprayed on the land at specific moments of time, when you open the earth and you spray a preparation made of manure from the grazing animal buried in the earth for six months so it's completely matured, and try to put that influence in. It's kind of homeopathic. There's also a silica spray that addresses fungal problems and that sort of thing. Those things—you are either inspired to feel it's important to do those, or you follow a similar system.

But it's arguable about whether large-scale organic certified agriculture can be sustainable. There's a concern that it's not just a substitution of inputs, that it's related to those biological principles that we were just talking about, and by extension, becomes involved with social justice and equity, because of agricultural labor that is involved in our food systems, see? Localness and scale become really important. Those are not necessarily spelled out in [organic certification]. All those things are part of a new model, and getting more people involved, which goes back to that same thing of attention to detail. Every little thing matters. Every little handful of compost or soil matters. That's more important in a garden-scale operation than it is in a large operation. I think more and more, the solutions are not big solutions. They're little solutions applied everywhere to changing the ecological balance of how we are producing food.

Questions of Scale in Organic Agriculture

Rabkin: There's a growing public conversation about an emerging dichotomy in "organic agriculture" in California. There seem to be two schools: the one you just laid out that emphasizes small-scale diversity, social justice issues, local focus, and so forth. And on the other hand, large-scale operations that, while they are certifiably organic, by the letter of the law, are very large-scale and don't pay attention to concerns, necessarily, about social justice, or serving a local community, or any of those things. Do you think of Camp Joy as being positioned in that dialogue? Do you think of your efforts here in the context of that growing dichotomy?

Nelson: We're successfully practicing and teaching and creating a model, an example of one form. I think there's tremendous application for it within communities, and even suburbs and urban agricultural interfaces. And there could be an application, in the long run, for having large farms that consist of lots of little farms, where there's cooperation and maybe more people involved. Ever since I've been here there's more to do than I can possibly do. So when people think about, where are there jobs, I just kind of giggle about it sometimes.

I think it's good for large-scale, certified organic farming to be challenged a little bit by some of these concerns that some of us are expressing, that come out of an ethical and philosophical base that was important to us. However, I like steps in the process, so I don't like to make anybody wrong for not including something, if they are headed in the right direction.

I think that even if you really just reduce it to different inputs, well, at least that's a step toward removing the harm in the picture, which is one of the places that it originally came from. Large-scale agriculture, specialization, to a certain extent, is efficient and allows people to tend to details of growing a particular crop. That's a different challenge than the one that I undertake, trying to learn the details of copious amounts of crops. And that's difficult in itself. You can't give one particular thing that you're doing all the attention that it needs, because your attention is divided in many ways. So on a larger scale, maybe [we'll] have cooperations between farms so the same farmer doesn't necessarily have to be the dairy farmer as well as the grain producer. Maybe there should be more interchange between those two, so that the fertility cycle gets completed again, through exchanges and interrelationships.

You used the word "dichotomy." It's good to have raging dialogues and challenges. But you have to make sure that you also realize that we can be united by bigger concerns. It seems a little presumptuous or not humble to assume that there's one right way of doing things. But there could be tests of concern for resource use and management and transportation. For things to change, more people have to get involved. More and more, the larger farmers, the more conscientious ones, are trying to pay attention to what's successful, what good things do you know that I can consider, and vice versa. So mutual respect and communication—

Colleagues and Mentors

Rabkin: Speaking of that kind of communication and cooperation between different kinds of farmers, are there other farmers in the Santa Cruz area who have been colleagues, or mentors, or mentees of yours?

Nelson: Well, for sure, UCSC. I've interacted with that place since the beginning, so have had friendships, and exchanges, and conversations, and compared notes with the current staff down there, and the previous staffs that have moved on. Like Dennis Tamura at Blue Heron was there, and then he went out into the world to try to make something work and is doing it in a beautiful way, on a larger scale than Camp Joy, and it's very different. It includes use of machinery and farm workers, some of whom live on the farm and some of whom don't. Those people are wonderful mentors.

Another large farm that I admire so much, and there's been some very interesting exchanges through the years between us and them, is Full Belly Farm. Full Belly Farm is stunning to me when I go see it. It's a large-scale operation, and yet it doesn't feel that way. All the elements that I've been talking about are involved on that farm. Those people are complete mentors and cohorts to me.

Rabkin: Full Belly is in the Capay Valley?

Nelson: Yes. They're the ones that do the big Hoes Down [Harvest] festival in the fall.²⁰ Well, if you go into the art barn up there, or the wreath-making barn, there's a little story there. Because we started doing our wreath sale thirty-something years ago. And Dru [Rivers] and Annie [Main, of Good Humus

Produce] from their farms—and not just from Full Belly, but there’s a collection of four or five women that came down there to learn wreath-making. We were doing this little harvest festival where we sold canned goods, and ornamental wreaths, and pumpkins, and squashes, and apples, and had activities. And on the way home they said, “We should have some kind of harvest festival like that.” And that was a little bit of the genesis of what Hoes Down is now. Hoes Down is just wonderful. It brings people from all over the communities—customers and not, and families and kids and tours. UCSC has a similar thing, too. We’ve all been visiting each other’s farms through the decades and saying, “Oh, wow. Look at the way you do that.” We’ve learned from each other.

The one little example I give which is another reason to pay attention to other farms, is I’ll have a particular year and maybe the potatoes didn’t do very well. And I think I did something wrong. I go down and I talk to Jim Leap at the UCSC farm²¹ and he says, “Oh, yes. We had such trouble with potatoes this year.” So then you say, okay— You know, not that you shouldn’t try to figure out what went well, what went wrong, and how to do it better next year, but it’s kind of liberating and wonderful to realize that, okay, it just wasn’t a very good year for potatoes; (laughter) the environmental conditions were not right, and that makes you feel a lot better about continuing. That’s just a specific example.

The people up at Occidental [Arts and] Ecology Center are good friends. And Richard Merrill²² is another person that I would have to mention as a mentor. I’ve learned so much from him. People who’ve lived here have taken his courses in entomology that he was teaching for so many years. He came and visited Camp Joy the very first summer when we started it. And then a couple of years later we

wrote an article and it made it on the cover of *Organic Gardening Magazine*, and Richard applauded and said, “You did it!” He built a horticultural program at Cabrillo College right during that same period. He was an outstanding teacher and continues to be a friend and collaborator. Many people that I know learned from him as well. He wrote a wonderful book with Joe Ortiz, *The Gardener’s Table*.²³

I’ve had a couple of beekeeping mentors too, Dave Meeks as a primary one, and then some other commercial beekeepers out of Santa Cruz that I’ve learned from. That’s a huge conversation to get into, what’s going on in beekeeping right now. It’s very interesting, actually. One thing that’s relevant is that if you look now at the two bee journals, *The American Bee Journal* and *Bee Culture*, you never saw this before— You saw it first creeping in with letters to the editor, but now you see articles in there saying, “Living with Mites: Toward an Ecological, Sustainable Beekeeping.” They’re starting to look at the challenges and getting out of this mentality of eradication, the same thing that happens with the gypsy moth and the light brown apple moth. You come up against this mentality that we can’t have any of this. And then, because of that mentality, you end up causing all the harm that you’re imagining that you’ve [prevented]. That’s what happened with the medfly. They slapped a moratorium on sales of all the Santa Cruz apples based on this kind of fear of this infestation, which didn’t really biologically happen. And then, sure enough, they couldn’t transport their apples, and the cold storage facilities were stuffed, and everybody lost all the money that they said they were going to lose.

We have to look at things like, how do we maintain basic health? Health might include some diseases. The solution comes with questioning our management, and questioning our procedure, and maybe changing things as we need to. I would say that the crisis of beekeeping is an industrial model of beekeeping serving an industrial model of agriculture. That's why there's a problem. The whole system is too fragmented to stay healthy.

Rabkin: This is the system of trucking bees across the country in semis and following the crops?

Nelson: Yes, and having just a few people keeping all the bees and everybody else specializing in other things. So the bees are stressed from being trucked around and being asked to do this job and this job and this job. And when they get there to do that job, there's not a healthy environment where they have a diversity of plants to forage from. The queen rearing is large-scale, and it's a manipulation that doesn't pay attention to the way in which the bees do it themselves, how they replace their own queens. It's a system that's based on what we want to get out of it, rather than how does this system stay healthy with its own dynamics.

I'll let you ask another question.

Rabkin: Okay. I've read that Camp Joy was the first organic farm in the Santa Cruz area. Is that true as far, as you know?

Nelson: I don't know. I don't know if it was the very first. The two other places that pop into my mind would be: Russel Wolter²⁴ in the Carmel Valley had an

organic operation going on, and he probably had that going on before we started. And then, there was a man named Nick [Pasqual]²⁵, a Filipino man, and he grew organic vegetables and marketed them, at least concurrently, if not before. And I'm sure there are others. But Camp Joy definitely was *one* of the first organic farms.

CCOF [California Certified Organic Farmers] started in 1973. Subsequently. The whole concept of certifying organic farms came later. So, yes, we got the opportunity through the letter from Cressie Digby to get a hold of a piece of land and try it. *Organic Gardening* magazine existed, but it didn't have much stature. It was just considered anecdotal. And the Seed Saving Exchange out of the Midwest, you could date when that started. It was probably after Camp Joy started. But in terms of what we're focused on in Santa Cruz County, Camp Joy was in there right at the beginning.

Camp Joy's Apprentice Program

Rabkin: We haven't talked about your apprentice program at all. Can you tell me a bit about how that works?

Nelson: Yes. We have a program that lasts from the first of April through most of November. It's very similar to the way it's always been, but it's changed a little bit through the years. The basic thing is that we find people who want to come here and help us manage and run the farm for the season, and be involved in most aspects of it, not necessarily all of them. Because maybe out of four people, two will really want to learn about goat keeping and the other two will want to put that on hold. They're more interested in other parts of it. It's hard to have

your finger in every pie. But basically they come and it's very hands-on. It's not curriculum-based. It's more based on the management of the programs that we're committed to.

At this time, we're running the CSA, which means vegetable, fruit, and flower production. And for our own consumption and for the fertility management, we have milk and eggs and honey. Then we have the tours and the kids' classes. People come and live here for the season and help run all those programs, and in the process learn how to do those things. And then, often, we'll have a few of them that really like it and that do well, and we like them, and they like us, they resonate with the place and will stay for another season or more.

The season is nearly eight months, the core season. In the winter time we kind of shut down and recharge a little bit, and it's quieter. We give them a small stipend and provide room and board. We don't charge tuition for that program. We haven't ruled that out. It's just that we haven't gone down that road. I don't think we have the depth of staff to make it possible to do that. It would create expectations that I wouldn't be willing to undertake at this point, even though I think it could be a good idea. It could be a good thing, if you had that capacity. But what's calling the shots is what we've committed to undertaking, and then get that done. And then the inquisitive people, you can see when they come, they work and they work and they look around, and their gears are turning in their head and they're saying, "I want to learn how to do all of these things." Those are the people who are self-motivated and inquisitive, and sure enough we will say, "Oh, read this book," or "check this out." We'll have conversations around the dinner table or the lunch table. That's where the curriculum gets in. But it's

not handed to you. So that's how it differs from what UCSC has evolved into being really strong in this other way. Camp Joy is smaller-scale and more hands-on. You get to spend maybe more time with the staff people.

Rabkin: How many apprentices do you have at a time?

Nelson: It's been going on for a really long time. It used to be a half a dozen apprentices. This year we started with three, and one left early, connected well for a while, but then it turned out they wanted to do something else. So we had two people (one came in March) that are still here. Then we had two additional ones during the core summer months. So we ran the whole farm with basically four apprentices, and three staff people, and lots of other volunteers and family helping with various aspects of it. It was very good that way. We also fallowed two out of the seven sections of the garden because of it being a dry year. And the thing that was interesting about that is that we maintained pretty close to the same production with less people and less ground planted, because we followed through really well. This is kind of like what I've been saying all along, but I never really believed in myself. (laughter)

Rabkin: Interesting. (laughs)

Nelson: It was calmer and more efficient. I'm really liking that model now. So that's the way the apprenticeship works.

Just one other thing to throw into the picture, is that through the years there's been a handful of people who've stayed for two to six years or something, and some of those people then have gone on to start places, or manage farms of their

own. So those are the people who really get a deeper connection. The most recent one would be Patrick Connors, who is managing the Farm School in Massachusetts now, in Western Massachusetts. He was here for two years. And then there's a little place called Sandy Bar Ranch up in Northern California that is similar to Camp Joy. Mark [DuPont] and Blythe [Reis] both lived here for many years and started that. There's a woman named Kimball Hamerel who lived here for quite some time, and she's was involved in UCSC before she came to Camp Joy. She has a business maintaining perennial borders and public plantings in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. She also did wreath making for many years, and then has also had milk animals for many years.

Rabkin: How do potential apprentices find their way to you?

Nelson: Word of mouth, and the website that we have. Mostly word of mouth through the network and a little bit of publicity.

Rabkin: Do you get more applicants than you can take?

Nelson: Yes, usually. But not a great deal more. I think people find their way. Through some serendipity we find the right people. Mostly. Occasionally I feel like it would be better if we did a little bit more outreach, because it would be good to have more people to choose from.

Rabkin: Do you prefer to have people who have gardening experience?

Nelson: Either way. Sometimes not. One is not necessarily better than the other. Often it's people who have little, and that's what they want to get by coming here. And that's really good because then they have enthusiasm and they learn

how we do it here. Once you get that grounded, and you go to any other place, you're going to make changes. It's just the nature of the thing. Sometimes I've had people whom I'm excited about, who I think are going to come, and they've had a lot of other experience, and then I start to see that, well, they kind of want to change things before they even find out how we do them, and that gets to be a problem. The joke is, "Oh, you haven't had much experience? Well, that's good because you won't have to unlearn any bad techniques." But there's no prerequisite.

Rabkin: Where do your apprentices live?

Nelson: We all share the main house for cooking, eating, and bathing, and a library, and socializing. And then there's little outbuildings that provide private bedrooms for people, that are attached to our various farm buildings.

Rabkin: Nice. And do you have any other, either volunteer or training programs, in addition to the more formalized long-term apprentice program?

Nelson: We've had some youth employment opportunities. The home-school program provides some continuity for kids through their whole elementary school period, of coming to Camp Joy every season for a number of years. And then a few of those come, and as they get older they start to help with making salve or making some value-added product. The idea is to try to get them to help us do something that we are doing so they can see this is a vocational option.

Rabkin: This is a consortium of local families engaged in home schooling?

Nelson: It's a charter school that we are affiliated with.

Rabkin: In the San Lorenzo Valley area?

Nelson: Yes, a Charter 25 school.

You always want to do more, more, more, but you can't necessarily. We have a court referral thing that we do, and a few people that mostly get in trouble for not paying traffic tickets or minor infractions, in lieu of paying large fines they work it out through community service work. We've had good and challenging people from that walk of life.

Rabkin: And then you have school field trips. Is that still happening?

Nelson: Yes. For several weeks we have a couple of tours every week. I try not to book more than that. It's changed through the years. There are some Scotts Valley schools now that are all coming here every season. They're very reliable. And some of the Boulder Creek schools. We've had Waldorf schools; we've had Santa Cruz schools. So on at least two days a week for the month of April and May and early June is when we have tours.

The fall programs, for some reason we're not getting as many calls for that. In the spring we break them up into small groups of six to ten kids. Each group is being shown around by a gardener who is not getting any gardening done during that period. (laughs) So you can't do too much of it. There's probably more money in properly run educational programs than there is perhaps (I'm not sure if this is true), in continuing to be a working farm of this scale. But I feel like if we're not a working farm, then what are we really teaching? People who lived here for many years went to visit a farm in Ireland. Now it was a beautiful bed and breakfast,

eco-tour thing. So they sat around the table and heard stories about the way it used to be on the farm, where they used to bake their own bread and have their own milk animals and sell vegetables in town. But they weren't doing that anymore. They had upgraded all the little apprentice quarters and they were renting them out—

Rabkin: For a chunk of change.

Nelson: For a chunk of change to tourists. Erin and Ed wrote a letter of appreciation back [saying] that they imagined there were several times where crossroads had come at Camp Joy where we could have gone that direction and maybe made more money in that way, but have lost something in the process. But somehow it's just in my blood. And then Chris, who is the co-farm manager right now, Chris Menge, it's just in his heart that he wants to be a farmer. We love to grow things and sell them to people and have that be what we're teaching—how to do that.

Funding Camp Joy

Rabkin: I have a couple more questions, and one is about finances. I understand that you run Camp Joy as a nonprofit, but that you try not to rely too heavily on grants, and that you generate more of your income from sales of farm products. Is that accurate?

Nelson: Yes. I think roughly a third of our income is from sale of products, including the plant sale, and the CSA, and the wreath sale and everything. About a third of it is from educational programs, which would be the home school, and

the tours, and adult education classes, which we used to do a lot of. We do not do quite as many now.

Rabkin: On what kinds of topics?

Nelson: Oh, the one that's really popular is cheese making. But compost making, or propagation, or cover cropping and soil fertility. We used to do a little series, and we still do some of those. Beekeeping is popular in the spring. Oh, orchard care. We've done adult classes in those kinds of things.

The last third [of the funding] is donations, which is partly from small membership fees and a few people who give a little more to become a member and supporter of Camp Joy. We've had some sizeable chunks of money given to us by a couple of different friends and supporters who have money and enough income that they can use our tax-exempt status to make a donation for their own tax purposes, but they are very much into supporting and enabling us to do the work that we do. And so for capital improvements, a lot of times the money's come for that—to finance the house, or the water system, or the building of a building and that sort of thing. So infrastructure improvements have come from more significant donations.

And then outside work from the people, including myself, who run the farm. I did initially a lot of pruning in the winter to bring in money. Then it became the beekeeping, and being able to sell honey year round replaced that for me. Renee's Garden had a major office in Felton, and people who lived here and were quite involved with Camp Joy would work seasonally in the off season doing customer service work or seed work down there.²⁶ Even at some seasons,

apprentices will work one day a week, or maybe two, doing a farmers' market shift for a larger farm like Blue Heron Farm, or Route One Farms, or Happy Boy Farm has employed people. Chris, who is the co-manager of Camp Joy right now, does landscaping work one or two days a week, cuts it down to a minimum during the core part of our season and does more in the winter and early spring. So he works off site to bring in money to help make ends meet.

Rabkin: And the cash flow works reasonably well year round?

Nelson: Yes, reasonably well. Our overhead is low. The land is paid off. We've never had mortgage payments to deal with after we raised money to buy the land from Cressie Digby. You measure your wealth partly in what you can do without. Keeping your expenses low is very important, and not having debt and that sort of thing, that's helped a lot.

Visions for the Future

Rabkin: What are your hopes and visions for the future of Camp Joy?

Nelson: Well, I see them manifesting right now in that I feel so fortunate that my kids are both involved in Camp Joy, and my grandkids now are around a lot. I have an eight-year-old granddaughter and an almost two-year-old granddaughter and an almost one-year-old granddaughter. They're around, and both of the moms teach kids' programs here with their kid in tow.

I've been joking about being semi-retired now. I say that just for my own attitude adjustment as much as for anything else. I'm not quite as relentlessly working, working, working, ambitious as I used to be, although I think there's more

biological momentum in Camp Joy. It's in a different phase now, where the fruit trees or some of the perennial crops produce more with less initial work. And then this wonderful discovery that we can manage the farm with less people, and it's okay to fallow some of the land, and not have to try to maximize everything.

My dream is to see the place continue and not be dependent on me as much, so that I can do other things like paint, or music, or travel. I don't have wild desires to travel the world. I'm happy to just travel the four acres a lot, or go on smaller trips. I think there's a lot of depth in sticking to one place. I've been here for a long time, but it's so diverse and ever-changing and seasonally based. I'll be working hard on something, and then just four months later I'm not doing that anymore. I'm doing something else. That keeps it fresh.

Part of the demise of family farming is the fact that it's such a grueling amount of work. If you have some cooperative, a community, more than one family involved, you take some of the pressure involved, you take some of the pressure off, so it's not all dependent on one or two people. And then there's that generational thing that happened all over the Santa Clara Valley, partly because of economic pressure and how valuable land was. Nobody wanted to run Grandpa's farm anymore, so they sold Grandpa's farm and everybody got part of the profit, which was a lot of money. But there's no Grandpa's farm anymore. Part of my dream is to not have that happen, to have the land irrevocably dedicated to educational purposes, which in our case is defined as running a small family farm for educational purposes addresses that issue, and then be able to hand it off to other custodians, but not have it be something that could be bought and sold.

Rabkin: Are you hoping to achieve that in part legally, through some sort of agricultural conservation easement?

Nelson: That's an interesting question. Well, in a sense some of that is already achieved just by the structure that's set up an educational non-profit 501(c)3. We have a reduction in our property taxes on the basis of the educational work that we do. That took many years to achieve. We pay all the special assessments and we pay the property taxes for some of the housing. So that's going to help keep the overhead low enough that people could go on to do this.

I think that it will continue more because of its value in the community. Camp Joy is very, very appreciated as a resource in the community. Lots of people *love* Camp Joy and I'm constantly being told, "Thank you for having this place," because families that come here, it's pretty unique. And there's some benefit in being in a non-farming niche here, so that we are more unique. You go out in farm country and everybody is doing this. No big deal! (laughter) Why would we come to your farm? I think that it will continue because of its value and uniqueness, what it adds to people's lives.

I've talked several times about how it's just in our spirit or under our skin that we like to grow food, vegetables and fruit and all that. But also, simultaneously, it's so important to see what affect it has on people's lives. So when I see people find what they want to do by their time here, whether it be to do this or not do this, (laughs) and kids have moments of appreciation and discovery—when you see people grow and change and be influenced by something, that's the most sustaining part of Camp Joy. And that's intertwined with the fact that it's a farm

and we're growing plants. To dedicate your life to teaching people and teaching people about the role that plants have—Plants give us our food, our medicines, our fiber, our fuel and building materials. They also maintain the balance of the atmosphere, and the air, and water retention. If you're engaged in it, you take it so for granted. People get myopic. We think what we do, or our culture is [the most important]. But the little Planet Earth that's circling around the sun happens to be just in the right place, with just the right amount of water and oxygen to make it possible to live here. That's really dependent on the green mantle that encases it. It's very real. And it's nice to be part of it.

Rabkin: Well, thank you very much.

¹See <http://www.polyfacefarms.com/story.aspx> and also the chapter on Salatin's farm in Michael Pollan's book *Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin: 2006).

² Melissa K. Nelson, *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future* (Inner Tradition, 2008).

³ See the oral histories with Steve Kaffka and Beth Benjamin in this series.

⁴ See the oral history with Jim Cochran in this series.

⁵ See the oral history with Steve Kaffka in this series.

⁶ See *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate: At Work in the Wild and Cultivated World* (Bantam 2008).

⁷ Sir Albert Howard, *The Soil and Health: Farming and Gardening for Health or Disease* (Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale Books, 1947). Republished as *The Soil and Health: A Study of Organic Agriculture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

⁸ Sir Albert Howard, *An Agricultural Testament*. (Oxford University Press, 1940)

⁹ Since 1975, Seed Savers Exchange members have passed on approximately one million samples of rare garden seeds to other gardeners. See: <http://www.seedsavers.org/aboutus.asp>

¹⁰ On the weekend of July 27-29, 2007, the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems held its fortieth reunion celebration, which was called the Back Forty.

¹¹ See the Regional History Project's oral history with Page Smith, *Page Smith: Founding Cowell College and UCSC, 1964- 1973* at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/smith.html>

¹² William James's "The Moral Equivalent of War" is an essay based on a talk James gave at Stanford University in 1906, and is credited with the origin of the idea of organized national service such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and VISTA. The relevant quote reads: "The Pacifists ought to enter more deeply into the aesthetical and ethical point of view of their opponents ... So long as antimilitarists propose no substitute for war's disciplinary function, no moral equivalent of war ... so long they fail to realize the full inwardness of the situation. And as a rule they do fail. The duties, penalties, and sanctions pictured in the utopias they paint are all too weak and tame to touch the military-minded."

¹³ *Sunset Magazine*, March 1969.

¹⁴ "J.I. Rodale, who believed that modern agricultural techniques and American eating habits left quite a bit to be desired, founded Rodale Inc. in 1930. He knew that there was a direct relationship between the declining health of America's soil and the health of America's people -- a revolutionary view in those days. In 1942, he started *Organic Farming and Gardening magazine*,

which taught people how to grow better food by cultivating a healthier soil using natural techniques. J.I. put his theories into practice on a 60-acre farm near Emmaus, Pennsylvania.” See <http://www.rodale.com/1,6597,1-101-211,00.html> for more history on the Rodale Institute and its publications.

¹⁵ See the Regional History Project’s oral history *The Early History of UCSC’s Farm and Garden* <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/farmgarden.html> for more of this history.

¹⁶ See Michael Balfour and Julian Frisby, *Helmuth von Moltke: A Leader Against Hitler* (Macmillan 1972).

¹⁷ See the oral history with Orin Martin in this series.

¹⁸ The Live Oak Farmers’ Market began in 1975 at Live Oak School, and was one of the first farmers’ markets in the state of California in the post-World War II period. Some of the other pioneering farmers’ markets were organized in inner city neighborhoods in Los Angeles, where residents lacked access to fresh produce. (Farmers’ markets had been common earlier in the 20th century, but were outlawed because of packaging and health regulations.) In 1977, in response to a grassroots movement of activists, the state of California created new direct marketing regulations that allowed farmers to be exempt from standard pack regulations when selling their products in a certified farmers’ market. See Jennifer Meta Robinson, *The Farmers’ Market Book: Growing Food, Cultivating Community* (Quarry Books, 2007).

¹⁹ See Stephen J. Crimi, ed. *Performance in the Garden: A Collection of Talks on Biodynamic French Intensive Horticulture*, Alan Chadwick (Logosofia Press, 2007).

²⁰ See <http://eco-farm.org/index.php/events/hoesdown>

²¹ See the oral history with Jim Leap in this series.

²² See the oral history with Richard Merrill in this series.

²³ Richard Merrill and Joe Ortiz, *The Gardener’s Table: A Guide to Natural Vegetable Growing and Cooking* (Ten Speed Press, 2000).

²⁴ See the oral history with Russel and Karen Wolter in this series.

²⁵ See the excerpt of an oral history with Nick Pasqual included in this series. A full interview with Pasqual, “A Very Rough Road: The Life of Nick Pasqual” is on deposit at the Special Collections Department of UC Santa Cruz Library.

²⁶ See the oral history in this series with Beth Benjamin for more on Camp Joy. See also Wendy Krupnick’s oral history in this series for more details on Renee’s Garden and on Krupnik’s time at Camp Joy.