

CONSULTANTS: Laurie Shapiro and Jack Ramsey
AGES: 62 and 81
RESIDENCE: Efland, NC
OCCUPATION:
INTERVIEW DATE: August 6, 2016, approx. 11:30 am
LOCATION: Carrboro Farmers Market, Carrboro, NC

Laurie Shapiro and Jack Ramsey are an older couple from Efland, NC. Laurie was curious about the project and enthusiastically agreed to an interview. She did most of the talking at first.

Hello, my name is Laurie Shapiro. I'm 62 years old, and I live in Efland, North Carolina, in a very *intentional* community that was developed around...early-to-mid 70s. And I only bring that up because it's related to what I'm going to share with you.

SG: And you say "intentional," like a master-planned community?

LS: Um...

SG: Or what do you mean by that?

LS: Um, in that it has very, very intentional covenants. There's no asphalt on the road...

Jack Ramsey (JR): No streetlights.

LS: No streetlights, it's still unpaved and gravel. It has a community pond, it has...the bylaws originally...covenants originally suggested cats wear bells to let the birds know they're coming, and it's the second community built by Harvey...Harvey... somebody. I'm losing, I just had it. And his other one is Roselind, down in Pittsboro.

SG: Interesting.

LS: [*she suddenly remembers the name*] Hartland! Realty, I think.

SG: Very interesting. How long have you been living there?

LS: Since 1998. And it was...so I'm the second generation, and many of the couples of the first generation did not make it because it's so intensive to build your own house from, you know, a plot of woods that they had to just develop from absolute scratch.

SG: So had just moved there as New Year's Eve 1999 came, not long, right?

LS: Um...

SG: 98, you said you moved there?

LS: Yeah.

SG: So take us back. Paint a picture in our minds, what do you remember --

Laurie stops me to let Jack introduce himself. I realize I haven't asked his name.

SG: Oh, yes. Let's get that for the record.

Jack is very soft-spoken.

JR: Jack Ramsey. I'm 81.

SG: Eighty-one. Looking good, sir.

JR: Thanks.

SG: Okay, and I presume you were together at the time?

LS: Yes. 25 years in November.

SG: Congratulations. Congratulations. All right, so take us back. What do you remember?

LS: What I remember was we were very anxious. And there was a lot of anxiety, particularly around computers crashing, water supplies going down, refrigerators going..., I mean, there was just such *panic*. And it was one of the few times that the community got together as a community to see how we could...

JR: To discuss our fears. And see how we could set up alternatives to cope.

LS: Oh, what a good way to put it.

SG: So they took preparations, absolutely.

LS: Mostly, it was discussion. We never got beyond the discussion [laughs]. It was really like, "Let's start talking about this." But it didn't get beyond talking. But there's some really old-timey hippies in this community, and this was, you know, they were in --

JR (to LS): You're not one of them.

Jack and Laurie both laugh.

SG: No one self-identifies, right? [laughs]

LS: Right. [laughs] So you know, they were sure that the crash was going to happen, and so we were going to figure out how to, as Jack said, cope. And come together, and work it –

JR: But there were skeptics, such as myself. [laughs]

SG: So you weren't worried?

JR: I was not.

SG: And why is that?

JR: I guess I just tend to take it a day at a time. And it didn't seem to me that it was very realistic, what was being projected.

SG: So you thought the media was blowing it out of proportion, that sort of thing?

JR: I did. I turned out be on the mark. [laughs]

SG: Well, better than the alternative, right? We might not be talking about it right now.

LS: I really thought it was coming. I really thought the crash was coming. I didn't...I believed it. I believed the hype. I thought surely they couldn't get the computers together.

SG: I appreciate your being candid about it, too.

LS: Yeah.

SG: I mean, some people were saying *planes* were going to fall out of the sky. You weren't to that level, or...?

LS: No, not planes, but banks. Clearly thought the banks were going to crash. And you know, your computer would crash, and all kinds of things would happen along those lines. So you know, this is a very much 'back to the Earth' community, so there were all these much more conservative, kind of reactionary...there *weren't* the full-scope of extreme reactions, of like "Gold..." what's the expression?

SG: Gold standard?

LS: No. People were..."Gold, guns..." When people talked about it. Hiding your gold, guns, and...the third one. "Gold, guns and..."

SG: Yeah, it's on the tip of my tongue; I know what you're talking about.

LS: Yeah. So we weren't into hiding guns and...[*she suddenly remembers the expression*] "Gold, guns and groceries!" We were talking about groceries. We were talking a lot about building underground places to put food.

SG: But you never got that far? Just talking about it?

LS: Talking about it. We have a couple members of our community I'd love you to talk to. Easy phone call.

SG: Okay.

LS: Yeah, they were the ones that have this incredible house in our community. And they were the ones who hosted the meetings in their house. And they were the ones...they've done a lot of peace work, conflict mediation work, alternative school work. And so they were...they bought it. They bought it. They bought that we needed to do something and get prepared.

SG: So take me to that night. Midnight is approaching, and then midnight passes. And with all of that you've just said...

LS: I know.

SG: What were you thinking?

LS: It was a sigh of relief.

JR: We went to bed. [laughs]

LS: It's like going to bed on election night, you know? Or going to bed any other New Year's Eve, you know?

SG: Did you have a computer at the time?

LS: Of course.

SG: Did you check your computer to see if it was working?

LS: Oh, *yeah*. Oh, yeah. I'm telling you, I bought it hook, line and sinker. Yeah.

SG: Wow.

LS: And you know, I mean, just look at what the Russians just did, you know?

SG: What, by putting Trump in...

LS: Yeah.

SG: ...in office? [laughs]

LS: No, not *that*! But all those emails.

SG: Yeah. Right.

LS: And who knows what could happen with this election? So, you know, there's sabotage, there's failure...

JR: That's far more realistic, for me, than the millennium.

SG: So aside from the Y2K and the preparations, did it –

LS: Oh, that's what it was called, "Y2K."

SG: Yeah, we haven't said that yet.

LS: Yeah.

SG: Aside from that, which was the salient memory, did it seem important to you, the moment?

LS: Not so much as, you know, a milestone birthday, say. Yeah. Um, but it was, it was. Turning over a century.

SG: What about you, Jack?

JR: I didn't give it that much recognition. I think I'm more concerned with Donald Trump's rival (?)

LS: But Jack has had a very fascinating life.

Laurie discusses how Jack is a "legend" whose career "matches social history." He spent decades working in government agencies for the homeless and mentally ill. During Johnson's administration, his agency was "shut down." He worked in Washington before coming to North Carolina and becoming the director for adult mental health services in Durham County.

SG (to JR): Do you think things are better or worse than they were then? I know that's a loaded question.

JR: No, it's not. You know, we have shifted our philosophies greatly. We've shifted to depend on the private sector, which is interested in for-profit. And as a result, there's a great drain off of resources, and if I was mentally ill, I don't know how I would cope with that, with the complexity of it. And I think that's my view. It's a sad state of affairs.

LS: It was such a caring system. You could come into public mental health and *get treated*. Now, it's an administrative office.

SG: Well, the treatment of mental illness has changed drastically, I imagine, in your lifetime.

JR: Well, the medication regimes have improved, the medication effectiveness. I'd say that's the most significant part. I think the fact...one problem is the mentally ill lack a voice, a political voice. And...

SG: I've never thought about that. That's true.

JR: Different than the developmental disabled, who have usually strong family ties, and they're great advocates.

LS: And they get great amounts of money.

JR: The mentally ill really get abandoned by families, and they're quite on their own. So I think that's had an effect over time.

I notice that some other people have approached. They seem to be waiting to speak with Laurie and Jack, so I ask one last question.

SG: Now this is like a time capsule. I've been asking people this question: what do you think is going to be the topic most often on people's minds in 2100?

LS: Whoah. I wonder if we're gonna get there.

Jack laughs.

JR: That sums it up very well.

It's getting very hot, and I can tell that the other people are trying to get Laurie's attention. I thank them for their time and end the interview.