

**Bob Scowcroft**  
**Narrator**

**Ron Kroese**  
**Interviewer**

**December 15, 2016**

**Bob Scowcroft—BS**  
**Ron Kroese—RK**

**RK:** Today is Thursday, December 15, 2016, and we're here at the home of videographer Jim Clark and his wife Alison, where today I have the pleasure of interviewing two men, Bob Scowcroft and Mark Lipson, who, throughout their careers, have been instrumental in advancing organic farming research, education, and public policies in California and in Washington, DC. Not surprisingly, as young men who shared a vision of a sustainable agriculture and food system, Mark and Bob have found themselves working together throughout much of their careers. So it is appropriate that a portion of this session will feature a dialog between them, where they will discuss how their paths converged and how they worked together toward achieving their shared vision. But this morning we'll begin with Bob talking by himself about some of the work that he did. And I do want to cover as much of your amazing career as possible, but I'd like to begin all of these interviews—I've done several of them now—with you starting about your own childhood, even how you got interested in this. I think of these interviews as someone looking at them 50 or 100 years from now, and then wonder—who were these characters that got this sustainable agriculture going? And a lot of it was formed as a child in many people, how they got interested and started in all of this. So I'd like to start there and then move forward.

**BS:** Thank you very much for inviting me to this interview process, this interview, this collection of our mutual history, Ron. Hopefully, you will be interviewing yourself somewhere down the road, if you haven't done one already. I'm probably a little different than many of the men and women you've interviewed, in that my childhood and even young adulthood had almost absolutely nothing to do with agriculture, with farming, with gardening. I was probably more of a TV dinner kind of kid in the '50s. I joke now, when I give presentations, that I had a real checkered past, and people would kind of think commune or the Vietnam War era, but mine was actually as a relatively good high school—or, actually, starting at age six—golf star. I played in my first tournament with my dad, father-son, when I was six, and we won. I played religiously all through elementary school, junior high. I caddied every weekend. In high school I was on an amazing golf team that I was number ... I think I played the number one position once, but usually I was number four or five on this team. We only lost one time in three years. All five of us made the Pennsylvania State High School Tournament, 144 players, and five were from my high school. Frankly, about the furthest thing from my mind was food, vegetables. I was a hamburger and French fry guy and, probably before it was legal, an occasional beer hidden away in the golf bag.

**RK:** But at least you were outside. There's this whole thing now—no child left inside. At least you were out there on the landscape. And this was Pennsylvania, not California?

**BS:** Yeah, I was born in Rhode Island, and we went from Rhode Island to Connecticut to Pennsylvania with the corporation. In hindsight and in retrospect, at least I was outside on one of the most agriculturally intensive, pesticide-excessive, fertilizer over-locations, sometimes day-in, for sure week-out for my first 18 years.

**RK:** Wow, that's true.

**BS:** Never camped out. Never, when my folks took the few vacations, we went to golf resorts. My father needed to live near a golf course and be a member of a golf course, and he wanted me to ... not overly, wonderful, not pressure, but I had the swing, and he wanted me to be a golf star.

**RK:** So then you went to college somewhere.

**BS:** Yeah, I just barely graduated from high school—times were a-changing in '69, and, as a matter of fact, I was accepted at Emory University, which is now nationally recognized, mostly medical schools, and by the end of my senior year, I was more focused on partying and a group of great friends and golf than I was on getting good grades. Upon acceptance at Emory, my last senior year quarter academic report card was so bad that they put me on notice that I was on academic probation in the first quarter of Emory, would determine whether I would stay there or not. That made everyone upset, and I went down there thinking I was going to put my shoulder to ... OK, I can do this. Let's just say really within weeks of arriving at Emory in the fall of '69 the student revolution that had been perc—you know, it was fully engaged in many campuses—hit—Georgia was always a few years late—hit the campus, and I found more interest and import in laying in the streets and marching in downtown and driving to Washington, DC than I did in attending classes. Within my first year we had occupied both the ROTC building and had occupied the administration building, and by the spring of 1970 I remained on academic probation. I was on social probation as well for violating the student codes. I was arrested but not booked for laying in a four-way light street sign in Decatur, Georgia, and luckily I was the guy with my buddy in the police car surrounded by 500 students, and it was very tense, and the president of the university came out and said—if you agree to get out of the car—and he negotiated with the police to drop the arrest warrant. Actually, one of the charges was ... we all wore army surplus dollar coats back then, and mine happened to be a lieutenant, so I was arrested for impersonating an officer. And that was a felony crime. But they dropped it. I agreed to not demonstrate off-campus, or not break the law off-campus, and during that period Emory also agreed to not—this is, of course, the draft and the numbers—my number was 35, and I had a student deferment, and Emory agreed not to expel any student for grades, which, in hindsight, I'm not all that proud of, actually, because that meant I could go to just fun classes or interesting classes, but I didn't have to strive for a 2.0 or above. That part, particularly, in talking to younger kids, that was a real mistake. I should have ... there were some great classes there and I didn't stumble across them until my senior year. It seemed to be more important to be on the streets in DC and some of the other activities, which is a sidebar, probably not enough time to really record here. But I'm going to try to write it out some day.

**RK:** Well, the turmoil around the war has had such an impact on so many of the people I've talked to. It's not at all surprising.

**BS:** It was a life-changing ... in a very relatively short period of time when you look ... I'm 65 now, and I'd say from '69 to '79, in that 10-year period, I had a number of epic experiences that by '79 had led me to organic. Maybe I can touch on a few of them.

**RK:** Touch on a couple of highlights before we get to the real organic work.

**BS:** I was interested—you're always looking for friends and you're looking for a partner, and it was a tumultuous time on dating and relationships, but I'd met a woman that was very friendly and interesting to me, and she invited me to a breakfast feeding program in inner-city Atlanta. It was intense, it was nothing ... remember, this is all golf course experience till then, and golf courses, restrictive as they are, there was hardly any life experiences outside of carrying golf bags or shooting 72. All of a sudden I was in Buttermilk Bottom, in a breakfast program, not really realizing that it was affiliated with ... and I was meeting African American people. I was meeting Hispanic heritage people. We were all in this together, and we were the students, mostly Caucasian, although the black student union of Emory was also involved in it. It was essentially the Atlanta chapter of the Black Panther Party, and the group was very open and friendly and food focused and nutrition focused. Aside, from out of that I attended, as a delegate, I think probably the only integrated Black Panther chapter to the National Black Panther Party Convention in DC, in late 1970, I think. That was intense, and I was very uncomfortable with all of the armed men and women there. I did not see or hear Huey Newton or Bobby Seal speak, because somewhere about three hours into this gathering people came up to us, mostly positive, saying—it's great the Georgia delegation's done this. Hey, Georgia, these are white people here, and it's not going to work, and you all should leave. So we did, and as we left and walked out of DC—at that time it was still three years after King's assassination—in a burned out part of the city, people started throwing rocks at us and we ran. That was a learning experience, and that I speak of, essentially positively, some of the mistakes I, we, made even then were balanced by the bonding and the brotherhood of a rainbow group of people that wanted to do good in Atlanta. So that was one of them. From there I wanted to ... went through Emory, started following the Grateful Dead—more importantly, the Allman Brothers' music was our sound track. From there I took an adventure with five other people. We had all read *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. The drug part wasn't that much of interest to us, but traveling around the country in a VW van was, and I had my first camping experience and spent seven weeks with five people in the classic VW bus camping across Canada, coming in at Vancouver into Seattle, and the goal was to drive all the way down to San Francisco and see the Grateful Dead in the Fillmore West. We got to the Fillmore West—you know, I saw parks and Banff and Jasper and places that I never knew existed. I had no idea about the outdoors. I got to San Francisco, and the Dead session at Fillmore had ended the day before we got there. We did not have internet and downloading and ... so that was that, and we went all the way down the coast and then came back across the country—Grand Canyon and ... that was the bug: I wanted to be a traveler at some point. One of the buddies on that bus, when we both graduated—he dropped out for a year and went to Asia. He came back, so he was a junior when I was a sophomore, and when ... I'm sorry—start again. He was a junior when I was a senior, so when I graduated he said—I want to go back to Asia, and this time I want to go follow Marco Polo's trail, because we had both read *Caravans* by Michener. Suffice it to say that I spent four months in Asia. One of the high points was going

into the Hindu Kush Mountains and finding a caravan and renting horses and riding around with them at the seven lakes at Band-e Amir, which was 1973. That was intense.

**RK:** And I'm sure that exposed you to a somewhat different diet than you'd had, too, and opened you up to some new kinds of foods.

**BS:** Fantastic food, fantastic meals. He had known someone there, and this man in Kabul invited us to his house maybe 15 times, so we sat with the carbines, the British Enfield rifles, leaning against the wall, because it's open carry, circa tribal 1960s, '70s, with 15 or 20 tribal leaders that were coming in and talking and eating with your right hand and your left hand down. Very little English, a lot of motions, and, of course, it would have been our luck, the day we got to the Afghan border was the very first coup, and it took us four days to get in. We were the second plane into the country as the coup was still unfolding. So the tribal leaders were all coming to figure out what this coup meant at Azeem Sararwee's house. And we were the two Westerners there. So that unfolded, and more travel, and I got back, thinking I've got to ... I had no money, and my folks were seriously concerned I was a ... I did graduate—I have a degree, though no relationship—it's always looked good on the resume—in political science. From there I bounced around and had a lot of tension—what are you going to do? You're graduated and your friends are either in school or traveling, got very little money. And I called a friend and said—I want to live in California. I really liked that part of the trip. He was an executive with Earth Shoes, which had franchises, but the corporate headquarters had opened a store in Palo Alto, and he said—drive to California, show up in Stanford Shopping Mall in Palo Alto, and you can be the assistant director at the Earth Shoe store. So, folks, I have a job, I'm going to California, I have a couple cousins out there. Times have changed—I'm ready to go. And I drove across country and got to the store and said—I'm here. Bill was there as well, and said—this is Bob, he's going to be your assistant manager, and the guy said—no, no he's not, I've hired one already. But you can be a salesperson, if you want, and we'll give you a month's ... so it was a little disconcerting, because I had management plums and straightening up, and great monies coming in, and now I was just hawking shoes on the floor, but that was OK. I'm getting there ... [Chuckles] They were just finishing up, and a group of carpenters were doing it, and they would hire these carpenters sort of not out of a carpenters' union—they're really talented finish carpenters, but he'd hired them off the street. At the end of the day within the second week, they, as we were setting up and boxing and filing shoes, and getting ready for our big grand opening, they said—hey, we're having a ... we all live in this community up in the hills, and we're having a big party. We have a dance hall, and have a really big party, and everybody's invited. Since I was living in my VW bus of my own, I drove up and went to the party. Again, it's a much longer story than this, but, essentially, I never left. I managed to do about three or four more months of selling Earth Shoes, but drive up there or stay at somebody's house during the week. The party was at a commune of 800 acres. It was a squat, 40 cabins and surreal architectural buildings had appeared throughout this parcel. It had a front house, a barn, and a dance hall, and two owners, if you will, disagreed who owned it. One guy wanted to build 800 houses on it, and the other guy wanted it to be a parkland. There were four other communes around it at the time, and that guy who wanted it to be a parkland said—anybody can live here who wants to until and when it's determined who owns it. I stayed there ... I had several adventures in between, but stayed there on and off until about 50 state police, city police, county sheriffs and 40 reporters covered the final eviction.

**RK:** And was that near Santa Cruz, then, already?

**BS:** Yeah, it was on Skyline Drive above Palo Alto. I'd come to Santa Cruz every once in a while. The connection here is on the property was a guy named Rip King, who worked with John Jeavons, and who taught us all to build French intensive, double bed-dug Alan Chadwick gardens. So I'd heard about this, we had our little corner of this parcel, had organized ourselves, and we had an amazing garden, fed ourselves a good bit of this. Neil Young was visiting, so we had him every once awhile jamming. Our dance hall had some famous bands, and we had our own printing press, our own pirate radio station. I built a house there. It took me a year to carry the wood to my spot to build it. I learned carpentry—I was on a crew. And when it ended I went to Alaska. I'd already hitch-hiked—I stood on Morrissey Boulevard here in Santa Cruz with a sign that said—Peru—and made it to the Panama Canal and back, as one adventure. And another one, with another buddy, we went to Alaska, and there we ... another sidebar is that I took the romance and life in the commune—I needed a break, and so I went to DC and went to an Earth Shoe store and said—I know how to sell Earth Shoes. And I did that for about eight more months in some of this period. And then my buddy and I decided we were just ... neither of us were dating. Neither of us ... we were drinking beers, having great times with our friends, but we were unhealthy, and so we just cleared the decks, bought a one-way ticket, and flew to Anchorage, Alaska to get healthy and get back in the woods, and over time—we were there two months, mostly in the bush—and the culmination of that was hiring a semi-private plane to drop us off above the Arctic Circle, after going to Denali. I showed you a picture. At Denali we got really good and strong, and that was where we realized ... and we had several grizzly experiences. Came back to the commune, closed it down, said goodbye to everybody, went back to DC, to move back to California. Saw a brochure, it said—Alaska needs your help—and I had two months and went to something called the Alaska Coalition, saying—I just came back from Alaska, and I went to the Arctic Range. I went to Denali. I went in Kenai, out to Kodiak. They said—Oh. And I said—and I don't want a job, because started up and funded, it was the Alaska Lands Act. I have a flannel shirt, I have no tie. I do not want to be a lobbyist. I want to empty your wastebaskets, organize, refile your papers. I want to do something that nobody else would do here. And they said—great! Nobody ever walks in here, everybody wants to be a lobbyist and write the testimony and wear suits and grow a career. I said—no, I'm an adventurer in a break here. I just want to do this, because I want to do something for Alaska. And within weeks, literally weeks, they came to me and said—you're the best three-by-five card organizer. You got the gift of gab. You always empty the wastebaskets. Would you like a job as office manager? And I said—I don't think so, but I'll talk about it. And, remarkably, I met a woman who was very different than I was at one of our house parties. Wonderfully sweet and beautiful, attractive— we connected right away. But she had a master's and was either Ph.D. or career in early childhood education, and I was thinking about going to Mongolia for another hard-core adventure. And, instead, my buddy, actually the guy I went to Asia with, showed up saying—OK, Beijing is open, but you can only go to the city, but who's going to follow two white guys? We're gonna ... That was, like, Judy? Job? Alaska? Really interesting, or two guys in a little tent, getting ill, sitting on top of a yak. It was a no-brainer. So sent him on his way, and within another month they said—you're such a good, you're a natural organizer, you have the gift of gab—would you like to be one of our national Alaska organizers coalition and we'll give you five states. I just ran with it. And Judy and I were together another month or two—this could be a life thing. The last part of this is at the end of the year (Senator) Stevens killed the Alaska Lands Act;

it was over. I had to start from scratch. Judy's sister lived in a place called Palo Alto. I was still a Palo Alto resident. Let's go out to California and just start a life. And that's when the guy sitting next to me, who's wonderfully eccentric and brilliant, unbeknownst to me gave a \$10,000 check to David Brower and said—I've just sat next to the best natural, intuitive organizer I've ever seen. You should hire him as Friends of the Earth's first national organizer. So Brower took the check, cashed it, then told me that I'd been hired as a national organizer, and the executive director at the time, Jeff Knight, came in and said—how did you get money? Eric Jansen, who was sitting next to me, who was independently wealthy, and was actually a volunteer, and his first project that he had been working on was to ban Agent Orange, and then separately 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, and to ban spray drift and have regulations behind contamination of other farms. So, over the year of sitting next to him, I would hear table pounding and 400-page testimony he'd submit. And it was like—Agent Orange is bad—I remember him...

**RK:** Goes back to the Vietnam War again.

**BS:** Exactly. There was linkages here. So the last thing I said was—I will be the national organizer. I can't believe that I'll be paid \$7,000 a year to do this. I'd never made this kind of money. If it's OK, I'd like to take my partner—I'd like to take three months to get from DC to Palo Alto via Mexico and Belize and Guatemala, to take Judy on another adventure before we get out there. And they said—sure, the money's restricted; you will not be ... it's ... we're in financial straits, so you'll just be there for a year. And I, magically, without thinking it through, said—if I raise additional money that is very specific to my activities, can I stay? Can it be assigned to me? And they, randomly, said sure. It's really hard, but if we get a thing—this money is for Bob Scowcroft, or this coupon is for your work at Friends of the Earth, then, sure, we'll put it in your account with a 30 percent overhead reduction of it. How much better could it get? I had an actual job for a year that I liked and was good at, and Judy and I had our adventure, and we got out there and got a place to live, and I had an idea that was a project before its time, though I think it's good to this very day. What I wanted to do was an environmental chamber of commerce. I wanted to organize outfitters to work on Alaska issues, bike shop owners to work on transportation issues, and natural food stores to help ban Agent Orange. So that was environmental chamber of commerce. The Friends of the Earth (FOE) developmental group said—well, that's good, threw some proposals out there randomly, and I got 20,000 bucks on one of them, and still was working on all three, and the simple idea was when Exxon went and said we want to drill in Alaska, that I would get 50 outfitters saying—it might be good for their business and their jobs, but we run summer hiking trips in Alaska, and we'll lose all our business, so it might be good for theirs, but it's bad for ours. Exxon saying this in DC, the outfitters are saying it in the congressional district. When you come home, you're going to put 22 people out of work. It was extremely effective. And then I got the idea of getting Gaymen Rowell's slide show, and to show it in all 50 outfitters' stores as a fundraiser for the Alaska coalition. So I was generating \$72, \$400, and lists of people who would do ... and the stores loved it—Wow, come in and see this, and we'll raffle off a backpack for ... so all of a sudden I had a multiple benefit program, raising this money. Bike shops, same thing. And I turned to natural food stores, and I have a photo here of 1982 where I went to the trade show, 1980 the Natural Foods Trade Show started, and I found them, and I had the idea of getting natural food stores to put up spray drift posters and hand out brochures, and within a year I had 1300 natural food stores in my natural food so-called chamber of commerce. As this activity was going on,

two farmers from Sonoma came down to Friends—one from San Francisco and one from Sonoma-Marin border came to the office saying—who's the Scowcroft guy doing this ... we want to meet him. Sure, no problem, and we had a meeting, and to this day, Sy Weisman and Stuart Fishman, my heroes, both of them—Stuart's still alive; Sy isn't—came in and said—brother, you've got to believe in reincarnation if you think you're ever going to stop all the pesticides out there. Plus, this is always against, it's always negative. You should be for something. You should be for certified organic food and farming. Come to our farms. See our stores and be an advocate for us. And I thought—that's cool, never really, you know. Judy was sort of bugging me in a very appropriate ... here we're eating this semi-crap at home, and now you're talking about pesticides—we've got to join the Palo Alto co-op and start buying organic. And we did, and I did, and ... two more things on that time, and then we can leap forward. One event was Sy came to me and said—we got a week to go; there's something called the Organic Foods Act in California. It's the California Health and Safety Code 26569.11. I can't remember who I met last week, but I still know the safety code number from 1987... 1987? 1980. It's going to go, it was the sunset clause, and it's the only definition. It was the first law in the country, and Vic Fazio wrote a two-year—when he was in the state assembly—two-year sunset clause, and it's up next week! What are we going to do? Can you get Friends of the Earth to write letters? We're going to get some farmers, and we think we have a new assemblyman—he's just coming in, but we think he will carry the sunset clause. He's from Monterey; his name is Sam Farr. And Sam is coming up, he's been there a couple months, and we've got organic farmers in this place called Santa Cruz, so would you get Brower to write a letter, environmental letter? Sure, I'll go ask, put it on FOE letterhead, and Brower said—no. We got so much going on, there was questions from others, does organic mean marijuana? I mean, we're Friends of the Earth in general. We've got Amory Lovins getting sued for Clinch River Breeder Reactor. It's got whales, it's in trouble in every corner, and now this new guy is coming in saying—we've got to support organic, and it's just too hippie; it's too alternative. And FOE (Friends of the Earth) being what it was at the time, we said—I'm not buying that. I think it's the right thing. I want to be for something, you know. So they said—OK, that's fair. We have a board member, his wife is a nutritionist somewhere. We'll ask her what she thinks, and if she thinks it's a good idea, we'll let you sign the letter. That one was Joan Gussow, and that was the first time I met Joan. Joan wrote a letter which was lost for 30 years, and I found it two years ago, and I did manage to save it. And she wrote a letter that said—Well, my expertise, and I'm a scientist and it's nutrition, I don't know if organic is any more nutritious, though it should be studied, but I suspect if there was a legal definition of it and actual rules behind it, that it would create the first alternative to this agro-industrial system, and it might succeed. As leadership, FO should support that. So Brower signed the letter, we submitted it. It was a small action. I can't tell you what that meant to the decision to go ahead and re-authorize it, but not only was it re-authorized, but I was invited to be the first environmental keynote speaker at the ecological farming conference in 1982, by Izzy Martin up in La Honda, in the old, old place. Just the cascade effect of going to the natural food show, where we had brochures that we would give for free to any natural food store, so they had a pro-organic piece. EcoFarm—I was the first environmentalist, by name, not necessarily by individual, with a national reputation to endorse organic. By those tracks and threads, the brochures had a coupon in it, and random people were sending in \$25 and \$50, and I was raising \$10- to \$30,000 a year through grassroots small donations, before Bernie (Sanders) ever thought of it. [Both chuckle] That's not ... it's an attempt at humor here. But that led to Medard Gabel inviting me to be a keynote speaker on organic and business at the first Cornucopia Conference

at Emmaus, Pennsylvania, which then led to me accepting, one of my first speeches on organic, which I still knew very little about, and in going to DC I had already met a gentleman named Garth Youngberg. He had interviewed me in the process of this report and recommendations report, so I knew about this. At that conference, the ride up there was ... in the car was Garth and me and James Parr from USDA, and another young guy just starting out—his name was Ken Cook. I actually knew Ken because his group house roommate, Molly, had become my Alaska buddy's girlfriend and then wife. So we had no ... it started out, oh, yeah—Ken, Molly, that was a great party, what are you doing? Well, I'm leaving ... what was he with—Rural, Catholic Rural Life? No, Public Broadcasting? I'll have to ask him again. I know this somewhere. But he was leaving and had this idea of kind of a kind of a working group project, and we became ... though I lost James Parr at times, Garth and Ken and I have been in the same mosh pit on and off for the next 30 years.

**RK:** Just to note, I interviewed Garth in Denver last week. He's retired, but still very concerned and very aware of things. It was a wonderful interview; he mentioned you. And then tomorrow we're going to San Francisco to interview Ken.

**BS:** It's quite a tribe. At the La Honda EcoFarm conferences, a couple of more things from the Friends of the Earth era, one day Brower came in and said—here, you know this stuff. I've got a final draft of a book that I'd like to ... sort of a galley print that I'd like you to read and tell me whether we should publish it. Like, Dave, you know—I am not a scientist—classically: I am not a scientist, I'm an organizer. I try to network good ideas with other activists who effect change. I can't be responsible for telling you to ... Read it! So I read it. I got about, I understood about half of it, but it was pretty fascinating in many ways, and it was by a young guy out of Sacramento, named Wes Jackson. It was called *New Roots for Agriculture*. So at EcoFarm Wes introduced me to Bob Rodale and Garth. So for a couple years the four of us would just look forward to visit and meet at the EcoFarm conferences. They were keynoting by then. I was a workshop kind of guy. I was not at that altitude; I never pretended to be. They're brilliant, brilliant speakers.

**RK:** Just to add a little bit to that. For what it's worth, Wes Jackson's been extremely important to me for all of the work I've done around in sustainable agriculture, in the formation of the group I co-founded, called Land Stewardship Project, he was an advisor. And the paper you held up, that *Report and Recommendations on Organic Farming*, was a seminal document. It was a real study. Sixty-nine farms were visited, and they really pointed out to Secretary of Agriculture Bergland, under Carter, that there really was some validity to organic farming, and it was coming on the heels of all the turmoil of post-Earl Butz era, when the prices collapsed and conventional agriculture was in trouble. So that was an extremely important time.

**BS:** I happened to be in the office, in Garth's office, right around the time ... Block had come in, and like that week Garth had, with 500 other—this was cut government, get rid of waste—they did 500 pink slips to send out unnecessary, or government waste, people. Garth and his secretary—back in those days they had secretarial pools, and she just had the horrific luck of being assigned to be his secretary. Out of the pool, she didn't ... no reason, no rhyme, but she was attached to his desk, and not only were they fired, but Block ordered the original plates destroyed of that study, and all copies shredded. And Garth was beside himself, but Garth was so wonderfully straight on—follow the rules, I don't know what I'm going to do. And I said—well,

I'll tell you what I'm going to do is I'm going to take that pile of about 20 and I'm going to wrap them in a brown paper bag, and I'm going to leave the office this evening with them. And he's, you know, this is ... and I actually felt a little bit of tension. The order was there. Even though he'd been fired, the fact that someone was going to smuggle them out of the USDA seemed to be an act of disobedience, if not something more dramatic. I said—you don't need to know this, even. The pile got sorted. But I can't let this happen.

**RK:** I heard a similar story, too, with Roger Blobaum somehow got some copies and kept them.

**BS:** Roger did, and Michael Sly. Michael also took some.

**RK:** And they were gradually distributed over the years.

**BS:** Yeah, I still have two. As a matter of fact, I still do a few presentations, mostly to students, and I still call this required reading. James ... I lose his name, but the reporter for the *Des Moines Register* heard about all of this and wrote a story for the *Des Moines Register* and that became national news, and within a year or two, just because now the spotlight was on it, though Garth was gone, this report became the highest requested report, the biggest seller for years, most of the years during the Reagan administration. Thanks, in part, to one reporter and the *Des Moines Register* and then the other folks picked it up. So the EcoFarm, now working on organic. At the other tale of the '80s and Friends of the Earth was I was in this car ride in the Cornucopia Project. They had break-out groups, which we still have to this day, which I largely try to avoid now, to this day. I have never found break-out groups to be really productive and then reporting back to the larger group. It's a time for a coffee break or restroom break. But others have gladly and to some extent appropriately, have different opinions about them, but didn't really work for me. At Rodale they had the Lehigh Valley breakout group. They had the New England, the South, and the West. The Lehigh Valley breakout group had 550 people at it. They did not organize this and think this through. The Western breakout group had five people at it. And Garth just came along because he was like—I'll go with you, Bob, and see what's going on. And Segó Jackson from Washington Tilth, me from Friends of the Earth, a six-month-old freshman aide from Eugene, Oregon to Jim Weaver, a guy named Peter DeFazio, and Sarah Ebenreck, from DC. And we sat there and did our—what are we going to do? And I said—well, I think what we should do is write an organic research act, taking all 20 recommendations. And just almost laughingly, Peter saying—well, I'll take it to my boss, Jim Weaver. He's a back bencher, he'll submit anything. Sarah said—well, I can help write it with Garth. And Segó said—I can organize all the farmers out West. I said—well, I've got 1,300 stores around the country—this would be something to be for. We'll call it the 1982 Organic Research Act. Again there's a lot more detail, some great files on this, but we generated over 50,000 letters. We got it in the House. The Senate was not interested in organic research, but Weaver at that point attracted interest from other corners of the House, and they came back—I think we were talking off camera before this started—they came back and called it ... I can't remember which was first; I think it was BUBBA.

**RK:** I think LISA was first.

**BS:** Low Input Sustainable Agriculture—LISA. BUBBA was a few months in time—Biological Organic...

**RK:** Because people were making fun of the feminine name of it.

**BS:** Right, we can't have anything feminine on the Hill for something. And eventually after two rounds I believe it came into the '84 Farm Bill as SARE—Sustainable Agriculture Research Education Program.

**RK:** And that program still remains one of the seminal programs in the sustainable agriculture-organic movement.

**BS:** It's made the greatest quantity of organic research grants over its 30-year time. It is the seminal place for career researchers, for farmer researchers, for educational activists who apply for and get funds. But SARE was an incredible landmark moment, getting that passed. But it came from five people in a break-out group saying—what the heck! We can do anything—we can write ... I didn't know politics, I didn't know the Hill. Garth said—well, I know a few people. Of course, Peter said—well, Jim knows the Hill and Eugene, and, of course, you would expect it to come out of Oregon. Oregon had the first regulation in '74. California had the first law in '78. And then that law was amended to take out the sunset clause and made permanent in '80. So these two, this all was going on in my Friends of the Earth days. Friends of the Earth went bankrupt for a number of reasons, though largely through Brower's financial management and some staff conflict. All of us, 54 people, were laid off. I got an extra six months to work for one of the very first environmental PACs, FOEPAC, on the Mondale campaign. So I learned about campaigns and organizing and geo-TV. Then I moved to Santa Cruz with my wife and nine-month-old, and we discovered he had some incredible medical challenges. At the very end of my Friends of the Earth run, I gave some presentations at the Agroecology Farm and Garden. I met a student there who was so impressive that I've always remembered him. His name was Mark Lipson. I made a couple of casual—you should be my intern up at Friends of the Earth. He was—no, no, no, I'm a farmer. I was always good; I had great interns, some of which I'm in touch with 30 years later. I gave them a lot of room to roam while managing them. So here I am in Santa Cruz now. I have a child with special needs, I don't have a job, my wife doesn't have a job, we need insurance, and I pulled some friendship relationships, and became literally a secretary, filing three-by-five cards and organizing paperwork for what's called the Continuing Education Program. No relationship to anything in my sustainable ag world, other than they gave me time to go to EcoFarm during those two years, and they let me program a couple classes. One of the ones I was really excited about in this continuing education was Wes Jackson and an Amish farmer named David Kline. I was really enamored with David and what I'd read, and Wes and David did an amazing program here in Santa Cruz. I did that for about 18 months, two years, always looking. And one day I saw a little insert, one ad, saying—California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) is looking for its first executive director. And I said to my wife—this is not working—to file. There were some issues, just that I was at the end of rope. And I said—I know we need insurance. She says—well, I've got some job..., we've got some insurance. I said—I have to; is it OK? And we made the agreement that I would take the risk and apply for the job. Mark had always remembered me, and we'd maybe stayed in touch a little bit. I'm sure he can clarify that little period of time, but after some almost Fellini movie-like interview process,

surreal interview process, I was offered the position and accepted it and showed up at the CCOF office, even before I told UC that I had taken the job, in sort of maybe October of '87, saying I'm ready to go. And the office was four staff, really funky fire escape to get into the building, and Mark basically said—thank goodness you're here. We're mostly half-time. None of us have been paid for two months. We have \$600 in the account. Rent is due on January 1<sup>st</sup>. CCOF was founded in 1973. It filed a state tax return in 1985. Never filed an '86 or '87 state tax return, and never filed any federal returns. So we're in violation of every non-profit filing system, and we have no money, and the four of us are really dedicated, working half-time to keep this thing going. I basically went home and said—well, this is going to be really great, Jude, it's great people, and I know many farmers, I'm really psyched, and there's other chapters. But gee, I just never really had interviewed for the process, and never thought to ask to see the books to get a sense of cash flow. They do have a certification system to bring in cash flow, but the money's not going to be seen until March or April of next year, and we're going to be bankrupt and be evicted. And I'm not going to be paid. So that was the big transition into my first six months in CCOF.

[Break in taping]

Mark and Phil had made the interview application. Phil McGee was also in the office. He drove on his ... I guess I called down at the office—I'm not going to look at Mark—I called down to the office and said—I'm interested in applying, how do I get it? I think Mark answered and said—oh, we'll get one to you in the mail. Phil McGee jumped on his bicycle and bicycled up to the house and put it into the mailbox an hour later. Then I went through this hiring process. I got to the office and Mark described the dire straits that the organization was in, and, thank goodness I was there, and he was sure I could pull it off. And as we looked around in foundations and asked some of my old FOE contacts, it looked pretty difficult. I did, through a network, and I think Mark played a role in finding, a gentleman who was a tax attorney who picked up the role of filing state returns and fed returns and started that process. We got a budget in place, so we had some sense of what money we were going to have in the next year, but we were sure we weren't going to get any. In brainstorming, in the conversation, Mark had a roommate and a friend who was in the management of the Grateful Dead, and we—remember, we're not in any tax form or any manner within which we could ask for or receive any big donations. So I went to the director of the EcoFarm, Ecological Farming Association, Community for Sustainable Ag—CSA, was it, at the time? Anyway, went to that group, and Otis Wallen was the executive director, and he said, sure, we'll do a pass-through for five percent. So I'm like—God, before I even start I'm out another \$500 bucks. But we went ahead and Mark made the ask, and when we get together maybe Mark can tell more about some of the back story we learned later, but Garcia and the band said—yeah, we'll give them \$10,000. And we moved that check as fast as possible through EcoFarm group to a gift to CCOF, and we paid the rent. We did back pay for everybody who were half-time. And by then the feds said—well, you can't ... we actually filed as a (c)(3), but they said no, you're not that, and you have a \$3,600 fine. And we paid the fine and went back as a (c)(5). And then I got to know the case manager, and the old gift of gab, I think, was very helpful, because eventually he agreed to return ... we had contested the fine. We used the image of all these farmers who were sitting around a table, and what do they know about rules and government and filing? They are trying to write organic standards. And he bought that, and we

got the entire money refunded, and that was the bridge to the first assessment income to CCOF funds.

So now we're in '88 and through my ... I want to give a two-year window of some highlights. We can talk a little bit about it more, and Mark and I can sit together and do some more color around it, but from mid-'88 to 1990 we had the carrot caper, where we discovered that a grower was fraudulently labeling conventional carrots as organic, and I went to the CCOF board, and it was a complaint filed—what are you guys worth? What are you for? I'm paying assessment money—what good are you if you're not going to enforce the law? Well, the law was really old and it had no enforcement protocol to it, so we made the decision as a board that we would fight it. We would file a complaint with the state health department, nothing around ag. Somewhere during that process, we hired an attorney, Barry Epstein, to assist us in Sacramento, in getting this law enforced. And then it didn't have much of an impact, the carrots were still pouring out labeled as organic. A few people in the marketplace were buying them, and we made the decision to do something with the press, to risk our seal, risk our name. I had known a reporter from Friends of the Earth who I actually worked with in my secretarial role at extension, mostly to promote Wes and David Kline's presentation, Mitchell Benson, and he was an up-and-coming reporter for the *San Jose Mercury News*, and within the industry we had a friend who had a newsletter for her business, and she went into that packing house saying she was a reporter and writing an article, and she heard they were really a growing business of organic, and they gave her an interview and she brought her camera and she took photos of Mexican bags of carrots being taken out of the bag and put into his organic label bag. She actually had the photographic proof. And then she gave them to me, saying—I want to be an anonymous source, you've got to take the hit on this. It's got to be your name and CCOF. I shared all that with Mitchell, and he brought it to his editor, and I told him he would get the exclusive; he'd get the first shot at it. And we went with CCOF, Bill Brammer was the president, with his support. We decided to go all-in—this was it. We were going to defend the law and embarrass the state. I remember distinctly around 10 at night Mitchell calling me, saying—it's all done. I've been through, run this through you eight times, but the photo editor wants to know who the actual photographer was. And I said—I don't think I can tell you this. And he said—they're going to spike the story if you don't tell me. And I said—I can only do it if it stays with you. You have my name in verification, you have the photos, and I can tell you who the photographer was, but it cannot be in ... as delivered from CCOF, shared with them. So I told him; he agreed to have it as an anonymous source and delivered the photos. Came back at 10:30 and someone said OK, they bought that, it's going to press at 11; you'll see it tomorrow morning. It was above the fold, it was the top story. The spotlight turned to this packing house. AP picked it up, *Chronicle* picked it up. Back then we had newspapers that really competed with each other, and it became a national news story, and the state still wouldn't enforce it. We decided to put more money in the CCOF budget, and it came to the point where this was just not working, they weren't going to do it using a county process. So we decided to write the law, a new one with enforcement protocol ourselves, and assigned Mark to take the lead, and working with Barry and by then Sam Farr, still there and moving up the ladder there in Sacramento, to write AB-2012. As this is engaged, a friend is going on—again, I'm kind of giving a two-year overview, and then we can get closer to the dates when Mark and I sit together. But as this was unfolding and shaking the organization to its core, testing our budget to its core, the friend of mine at NRDC called me and said—we've got a project of 20 pesticides, and we've known you from the FOE days and spray drift and

Agent Orange. We think we have a big deal with this thing called *60 Minutes*, and we are releasing the fact that these are suspected carcinogens that are still being used and are breaking the law. And *60 Minutes* is going to do a story on all 20 of these. And we're doing it in cooperation with Mothers and Others for a Livable Planet. And what we're struggling with is what we're for. What's positive—what's the solution. We trust you, and we're going to come down and see some farms and I want them to be certified organic—it's the only answer. Actually, after a lot of back and forth, it was vetoed at the top of the NRDC chain, and they were going to be for sustainable agriculture. And, OK, that's as good as we're going to get from them, but at least there's now some discussion from the opposite side. Turned out that *60 Minutes* focused on one. It was called Alar. The Alar, the day after our phone—we had one phone—started ringing with—do you have organic apples? I saw this thing last night. How do I find...? And we'd be—well, you can get our growers list. Send in \$5, we'll get it to you in a month. I need it tonight! And so it got chaotic. We actually made the big financial decision to buy call waiting so that we could put them on hold and get the second line. That was absurd. It got really busy really quickly over the next few weeks, but it sort of tapered down a little bit. Then there was Chilean grapes and maybe arsenic. There was a chemical in those. Food safety was the cover of the day.

**RK:** And Meryl Streep was part of the Alar one, right?

**BS:** She was part of Alar. They went ballistic with her. The apple growers sued her. She was called in front of Congress. It was quite the ... and there was a buzz out there, and the O-word showed up a few times in places, but it wasn't really what it became. About three weeks later or a month later she appeared on the Donahue show. Again, to keep—yeah, they're all after me, but ... couldn't say I'm Meryl Streep, she just said—you know, I've done my research; I know my stuff. My kids aren't going to eat this. Alar should be removed from the market. It's a crime that it's still being used anywhere. And Donahue, in their chatty manner, said—Oh, your kids—what do you ... So I, personally, I've made the commitment, I've found it ... I work with the groups in New England. The only way to go is certified organic food. And it was within an hour or two of that that our phone broke. We had to get multiple lines. Over the next many months we went from 200 applications and/or certified organic farmers. I think by '90 we had 800 in California. We had to add staff. We completely blew our budget. We had a billion dollar international Nordisk Andelsforbund come to San Francisco to drive down to Santa Cruz to meet with us to get our growers list and to talk about international trade. A humorous moment—we had to ... Phil had found, or maybe Mark had found, a couch on the street and put it on cinder blocks in our little room. That was our office. I think we got a new sheet to put on it so they would feel more comfortable in their suits and ties. We had local news cameras outside in the parking lot. Two other events during that period of time that were really important: As we were doing this and trying to manage this—three events—we got a call from a woman in Washington, DC, who worked for Senator Leahy, and he had tasked her, charged her, with gathering what states were doing what. Vermont had no certified organic program, and really I think the intent was for her to go and do a report to him. She told us she wanted us to send her everything possible—it was Kathleen Merrigan, working for him—and wanted to see where the differences were. Was there a need for a national standard? She wasn't really ready to say that, at least to me over the phone, but she wanted all the CCOF information and Oregon Tilth, and Washington. The process, mind you, was still going on to standardize. Tilth and Oregon Tilth and CCOF all went to write

basically the same law in three states to facilitate trade there. That was still underway. We had Alar in the national spotlight underway. It just so happened Mark was going to DC around that time, and I said—yeah, go meet Kathleen, check this out, she's asked us. And Kathleen always begins her story with—and see what's going on. Mark took that to go into Kathleen's office saying—we want a national law. Kathleen starts the story with—this farmer from California, Mark Lipson, walked in and said—we, out West, want a national law. And it was, OK, let's do it. So we started the activity around the national Organic Foods Production Act around that time. And if that wasn't enough, in October of '89 we had a 7.0 earthquake four miles from our office. Four people died in Santa Cruz County, two within 100 yards of our office. I was not there. I was in giving the first-ever organic presentation at the Produce Marketing Association in Reno. But the office, all the windows were broken, the wall separated, the fire escape was six inches from the building, and we had to evacuate. Mark took the lead, took care of all of that. The streets, bridges came down, the area was closed, and we had to, over a period of time, figure out how to re-group. Never mind certification and the constant—we need a certificate here, we need to fax there—the business of organic. And we signed the paperwork, and over a three-hour period we rescued every file from the office, which still is intense to this day. We have a couple of photos of Mark and I and Ryan Baker with our hard hats on, with one van. I have a photo of all driven to my house in the front yard. That's where the entire history of CCOF was parked for a couple weeks, if not months. And how we recovered from all of that. Lastly, the budget was busted. Eight hundred farmers needed to be addressed. We had five or six staff at this point. We were running out of money again. We were (c)(5), and I went to the board and said—I don't know ... this is not sustainable, the way the assessment system is set up. Grower pays \$25 or \$100 to apply. We service them for a year. Then they pay a quarter percent or half a percent—I think we messed with the percentages of their gross organic sales—the next year. So we serviced them for two whole years before we got an additional taxation or assessment payment. And now with 800 farmers, we were doomed to failure. They said—well, figure it out; you've been really good so far. So I went to a few foundation friends and one of them was Susan Clark at Columbia. And Susan, in her wonderful way, just listened to it and said—we can't give you any money. Great. But we have funded you at FOE on this, and we've known you—I trust you, Bob—just go found another organization that's a (c)(3), and we'd be so proud to make the first grant. So Mark Nielsen and at the time Patty (Rose) LaBoyteau and Warren Webber were the three CCOF board members, but really Mark Nielsen did the heavy lifting. And Mark and I wrote the bylaws, wrote the language. By then I was a pro, working with the feds on (c's)(3), (4), (5), and I went back and I'm not sure if I even used the same ... or went back to the gentleman who helped us out so wonderfully for the CCOF status, but it was very quick. I think within four months this thing that Mark and I called the Organic Farming Research Foundation was ... we got the (c)(3) letter. By then fax machines were rather universal. I faxed it to Susan in Columbia. Susan turned around and worked with Mrs. Russell, and they made a \$20,000 grant within two weeks. They might have overnighted it down to the office. We had an account open and ready to roll. We deposited it, and then OFRF, by a phone call, made a grant, an educational grant, to CCOF for \$19,000. And we kept a thousand aside, because we needed to pay for a p.o. box and a tape machine, and a phone line, and that \$19,000 covered the nut. And from there David Katz, who was on the newly formatted OFRF board, introduced me to Jean Wallace Douglas at Wallace Genetic in DC, and Bruce Hirsch and Clarence Heller and Alf Heller. And Garth helped significantly with both Jean and Alf Heller, and within that year, together, they had given us \$80,000, and we kept a little bit more, we set it aside, and most of it went to CCOF for our educational activities.

Because, the fact of the matter is, we were answering organic calls now from around the country, and on staff was Brian Baker, who, working with Oregon Tilth and Harry MacCormack and Lynn Coody, we had created an organic materials list. And people wanted to know—how do you add materials and take them away? What’s natural and synthetic? So we’ve got all of this stuff done. Brian would help them, and he started writing a column under the OFRF name in the CCOF newsletter called, “Science You Can Use.” And Brian had discovered this thing called the internet, and he was linked in with other scientists, the 15 or 40 that were studying sustainable ag, and writing these great stories about papers they were trying to publish or barely gotten published, and how translated what you could do for compost or organic systems. By ’92 I was running both organizations. I was drained with the CCOF experience. Off camera I told you a little bit, but CCOF had four board meetings a year. They had four executive committee meetings a year. It was intensely hands-on, chapter focused, but it was really staff run, and we had one president, really, during that time—Bill Brammer. Not really for personal reasons, but for chapter—we want more autonomy, we want more leadership, more decision-making, at least half of those meetings. Four meetings a year, either at ex com or at board level, there was a motion to fire me. Meaning that we want to reduce the power of the Santa Cruz office and the executive director to implement the overall board and the president’s directives. That was draining. So the OFRF board at that time had a motion that if we ever got \$40,000 ahead of the curve, in addition to what we were granting CCOF every year, if we built up our account, at \$40,000 it was time for it to get its own executive director and take this organic research conversation beyond “Science You Can Use” and into actual farmer-directed grant-making. And Mark Nielsen wrote all of that. Mark is the unsung and, really, unknown hero. He’s an organic kiwi grower up in Gridley in California. Mark did all that work, and then I’d do the proposals and do the meetings around the country. And lo and behold, we got \$40,000 ahead, and they filed, said—green light, Bob. Mark wrote the job announcement and set up the hiring process. We got almost 60 applications. It was simply an idea. No office, no place, could be anywhere. I went to my wife, Judy, at that time and said—I think I’m ready for another challenge and starting another organization. This is so different, and I think I’d be good at this, because the farmers are going to make the actual decisions on the research and what’s good. But my job is to raise money and be a presence and to grow the organization. So it’s compatible with CCOF, but it’s very different. So I applied and went through another hiring process, and then they offered it to me. That was the beginning of OFRF, Science You Can Use. From that Mark had gone to farm more, but he came back around. We got an idea...

**RK:** You’re talking Mark Lipson, now?

**BS:** Mark Lipson. We got an idea to write, *Searching For the O-word*. You can ask him more about that. *Searching For the O-word* led to integrating some of the 1980 policy recommendations, but it led to fantastic language that Mark and then Brise Tencer, and we wrote, tied into the farm bill, Tom Harkin, so we wrote OREI, Organic Research Education Initiative. We also got a wild idea to hold an organic business and regulatory conference at the Claremont, where no one else seemed to be bringing together media, researchers, scientists, Hollywood, businesses, and we held four of those. Erica Walz was now starting to work for us. We did a national organic farmers survey for research priorities. That survey made a big bang, and added staff and spread out through the country. And that led to, of course, the organic federal law and 10-plus years of regulatory activity and everything from the Harvey lawsuit to trade

association to different tensions among different parts of the industry. And Grateful Dead music as the sound track for a good bit of the time.

**RK:** Excellent.

**BS:** How's that?

**RK:** That's very good. I think we should break now, and then we'll pick up our joint discussion.

**BS:** Right.

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