

Scott Williams, Narrator

Anneliese Abbott, Interviewer

July 6, 2021

Location: Scott William’s house, Columbus, Ohio

With Scott Williams’ Edits and Additional Stories (completed May 13, 2022)

[Note: This edited version of the transcript is not true to the recording, but is included in this collection at Scott’s request. An exact transcript of the recording is also included.]

SW=Scott Williams

AA=Anneliese Abbott

AA: All right! This is July 6, 2021, and I am interviewing Scott Williams. Scott, thank you so much for taking the time to interview today. You want to start telling us a little about your background in organic/sustainable agriculture and your connection to that?

SW: Sure. At a very young age (13?) I was compelled to want to travel overseas and visit other cultures after high school. In high school I worked several jobs to save money. I succeeded and wanted to travel more. I lived with my parents and took on multiple jobs to travel to even more exotic locations. The dollar was extremely strong so you could live on a “dollar or two a day” in some countries. I imported hippie clothing, jewelry, etc., to help extend my savings while traveling (“anything” foreign was easily sold at this time). At 21 I decided to retire from this incredible experience and sink my roots back in my hometown of Columbus, Ohio, ...a very different person. However, at first, American food now made me sick—being so over-processed (etc.?). Through my importing I had become linked to Columbus’ wonderful alternative community which included the food co-op. So, a year later I was able to get a job working with our natural foods co-op. This grassroots business was growing exponentially due to the counter-cultural (youth’s) demand for healthy, safe, whole-grain, organic food at wholesale prices using techniques like bulk-distribution and volunteer-member duties to minimize the intense food price inflation of that era. It was an incredible experience, that era (mid-1970s). At my local co-op, I was responsible for two departments: produce and literature. This gave me experience importing fresh organic produce from California and Florida which was not always successful. Buying literature from the alternative presses and distributors of the era (e.g., Book People in San Francisco), as related to food and health, considerably ramped up my knowledge of our “counter-culture” movement. I stress that some of us were rooted in the growing science-based knowledge of our movement and against charlatans trying to make a cheap buck and massage their egos. There was a large “grey” area of knowledge where people had to guess if something was true or not! For example, Native American folkloric knowledge about the medicinal uses of wild plants was respected.

On a farm outside Columbus in the spring of 1976, I attended the second official planning meeting of the Federation of Ohio River Cooperatives (FORC). This farm became the location of FORC’s first warehouse and trucking operation to serve a five-state region. Mick Luber, who

you interviewed earlier, was involved in creating an organic certification program for FORC. At the time, there was no national program other than to follow what “Rodale” was saying. At this time, so many young people were leaving the big cities and moving to the country to buy very cheap land to start growing and *living* organically. Our “media influencers” of the era included magazines like Mother Earth News, and both The Whole Earth Catalog and Coevolution Quarterly on the West Coast, founded by Stewart Brand and friends. These FORC “back to the landers” formed pre-order buying clubs in their rural areas with like-minded folks which were served by FORC. Communes were formed, too, some of which still exist to this day! FORC then would buy food products grown and/or prepared by our rural members (not very successful) who were also working to re-establish farmers’ markets in their communities. The main sales volume for FORC, however, came from its urban food co-ops in cities like Akron, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Lexington, Cleveland and Columbus. Universities like Yellow Springs and Oberlin had student co-ops heavily involved in FORC as well.

So I became emersed very quickly in a politicized movement that was very much trying to create a new vision of what we should have in America in terms of our food, how we handle energy, and how we handle decision-making as humans. For example, this era adopted collective decision-making to run its communes, food co-ops and many other alternative businesses being started. It was all oriented towards an organic, ecological worldview with a strong emphasis on social justice—with everyone having a say. The social network, that we were part of, embraced many cultural reforms. One strong element in our movement was the women’s movement for equality which included many “fronts” like the right to home birthing with legal mid-wives. Interestingly, there were many small Christian congregations in this youth movement who also bought into our natural foods’ their ideology, most of these were pre-order buying clubs with FORC, and we all got along. The cancer “scares” kept unfolding in the media and suburban housewives also began demanding safe natural foods, further driving our sales volume in FORC. All these people were changing quickly and learning about how to cook with whole grains and “natural” (but at first strange) foods. Famous cookbooks emerged like Diet for a Small Planet, The Moosewood Cookbook, The Tassajara Cookbook, Laurel’s Kitchen, etc. One of my favorite titles was Cookbook of Foods from Bible Days reflecting a growing awareness of the health value of pre-industrial (if not neolithic!) cuisine. This entire movement around food was driven at first by people on the West Coast and New England, but we in the Midwest did our thing too. Quickly FORC rose up and were recognized nationally for our own innovations (decision-making and tax on specific Third World foods). Canadians were part of our movement, too, and we all met at regional and national conferences to consolidate our transportation and food-sourcing networks—those were “heady” days.

But I also saw the troubles we were having. Our collective management and decision-making processes took too long and didn’t always remove the inevitable ego-clashes. We had no real knowledge of the food industry we were bumping up into through our rapid growth. We learned from mistakes. There was no way to properly screen for new employees who joined us out of personal desire. Turnover was high. Yet, I had learned so much! Just one example was learning about the European, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who proposed his biodynamic agriculture system in 1924, and whose followers were part of our food co-op movement. I visited one of Steiner’s legacy “Camphill Movement” locations on the East Coast where I got to meet Ann Wigmore (eliminate all sugar and adopt live foods – especially wheat grass smoothies -- to cleanse yourselves). Ann had famously collaborated with, and mentored, Victor

Kulvinskis, author of Survival into The 21st Century—Planetary Healers Manual. We were all space cadets!

So, by the end of the 1970s, I was living perpetually poor and decided I needed a college degree. One influence was surely the University Center for Cooperatives at the University of Wisconsin in Madison where Elaine Nesterik and Ann Hoyt were paid “real” wages working to promote food co-ops. Because of my foreign travels and heavy involvement with FORC’s World Food/Hunger Committee (a precursor to the fair-trade movement), I found myself on a panel at an Ohio food conference in Cincinnati sitting with a professor, Dr. Jean Bowers, from Ohio State University’s College of Home Economics, Consumer Sciences Department. As I was such a generalist, this was a great link-up for me and I thrived going to college on loans, taking courses across the university, hosting OSU’s first visiting scholars from mainland China, and eventually getting my degree from a renamed College of Human Ecology. Studying both the history of the home economics and co-op movements, I discovered surprising stories of how they led the battle against adulterated food. Of course, Upton Sinclair writing The Jungle helped to launch a pure foods movement at the start of the 1900s which led to the founding of the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). In the 1930s the development of “white” bread was rejected by both home economists and consumer co-ops, I discovered. Yet they failed to stop the success of white bread (the power of corporate marketing!). At that Cincinnati food conference in 1979, I got to have my “Emperor Wears No Clothes” moment with the FDA! There was a panel of scientists from the FDA. I asked them why there could not be research studies on the combined effects of multiple, allowed, industrial food toxins eaten at the same time in a typical processed food product, let alone eaten in a typical American meal. Their research results were setting toxicity limits for each isolated food additive based upon their rat consumption studies. Their answer was that it would be impossible to do that kind of research! But let me be clear, some of us also knew that even organically grown foods can have natural toxins, never mind our ways of cooking that can sometimes greatly increase a meal’s toxicity.

I did not stop college. I then joined a graduate program on farm co-ops being offered by OSU’s famous College of Agriculture. Alas, I eventually felt uncomfortable with my career track that would put me into farm co-ops that had no interest in building a sustainable agriculture. Nevertheless, my main accomplishment in grad school was creating a 3-volume, 1,135 page, 5,390 citations, annotated, multi-fields-indexed, bibliography on rural and agricultural co-operatives that was never published but at least it was added to the University of Wisconsin’s Co-operative Library. Working on that bibliography, I discovered and included the first references in traditional ag media to organic farm co-ops being formed.

So I cut my losses and looked for a new career. I took a cataloging job with Ohio State University’s Prior Health Science Library. In a couple years I found my new career as a grant writer and manager for Central Ohio nonprofits, often being tasked with additional knotty problems no executive wanted to handle!

So, in constant poverty, I sadly departed my ag econ degree program and took a job at OSU’s Health Sciences library cataloging new books, etc. In a couple years I found my new profession working with a mental health agency as an evaluator, planner and grant writer/manager. With my Home Ec degree, it was perfect. I found a half decent paying profession with local nonprofits—specializing in grants and fundraising. Enriching people’s lives and dealing with social problems was the flexible mission. Yet, with some irony, I found myself handling food and hunger issues again! How interesting that was. One of the highlights of that subject area, toward the end of my career, was working with Barbara Packer, who helped

to revolutionize food pantries in Central Ohio and beyond! Imagine shopping at a grocery store where the floor layout is based upon the food groups! The food co-ops never thought of that! Her advanced-design “choice” food pantries allowed families to select the foods they liked from each food group in a ratio formula that insured they took home a nutritionally-balanced shopping basket of food, based upon family size, that always included fresh fruits and vegetables. Overall, however, I was already pretty cynical of the poverty food system in America. Rather than adjusting minimum wage rates going forward from the 1960s which would mean a \$24 an hour minimum wage rate in 2021, our nation decided to keep boosting food stamps (SNAP) to help alleviate hunger from poverty—undermining their psychological self-esteem! One additional food and health disaster created for the American poor was their obesity rates skyrocketing due to the cheap junk food being marketed “at them”. I found that the food banks and food pantries also got vast amounts of this salt-sugar-fats junk food, nearing shelf expiration dates, donated to them to distribute to the poor as a tax write off for food system corporations.

AA: All right, so the next question’s about farming methods, so probably that one’s not as applicable to you because you weren’t actually involved in the production side of it?

SW: One sector of the early organic movement was linked to Hollywood, I like to think. There had always been specialized health food stores going back in time before the advent of the hippie natural food co-op movement. These stores had to be careful! They sold products and knowledge that the medical world did not approve. And they were a link to underground doctors and practices that used non-medically approved health rejuvenating regimes. The hawkers (brand names) of supplements, in some cases, cited their product as being used by Hollywood stars. I believe that this “underground” very small economy was also appreciative of Rodale and his magazine *Organic Gardening* which sold in these stores and carried ads for mail-order supplements. Hollywood stars were always going to health resorts to keep looking young! I suspect that included European resorts. In Europe there was a long history of “drinking the waters” at these resorts. There was a whole pilgrimage history that had Europeans either visiting holy sites or these health resorts where a famous spring existed with healing waters. At those “baths” you fasted, soaked, ate a specific diet, exercised, drank the waters, and left feeling like a new person! So, in the USA, these folks readily became a minority group in our burgeoning organic food movement. What follows is one story from my experience.

We had a “rogue” doctor in Columbus, Dr. Ernest F. Shearer, DO, who had founded in 1940 the Beechwold Clinic and practiced wholistic European natural medicine. Our main newspaper, The Columbus Dispatch, working with the American Medical Association, tried to run him out of business (if not put him in jail). He was a total “quack” in their eyes. In the basement of his clinic (house) along High Street was Beechwold Natural Foods (and health supplements, of course). This natural foods store long pre-dated the founding of Columbus’ first natural food co-op (a pre-order) which was started in 1968. One day in 1976, I was working in our evolved “movement” food co-op which now was open 6 or 7 days a week with a very large inventory! I walked three older adults whom I immediately identified as visiting Europeans from Central Europe (probably Austrians by their clothing!). They walked around a while and I went up and welcomed them. The woman asked if we had plain kefir for sale? I said we would have to look, and we walked over to one of our coolers, but it was all sweetened fruit-flavored varieties of kefir for sale—we didn’t carry plain kefir as no one liked it yet! They sort of turned

up their noses and walked out (our food co-op, like most, was not that clean, either!). I said, oh my, I bet they were visiting Dr. Shearer, and had been encouraged to go see the food co-op!

So we did get into the philosophies a little bit there. Religious and spiritual views. Yes, I want to talk about that just for a second. You know, we mentioned Charlie Frye, a president of OEFFA, and a United Methodist Minister. At that time (mid- to early-1990s I was on the board, too. I served twice on OEFFA's board doing lots of volunteer work in certain areas like marketing, conference, workshop development, grant writing and fundraising.

But may I digress with an important story: I was close friends with a Russ Smith working on his PhD in the OSU Ag College's Dept of Ag Econ and Rural Sociology. The two of us wrote OEFFA's first real grant proposal to the new Low Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA) program started by the USDA. At the time (1986-87?), OEFFA's next conference was to have the theme "Ecological is Economical" which I thought was a great theme! Russ and I were well aware of the very first academic articles being published on this very theme! We wanted to gather the state-of-the-art academic knowledge and do a workshop for the conference related to this theme. Ha!!! The current President of OEFFA, Dave Baldock, refused to endorse this workshop from happening as he "didn't want any OSU academic types involved with giving a workshop at OEFFA." I was also *on the board* and I was devastated—this OEFFA President moved on and soon left OEFFA, by the way. This story reflects one aspect of our movement's philosophy!

So at a mid 1990s board meeting, OEFFA Board President Charlie Frye stated he was going to do a workshop on the spiritual philosophy of organics. And I said, I'd like to join you in that, and share some of my materials that I have been collecting on the topic, to which he was agreeable. He was a minister who couldn't stop talking-(as is often the case with ministers!). And we all loved him and everything, but oh I was mad as hell at him afterward. I put together a handout, 20 pages or more, of some of the best philosophical thinking about the environment, from early thinkers right up to what was being produced in the early 1990s. I had gathered just some incredible material looking at the planet as a whole. But, in the workshop, Charlie just kept on talking and talking, and like ten minutes before time was up, I said, "Charlie, can I have some time to give my presentation?" Well, he had to wrap up his presentation, so it took him another five minutes!

So, I quickly tried to pass out some twenty copies of my handout to a packed workshop and explain how to look through my packet... You know, we're talking about local to global, the human mind, how we think, how sociology works among people, and global-local environmental feedback loops. Just capsulizing in quotes and in diagrams all these fabulous thinkers. Harv Roehling, another President of OEFFA whom I knew well, afterwards says, "This is incredible, Scott!" People were trying to ask questions as the workshop quickly ended and we all had to leave the room. So that's my two cents worth of religious and spiritual views of our movement, which I put into print. The material that I assembled I still have. I don't know. Maybe someday it will get to Wisconsin. Yes, I included it in my donation to the Historical Society Library.

AA: Thank you, that stuff is really interesting. Were there some people then, you were saying there were some people who were Christians and some who were hippies, and they were able to get along pretty well, or sometimes there were disagreements?

SW: People from totally different backgrounds got along well with one another in OEFFA (see additional comments below). It was just mostly male egos fighting over potential wealth (and

their power) happening inside OEFFA, over time; and also wanting to sometimes split off to start their own groups and things like that. When we came together in these conferences those male egos, they would try to have their say now and then, in our membership meetings. But they never became dominant. It was this wonderful cultural fusion going on where people would sit with one another different from themselves. That's the way it's always been. Very positive stuff. One could say that OEFFA was social-engineered by the influence of FORC (inclusive decision-making processes) and common-sense folks like Mick Luber who understood the value of bringing disparate interests together in a coalition that behaved itself by not wanting to alienate segments found in the total crowd present as we kept growing every year larger! Ultimately, OEFFA, unlike FORC, brought together extremely disparate groups in our society: rural-urban, elderly-young, hippies and straight, Christian and athiests/pagans, and made it happen! Just imagine our unwritten social code of respecting one another unfolded which was made easier, for sure, by being a minority as a whole in the scheme of the food economy. People like Harv Roehling and Mick Luber would call out and contain certain male egos, that if given free rein, might have ruined OEFFA's development.

AA: That's really good to know. So is there anything you want to share about the connection—and you already did share a lot, but anything else about the connection between organic/sustainable agriculture to the broader historical and cultural context?

SW: Well, again, this really troubles me, but it seems like in human populations, you take a sample of them, there's only like five percent that have any common sense. And it's really hard in our culture with the media controlled by giant corporations that have a financial interest behind their thing, including the scientific research being done and everything to advance their bottom lines, to have this independent thinking ability (scientific skepticism) as did the Spray Brothers' families farming in Ohio in the 1940s. I'm paraphrasing them: They saw the new-fangled chemical agriculture being marketed by corporate sales agents come on to the scene. They decided to pull back and just wait and continue to farm the way they were farming. They were still making money; the old way ~~it~~ still worked. That's the problem. There's not too many people that have that kind of open-mindedness anywhere, it seems, to see a pig for a poke and know that maybe this isn't such a good idea: This new-fangled stuff that they want us to spray on our crops and put into the soil.

So that's perhaps my answer to that question. We're working good, we've got ten minutes left till 5 p.m.!

AA: So you were involved, you were talking about FORC and your involvement in that, and then I know you were also involved in OEFFA. Do you want to share anything else about your involvement in organic organizations?

SW: Well, I laughed at my first involvement in OEFFA. I was so involved with the natural food co-op movement that I didn't want to get involved! I wanted to help a little bit with OEFFA and nothing more. And so I did not even remember until I saw my name on the attendee list, that I had attended that key Spring '79 OEFFA planning meeting. However, I didn't attend the final organizational meeting in the fall of '79. But I then attended ~~that~~ OEFFA's first membership conference meeting in the Spring of 1980 because I was ordered by FORC to be there! Ha! And

I had to give a workshop on world food and hunger in exchange for FORC donating its world food and hunger tax money to help found OEFFA—a *quid pro quo* I got stuck with, ha!

One of the really innovative things that FORC did was that we taxed imported Third World foods from dictatorships. This was some years before a fair-trade movement would emerge. We sent that money back to those countries to help the farmers' groups fight against the United Banana Company, or whatever. And we used the rest of that money to educate our own public about how bad it is for these growers and farmers in these Third World countries under these dictatorships. Using some of that money to build OEFFA was not even an issue on the committee. Frankie Moore Lappé, *Diet for a Small Planet*, fell in love with FORC and came to visit us. She wrote us up all over the place. I met her a few years ago, and she was like, "Oh my God, FORC was one of the best things I ever ran into." In terms of people rising up and doing good things with their money, as well as trying to build an equitable food system in our society, that was FORC. So that's kind of one aspect.

So I ended up having to present a slide show on world hunger at OEFFA's first conference, and one person attended my workshop—I didn't even want to attend it, I wanted to go hear another workshop. Ha! Then I got on the board, and I helped with newsletter articles and the organic suppliers' directory. I was very marketing-oriented, so I helped write, edit and design some of OEFFA's earliest marketing and membership recruiting brochures. I was also trying to get marketing brochures, for the first time, into the hands of consumers, in our food co-op system. These brochures are now in the Wisconsin Historical Society Library. So I did an organic suppliers directory using a library industry software database for indexing. And that was a big disappointment for me in different ways. For the directory, I created a thesaurus of-organic terms (including their synonyms) in an outlined structure by broad-to-narrow categories and these terms were used to index the listed suppliers. I thought the organic industry would love that. But they never took note. There's so much chaos in our lives going on all the time. Sometimes things don't happen.

That was a financial disappointment, too, for OEFFA. We were going to try to make some money with it, but a change of leadership occurred who didn't like the directory. But to go back to my failed Thesaurus: I distinguished between standard, generic product terms and service terms with brand names, and then even with specific scientific species names for life forms, and for bugs that we were buying to use in Integrated Pest Management (IPM). So I did that then, and then I got off the board. And then I was ordered back on again some years later. I was ~~already~~ doing grants and fundraising in my work life career by then. I'd done that back in the '70s for co-ops, too! This time I was appointed to a role on the board (the fundraising person for OEFFA's new charitable workplace campaign program). So that was really fun. I had an easy job and I could sit on the board and listen to everybody, and help raise money. I did this for several years when OEFFA had its first part-time manager, Sean McGovern. Then recently, since 2015, I've been involved with the history of OEFFA, because I'm a born archivist, it seems. Early on, as did Mick Luber, I tried to collect everything that was being handed out each year, save newsletters, and save all the other movement literature. That's how you got to know me.

[SCOTT IS SHOWING ANNELIESE SOME OF MY EPHEMERAL ORGANIC MOVEMENT LITERATURE WHICH WAS DONATED TO THE WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY.]

Lately, I have been gathering together all the food co-op movement stuff. This is a 1977 Massachusetts' set of publications, of which they had 12 of these, Talking Food pamphlets.

These were sold by me in our Columbus food co-op for, perhaps, 10 cents each, and they sold well! I had one of the better bookstores of any food co-op in the country (maybe!), here in Columbus. We had the latest natural foods cookbooks, and all the literature of our movement that spilled over into women's issues and natural healthcare, etc. And I loved these little pamphlets like Talking Food. There were different topics, like miso, fruit juices, all natural, and organic stuff. Here's their lead one titled, "Natural Foods Are the Best Buy." It argues about why we want to pay a little bit more to support organic farmers building their soil. With the lingo of the era, it is very funny to look at.

AA: So I'm curious. I know that you were, at least for a while there, involved in the Ag Econ department at OSU. So I'm really curious about your perspective on the relationship between the agricultural universities and organic and sustainable agriculture and how that's changed over time.

SW: Yes. In the latter 1980s, I was in the Ohio State University's College of Agriculture's Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. There were perhaps twenty professors in this department, but none were doing any work that related to organic farmers. They couldn't despite what I discerned to be a strong sympathy for environmental, sustainable and ecological agricultural practices. This was due to a lack of funding, of course. Another reason was that there were too few organic farms to make good publishable scientific studies. But most important, the head of the Ag College, was Dean Kottman who was strongly opposed to any "research" related to organic-sustainable agriculture. As was most all of the funded research in the college, Dean Kottman was linked to the industrial-agricultural-corporate complex which believed that ecological techniques would plunge the planet into starvation.

One of the more remarkable stories of OEFFA's relationships inside the OSU College of Agriculture was an early member of OEFFA named Kamiar Enshayan, an immigrant from Iran. He was very bold and asked embarrassing questions of professors at OSU events in front of Dean Kottman! His questions pertained to his deep scientific knowledge around energy costs and ecological issues related to industrial ag. Dean Kottman decided Kamiar, an A student, needed to be kicked out of his graduate course for such heresy and related activities! The professors protected him, but a true savior then did appear to save Kamiar's ass! The College of Arts and Sciences at OSU had the Department of Botany that Dean Kottman had no power over. They hired from England one of the world's leading scientists on sustainable agriculture and entymology, Dr. Clive Edwards! Kamiar moved his doctorate program under Clive's wings, and together, they started OSU's Sustainable Agriculture Program. Ah, but they had help from renegade angel scientists up in Wooster, Ohio, who now emerged into the equation being employed at OSU Ag College's ATI (Agriculture and Technology Institute). This would be the remarkable duo of Deb and Ben Stinner who also became members of OEFFA and wrote for its newsletter. Together they broke Dean Kottman's strangle-hold on allowable ag research at OSU's ATI. One of my theories of how professors could get around the industrial agriculture research system during this transitory era, was to simply start a private consulting firm with a bland name and do not very well publicized events to bring small crowds together. OEFFA, of course, at the time was too radical for them to be allowed to present at, but that would quickly change. Perhaps the first time I saw Ben Stinner was on a panel at one of these "off the record" soil scientists' events. Another fellow soil scientist on the panel at this event summarized what they knew about ecological soil science that could help reduce crop problems and boost

production. I was stunned at how little *they* knew. Let alone the complexity of life in a square yard of soil!

AA: So from your perspective, the social scientists, the ag economists and the rural sociologists, were more favorably disposed toward organic farming than the plant scientists and the soil scientists?

SW: Yes and No! I really can't say, except that within OSU's department of ag econ and rural sociology, we had monthly give-and-take meetings that were very fun to attend and where it was clear that big environmental issues were unfortunately not being addressed. I suspect that ag scientists elsewhere at OSU kept their opinions more to themselves. But there was good change happening, an example being Dr. David Zartman from the dairy side who helped to spread adoption of rotational dairy farm grazing that came out of New Zealand. He worked with OEFFA members like Stacy Hall and Pete Dix's dairy farm in Athens County Ohio which helped to launch an organic, grass-fed dairy business named Snowville Creamery, a member of OEFFA.

Now Deb Stinner said something interesting that should be recorded. This is much, much later, 2015. We're talking 1985 versus 2015. Deb Stinner is managing our national research task force for organic research in the country. She's on the committee. I think she's the head of the committee. She said, off the record probably, how she could not use European research, with application to training and dissemination of knowledge about organic research, in America. We had to re-research all the organic research that the Europeans had pioneered to tell us what's working and what isn't. We had to do it over again using our own people. The politics of American academic institutions was blocking this. We're number one, we can't trust European research. That really threw me for a zinger, really depressing to hear.

AA: All right, great. Do you want to share if you have any perspectives on organic certification? Again, I know you weren't personally involved with much of that.

SW: No, I've already said how I tried to create a thesaurus of organic terminology, but never got that involved with the certification people. We were just overwhelmed sometimes in our lives. You can take the horse to the water but it doesn't drink, you know. That's the case of that pitiful effort on my part. My point being is that I tried to make the certification and maintenance process easier for growers by providing them a thesaurus that outlined all the potential information/product sourcing needs of a grower in an easy-to-understand wholistic outline that incorporated generic terms with their scientific and brand-name product terms.

AA: And I'm curious to hear your perspective on past and current trends in organic/sustainable agriculture. Is there anything you want to comment on some of the controversies and maybe why those have come about?

SW: Well, I'm going to take a consumer perspective on this. The consumer got overwhelmed with labels, certification labels, at one point I think, at least. That's one thing that's going on. Again, when you study consumer sciences, we learned things (like marketing science from the business college), along with propaganda, the art and science of propaganda (from the spy world and political science theory). If you repeat a lie often enough people will believe you. If you

create so many variables for when a consumer wants to buy a product, you confuse them, so they never know what they really want to buy because it would take too long to study the whole situation. This has been proven. And all industries that know this are using it. You have so many attributes of the product and so many variable options. In the end, you're left choosing something that sounds and looks good but you're actually paying more than you should for what you really want and need, criteria-wise, for that product. Something like that. So there's "greed" involved with these proliferating labels—not that they are sincere in developing another specialized certification program related to ecological agriculture and food products. And we've talked about that earlier. I find that fascinating.

And I love trying to find new organic certification labels that I haven't seen before. I began to collect them when they first started being used. Alas, I see products being sold at Kroger, certified organic, but there's nothing on it that shows the certifying agency, *which is illegal*. Talking about Ohio and Kroger, locally, Kroger tells everybody they're buying local and whatnot. And our Amish organic growers in OEFFA that were producing kale chips—they had a wonderful product—along with other Ohio products, I found being sold on a moveable island in the Kroger store to promote Ohio products. It used to be there when you came in to the produce area. Perfect! Well, one day I said, where did it go? And then I found it; they put it way back in the dog food area. Ha! Believe it or not, they were not even monitoring the perishable dates on the products! And that poor Amish company, I then found, had kale chips that were visibly moldy for sale. I looked at the expiry date and it was ten months past due date! This is how bad it can be for the organic movement, indeed, the local organic, which is even more important. Enough said.

AA: So what would you say are the most important aspects of this history to preserve and then teach to the younger generations?

SW: Note: I did not directly answer this question as I should have. Most important, I think that's maybe the wrong question. And this gets back into my comments on the food pantry system in this country. It's sort of like, we're just sort of, we accept things because we don't know how different and better they can be. The information about organics is out there. It's a question of whether we are going to own the politicians and force them to change the system and deal with the corporations that are doing what they're doing. Until we have a democracy that's able to do that, I don't see much change going into the future other than our gradual growth as more and more people convert over to that. We had that exponential growth, and we know that it continues, I just saw the grocery data just recently. It's still growing at a great clip. But it's far behind what we need. You know, we saw what the corporations did when they came in and tried to take over parts of the organic label just so they could make money selling an organic chicken that says organic. But we know that it happens at the grassroots level, too, with people just trying to cheat and make money.

I'm worried because of the power of the truly giant corporations. It's so significant, I think we have so many obstacles until we deal with certain aspects of our democracy, the gerrymandering, you name it. One of the things that comes to this, you hear about, we need a new constitution. Yes, we do, blah blah blah. But when we were founding OEFFA, we were founding a bioregion. This is part of the scaling of democracy, having local systems that are democratic on top of others that can help fix all the problems we've been ignoring for decades and decades. Usually it takes a crisis, but the crises I've seen coming into our society have been

quickly forgotten, and we go back to the old ways more and more of the same. So I don't know. I don't know what can be done in that sense. Certainly one-on-one mentoring is wonderful.

I know that we heard the others talk about this in terms of the USDA, marketing, and these other, the problem of grain farmers, and trying to solve that problem. I think that's way beyond where politicians in our society today are, specifically the gerrymandering, because if you think about it, the Democrats, who were the ones that supported the organic originally, many, many Democrats, elected Democrats in our US House of Representatives, are coming from gerrymandered districts by the Republicans. The Republicans (in Ohio) then create a few A gerrymandered Democratic districts that a Democratic person can always win. And so they have no incentive to get rid of the other gerrymandered districts that are supported by the corporations. Of course, the Democrats are very much supported by the giant corporations, too.

To change society it usually takes a big crisis. But the last few that we've seen didn't seem to do much. So I don't know. It's looking dangerous in my future with the aspect of severe hits by global warming perhaps as soon as the 2030s or 2040s. Was there one or two more questions?

AA: That was all the main questions. If there's anything else that you want to add to the recording.

SW: I found joy in collecting the organic food movement material, their food labels, and the print culture of the movement. And that's why a lot of my stuff is going to Wisconsin. We fought hard, but we had a lot of fun. And we had sort of a spiritual, ethical position that these people that came together in FORC and OEFFA had that was different than the kinds of other nonprofit organizations being created. Oftentimes one mission nonprofits are started with the , ~~and~~ I want to get rich, I want to be an executive director, as an unstated mission. No. That was not part of our culture. That made it so rich. And enriched my life greatly.

AA: Well, thank you so much, Scott!