

# Oral Histories of Tompkins County

## *Archival Finding Aid*

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### **2019 - Communes of Tompkins County - Oral History Project**

‘*Communes of Tompkins County*’ contains three interviews (as of 2022) conducted by Rod Howe, former director of The History Center, interviewing Tompkins County community members who lived in intentional communities in Tompkins County in the latter half of the twentieth century. The communes discussed in this collection include Lavender Hill, Yea God, and Be Light as of 2023.

*This oral history collection may increase as interviews with other community members with commune experiences are added to the Oral Histories of Tompkins County collections.*

#### ***Interviews with:***

##### **Mitch Bobrow (Yea God) (49 minutes)**

Mitch Bobrow explains the formation of the Yea God commune, including its origins and settlement in the Ithaca area. Bobrow discusses the living situation of the community and addresses challenges faced, including the dissolution of the commune. In this interview, Bobrow gives his opinions on the workings of the commune and his own experience as a core member.

*Trigger warnings: Lack of food, mental illness, sexual assault*

- *Recorded 12/6/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rod Howe*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2019-12-6\_Bobrow-Mitch*
  - *Digital Format: MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2019-12-6\_Bobrow-Mitch\_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Communes of Tompkins County Oral History Project*

##### **David Hirsch & Yvonne Fisher (Lavender Hill) (56 minutes)**

David Hirsch and Yvonne Fisher discuss Newfield/West Danby Lavender Hill commune, which was centered around the feminist movement and queer community. They shed light on the commune’s migration to Tompkins and challenges faced at the individual and community level. Hirsch and Fisher reflect on their experience living there and delve into different events and movements that developed that community.

*Trigger warnings: Substance abuse, homophobia, AIDS Epidemic and associated loss*

- *Recorded 10/31/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rod Howe*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2019-10-31\_Fisher-Yvonne\_and\_Hirsch-David*
  - *Digital Format: MP3 and MP4*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2019-10-31\_Fisher-Yvonne\_and\_Hirsch-David\_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Communes of Tompkins County Oral History Project*

**Mitch Weiss (Be Light) (35 minutes)**

Mitch Weiss discusses the Yea God and Be Light communes, their ties to the Ithaca community, and their philosophies. Weiss reflects on his experience interacting with both communes, mainly how these impacted the course of his life and led him down a path of giving back to the community.

- *Recorded 11/19/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rod Howe*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2019-11-19\_Weiss-Mitch*
  - *Digital Format: MP3*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2019-11-19\_Weiss-Mitch\_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Communes of Tompkins County Oral History Project*

*Other interviews from the Oral Histories of Tompkins County collection that share memories of communes in Tompkins County:*

**Aneda “Ned” Asta (01:23:22)**

*Lived at Lavender Hill and also talks about other communes in the area in the 1970s.*

Ned Asta discusses her relationship to art, travels across the United States, and participation in the women’s and gay liberation movements during the 1960’s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. She also reflects on her experience as a founding member of Lavender Hill, a LGBT commune located in Danby in the 1970’s.

**Trigger Warnings:** discussion of drug use, experience of sexual assault, discussion of death from AIDS virus, experience of breast cancer and mastectomy

- *Recorded 11/14/2019*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2019-11-14\_Asta-Ned*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2019-11-14\_Asta-Ned\_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 HERSTORY project*

**Krys Cail**

*Discussion of living at Lavender Hill from Commune section 28:24-31:49.*

Krys Cail is a consultant working with food production and distribution enterprises, particularly smaller scale cooperative ventures. Having spent most of her life in upstate New York, she reflects on the environmental changes she has witnessed over the past few decades. She talks about her frustration with the individualist consumer-oriented responses to ecological crises, and emphasizes the need for collective and political action.

- *Recorded 6/25/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC\_2019-6-25\_Cail-Krys*
  - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC\_2019-6-25\_Cail-Krys\_Transcript*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) Oral History Project*

*CITATION FOR THE COLLECTION*

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