

C.A.L.L.



International Communes Desk
KIBBUTZ FEDERATION

Nr. 12
Summer 1998



יד טבנקין
YAD TABENKIN

CALL

endeavors to spread information
and exchange experiences on
Communes and Communities
the world over

in order to create
contact and affinity between all
and help building a frame for

NETWORK



Editors of CALL (Communes at Large Letter) : Bi-annual
Magazine of the I.C.D. (International Communes Desk) :

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LETTERS



Dear Yoel Dorkam,

Many thanks for the last issues of CALL which you sent me, I was happy to rediscover there old acquaintances... A long time ago me and some friends planned to found an "intentional community" here in Germany, when one of our people donated his land for this purpose. A toy factory (which I found later at the Bruderhofs) was part of the project. The failure of this plan can be explained as the typical story of a youngster's dream passing away.

I have always held an interest in communitarian and "alternative" forms of life, not least in my professional capacity as social psychologist. I took active part in the formation of the "Netzwerks Selbsthilfe" in Berlin, also participated in the world-conference of the I.C.D. in Israel in October 1981. I remember so much of it, but first and foremost my long talk with Mordechai Bentov...

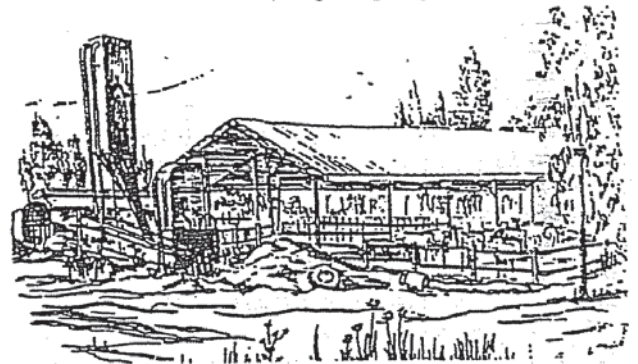
Dear Yoel, you see that I feel closely connected with Kibbutz life and its problems. I believe that communitarian and economic forms of society are still to realize their important role in the world. As one of the editors of "Die Neue Gesellschaft", I would like to take part in a discussion with you and your friends on the future chances of the Kibbutz, in the spirit of Amos Oz's saying: "I see in the Kibbutz idea one of the jewels of Israel, and maybe one of the most exciting social creations of the 20th century. It must be healed, not destroyed!"

Be well! Regards and best wishes, yours
Horst Von Gizycki, Birkenkopfstr. 4a,
34132 Kassel, Germany

Dear Yoel Darom,

Thank you so much for sending me CALL - a little reminder, if I ever need one, of a very precious time of my life, the time I spent in Israel, but foremost on your Kibbutz. I am reading a book called "The Kibbutz, a Different Society" (by H. Darin-Drabkin), and I enjoy it very much. The history of the communes movement is fascinating! Don't you miss what was at the origin of the movement or are you in favor of a re-definition of the communal life?

Society here is changing rapidly. Worst part is, it is tending toward individualism losing all its values. People do not have time to get to know each other, to share, to understand and appreciate the differences between them. And we are so fast at judging!



So I find it important to sit back once in a while, take a deep breath, look at the sun and the trees and experience a moment of pure connection with nature. And sometimes I am transported to the Kibbutz, to a place I went there often to renew with Shalom - the outside theater close to the dining hall, Right in the center, looking at the endless horizon, the wind playing with the two tall palm trees, the fields growing slowly - always brought me a feeling of bliss and filled me with energy.

Thanks for the good you do to the "Communal Way of Living"! Give my best wishes to all Kibbutz members!

Your friend Silvie Roy,
10727 Boul. Ste. Gertrude, Montreal
Nord, Quebec, Canada, H1G 5N7

Paradise Not Quite Lost



Like other 60's-era communes, Twin Oaks has survived, and nearly prospered, by making lots of rules and lots of hammocks. But every year the average age gets a little older. By Daniel Pinchbeck

ONE WALL OF THE DINING HALL AT THE TWIN OAKS commune functions as the bulletin board and local news service, with budget notices, letters from former members and handwritten, often fervid opinions posted on clipboards. At the moment, the hot topic on the wall involves a couple who have been seen pushing and hitting each other several times, violating Twin Oaks's strict nonviolent ethos. Members have posted lengthy comments, calling for the community to intervene or to impose sanctions against the couple. The woman involved has put up a typed note saying that she feels the violence remains within her "personal comfort level." Most of the other members angrily disagree. I watch this woman one night before dinner as she studies the responses to her note. Tall and lanky, in a cutoff T-shirt, she gasps as she reads, twisting her body into a defensive posture.

This year, Twin Oaks celebrates its 30th birthday, which in commune years is almost ancient, and it has not survived for so long by encouraging members to do their own thing. The roster of forbidden activities ranges from drug taking to owning a car to keeping wages for a job outside the commune. For transgressors, the intimate scale of life on the commune means that no broken rule goes unnoticed or without comment.

Kat Kinkade, the only founding member living on the farm, says that she is weary of the constant struggles over issues of personal autonomy versus the collective will and admits, "I'm sick of being told what I may and may not do." But regulating its members' behavior has been one of the keys to Twin Oaks's endurance. The stringent directives carefully preserved in the community's rules and bylaws keep it a self-enclosed world, a laboratory where questions raised in the 1960's — about the individual's place within society, about the meaning of community — continue to be asked.

On the whole, members no longer believe that they can spark a total transformation of society. They strive instead to take control of their own lives, of the food they eat and of the environment, inspired by a larger movement toward "voluntary simplicity" — an attempt to minimize waste and escape the alienation of today's supermarket culture. As one member says, to live at Twin Oaks you ultimately have to "accept and surrender."

SITUATED ON A 500-ACRE FORMER TOBACCO PLANTATION NEAR Charlottesville, Va., Twin Oaks began during the "back to the land" era with eight young, idealistic members living in one rickety farmhouse. It has slowly expanded over the decades to reach its present level of modest prosperity, supporting some 100 members and running several successful industries, a dairy and a vegetable farm. At the start, most people were in their early 20's, and turnover was as high as 70 percent annually. Now the average age is just over 40, while the average length of a member's stay has grown from seven months to more than seven years. "We're not getting many young people anymore," says Keenan Dakota, who is 37 and has lived on the commune since 1983. "Eventually, we could be an old-age home."

Some members appear distinctly hippie-ish, wearing thick beards, tie-dyed clothing and Birkenstocks. Others are even more laid-back; members can take whatever they want from Twin Oaks's free clothing store, an attic filled with castoffs rescued from thrift shops and Dumpsters.

Every day for meals, the residents gather in the dining hall, a high-ceilinged, skylighted building decorated with Native American wall hangings above mismatched tables and chairs. Windows look out onto the woods, where picnic tables are set up and hammocks sway between trees.

"Some people come here because of their political beliefs, some for touchy-feely New Age reasons and some because they have nowhere else to go," says Tom Freeman, who is sitting at my table. Tom counts himself among the first category, as does Ed Gottlieb, a brown-bearded environmental engineer in his late 30's. "I think living at Twin Oaks is a political statement," Ed says.

The dining hall is named Zhanchoy, after a pre-Zionist Jewish settlement in Russia. Most of the buildings at Twin Oaks bear the names of real or imagined communities and utopian settlements of the past. (A complex of wood shops and warehouses at one end of the property is called Emerald City.) In many ways similar to an Israeli kibbutz, Twin Oaks began with ideals of income sharing and total egalitarianism taken from the oddly depersonalized, hivelike model for a better society described in the psychologist B.F. Skinner's book "Walden Two."

While Twin Oaks has always been a leaderless society, many of the original group-living experiments of the 60's were formed by "magic men" — charismatic figures ranging from the psychopathic Charles Manson to Stephen Gaskin, the mystical Christian who led a caravan of buses to the Farm in Tennessee. Various settlements focused on psychedelics, free love, Eastern philosophy or organic gardening. The media gave intense scrutiny to these efforts in magazine articles, sociological studies, personal memoirs and the like, and the movement peaked in 1969, which Newsweek dubbed "the year of the commune." Mainstream interest in utopian solutions steadily decreased after that.

Yet today, Twin Oaks is far from a lone anachronism in the wilderness. "In the late 1970's, the communities movement was declining," says Keenan, who is on the commune's planning board. "Twin Oaks acted as the lifeboat of the movement back then, taking in members from places that folded. Recently, a new wave of communities has started up, and we have become the movement's flagship." The Communities Directory lists more than 500 so-called intentional communities across North America, ranging from a small farming cooperative in Oregon to a middle-class land trust in Florida to new attempts to create large-scale "ecovillages" — like Earthaven in North Carolina, which is meant to become an ecologically self-sustainable village. There are intentional communities formed specifically for organic farming, political activism, holistic health, "ecospirituality," multipartner relationships and a variety of esoteric religious practices. Many commune members seek a refuge from middle-class anxieties and from their own problems. Jeff Clearwater, an advocate for the Global Ecovillage Network, says that communes are the only way to address "the two kinds of pain so many people feel now: that we are killing the planet and that we are so alienated from each other."



"I think I will stay in an income-sharing community like this one for the rest of my life," says Tom, who is in his early 30's and has lived at Twin Oaks for two years. Tom is tall and thin, with an ascetic, intelligent face, short, uncombed hair and metal-rimmed round glasses. He goes barefoot through his daily tasks, wearing a blue T-shirt and patchwork shorts.

I follow him during a typical workday, which begins at 8 A.M. in the tofu factory, a small building filled with machinery and steam. The laborers wear aprons, rubber gloves and plastic hairnets (and in some cases beard nets) as they process vats of soybeans into tofu, then seal, package and refrigerate it. "We're not very efficient here," Tom says. "People ro-

tate their jobs a lot, so they don't become experts in any one field. We prefer to be inefficient, really, to maintain our laid-back life style. The great thing about Twin Oaks is that you can do whatever you want. When I work, I work for myself and I choose my own labor."

Twin Oaks adopted its labor system from Skinner's ideas: instead of a single job that they perform every day, the members create weekly work schedules, varying their activities every few hours. Nobody gets a salary, but members receive a \$60 monthly stipend to spend as they please. Within the boundaries of Twin Oaks, they don't need money at all, and they have no opportunity to build up equity or savings. As one member says, "When you leave here, you leave with nothing."

Tom's four-hour tofu-making shift ends at lunch, which is served cafeteria-style in the dining hall. Today's lunch features a thick carrot soup and a "vegan" shepherd's pie — no meat, no fish, no dairy — made from potatoes, tofu and cabbage.



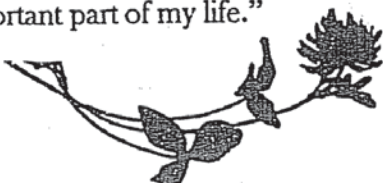
A typical communal manifesto of the 1960's stated, "We want to abolish the system (call it the Greed Machine, Capitalism, the Great Hamburger Grinder, Babylon, do-your-jobism)." Today's commune dwellers seem to have lost this revulsion to mainstream values. Instead, many of them ascribe to the more modest goal of voluntary simplicity and dream of being completely self-sufficient — an ideal in which nothing would be store bought or prepackaged, in which every grain of cereal or rice would be grown and harvested by hand. "There are people here who want us to have a lower standard of living, to be less middle-class," Tom says.

We walk to the hammock shop, which produces most of the commune's income, supplying about 35,000 hammocks a year to Pier One Imports. Twin Oaks farms out much of that order to other communes. When the commune breaks down its collective revenue for the I.R.S., the members make about \$5,500 a person. "People are attracted to the communal aspect of living together, but they don't realize that the life style rests on the stable base of our economic system," Keenan says. "We claim a great deal of control over the individual's time and resources. Even after fulfilling the labor quota, you can't have a career or income outside of here."

Weaving the hammocks is repetitive, pre-Industrial-style labor, but the tedium makes the shop a social center. As Dianne Grandstrom, a big-boned, middle-aged woman in a cutoff maroon sweatshirt, weaves, she says: "Everyone at Twin Oaks gets their own room. A couple may choose to live together here, but they still have two rooms. That way, if they ever want to experiment with nonmonogamy, they don't have the bed." Some of the dormlike rooms are decorated with folk art, hanging mobiles and batik wall hangings. Others are completely unadorned, like one that contained just a bed, a closet and a guitar resting plaintively against a wall.

"As social science editor of *Communities* magazine, as a planner and as a member, I was learning an incredible amount about myself — my failings and my strengths — and I was learning lessons that still shape much of my thinking about management, leadership, and the middle ground between pure capitalism and communism.

The most important aspect of my Twin Oaks experience, however, was that I made and had so many good friends, many of whom still remain an important part of my life."



MANY MEMBERS SAY THAT ONE PROBLEM WITH TWIN OAKS IS THAT IT often attracts misfits — people who arrive mentally imbalanced, too alienated or desperate to connect. Over its 30 years, there have been three suicides. "I've been on a suicide watch here," says Ed Gottlieb, the environmental engineer. "It's very difficult — should we allow in members who

have made suicide attempts in the past? On the other hand, where else can they go?"

But as Kat Kinkade says, "We are not a therapeutic community." A small woman in a purplish pants suit, she is in her late 60's and is the author of two books on life at Twin Oaks. She was a half-generation older than most of the original Twin Oaksers when the commune began in 1967. She became dissatisfied in the 1970's and left, working at one point as a computer programmer in Boston before returning, somewhat reluctantly. "Egalitarianism itself engenders and legitimizes envy," she says. "People's attitude is, 'I want to have whatever he has.'"

A weekly meeting of the residents of Morningstar, the house I am staying in, begins with a "check-in" — a chance for the residents to tell one another how they are doing.



When I ask Kat about this argument, she says: "We started Twin Oaks with a naïve belief that we could form a new culture unique from the mass culture. We thought we could fight TV. It is one thing to say I will go without TV for three years. It is another thing to say I'll go without TV for the rest of my life."

Even Kat, the Twin Oaks founder who started out believing that she and her comrades could fight global inequities, says, "I no longer think we have the power to do the things we once thought we had the power to do."

Today the members of Twin Oaks and other communes have scaled down their goals. They take satisfaction in cultivating their own gardens. They try to escape alienation and connect with one another. They keep alive a small, flickering flame of idealism. Yet they resemble the ragged communal pioneers of a generation ago as they seek to create something approximating home. ■

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE / AUGUST 3, 1997



Who We Are:

Twin Oaks is an income-sharing community of about 70 adults and 15 children located on 465 acres of land in central Virginia. We are a non-sectarian community which espouses the values of cooperation and egalitarianism while striving to eliminate racism, sexism, violence, consumerism, ageism, and competition from our everyday lives. We believe in living lightly on the land, and conserving and reusing as much of our natural resources as possible.



For information about our regular Saturday tours, or to inquire about our 3-week visitor program, please call during regular business hours or write to us at:

Twin Oaks
138 Twin Oaks Rd
Louisa, VA 23093-6337
540-894-5126
e-mail: stevik@twin Oaks.org

INVITATION

The "Urfeld Circle" was formed 3 years ago, at a week-long stay of about 20 Israeli Kibbutzniks at the Integrierte Gemeinde in Urfeld (South Germany).

After several mutual visits it was decided that the next step to deepen and strengthen the ties between the two communities shall be an exchange of young people (18-28), and the first stage in realizing this plan will take place this summer, with a number of youngsters from the German community coming to Israel to live on a Kibbutz and get to know it "from the inside". The return visit of their (young) Israeli hosts will probably materialize at the end of 1998.

At the moment this is only a pilot

program, which should include - except getting acquainted with the Kibbutz - tours of Israel, and visits to some of her important centers. If it succeeds, it will be extended and include, during the coming years, a larger number of young people.

This project could well be extended and include many different communities. Two plans are being proposed on these pages : who takes up the challenge?

Calling for a positive response,
on behalf of the I.C.D - Yoel Darom

Dear Call Reader,

= 1 =

We wish to inform all members of intentional communities of a new extension to our activities: we would like to see one or two of you as our guests, in order to learn "from the horse's mouth" about your achievements and problems, while giving you the opportunity to see and experience life on a Kibbutz.

Here is our proposal: you pay your plane ticket as well as the (cheap) bus fare for any sightseeing you may want to do in Israel on your own. All other expenses will be taken care of, as our guests in one of our Kibbutzim for up to four days. During your stay here we want to show you "Yad Tabenkin" and invite you to participate in a meeting with the activists of the International Communes Desk there.

For further details please get in touch with Shlomo Shalmon,
I.C.D. Ramat Efal. 52960, Israel
(or E-mail: yaffab@actom.co.il)



= 2 =



The Kibbutz movement began with twelve young people setting up a cooperative farm in a neglected corner of the ailing Ottoman empire. Today, over 80 years later, we have 270 villages all over Israel, we are 125,000 people, and are recognized internationally as one of the largest and oldest intentional community movements. Today the Kibbutz movement is undergoing immense change, both structurally and ideologically. To some people, we are losing our identity and "selling out" to others we are realigning ourselves with new social realities and responding to the modern world.

Why not come and form your own opinion?

We are putting together a small group to tour and study the contemporary Kibbutz. For two (or three) weeks we will visit many different kinds of Kibbutz, meeting with members who are involved in the ongoing debate about which direction Kibbutz should take. We shall also spend time at the Kibbutz Documentation and Study Center at Yad



Tabenkin and talk with people doing professional research into Kibbutz conditions today.

This is a unique opportunity for researchers, activists, journalists and students of the Intentional community scene to take an in-depth look at one of the most extensive social experiments of this century. This study tour was conceived by the International Communes Desk and is organized by one of its members. As you may know, the I.C.D. is a group of Kibbutz members who maintain contact and carry on a dialog with other intentional communities and see Kibbutz in an international communal context.

Dear Shlomo,

Greatly pleased getting last issue of CALL, please keep sending it! It is very interesting to read about other communities, mainly the Integrierte Gemeinde, where I spent some time in the year 1965. At that time I wanted to stay and live there, but the Lord led me a similar but special way: in the more than 30 years of communal living I changed from realizing my ideas to now let me be led by the Holy Spirit and Mary Virgin.

Thank you for your great work for Communal Living in CALL. Best wishes from

Mag. Friedrich, Koestlinger,

Frauendorf 76, A-3710 Ziersdorf, Austria



The study tour will take place in June 1999 and last for 2-3 weeks. We need a group of about 15 participants to make it socially dynamic and economically feasible. The cost will be around \$1000 per person, which would include all accommodation and transport in Israel, food and guides. We are now interested in hearing from interested potential parties - and sponsors who might help bring the price down or support scholarships.

Please contact Jan Martin Bang,
I.C.D., Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Efal,
52960, Israel



Permaculture Design Course

Aug.30-Sep.11 1998, ISRAEL

You are invited to come and learn Permaculture principles on a "Green Kibbutz", in an international atmosphere on Kibbutz GEZER, one of the founding communities of the "Green Kibbutz Group" and the Israeli representative of the "Global Ecovillage Network". Gezer is a think-tank and off-campus center for social and applied sociology. The course includes:

- A thorough grounding in Permaculture ;
- Hands-on practical experience in Permaculture aspects of gardening and building ;
- See Permaculture in action, in a variety of different ecological projects ;
- Networking with Permaculturists from around the world ;
- The experience of living on a "Green Kibbutz" and taking part in out way of life ;
- Seventy hours of instruction ;

A course certificate enabling you to use Permaculture in your profession.

For details and registration please contact:

Jan Bang, Kibbutz Gezer, 99786 ISRAEL

K A L E I D O S C O P E

The Communitarian Scene from all Over and Under

Compiled (and partly translated) by *Joel Dorkam*

Dear Kaleidoscope freaks,

I must admit some weird things are occurring inside the communitarian scene. But before diving deep into those fascinating undercurrents, let me offer a few tidbits as appetizers: "When somebody dreams for himself, it's only a dream. When people start dreaming together, it's the beginning of a new reality", says Helder Camera, the Brazilian Ancestors' Bishop.

And another one: "... the fate of American civilization hangs on whether we can recover from our addiction to the private car...", remarks Ernest Callebach in "Sustainable Cities". How about that in your community?

Well, what shall we enjoy first? Let's take an "oldie" from TWIN OAKS LEAVES about changing the clock, which first appeared in 1968 and was reprinted in No.84 of last summer. (By the way: TWIN OAKS ARE CELEBRATING THEIR 30TH ANNIVERSARY - MANY HAPPY RETURNS!!):



Days of Past Leaves

by Stevek

Issue number 4 of *The Leaves*, published in January, 1968, contains an article that I found quite fascinating. Written by Kat Kinkade, the piece reminds us of the Behaviorist roots of Twin Oaks...

- We Change the Clock -

Almost everybody hates to get up in the morning, including utopians. In fact, the absence of bosses and classes and schedules and time clocks may make utopians a bit worse than other people in this matter. We had breakfast scheduled for 8:00, but it was rarely ready before 9:00, because the breakfast cook couldn't get out of bed, either. Work on the building was supposed to start at 9:00, but didn't get started until 10:00. The building manager grumbled. We all knew the situation was getting out of hand. One member kept saying we ought to get up earlier. We all knew we couldn't do

that. Then someone suggested we set the clock back, just like Daylight Savings Time, and for the same purpose. Most of us thought it wouldn't work-after all, if we couldn't make ourselves get out of bed at 8:00, having the clock tell us it was 9:00 wasn't going to make any difference, was it? But we tried it. The odd thing is that it worked. We are still a little late getting up, but we are late an hour earlier than we used to be, and therefore use an extra hour of scarce and valuable sunlight for the outdoor work. The skeptics among us are amazed to find that it is the clock we go by, and not the feeling of sleepiness.

That puts the Community on Daylight Savings Time, while the surrounding area is on Standard Time. We have to remember that when we have appointments in town.

At the time this article was written, there were about ten members at Twin Oaks. Kat tells me that what became known as "Utopian Time", or "Twin Oaks Time" lasted about ten years. In

addition to the practical use of being one hour ahead, communards prided themselves in being different from the "outside world," with this scheme. Today the practical need for a time difference no longer exists. With an adult population of around 90, there's a larger pool of workers to get the work done. The number of night owls is roughly equal to the number of early birds, with most communards falling somewhere in-between. However, we do still pride ourselves in being different: our work week begins on Friday!



KALEIDOSCOPE

"DIGGERS AND DREAMERS" (part of a press release 98/99) introduces us to a choice of new biological species, including "serial communards" and also "Commune Hoppers". Let's take a look:

Diggers & Dreamers



Diggers & Dreamers 98/99
published by
Diggers & Dreamers Publications
BCM Edge, London WC1N 3XX
(£9.50; ISBN 0 9514945 4 6; 224 page paperback)

MORE THAN A CENTURY OF COMMUNAL LIVING

In 1898 a bunch of Tolstoyans from Croydon (yes, Croydon!) moved to a hamlet in Gloucestershire called Whiteway. There they scandalised the natives by burning the title deeds to their property and wearing shorts! A hundred years later, their descendents are still there. The Whiteway Colony isn't perhaps as Tolstoyan as it once was but it's still a pretty unusual place.

This is just one of the subjects covered in Diggers & Dreamers 98/99, the brand new edition of the biennial guide to communal living - the "communard's bible". Other highlights include:

- a look at the hopes and dreams behind the Pure Genius site
- an article about the commune that has really planned for the future ... by constructing a burial ground for its members!

There seem to have been a lot of cycling tours taking place. One circuit of Israeli kibbutzim is described in depth while another brave soul has apparently pedalled around Britain with a laptop on her bike, doing her best to prove to intentional communities that the Internet would be good for them. You can read the fascinating results of her survey in D&D.

Diggers & Dreamers introduces two new biological species: The first is the "serial communard" which moves from commune to commune, spending several years in each. One of these creatures has written a light-hearted article in which he endlessly compares and contrasts. Then there's the "Commune hopper" - also a nomadic animal, but one which moves rather more rapidly (ie a weekend in each place!). Frank and Emily are two such commune hoppers and their hilarious postcards home are reproduced in D&D. Humour like this is a welcome sign that the communal living movement can laugh at itself.

Diggers & Dreamers 98/99 continues to prove that communes weren't particularly a phenomenon of the 1960s. They were there in the 1890s and they're still here in the 1990s. In fact they just won't go away!

From "DESIGN EXCHANGE" No.2-3 of Summer-Fall 97, we pick a special morsel about "Gesundheit!", one of those Health Ecovillages - not exactly a community, but too good to skip over - maybe a prototype for some kind of health commune?

Whatsa Gesundheit!?

Gesundheit! Institute is located on 310 acres of rolling countryside in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. If you get out your atlas, you find it by looking for the green areas that comprise the Jefferson, Washington and Monongahela National Forests. If you imagine those green areas being shaped like a squirrel on a surfboard, with the Allegheny Mountains as the board, then Gesundheit! is positioned like a nut in the cheek of the squirrel. From the town of Droop, there is a thin white strip of private land that extends up

into the center of that gigantic mid-Atlantic forest. Gesundheit!'s road takes off from Droop State Park and deposits you at a large cleared field bordered by a pond. At

Patch Adams

the top of the pond is a 15 meter waterfall, and it was from a stone under the cliff behind this waterfall that Patch Adams sat, in 1980, looking out through the wall of water at the field and saw a hospital, rising through the mist.

Borrowing money from friends and neighbors, Patch bought the property from a lumber company. With mostly volunteer labor, early settlers erected a three-story workshop, a seasonal work camp, solar showers, sauna, volleyball and extensive vegetable gardens. The schedule for volunteers is posted in the community kitchen:

- 7:00A Mova your booty (the cook blows a conch)
 - 7:30 Breakfast (the cook blows the conch again and then sings "Home on the Range")
 - 8:30 work work work work
 - 12:30P stop (conch again)
 - 1:00 Eat veggies or no play
 - 2:30 chugga chugga chugga chugga
 - 6:00 Don't work no more (last conch)
 - 6:30 Sustenance, yum!
- Remember, Have a Marvelous Time!*

Food is simple, mostly vegetarian, and is cooked by shifts of volunteers. A sign by the garden gate reads: "Consult with a garden team member before you pick anything except your butt." Before the meal there is a circle to hear announcements, greet newcomers, and thank the cooks.

The week's chores are on another sign in the kitchen. When DX visited, the chore list was:

- Dig poop pit
- Clean woodstove
- Clean Fire Pit
- Make Mud Pit
- Mow
- Firewood
- Dock

Composting toilets are inside the main house and by the work camp. Water from the mountain is piped downhill, gathering 72 pounds of pressure before it hits the solar water heaters and garden hoses. If Gesundheit! had the needed equipment, they could run a Pelton wheel off the stream and generate all their power on His mind ablaze with revolutionary possibilities. Patch The Medical Student first conceived of what 10 years later became Gesundheit!: a healing community set in nature, with gardens, primary school, library, housing for patients, and facilities for artists and craftspeople to live together and develop a positive outlook, "where joy is a way of life."

After a pilot project—a free clinic in West Virginia—a stint at goat farming, and hospital-touring with a clown troupe through North America, Europe and Russia, Patch settled in earnest into pursuing his great vision: building a free hospital in that field beside the waterfall.

Gesundheit!, HC 64 Box 167 Hillsboro, WV 24946.



As usual, "DOWN TO EARTH" (one of my favorites) of April-May 97 provides an unusually enlightening insight into that extremely vital fixture - the Communitarian Crapsite. Here comes an excerpt from "Confest Story":

BLISSSED OUT! by Andrew Elksin

I had been a hippy 22 years ago. I feel comfortable with the people in Brunswick St. Fitzroy, but this was a challenge and surprise that dislodged some of my last remaining deep judgmental conservatism, which rose up with sceptical observation making judgments on what was not there rather than looking at what was there.

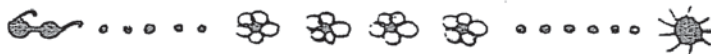
People giving of themselves in music, song, entertainment, people caring for each other, the largest example of the outpouring of the human spirit, the greatest flood of unconditional love I had ever seen.

All sub culture and tribal groups except Neo Nazis were represented - Gypsies, Bikies, Punks, Hari Krishnas, Ananda Marga, Pagans, Old Hippies, New hippies, Squatters, Homeless, Rovers, Neo Hippies Nomads, New Agers, Magicians, Witches, Shamans, Polynesians, Lesbians and Gays, Indians, Asians, Buddhists, Disabled, Ferals, Nudists, Aborigines, Reggae, Environmental Activists, Anarchopunks, Crusties. What new agers and other religious groups only talk about or only live in their minds, many of these people actually live out in reality.

The heightened energy awakens latent individual powers, chants drumming and harmonics are tools for calling in the new era, and this work is being performed by people who mainstream society and some new agers lookdown on. The first will be last into the new dimension and the last will be first. Like the Indian or Aboriginal Shamans and Mystics of old, these people are consciously speaking and Chanting and inviting new Cosmic energies to earth, and everyone there could feel it.

The deeper mystery in everything, even in dunny duties. I went to the toilet and found the last of the paper gone, then proceeded to the information tent to get more paper. They handed me the dunny kit and assumed I would clean the toilet block as well as restock the paper. Everywhere people were doing Stuff for each other under the intoxication of higher love. Cleaning these toilets was not a burden but a privilege. A mystical insight blissed me out as I was disinfecting the round

toilet seats. The great unifier, crapping, reminds us of our basic unity, people can reject many things about each other, but are united by the need to crap like the next person. Unless we shed outer garments and assume an embarrassing position, bringing our head closer to the rest of the body, like a foetus shape we cannot partake in crapping. The turd going through the round seated hole, the symbolic reminder that our soul grows when we go through the eye of the needle. We, the small circle, are related to and interact with the larger circle, the toilet seat, the whole.



Rachel Summerton of PADANARAM provides some useful advice to all communitarian guests - In MILLENIAL CHRONICLES' Issue 9, 1997. Hear hear!

ETHICS IN VISITING A COMMUNITY by Rachel Summerton



In my thirty years of living in community, I have seen many visitors come and go. Some visit and want to come back. Others will make a one time trip and never return. We have always been open to visitors since our beginning and look forward to sharing our lifestyle with others.

As one of the key people who work with guests, I would like to offer a few suggestions to those interested in visiting community. Since we have many high school and university students, plus other clubs and groups, I have offered guidelines in this context. However, they have application as well for the individual visitor.

GUIDE TO EDUCATORS

1. By letter or telephone call, make a request to visit. There is usually a contact person. Be explicit about number of students, class (focus), age group, etc.
2. Fit your schedule into that of the community. Pick several dates that would work for you.
3. Provide a syllabus. What is the class? What does the student hope to accomplish by this visit?
4. Provide printed materials to the students before they arrive. Ask the community for available publications.
5. Ask ahead as to taking photographs or videos.
6. Ask about meals or snacks. Providing food for 10, 20 or 30 people requires extra work and purchases by the community. Consider a bag lunch.
7. Arrive at the stated time. If you are running late, call as you would with any other appointment. Leave at the stated time.
8. Don't bias the students ahead of time. Let them form their own opinions. Present materials of more than one style of community.
9. Remind the students that in two hours, two days, or two months, they cannot make a judgment about the



community. A too-quick assessment of a community is not in the best interests of anyone.

10. Send a personal letter of thanks to the community or contact person. Was the class treated well? Should something be changed in the future? Was it worth the time? Feedback to the community is important (pro or con).

GUIDE TO STUDENTS

1. You are a guest. This is someone's home. Be friendly, sincere, and courteous.
2. Don't be nosy. There is a difference in asking questions and being nosy.
3. Try to lay aside any preconceived notions you have about the community. Form your own opinion.
4. When speaking to someone, ask how long he/she has been in the community. Two weeks or 30 years makes quite a difference.
5. If you plan to stay more than a few hours, help with the work be it garden, kitchen, yard work etc. This can actually be planned ahead of time with the community. This is a good way to meet people and also get to ask questions.
6. Don't be overfriendly to the children. Don't take them on walks or isolate them from the community.
7. Take the role of the communitarian. Be more than a visitor. What kinds of questions are ethical?
8. Don't randomly video or take pictures. Some people do not wish to be photographed. This is not a zoo nor yet a museum.
9. Don't expect to be entertained the entire time. Spend some time within the class making plans together-perhaps a trip to town, a museum, or a place of interest in the area. Plan something within your group and invite the community (musical entertainment, etc.)
10. Send a copy of your class papers or projects to the community. Send a copy of your photographs or video.

**As it turns
out, not all
Communities
are subsisting
happily
everafter.
Consider
COMMUNITY
OF
CELEBRATION'S
report of
November 97,
for instance.
And here we
thought, only
the Kibbutz is
in trouble...**



Those of you who receive the Community's magazine Kairos will be aware from the last issue that for most of this year we have been dealing with difficult internal issues.

We have received much help in this, from a professionally qualified outside facilitator, from our sister Community in the USA, and also from many friends who have supported us with their advice and prayers.

By the beginning of August we had reached a stage in the process where it was appropriate to stop and take a break. There were decisions still to be taken, but, as our Kairos report mentioned, we were now in a position to make them together.

Holidays gave time for reflection. On our return, it became evident that there was little or no energy to carry on as before. We therefore came to the unanimous conclusion that the most creative option was to dissolve the Community.

We have reached this decision with sadness and regret, yet we believe it is one which will release us into life. Some members already have plans in mind; for others the way forward is less clear. Those who have recently taken life vows are in conversation with Abbot Basil Matthews and others about their position.

What of the future? The affairs of the Community will take some time to unravel. Assets of the Community are held by a charitable trust, and it will be for the trustees to consider how these should be administered in the light of its aims and objects. Meanwhile, we are seeking the support of our regular donors to enable us to meet existing commitments.

There is also a strong reluctance to let go of friendships built up over many years. We will certainly be talking, both with our Companions and with our sister Community in the USA, about possibilities for remaining in touch.

Finally, we would like to thank all those of you who have encouraged us with your support and prayers over the years. That has been a great strength to us, and we hope you will continue to pray for us as we seek God's will for the next steps.

With love from us all,

The Community



Community of Celebration
Berry House, 58 High St.
Bletchingley, REDHILL, Surrey
RH11 4PA J.K.

Ever Imagined building your home out of straw bales - cheap, readily transportable, easy to obtain (a bit flammable, though). In a letter to our dear ex-secretary Shlomo Shalmon, architect Laurence Schechter of Ashland, Oregon, gives us a first-hand account of his speciality:

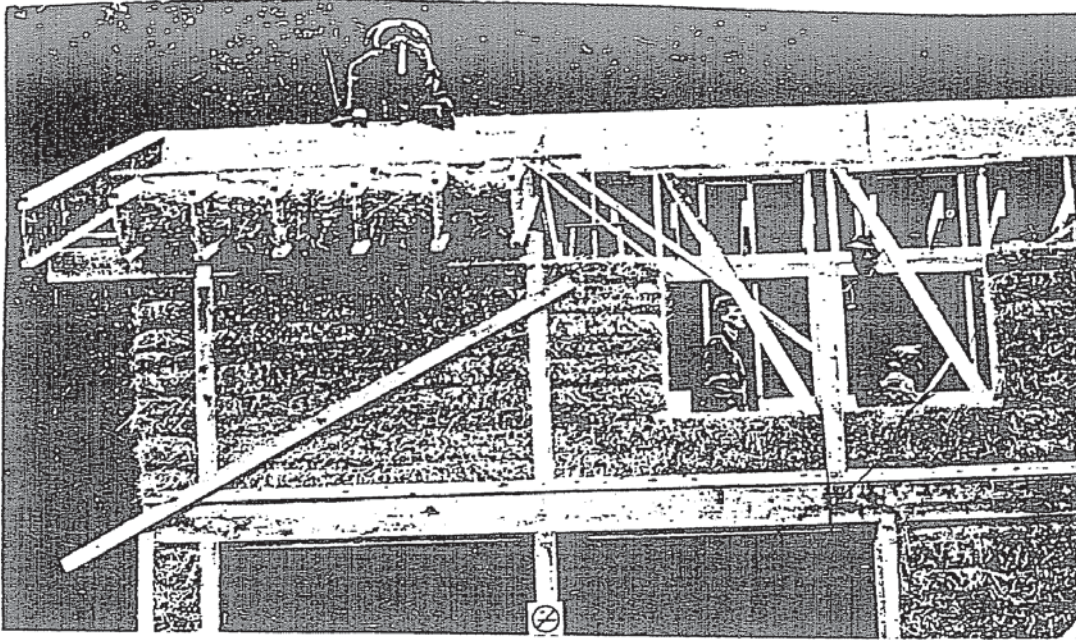
Dear Shlomo,

When I took my first workshop on the subject several years ago, I began to see many new possibilities for its implementation. Now, my professional life is seriously and joyfully oriented toward implementing straw-bale in my architectural practice. In fact, most of my clients are attracted to me because I offer a comprehensive architectural background which includes a wide array of ecological breakthroughs in design and construction, including straw-bale construction. This alternative technology has been very well covered in the media, and considered one of the most promising new innovations in the housing industry.



In Israel, especially in a Kibbutz, this would be very effective, as the members of the building team can be taught in a few days how to use this approach in a hands-on workshop. There are a lot of details to master in order to do the job properly, but this method does not require expensive equipment and materials, nor sophisticated builders.





Straw-bale insulation set within roof framing

I have taught many workshops in straw-bale construction and have a strong desire to help introduce this wonderful Earth friendly technology in Israel.

What comes to mind, is to look into the possibility of coordinating several straw bale construction and design workshops for next year, primarily in the Kibbutz setting where representatives of many different communities could attend and bring back their new skills. A **consolidated effort** would spread more thinly the costs involved, including my travel costs and nominal fee.

Your networking might prove the most effective means of reaching the key people who would be able to make a success of this endeavor. It would be a great blessing for everyone, opening many opportunities for **inexpensive, healthful, energy efficient housing in Israel.**

Lawrence Schechter , Architect

POB 656, Ashland, Oregon 97520 • USA

Phone: (541) 482-6332 • Fax: (541) 488-8299 • E-mail: susarch@jeffnet.org



And now for the “Plece de resistance” out of “**INTERSPECIES COMMUNICATION**” (whatever that means) of Jan. 98 - got seasick just from reading! We already have had rural and urban Communities, so what comes next - a marine one? And why not, if you please?

A New Sea Community “FRIEND-SHIP”

During the past six years, Walter sailed some 25,000 miles across oceans in a 45 feet catamaran. He loved this life so much - and life was so inexpensive - that he decided that he could afford a bigger boat that would suit his requirements better. Walter got the vision that he wanted to live on a catamaran with a community of a dozen or so people, not just with his lover. We asked Walter some questions about his vision:



Gigi: What is the source of your vision to want to start a community at sea?

Walter: Living on the sea with intense interaction between people - to live intimately with a group of friends - should be the best, most exciting life imaginable. I know that life on a sailboat is great fun. So, the combination of living on a boat with close friends combines fun, adventure and the best opportunity for personal growth, both emotionally and spiritually.



Gigi: What is your vision for a community at sea?

Walter: The top priority would be to form a family of intimate friends. Share your feelings daily by whatever means that is appropriate - such as by way of Council. To live with awareness, joy, friendship, freedom, adventure, without a hierarchy. To live a simple healthy life, farm the sea, not only catch fish, but experiment with seaweed and growing vegetables - e.g. experiment with hydroponics. Visit remote areas in the world, but travel also inland. All other objectives are secondary to this one.

Gigi: A lot of people are afraid of intimacy. How would you deal with such an issue?

Walter: I have heard that before. People have the feeling that when they are intimate they are getting hurt. They are afraid of showing their true self, afraid of leaving or of being left, afraid for hair in the bathtub or of sex, afraid for disagreement or of saying "no". These kind of fears are unhealthy, and can be overcome in a loving and caring environment where emotional growth can take place. Instead of thinking how afraid they are of something it makes a big difference to think how exciting that same thing really is. It makes a big difference. Fear is also caused by lack of experience. During my first storm, I was afraid, now I know what to do, and I like storms. I would be afraid to climb the Mount Everest, but people who are doing it do not talk about fear.

Contact: Walter van Varik, c/o KPMG Accountants, PO Box 504
2130 AM Hoofddorp, Netherlands, or:
Gigi Coyle, PO Box 513, Big Pine CA, 93513, USA



Dear Dik,

Well, you arskt for 'em, so here are my two:

"Procrastination: Now there's a big word. I'll put it aside and look it up one day"

"DYSLEXICS RULE, K.O.?"

P.S. I love DTENEA News!!

Regards,

To top it all
and round it
out, here is
some more
from "DOWN
TO EARTH":
All you ever
wanted to
know about Procastination, Dyslexics and
- Circumcision... Bye now, Shalom!

What about all those pieces you
planned to send me? Still expecting!

Yours - Yoel Dorkam, Kibbutz Tzuba, Israel





KIBBUTZ EDUCATION

- 15 -

A SOCIOLOGICAL ACCOUNT AND ANALYSIS

by Yechezkel Dar



Part 2. The first part of this essay, which was published in our last issue (CALL NO.11), reviewed the fundamental principles of Communal Education, as laid down and practiced on the Kibbutzim during their first decades. The second (and last) part deals with the changes that the Kibbutz movement went through - and their effects on the field of education.

The economic crisis which began in the mid-1980s merely served as a catalyst for the gradual social transformation of the Kibbutz which had begun about 20 years before. The economy, mostly agricultural until then, was diversified and industrial production rose rapidly, bringing a marked rise in the standard of living. Hierarchical modes of management were introduced along with industry, and these influenced the entire organizational structure. The role of the Members' Assembly diminished, and the focus of decision making shifted to expert committees and to functionaries specializing in management. At the same time, there was an increase in members working outside the Kibbutz, largely in professional and managerial jobs.

As a result, trends of social differentiation appeared with regard to the allocation of power, prestige, small material benefits and opportunities for

self-actualization. Another result was the increasing demand for higher education.

Concomitantly, the roles and status of the family within the community have been enhanced. The family household and residence have grown, helping the family to become a fairly independent unit within the communal consumption system. This has promoted the consolidation of the family as the most viable center for both adults and children, and facilitated the parents' (mostly mothers') demand to have children sleep at home. This demand has reflected women's willingness to increase investment in motherhood. Once this change was instituted, the children's house lost its significance as a real home and turned more into a "day-care center".

Structural changes have been accompanied by changes in values and sentiments. The utopian emphasis of the Kibbutz has waned, as has its self-image as a nation-serving elite. Equality and communalism are no longer central in motivating the Kibbutz member and giving meaning to his/her life. Consequently, the sense of togetherness and commitment to the collective have lessened, and legitimation has grown for fulfilment of individual needs, even when they stand apart from the needs of the collective.

During this period the demarcation line between the Kibbutz and society outside it has become rather blurred. Industry, unlike agriculture, has brought about an increase in the involvement of the Kibbutz in external economic markets;



the rise in the standard of living has a similar effect. The rising demand for higher education has brought many Kibbutzniks into the universities. The various newspapers and especially television have exposed members to the general media, while a considerable drop in indigenous cultural activities has transformed the Kibbutznik into a fully-fledged consumer of the national (and international) entertainment market. All these changes have been accompanied by a decline in the political power and social prestige of the Kibbutz.

Fundamental Changes

Structural changes have occurred in each one of the (abovementioned) six types of Kibbutz education:

- The educational role of the family has been strengthened at the expense of the commune ;
- The school has assumed greater autonomy and concentrates on academic achievement; The educational roles of institutions and caregivers were further undermined when the child reaches elementary school, especially the new regional schools, where they are cut off from "their" Kibbutz during the day.
- The role of the age-group in the individual's life has been restricted;
- Children and adolescent "societies" have lost ground as socializing agencies; and the once short transition to adulthood has been extended into the early thirties.

None the less, earlier patterns still exist, but changing concepts and meanings neutralize their former socializing power. In particular, the system's ability to socialize via structural messages, the most profound socializing power of this education, is impaired. At the same time, ideological anomie precludes substitution of eroded structural messages by articulated content messages.



Several developments in the last decade "help" to decrease the present ability of the Kibbutz to ensure its continuity through its offspring. First, youth today is a third (sociological, not necessarily biological) generation in the Kibbutz. Less than 50% favor the Kibbutz over other ways of life, and many more are uncertain whether they would opt personally for Kibbutz as their permanent home. College education, which is now afforded to all youth, increases differentiation of personal pathways, decreases dependence on collective decisions and furnishes young people with new resources for successful adaptation to life outside the Kibbutz.

A profound social change is eroding the distinctive characteristics of Kibbutz education which in the past made it a highly effective system of socialization for communal life. The change is clearly incompatible with the educational aims of the traditional Kibbutz. It is, however, compatible with the personal needs of most of the youngsters who leave the Kibbutz. If present trends towards "privatization" on Kibbutz continue, these changes will also fit the needs of those who opt for Kibbutz life, now a much less communal place than in the past.

.....

Yechezkel Dar, a member of Kibbutz Degania A, is Professor of Sociology of Education at the Hebrew Univ. in Jerusalem



**The Sixth ICSA Conference
Amsterdam, The Netherlands 7th-9th July 1998
Utopian Communities and Sustainability**

About 85 abstracts have been received by the middle of February and a further 25 people are expected to send one. The abstracts have been submitted from 15 countries: United States, Israel, United Kingdom, Austria, Italy, Brazil, France, Holland, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Japan, Ghana, Nigeria and India.

The abstracts have been divided into eight sub-themes:

1. Theoretical reflections
2. Historical Projects / Case Studies
3. Present Communes
4. Gender and Interethnic Integration
5. Sustainability / Survival of Communities
6. Ecological Living
7. Architecture, Cohousing and Sustainable Designs
8. Future Possibilities / Postmodern Values / Virtual Communities



Conference ICSA-6, Saskia Poldervaart, Univ. of Amsterdam.
O.Z. Achterburgwal 237, 1012 DL Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The Society for Utopian Studies

**The 23rd annual meeting
of the Society for Utopian Studies,
will be held in
Montreal, Quebec, Canada,
October 15 - 18, 1998.**

Founded in 1975, the Society is an international, interdisciplinary association devoted to the study of utopianism in all its forms, with a particular emphasis on literary and experimental utopias.

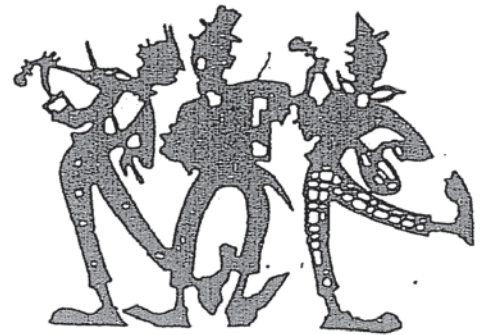
Contact: Prof. Beatriz de Alba-Koch
Dept. of Hispanic Studies, McGill
University, 1001 Sherbrooke St. West
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 1G5



A Day without MUSIC is a lost Day

In order to find meaning in life, one has to believe in something meaningful. With Kibbutz ideology playing a less central part in my life, when Life seems to crumble all around me, there is one subject uniting me with many others, enriching my inner world - MUSIC. She is the common language, with no need to be translated. With music - even secular people like me - pray and communicate with their "God".

When I was younger I tried to find out where I belong, looking for answers, deciding who is right or wrong in the eternal argument about man being basically good or bad. Getting older, I am less sure. Interpersonal communication, sharing, taking responsibility - all became less frequent.



Yet in music I find solutions, a uniting bridge. Even listening only to (often divine) music turns us into better human beings. "Bad people do not have songs", says a Chinese proverb. Listening to music, I arrange my thoughts, experience feelings and emotions. Music, being the root of all other forms of art, is for me one of the greatest means to move my heart and soul.

In making music we create together instead of fighting each other. They are dedicated to a common task, become a group, reaching higher levels of mutual understanding. Music knows no frontiers - and she lends me new sources of strength. For me too - a day without music is a wasted day!

Naomi Shalmon, Kibbutz Gesher
Jordan Valley, Israel



What is the Commune for ?

(Six years in Finkenburg)

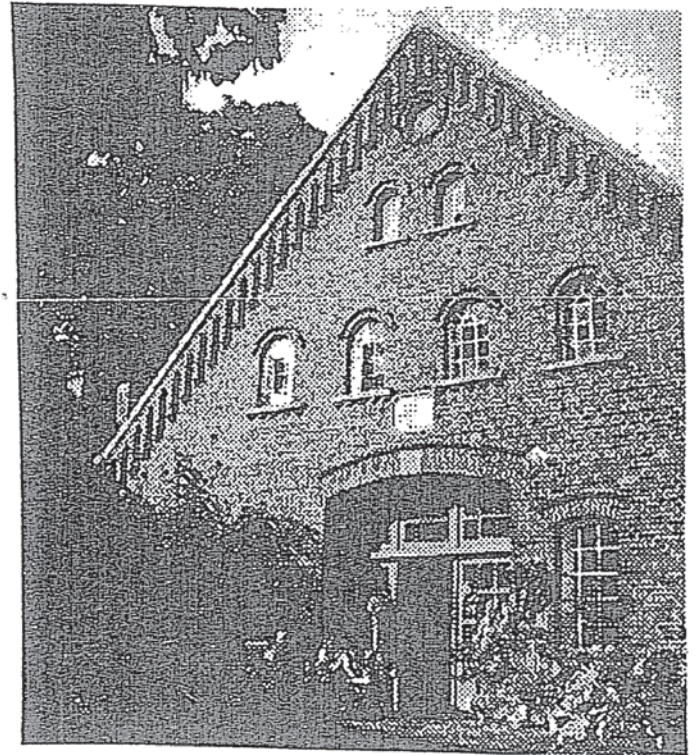
What happened to me in Finkenburg? Why am I still here? What was especially important? What contains the particular value of communal life, in view of the fact that conflicts within the group play a key-role? For me, Finkenburg is, first of all, an experiment, enormously thrilling, posing challenges every day. It is often beautiful, sometimes absorbing all my strength and above all - with the end-result unknown.

The things most important to me
in the Commune are :

- @ To live with children as equal partners;
- @ To cope with and overcome jealousy and not run away;
- @ To take responsibility for the whole group and each single person here (and above all: for myself!), independent of my personal, sometimes problematic, relationships with some people;
- @ To develop a closeness to many;
- @ To unfold myself into being-a-man;
- @ To regain a decent equilibrium between Take and Give;
- @ To learn to discuss (and not evade) issues;
- @ To choose, shape and foster working spheres by means of preference and not according to imposed sexist models of obsolete habits;
- @ To gather financial strength by our common economy, to mutually secure our life here and most of all - to re-arrange our queer attitude to money;
- @ Everything is permitted and everything is possible.



For all this, the Commune represents a suitable instrument for me on this path, and I am sure that my life here has a meaning: enabling me to unfold my personality to the full. I am convinced that I can serve the Commune to my best ability if I develop myself constantly.



- die Finkenburg -

The Commune as one Big Mirror

One of the most important features of the Commune is living in close and binding proximity with quite a lot of people. So why do I do this to myself, when it would be so much simpler with wife, children and a middle-class car? Because I don't want it that simple.

In Finkenburg I live vis-a-vis 11 adults and four children. All of them - including myself - change their behavior and preferences as time passes. The common daily life confronts me again and again, quite severely, with myself.



My impressions tell me that all those people offer me perpetual feedback by their very behavior and reactions. They operate, in fact, as a multi-faced mirror, in which I recognize myself ever clearly. This is often unpleasant and strenuous, sometimes very painful, but it issues the real meaning and reason for my wanting to share my life with many...

This can be quite chaotic, especially in our first stages, as we have no hierarchy, no fixed distribution of tasks and duties, no definite roles of men and women, no clothing arrangements etc.

Conflicts as Key Features

Conflicts are the big common challenge in the Commune. We are all aware that whenever a conflict is solved,

we at once feel much better. Conflicts are unavoidable where people live together under mutual obligations. Conflicts could be very fruitful for us but we tend to avoid them most of the time. The reason is that we are too inexperienced to utilize the conflicts as they appear.

In conclusion let me say this: COMMUNE IS GOOD FOR ME! It is a form of life we create for ourselves, so that we and our dear ones can develop most effectively and comprehensively. In this process we can act as a social model for wider circles, which means: being a society-changing factor!

Christof , Finkenburg Commune
27321 Thedinghausen-Eissel, Germany

(translated from Kommunja Nr. 21)

THIS DELIGHTFUL LITTLE BOOK doesn't pretend to be a complete history of the kibbutz movement in Israel. Nor does it set out to explain each intricacy of Kibbutz Kfar Blum, the home of its author for nearly 50 years.

Instead, by offering tidbits and anecdotes and the occasional spicy statistic, Saadia Gelb (who describes himself as possibly "the only octogenarian barman this side of the Mississippi") offers an insightful sampling of kibbutz life past and present.

In the early days, pioneers drained the swamps, slept with rifles, and cleared rocks and thistles from fields by hand. Within a few decades, people were eating salads every day, though everyone still rose at 5 a.m. and a visiting volunteer noted that his fingernails were permanently dirty. After many long years of "draining, clearing, planting, building, pushing, [and] pulling," communities had been established that included factories, hotels, restaurants and tourists.

Quite a few of the experiences Gelb relates will ring true for some North American communitarians as well. For instance, the cultural clashes between those from different backgrounds.



Almost One Hundred Years of Togetherness

By Saadia Gelb

Shmuel Press, 1996

Pb., 160 pgs., \$15

Available for \$17.50 postpaid:

Illana Goldstein

11908 Bargate Court

Rockville, MD 20852

301-984-1470

Thankless administrative jobs and distrust of outside "experts." The preference for being gullible and accepting human frailty. The occasional member who gripes endlessly, doesn't like to work, or just plain doesn't fit. Ongoing controversies on communalism v. individual ownership, idealism v. pragmatism, and how best to raise children. A community that is basically optimistic in spite of constant grumbling.

Other experiences are more particular to living in a country continually at war. Losing a young member to sniper shots. Cocking a rifle at a figure during night guard patrol only to realize it's a cactus. Sneaking in arms past the British. Yearning for peace with their Arab neighbors.

As Kfar Blum ages, new questions arise. Is it acceptable to hire outside labor? Should the kibbutz buy television sets for families who have none?

Originally printed for distribution at Kfar Blum's guest house and including charming illustrations on every page, lucky readers can now obtain copies without traveling all the way to Israel. If you don't have the good fortune to visit Gelb's beautiful homeland, this small volume of reflections may be the next best thing.

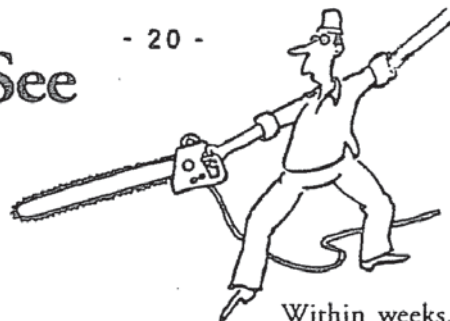
Reviewed by Tree Bressen

From Communities

What Can Outsiders See That Community Members Can't?

- 20 -

Communities
Number 95



OUR VERY DISTANCE FROM daily life in community, as academics and outsiders who report on responses to our 15-page Communities Questionnaire, may occasionally give us insights not readily available to insiders.

For example, several years ago, one of us (Mike) was part of a three-person research team that visited a community in the San Francisco Bay Area, which we'll call "Sequoia." In previous contacts the team had been impressed by individual Sequoians and with their community's accomplishments over the last 20 years. During this latest visit, which lasted several days, we found most Sequoians to be bright, talented, articulate, energetic, and dedicated to their experiment in polyfidelity (group marriages, with multiple sex partners and fidelity within the group). However, we were troubled by several aspects of the community—aspects its own members seemed unaware of.

First, the founder and leader, "Don," did virtually no work and was waited on continually by the other members, especially the women. Second, Don sometimes simply announced new policy, which, by Sequoia's official democratic standards,

should have been decided on by the whole group. Indeed, power, influence, attractiveness, and popularity seemed concentrated in Don's own multiple-partner group within Sequoia.

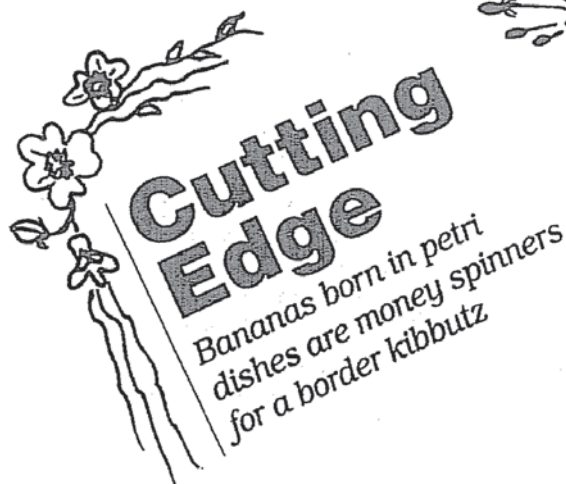
Next, despite talk of holistic health and ecology, the Sequoians consumed large quantities of junk food. Moreover, though a large portion of Sequoia's annual income was "dedicated to philanthropy," we could never get any substantial figures on actual philanthropic donations. Perhaps most peculiarly, the radical, egalitarian Sequoians, who had for years expressly criticized mainstream culture, had recently become large-scale computer entrepreneurs and great fans of capitalism, while denying any contradictions between their egalitarian communalism and their new pro-capitalist stance.

On the second day of our visit the Sequoians pressed us to find out whether we had become enthusiastic supporters of their system. When we replied that we were just getting acquainted with their system, Don and several followers became first cool, then brusque, and finally outright hostile to us. Don was especially irked by positive comments one of us made about Emissary communities.

Within weeks, in order to give the Sequoians an opportunity to correct any factual errors, we sent a draft of the article we were writing about them, in which we expressed a combination of admiration and misgiving. At the next Communal Studies Association conference, a group of leading Sequoians publicly expressed their extreme displeasure with our draft article.

However, when Sequoia disbanded about two years later in a collective rejection of Don and his policies, some of its most forceful former members described their community, in retrospect, as having been "more or less your typical cult." These ex-Sequoians pled guilty to most of the community shortcomings that we had first brought to their attention.

In contrast with the Sequoian experience, most of the communities we have studied in our research (including those as diverse as The Farm in Tennessee, Sunrise Ranch in Colorado, Ananda Village in California, and New Meadow Run Bruderhof in Pennsylvania) have presented us with the opportunity to notice positive qualities that go largely unnoticed by the residents: ecological economics; innovative architecture; lively and creative children; conscientious attention to detail; high standards of work; friendliness toward one another and strangers alike; effective feedback mechanisms; and the virtual absence of social pathologies such as unemployment, crime, addiction, domestic violence, and suicide.



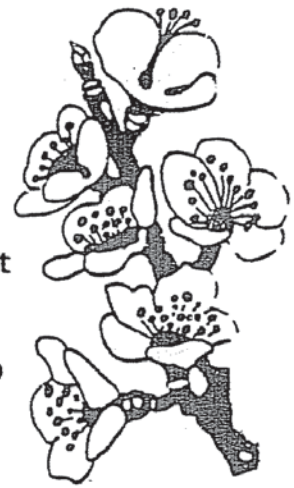
AT FIRST GLANCE, RAHAN Meristem seems like some kind of medical R&D center, with technicians and workers in sterile gowns and gloves scurrying between petri dishes and test tubes. In fact, they're growing fruit.

The super-sterile plant propagation lab at Rahan Meristem (Rahan is a Hebrew acronym for Rosh Hanikrah, the Lebanese-border kibbutz where it's located; "meristem" is embryonic plant tissue) produces banana, strawberry, pineapple, artichoke, sugar cane and date

plants in test tubes. A tissue culture taken from a living plant, in a process called micropropagation, is nurtured until it's split into mini-plants. The process, which can produce up to 10 million plants from the original tissue, continues until the plants can be moved out of the protected environment and slowly acclimated to normal agricultural conditions — regular soil and water.

THE JERUSALEM REPORT

Rebuilding LIFESPAN Community



You may already have heard about our community and the traumatic times that our two remaining members have experienced since Lifespan inadvertently took on a number of ill-intentioned tenants two years ago. Our compassion and trust was rewarded with intimidation, violence, fraud, theft and criminal damage. Most people fled to leave two community-spirited members cruelly outnumbered by a group of people who were out to strip Lifespan of all its assets and wind down our long-established moorland community.

Only when financial irregularities were reported to the police and when we took our plight to solicitors did our plummeting fortunes ease. We took refuge with another community while the work of solicitors, accountants and the police whittled down our antagonists, until just one of their number remained in residence, thereby placing majority voting power in responsible hands. The final problematic tenant was eventually ousted after a nine month spell of destruction during which time he stripped the place bare, disposing of all Lifespan's saleable assets to unscrupulous associates: copper pipes were ripped out, paving slabs were lifted up, roofing slates were removed by the ton, furniture, fireplaces and fixtures were all sold on for drug money.

In the meantime we've confirmed our legal entitlement to manage these nineteen terraced houses that Lifespan owns outright, and we've almost finalised a new constitution that will protect a new living group, with natural common sense, against a repetition of this nightmare. We're very carefully recruiting prospective members: hard working, 'real', responsible and sociable people of stable dispositions who will commit themselves for a few years to (almost literally) rebuilding what will effectively be a brand new community, with strong and attainable ideals: those of practical, ecological self-sustainability. If you fit this category, if you like what you're reading and if you really do want to work toward creating a viable alternative to our consumerist society, then please do write to us with a detailed introduction about yourself (please enclose an A5 sized SAE).



The fact that we own all our houses has been the driving force behind our efforts to reestablish Lifespan: although our houses are now semi-derelict their value will provide security against the loan which we'll use to fund our renovation programme.

We're hoping to secure a sizable loan by May, but in the meantime we're having to fend off legal actions from the creditors which we inherited from the criminal bunch. We salvaged Lifespan's vehicle as we departed last March and sold it to repay creditors in order to avert the court actions that would have meant the end for Lifespan. That money's dried up now, yet we're obliged to honour monthly outgoings of £150. Apart from that financial worry, we can no longer cover the week-to-week expenses needed to keep everything ticking over in preparation for Lifespan's future: our dole cannot possibly keep pace with essential travel costs, 'phone bills and postage costs. It's hard for us to ask people for this kind of assistance, but the situation's desperate. There's light at the end of the tunnel, but we really do need any kind of loan or donation just to see out these few months, to stop us going under after all this effort, before Lifespan really gets moving again.



If you'd like to be involved in setting up our 'new' community or if you're able to send a loan or donation we'd love to hear from you. In peace, John Clark.

LIFESPAN COMMUNITY, Townhead, Dunford Bridge
Sheffield, S30 6TG ENGLAND

A kibbutz without the cowshed

Beit Shemesh is home to the latest example of a new Israeli phenomenon: the urban kibbutz. There, families unite for common socializing and education, while retaining some of the amenities afforded by city life. Orna Landau reports

On a rainy winter day it looks like just another of the innumerable construction sites dotting the city of Beit Shemesh. Another hill overlooking a gorgeous view, another skeleton rising up between older buildings. In the unflattering setting of beams and concrete, it is hard to distinguish a pioneering aspect in the four two-story buildings. But when the site is occupied this summer, it will be the first neighborhood in the country designed around the idea of the urban kibbutz.

There are three urban kibbutzim in this country — Berashit in Jerusalem, Migvan in Sderot and Tamuz in Beit Shemesh. All of them were founded in the early 1980s as a late awakening to criticism in Israeli society against the traditional kibbutz. Urban kibbutzim strove to return to the heart of the Israeli enterprise — not as security and settlement frontiers, but as social and educational ones. Kibbutz Tamuz in Beit Shemesh was founded on this ideal.

Ten years later, there are 51 families living in one of the city's oldest housing units, the kind of units one finds in every development town. Tamuz members raise their children in small, 70-square-meter

apartments, living an ordinary urban family life. The kibbutz does not include communal dining or sleeping arrangements. What makes Tamuz a kibbutz are the thrice-weekly meetings in the common bomb shelter. Every Sunday, there is an assembly of members, Friday mornings are devoted to group study and Friday nights are marked by a communal meal which small groups of members take turns preparing. Beyond these meetings, what unites Tamuz members is the ideology of being a learning community. Despite their declared secularism, members study what is called the canon of Jewish texts.

The kibbutz has a common coffer, but does not provide its members with work. Many teach at local educational institutions while others are professionals based in Beit Shemesh and elsewhere. The kibbutz operates a nursery school as well as a number of educational projects.

By giving Tamuz its own neighborhood, Israel has made its first attempt to give planned architectural expression to the unique way of life constituted by the urban kibbutz — a way of life that is inwardly a kibbutz and outwardly a part of the urban fabric.

The new neighborhood was planned by Ram Carmi. "When they told us to see Ram Carmi, we thought it was a joke. But as soon as we approached him he said, 'I will design the first urban kibbutz.'"

Carmi had to deal with issues similar to those encountered the world over by architects designing communal living projects. Limited communalism in an urban setting is the trend of the 1990s. A communal lifestyle called "co-housing" is gaining adherents particularly in the United States and Scandinavia. In co-housing communities, residents own their own units, but units are arranged in a community-oriented fashion. Most co-housing communities contain areas and buildings designated for all residents, and some eat meals and educate their children as a community.

"The experiment is to allow families who share our ideals regarding communal life, a secular Jewish lifestyle and education to come live here without taking on the economic cooperation," explains Yair Alberman, a Tamuz member. "The idea of urban neighborhoods next to kibbutzim is beginning to gain momentum in various places. For some reason economic sharing threatens people, and we believe that without it there are many who would identify with us. People who would want to live with us, educate their children as we do, and celebrate the holidays with us. The new neighborhood would allow them to join us under different conditions."

According to Adar and Alberman, there is already substantial interest, among Beit Shemesh residents and



others, in joining the new neighborhood. But kibbutz members are not afraid of losing the character of their community. "Regular kibbutzim offer grass, single houses and country living," Adar says, "All we offer is a regular apartment. We believe that those who come here will come because they believe in the idea and like the neighbors."

Jerusalem Post

The Dancing Rabbit Project

The Dancing Rabbit Project is a group of individuals who desire true environmental sustainability. Rather than the "quick fixes" or band-aid efforts of the mainstream, we are interested in long-term societal and technological changes that will ensure the integrity of the ecosphere, and the well-being of humans (and all life forms), far into the future.

We believe that it is impossible to live sustainably while enmeshed in the consumer culture and difficult to live independently in isolation. Therefore, we envision a locally self-reliant town committed to radical environmental sustainability – a place where people can live a successful and happy life without causing environmental degradation.

Fully realized, Dancing Rabbit will be a small town with about 1000 residents. We will be housed in a variety of living arrangements, eat a variety of foods, and work on various projects. It will be a society flexible enough to include egalitarian communities, cohousing, individual households, and hermits. But while we may have different approaches to some issues, the common desire for environmental sustainability will underlie all decisions at Dancing Rabbit.

Although Dancing Rabbit will strive for self-sufficiency and economic independence, we will not be sequestered from mainstream America. Rather, outreach and education are integral to our goals. We will vigorously promote ourselves as a viable example of sustainable living and spread our ideas and discoveries through visitor programs, academic and other publications, speaking engagements, and the like.

Currently, Dancing Rabbit has some members living in northeastern Missouri. We are currently in the process of meeting with landowners in the search for a suitable location. *



LIFE AT DANCING RABBIT

Dancing Rabbit intends to create a social structure which encourages sustainability. One reason for the desire to have Dancing Rabbit reach a population of 1000 (much larger than many intentional communities) is to enable us to provide for most of our own needs (social as well as economic). We can never be truly sustainable unless our members are happy. We believe that a sense of community is essential to human fulfillment, but that diversity is also key. If people's social networks, as well as their livelihoods, are largely local, they save the huge energy costs of mechanized travel and gain the opportunity to be in touch with their homes and neighbors. The "small town" size of 1000 is small enough to permit face-to-face familiarity but large enough to provide a variety of personalities so that each member can create a network of friends.

In short, the Dancing Rabbit Project hopes to provide the land, knowledge and community so that people can come and live with the freedom to define their lifestyle within the new sustainable structure.

Dancing Rabbit will strive to be culturally diverse enough to provide a home for people from many backgrounds and with many different desires. We encourage people of varying education, ethnicity, ability, spirituality or socioeconomic status to join, and welcome any lifestyle within the constraints of sustainability. Cooperation is important and we also see the need for individual responsibility and freedom. Therefore, DR will allow for varying community structures within its greater society. We call this the "Society of Communities" model.

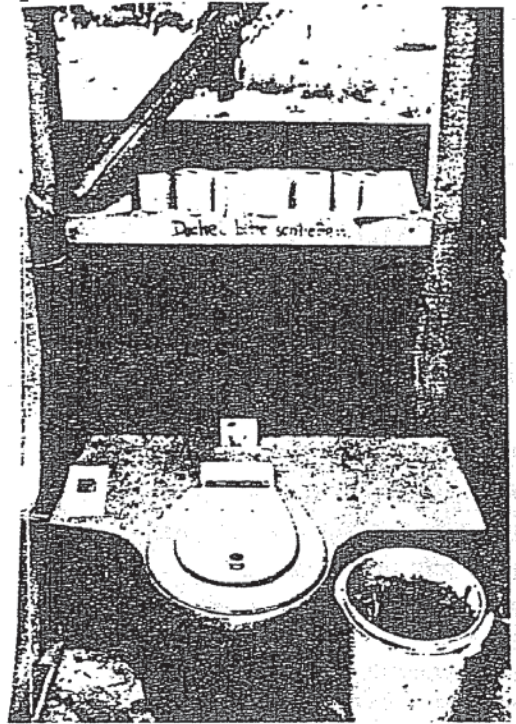


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U. S. A.

Composting Toilets

Die Kurzworkshops für praktische Umweltfragen fanden bis November zweimal im Monat am Samstag Nachmittag statt und waren eine Gelegenheit für Menschen aus der Region und aus Berlin, sich über konkrete Umweltthemen zu informieren wie Komposttoilette, Pflanzenkläranlagen, Wärmedämmung, aber auch Sozialökologie. 1998 wird die Reihe fortgesetzt, diesmal in Kooperation mit der Volkshochschule Belgig.



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The Eco-village Movement

by Dr. J.T. Ross Jackson

Response to Global Crisis

Human settlements are in crisis in both the North and the South, but for different reasons. In a larger sense, the human settlements crisis is part of the greater issue of a planet experiencing the limits to growth.

One response to this crisis from a growing number of individual citizens across the globe has been to focus upon the issue of how they want to live their own lives in this future sustainable society.

They are saying, let us try to build a small community, an eco-village, that satisfies the requirements of such a society. One that provides a high quality of life without taking more from the Earth than it gives back. One that does not deny



existing technology, but which considers technology as a servant and not a master. One that satisfies the human need for a society with a social, ecological, and spiritual content that is often lacking in contemporary mainstream society.

The Eco-village movement



And this is happening in many countries. In different versions, different cultures, different climates. But in almost all cases without any public support. In almost all cases, by people who have very few personal resources, but a high degree of idealism and dedication to the stated goal.

What has happened to GEN in Europe since the Findhorn Conference

Declan Kennedy

Preamble

In 1994 at Fjordvang, Denmark, 20 invited people from 9 eco-villages from all over the world struck a common note at two consecutive meetings, deciding to network together for the common good. In Spring 1995, in Lebensgarten Steyerberg, Germany, the "seed group" met to consolidate.

All those years within these eco-villages of quiet personal commitment, with constant celebrations of art, music, nature, people and laughter - had an effect on the initiating meetings of GEN. So as well as the dancing and the tree-planting, the meetings and talk were a celebration of commitment - and love. This has been the tenure since.

The Findhorn Conference

After 480 people from 40 countries gathered for a week to discuss "Eco-villages and Sustainable Communities" at the Findhorn Foundation, the Global Eco-village Network was founded. Three additional nodes were added to the network: Asociación Gaia, Argentina; the Green Kibbutz Group National Movement (Israel); and the International Institute of Sustainable Movement (India).

So what is happening in Europe?

The eco-villages movement is new, but it is spreading very quickly in Europe. When the GEN-Europe office was started, there were only eco-village networks in Denmark - LØS, in Germany - IDÖF and in Israel - an organisation of Green Kibbutzim. That was Spring 1996. Now in Spring 1998, we have new networks in 6 further countries: Finland had the first meeting in June 1997, as part of the Permaculture Association of that country; France in August; Ireland just lately in October 97; Italy is already founded as a network at the meeting in Allesano in Dec. 1996; whereas Russia had an information office in St. Petersburg since 1995, but the network is still struggling (although there seems to be 25 to 30 eco-villages on the ground and a co-operation with the Sacred Earth Network in Moscow is nearly completed); and the United Kingdom has really only one fully fledged eco-village (namely Findhorn Foundation in Scotland), but has an organisation EVNUK which has been meeting and networking since mid-1996.

Where do we go from here?

This movement invites us all to say YES to a way of living which addresses the critical issues and enables us to live together with respect for nature. As the eco-village models become established, we can expect to see not hundreds but tens of thousands of people moving every year into rural or urban eco-villages or transforming dead suburbias into living eco-villages.

Green Kibbutz Group's Visit to Turkey

In September 1997 four members of the Turkish Hocamkoy Ecovillage Organization attended the First Ecovillage Training Course on Green Kibbutz in Israel. As a result of this I was invited to Ankara to give a three day intensive seminar on Ecovillage Design for others of the group unable to make the trip.

Turkey is a country straddling east and west. With the end of the First World War and the establishment of the Republic under Ataturk, the central part of the old Ottoman Empire turned its direction deliberately towards the west, and is still in the process of aligning itself with Europe and America. Despite this, there is still a strong groundswell of old traditions, and a not insignificant Islamic Fundamentalist Movement.

Following immediately after the Course the Hocamkoy Movement had organized a two day conference on Ecological and Alternative living. This was an opportunity for Turkish activists to get together with one another and exchange information. I also managed to meet many of them, and gave a short presentation of Kibbutz as an alternative society.

This short visit to Turkey can be seen as part of an ongoing dialog between the Green Kibbutz Group and Hocamkoy. We both have a great deal to learn from each other, and we ended the visit by drawing up a list of programs that we want to realize over the next two years. This is an open dialog, and we invite others to join us, especially those from our own region, from Greece, the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Jan Martin Bang, Kibbutz Gezer, May 1998



MY EARLIEST experiences of a shared lifestyle were after I graduated from university in 1977. I wanted to try out and see if this was my calling in Jesus and, although I had been a Christian for five years, I had no idea what lessons community living was going to teach me!

The first large community house I lived in was a creamy stone farm house set in the heart of rural Northamptonshire. There were about twenty of us - marrieds, families and singles together all under the same roof. It was a learning time, experimenting with creativity in art, music and sewing. We grew close together as we picked fruit on our farm and opened up our hearts and lives to each other. We spoke about things that we'd never spoken of before on long country walks as well as enjoying light-hearted times as a community family mingled together.

Worship took on a deeper significance as an expression of our gratitude to God for calling us together in this radical way of living.

Mistakes were inevitable in the climate of youthful zeal and enthusiasm, but many of us found a deeper sense of purpose and commitment as we worked out our challenging vision. As a literature student I

Over twenty years in Christian community living has brought many trials and blessings for Sue Withers. She tells her own story.



had many ideas and dreams and now I had the opportunity to see them work in practice with all the chaos and mess!

Many spoke in those days of a 'honeymoon experience' of early days of community. For me, it was a rude awakening that has led to a much richer Christian experience as I have faced my own weaknesses and worked them through.

In 1991 I moved from the pleasantness of rural Warwickshire (I had been there for six years) to the harsh realities of London.

During the six years I have been there, many people from different cultures and races have come to us and now we have 27 nationalities in our congregation! In working to overcome our differences I feel I have discovered a richer example of a shared lifestyle than I found back at the beginning in 1977. The fire of God's love has not died, but has spread out to embrace more people than we originally thought possible.

But more than this we are a growing family who accept and affirm those whom our society so often rejects and marginalises.

Twenty years on I'm glad that our community vision has matured and grown through trials, tears, encouragements and disappointments and I am looking forward to entering the next millennium as part of this colourful people movement that is Christian community.

JOURNAL OF RURAL COOPERATION

1973-1998

Call for Papers for a Special Issue on:

Rural Cooperatives Towards the Next Century: From Traditional Roles to New Local and Global Challenges

The *Journal of Rural Cooperation* was founded in 1973 to provide a forum for the discussion of topics relevant to cooperatives and related organizations, and particularly the dynamics of cooperative-community relationships in rural development. Towards the Journal's 25th anniversary, we invite you to contribute to a special issue to appear in 1998 and devoted to a theme which demands our particular attention.

A comparison of topics of major interest to contributors of articles in the first years of the Journal and now, shows the change we have gone through. Then, typical recurrent motives were the need to maintain a fruitful dialogue between cooperatives and the government; whether or not traditional forms of mutual aid in developing countries can provide a basis for modern cooperatives; and assessing the performance of agricultural cooperatives in Eastern Europe. Among the topics in vogue today we note cooperatives facing growing market competition; women cooperatives and agritourism, and such new forms as shareholding and multi-stakeholder cooperatives. The impact of globalization and the reaction to it become matters of growing concern.

Can cooperatives play a meaningful role along two such contrasting dimensions as securing reciprocity and trust at the community level while at the same time strengthening their position at the vertical level? The issue is compounded by increasing downsizing and the ensuing unemployment in both the public and private sector. Rural contexts are no exception, regardless of the scope of agriculture therein. The traditional association of cooperatives with agricultural production and services supply may need to be re-examined.

As a forum that has always endeavored to explore the potential of cooperatives in a broader community context, we feel that these, and similar topics you may wish to add, are well suited to mark the 25th anniversary of our Journal.

With many anticipated thanks for your collaboration,

Yair Levi
Editor

Journal of Rural Cooperation, CIRCOM,

Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Efal 52960, ISRAEL. Fax: +972-3-5346376.

Ramatis

"Ramatis" is the name of a group based on the ideas as of Philo of Alexandria, and Allan Kardec, the XIXth century French creator of spiritualism. Its main ideas, as stated on their June 96 newsletter - NOPO-LO - are "universal fraternity, communitarian experience, cooperation, respect to all forms of life, universal love, search for simplicity in life, honesty, and universalism. Their main goal is to build a civilization, through the exercise of unattachment (to material life) and cooperation, prepared for the 3rd Millenium.

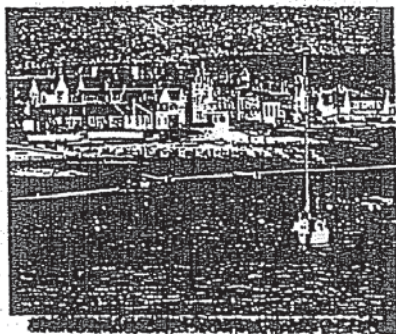
The Ramatis Group is formed by forty communities spread throughout Brazil, concentrating mainly in the state of Rio de Janeiro. These centers are the places where people meet, and share their ideas, in order to search for solutions to problems around them. They also try to find out ways in which they can transform their lives into a concrete collective frame, i.e. living, working, partying, and dying together. Many of these people are highly qualified-physicians, biologists, sociologists, engineers, etc., - and many others are middle-level professionals.

It is their plan to invite people from established communities in Brazil and abroad to come and share their experiences of communitarian and equalitarian living.

Polo Comunitario Ramatis
Caixa Postal 6214
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Brasil

I.C.S.A. Bulletin

Findhorn Village



One of the big debates currently is whether we've moved into the education business or if we're still a spiritual community at heart.

The truth is ~ we're both.

We try very hard to strike a balance between making our educational programmes economically viable, yet at the same time not to lose our spirit of community - particularly as our community now stretches worldwide.

You've probably heard that there are a lot of changes going on here at the moment.

Well, it's true.

Sometimes the changes are quite painful, and we've all had our fair share of discomfort. But there's also a new air of excitement about the place ~ a sense of re-

invention and purpose. New buildings are going up ~ a major extension to the dining-room and kitchen at The Park; and new houses at Bag-end.

It would be easy to become increasingly institutionalised if now and again we didn't have to stop and ask ourselves what we're really doing here and whether we truly 'walk our talk'.

Personally, I hope this process of change and re-invention never stops.

/k Ike Isaksen
Editor

Findhorn

Cluny Hill College, Forres IV36 ORD, Scotland

THE GREAT CIRCUITS

Etulie, the second born of Damanhur's communities, is located on a beautiful hill completely covered with woods. In Etulie, is nested the Temple of Mankind, and the wood itself is considered a sacred place. There it is possible to contact the powerful energies of the earth and, through the plants and the trees, to communicate with Superior Forces. The Sacred Wood grows on a meeting point of synchronic lines, just like the Temple of Mankind. It is very easy to perceive that it is a living organism and to get in touch with its dwellers - animals, plants and nature's energies. In the heart of the Sacred Wood, since last June, we started tracing thousands of stone circuits, that we then painted in bright



colours. The circuits allow us a full immersion into Nature and the Forces of the Earth. They are spirals and mazes, selfic patterns which represent the open air development of the Temple of Mankind. Together with the trees of the wood, they are its antennas and amplifiers.

Walking along the circuits is an extraordinary dynamic meditation which helps us open inner and hidden doors to inspiration, healing, intuition, the integration of our personalities, communication with the trees, the discovery of our talents...

Love and light from the People of Damanhur

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by

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Newsletter of the Federation
of Communities of Damanhur

Chinese Herbs on Israeli Kibbutz

Deep in the south of the Negev Desert, sitting in the flat bottom of the Arava Valley along the border with Jordan, Kibbutz Ketura has erected huge camouflage nets over vast fields of greenery. The 100-meter long "net houses" are home to perhaps the largest farm of Tibetan herbs and plants in Israel. And that is, indeed, saying something, since the Tibetan plants in question are a unique and still very rare source of medical treatments.

For the last three years, this unit, the first academic center in Israel to scientifically investigate natural therapies, has initiated and run studies on traditional Tibetan medicines produced by Padma. Production of these ancient medicines is based on knowledge that originated in Tibet, but which hundreds of years ago spread to Mongolia and from there to the West.

The Tibetan medical tradition is approximately 1,500 years old and deeply connected with holistic philosophy that sees the body as a source of cosmic energy.

The cultivation of Chinese and other East Asian herbs and plants has been a growing enterprise among Israel's kibbutzim, mirroring the fascination with Asian culture, medicine, and spiritualism held by the nation's youth. But Kibbutz Ketura is no small-time operator in herbs.

The Green Page

Owls in the Service of Agriculture

She lives in dark caves, inside ruins and deep in abandoned water-holes - she is a savage predator, leading a violent and bloody night-life. But she is no sinister criminal, a threat to innocent citizens - she is the owl, and a recent experiment at Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu shows that if given the chance she can become a useful citizen, contributing to society by exterminating pests from fields and plantations.

Shmuel Aviel, now working on the project of biological extermination of pests at Sde Eliyahu, has been studying owls for the past 14 years. He describes the owl as a night raptor, whose menu includes 3000 kinds of rodents. An adult owl may consume about a thousand rodents per year.

Yet in their calling as exterminators of pests, owls suffer from two basic problems: from lack of housing and from vulnerability to pest-control by chemicals. An experiment carried out in the eighties on Kibbutz Neot Mordecai, was cut short by the increased use of chemicals to exterminate mice, which killed the experimental group of owls through secondary poisoning. With regard to pest-control, compromise is not viable: biological pest-control will not work side by side with the conventional chemical type.

Sde Eliyahu, "a superpower" in the sphere of biological agriculture on an area of 2000 dunam, was found to be ideal for a renewal of the experiment.

Since the owl does not build a nest and is dependent on "abandoned housing" provided by the environment, it suffers from the expansion of built-up areas and the decrease of open spaces. On Sde Eliyahu, a clever solution was found: they built "protected housing" for the owls on 2.5 meter high posts, to ensure they would not be disturbed nor forced to compete with other "homeless" animals.

These "housing solutions" sufficed to attract the lodgers: the owls brought in especially for the experiment abandoned the caves at the end of the first season, but at the approach of the following egg-laying season other owls from the natural environment "squatted" in the "protected housing" and immediately began to "pay rent," effectively hunting down the rodents.

Thorough research has been carried out at Sde Eliyahu for the past two years, under the guidance of researcher Gila Kahila, who is comparing changes in the rodent population between agricultural areas where the owls are performing biological pest-control, with other areas where they are not active. The experiment has been planned to last three years, but already at the end of the second season Aviel is able to report "interesting results."

Ran Halevi

Excerpted from Hakibbutz, October 21, 1997. Translated by Hana Raz.

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