# C.A.L.L.

## Communes At Large Letter

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES DESK

YAD TABENKIN

No. 28

Spring 2007

Dear Readers,

Congratulations! You have begun the thought-provoking journey which reading this latest issue of C.A.L.L. is going to expedite.

We have packed in significant amounts of news from communities around the globe: We have features from Italy, Mexico, Germany, Norway, Israel and the USA, proving that the International Communes Desk (ICD) has it's finger on the pulse of intentional communities the world over.

I have always loved the quote "Never doubt that a small, group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has". I'm inspired by these words and like to think that anthropologist Margaret Mead was referring to us communards and our attempts to affect the society around us.

What I deduce from this quote is that at a time when alienation and injustice reign supreme, a small minority can light the way on the path to equality and co-operation. But if this is what we aspire to, surely we should be aiming to be large, not small? If we grow, will we cease to be those thoughtful and committed citizens Mead encourages us to be?

I believe that the intimacy engendered by a few people sharing their lives together can provide the basic building block for a better society. But only within the wider context of a community of suchlike groups, which in turn exists within the context of a network or federation of such communities. In this way, both 'small' and 'large' can be present and we can retain our ability to influence those around us.

In fact, the purpose of this publication is to create that connection between the many communities worldwide. Sharing ideas and inspiring one another will give us the strength and support to continue in our mission.

I'd like to sign off with another quote from Margaret Mead. Once again, I interpret it as a call for communal living and the pursuit of the basic building block of society which I referred to above: "Nobody has ever before asked the nuclear family to live all by itself in a box the way we do. With no relatives, no support, we've put it in an impossible situation".

Enjoy C.A.L.L., and please send us your feedback.

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# From the Secretary's Desk

Dear Reader,

**Guests of honour** at a recent meeting of the Desk were **Jan** and **Ruth Bang**. Former kibbutzniks, they now live at a Camphill commune in his native Norway. Their account of their life there was moving and inspiring. (See page 16) Jan has recently finished his second book on eco-villages…. Other interesting reports came from 2 young Israelis, who were on communal "holidays" abroad. **Michael Weindholtz** had spent a fascinating month at **Auroville**, the community/town of communities in India. **Nir Giron** attended **Ecotopia**, the annual festival run by **EYFA (European Youth For Action)** at **Zajezova, Slovakia** and visited the commune there. Hopefully, we'll have more about EYFA in the next issue.

A **new book on the Hutterite communal movement** has just appeared – so far only in Hebrew. "By Their Faith Shall They Live" was written by two geography professors, **Israeli Yossi Katz and Canadian John C. Lehr,** and published by our own Yad Tabenkin. The fruit of several extended two-way visits by and to the Katz family, it provides intimate glimpses of life on several Hutterite communes and a wealth of historical and factual material. It is not known when the English version will appear.

The communal grapevine has informed us that **Eileen Caddy, veteran member of Findhorn**, has passed away at a ripe old age (See page 19). One of the three founders of the Findhorn Foundation spiritual community in Scotland, she was a mystic, a spiritual teacher and author – a very special person.

It's still not too late to register for this summer's **ICSA Conference at Damanhur**, Italy, and get to meet a variegated selection of academics and community members. (See page 19) The fascinating Damanhur Federation of Communities is in itself enough reason to get there. And you might consider a communal side trip to the Holy Land.

Violence is so out of tune to our way of thinking that **violence in the communal world** is very traumatic. Our last issues have mentioned attacks in 2 very different ICs, not carried out by actual members of the communities. (May I take this opportunity to wish Jeff of Ganas a full recovery from his wounds.) To this list, I add the tragic murder of Amish school children, even though these good folk don't consider themselves as intentional communities. But this last summer saw a sad record of escalated violence: over a month-long bombardment of northern Israel, with its dozens of kibbutzim, by rockets (See page 10). Even now, more than a dozen kibbutzim, plus the urban kibbutz Migvan (at Sderot), bordering on the Gaza Strip in the south, are still living under the daily threat of rocket attacks.

Finally, one gets the impression nowadays that the **world in general** – at least, the western part of it – **is more and more coming around to the intentional communities' way of thinking**. Ecology, sustainability, and alternative fuels no longer belong to us "crazy" few, but have joined the public debate. Simultaneously, alternative life styles are also becoming more and more prominent in the general media. Maybe, our ideas aren't so way out after all.

In the meantime, we have **an urgent request. Please write to us!** C.A.L.L. can only live if you, the IC members, provide us with oxygen: your way of life, your activities, your joys and your woes. Even your problems – if you have any!

Yours in community,

Sol Etzioni,
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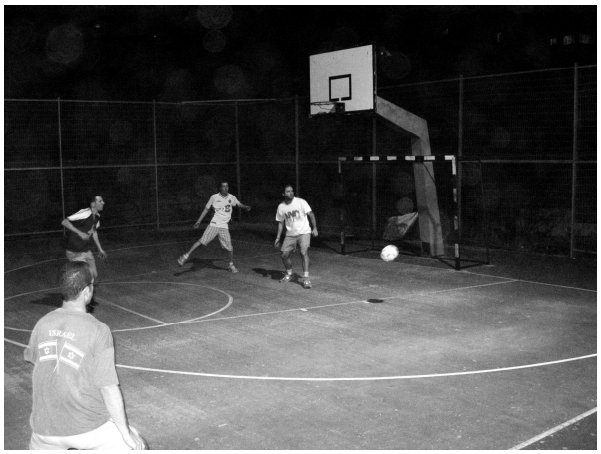
As oxymorons go, business ethics, civil war, educational TV and junk food are all concepts that commune dwellers the world over can appreciate with a wry smile. But put competition together with communal living and some communards will tell you that, with all seriousness, they look forward to it all week. Over the next two pages we feature two communities that have found competitive sport to be in sync with community building.

## Football in the (Urban) Kibbutz by Robin Merkel



**Saturday night, 7 PM. A group of anywhere between six and sixteen kibbutzniks are gathered on the cement, floodlit pitch, warming up. The challenge is more than just scoring goals; a combination of busy members, the geographical spread of our kibbutz over two towns, and neighbourhood youth, makes for a varied sporting experience.**

Football (soccer) is an old kibbutz tradition, normally played on a grass pitch on Friday afternoon at the end of the working week. The as yet unnamed urban kibbutz of Migdal-Ha'emek / Upper Nazareth plays on Saturday night because members travel on the Friday-Saturday Israeli weekend. We live in rented apartments scattered throughout the two towns, so instead of grass we play on public playing fields that double as basketball courts. If we are lucky, the lights are working, we can find a reasonably empty pitch, and have booked enough cars that everyone can get there on time.

Our kibbutz is young, and rapidly growing due to the constant influx of members from the youth movement. In the four years that we have been playing, people who used to turn up every week have found themselves with work and family commitments and have been replaced by a younger crowd. We play co-operatively (though it can get a bit physical), four against four, rotating who sits out after each ten-minute game.

As an urban kibbutz whose mission is education and improving society from within, a unique issue surrounds football. Local teens, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, often turn up at the pitch during a game. They are used to the losing team sitting out (and are usually better than us!), and often stop the game to argue over who will play in goal, or tactics, or just about anything. We never know what to do in this situation - sometimes we need a few extra players, sometimes we find a different pitch, sometimes we take the educational angle and explain our rules, sometimes we simply argue. In fact, football is a real-world example of a major issue on our agenda for the past few years, as we try to build a permanent kibbutz: whether we should create our own "fenced-in" community or should live in the communities we are active in. Is the desire for a co-operative game three hours a week enough to justify "fencing-out" the neighbours? Football has become a topic of some controversy!

## The Ultimate Thrill!! By Ezra

From Leaves of Twin Oaks no. 102

What do you get when you combine 6 – 10 Twin Oakers and a round plastic disc on a sunny Saturday afternoon? Well, if it's anytime in the past few months, you would get a lively game of Ultimate Frisbee, the latest athletic craze to sweep the commune! Although the game is a recent phenomenon at Twin Oaks, "Ultimate" (as it's usually known) has been around for years as the quintessential 'sport for people who hate sports.' The rules are simple enough: one team tries to move the disk by throwing it down the field and catching it in an 'end zone,' and the other team tries to stop them by intercepting or blocking the throw. You can't run with the disk, and if a pass is dropped or intercepted, it's a 'turn-over' and the frisbee goes the other way. The sport has a reputation for being low-key and free of the 'in-your-face' competitiveness and machismo that can unfortunately ruin the sporting experience for us laid-back commune types. Although everyone runs around and plays hard on each point, we don't keep score, and the teams are reshuffled if it seems like one team is scoring too many points in a row. Players of all ability levels are welcomed, and no-one keeps track of who's winning.

The merits of Ultimate Frisbee are well known to many Oakers, and its absence has been for years an oft-lamented aspect of life on the commune. For Yours Truly, giving up my weekly pick-up game in Oakland, Ca. was one of the greatest sacrifices I made in moving here. But in the past, Twin Oaks just hasn't had the 'critical mass' of committed disk-heads necessary to start a regular game (you need at least six people for a game, eight or ten is much better). So what changed? Earlier this spring, a group of Oakers made a LEX trip to Dancing Rabbit, where Ultimate Frisbee is an established part of the culture. They returned to Twin Oaks determined to make it happen here, and their spark of inspiration fell upon fertile timber—a group of enthusiastic Oakers who were just waiting for that initial push to "get the disk flying." Thanks, DR!

Our primary obstacle was location, location, location—although 450 acres sounds like a lot of land, most of our property is either wooded, hilly, or earmarked for agricultural purposes. We've made the best of it in a field known as 'Wellhouse West,' one of our lesser-used pasture areas. You wouldn't quite call it manicured, with it's gently rolling hills and slightly asymmetrical shape, but we've got our herd of four-footed friends who pass through every so often to keep the grass short (leaving behind neat little organic 'land mines' to enliven the game), and it's free of poison ivy, mud-pits, and navigable bodies of water..

For the past few months, we've managed to put together at least one game (and sometimes two) nearly every week. Our first, well-publicized, outing drew over two-dozen participants, and from that group, about 8 people have become 'regulars,' playing as often as they can. Other Twin Oakers drop in once in a while, along with a rotating cast of visitors, guests, and folks from Acorn. Our first few games were marred by injuries, causing some lasting skepticism among non-players of our claims that it's a "non-contact" sport. But, at the time of this writing, it's been at least two weeks since anyone has broken, torn, mangled, or lacerated any part of their anatomy, and over a month since anyone has been carried semi-conscious to a hospital for stitches. And for those of us who have escaped injury, the regular exercise has begun to pay off, with a noticeable decrease in the amount of hacking, wheezing and dryheaving exhibited after each point!

Having soared into the hearts of many Twin Oakers, it seems that Ultimate Frisbee has 'caught on,' and will (hopefully) become a lasting part of Twin Oaks culture. Who knows, maybe someday we'll even be able to challenge Dancing Rabbit to a tournament (non-competitive, of course)!

# THE GIANT SEA TURTLE IN OUR SHOWER

**BY MOLLY PRENTISS**

**Growing up in community can mystify your friends, but by the time you get to college, can turn out just fine**

A giant sea turtle, dead and stuffed, loomed like a shadow over the shower. The adults had dragged it home years ago, nailed it to the wall behind the showerhead, and seemed to have forgotten what it was. To them it became a fixture, a statement, a real piece. To me, already weighted with the adolescent traumas of growing breasts and kissing boys, this dead turtle equated to pure embarrassment, epitomizing the abnormality of my family and living situation. I grew up on a commune: three families, one piece of land, and hundreds of quirky "pieces" like the tortoise. Combined with our orange velour couch, a neon sign that read "eat!" in the kitchen, and the unfinished paint-jobs on various walls, the shower turtle became an immense source of stress when friends would come over to my house. Sleepovers or after school snacks meant explanations of our communal kitchen, justifications of our barn-shaped houses, and a patient question and answer period in which I was forced to address subjects like why is the bathroom outside? And why don't you just live with your *own* family? I cursed these abnormalities daily as I shampooed my hair, forced to glare back at the marble eyes of the stuffed turtle.

Molly age 9

My friends would arrive at the commune and want to see everything: "Ohmygosh, take us on a *tour*!" they would yelp, spreading themselves like insects over the expanse of wooden floors. I would gather them up Jessica, Sonya, Meika, Lacey) and shuffle them through the house as if it were a museum. I was careful to emphasize our restaurant-style dishwasher and fully stocked pantry, steering clear of rat-traps and cobwebs in corners. I would show them the enormous circle of a dining room table where we ate every night, the three-door refrigerator, the personalized mailboxes for each commune member. Always, there were questions and answers. "Like, *where* do you guys *sleep*?!" Lacey would chirp with the realization that there had been no bedrooms on the tour so far. "We cook and eat and hang out in the big house," I'd explain. "We sleep in the little houses." The girls, intrigued and puzzled, would follow me like soldiers along brick paths and through overgrown gardens to the little houses where we slept. "So I don't *get it*," Sonya would bark, "Where do you *shower*?" I would reluctantly lead the group to the communal bathhouse, an open room made up of cement and tile and three showerheads, and expose them to the immense presence of the turtle. They would squeal and giggle and I would remember how strange this must all seem to them: sharing space, sharing showers, and sharing daily lives with people outside of my bloodline.

Author Molly Prentiss today

In 1979, my parents and a band of ten other idealistic hippies bought "La Selva," a ten-acre plot of land in Santa Cruz, California, that overlooked the bay and smelled fresh like oat trees and new beginnings. They pooled their resources, their skills, and their spirits to envision and create a housing system based on sharing, coexisting, and community. What started as a small, overcrowded shack turned into individual wood· framed houses and sprawling gardens; the commune evolved into a tiny village. Its members were individuals - artists or stock-brokers or office managers - but also active members of a cohesive group. Systems developed: each adult cooked one night a week, everyone showed up for dinner and pitched in with the garden or household projects. Bills were split, responsibilities were shared. Living each day became something entirely different from the nuclear norm. Life, both its "dailies" and its ideals, became communal.

The commune was a perfect playing field for the game of growing up: acres of exploring, an encouraging ensemble of adults, and consistent kid companionship. Six adults made up the core of

the commune: three couples, two of them with two daughters each. The clan of four daughters developed a community all our own: we ran barefoot in fields and stole strawberries from farms, devised games with sticks and baked mud-pies from scratch. As the oldest daughter at the commune, I acted as the ringleader for dress-up dance productions and ploys against the parents. We even started a commune newsletter, "The Household Times," which featured highlights such as new pets and recent dinner parties. Our community fostered creativity and communication and supplied us with a strong feeling of kinship and connection with those around us.

As we grew older, with more visits to friends' two-story houses in ostentatious neighborhoods, we began role-playing games where we pretended to live in conventional nuclear homes. We would envision future lives for ourselves: a husband named Chris, a black lab named Midnight, and a house all our own at the end of a cul-de-sac. We would play "neighbors" (which we didn't have) and ask each other if we could "please borrow a cup of sugar because we had just run out and we had already started baking cookies!" The lure of normality became a source of inspiration for our antics; a touch of longing wove itself into our make-believe. We became mildly obsessed with things like fences and sidewalks, things we didn't have on our rural chunk of land on the hill. Sometimes, when raccoons scratched anxiously under the floorboards as I tried to sleep, I longed anxiously for the suburbs.

Yet despite youthful longings for two-car garages and next-door neighbors, the commune kids grew and evolved in the communal setting in a very natural way. Living as a part of a community was all we knew. Enormous feasts infused with conversation and interaction were what we came to expect from a nightly meal. Interacting with multiple sets of parent-like figures was organic and unforced. We knew nothing of borrowing sugar from neighbors because our sugar was already shared. These things, although they required explanation to friends from traditional one-family houses, were our way of life from the start. Our parents had been the visionaries, the seed-planters, the innovators. As their children, born into this environment of interconnected houses and relationships, we were raised feeling that it was the natural way to live. We became active participants and respected members of the commune. We had our own slots for mail, responsibilities around the house, and places to voice our opinions at the dinner table. We were born into a vision that had already been realized; for us, that vision was our home.

Sister Grace, commune sister Annie, commune sister Maddy, and author (right)

I often find that people consider communal living to be overly utopian or painfully idealistic, concerned with concessions of personal space or freedom. But La Selva, a leaf clinging to a weathered branch of idealism, is just one example of a community idea that has remained a working reality. It has no religious philosophy, no intensely structured organization, and not even perfect communication among members. What La Selva does have, however, is flexibility. It shows that communities can grow together, adapt to changes, and move through generations. The sea turtle was eventually removed. The commune girls, college-ready, eventually waned in numbers. But the lasting members of La Selva remain, eating dinners together, making decisions, and acting as an example of co-existence.

In my college years I return to the commune every few months. I bring friends with me and give them tours of the buildings. "This is amazing," they say. "What a great way to grow up." I now understand that it was great, and I was indeed part of something important. On the tours, I proudly lead my friends to the remodeled shower room; it is now my favorite room in the house. I tell them with a chuckle how there used to be a four-foot-wide sea turtle bolted to the wall, looming like a shadow over the shower. They laugh with me and don't really understand.

*Molly Prentiss was raised in La Selva commune in Santa Cruz, California, and is now attending college.*

# Cooking in Community

Here we publish correspondence from the 'living in community' listserve about cooking in quantities - for a variety of tastes.

Hello, I'm new... Sat Oct 7, 2006
Posted by: "Erica (Raven) Branch-Butler" golanv1@yahoo.com

Hi there, I'm Raven, and I'm new to your list, but not necessarily to community living. I live in a ten person household consisting of three couples, one 11 year old, one 2 month old, three single people, a cat and a rosy boa.

One of my foci has been to figure out how to cook for so many people, and I'm also here to try to learn about interpersonal relationships, how to make things go more smoothly.

Anyway, I look forward to leaning and sharing here.

Regards,
Raven

Hi Raven - Carol from Kindlehome here - welcome. Tue Oct 10, 2006
Posted by: "TheDukster" ruccha@hotmail.com

I agree that meals can be a challenge, especially when various diets are involved. Add the changing food preferences of adults, not to mention kids, and the mix can get pretty confusing.

At our weekly meeting, one of the agenda items is weekly meals and groceries. During this time (usually brief -- 10 to 20 minutes) we talk about things culinary -- fixing the days when we will have community meals that week (this means meals where we all sit down together to eat at the same time -- usually four days a week minimum), when we will have food available without a sit-down (this means that there will be a prepared dish available, but we don't agree on a specific meal-time -- everyone can eat when they want), and "forage days" (days when leftovers abound and there's plenty of grub available, but each person manages their own meals). Because our schedules change week-to-week, we do a weekly check-in and set meals accordingly, although we seem to have a usual schedule (Meals together Friday through Monday, forage or available Tues through Thurs – that seems to be the way it plays out in our community, which works well for us at this point -- and it does change from week to week).

The other thing we talk about during the meal discussion is "anything anybody's craving, or not wanting?" -- this gives us an opportunity to keep variety on the menu and also make sure that anyone's particular appetite preference can be served.

We have a standard "grocery list" on the fridge that everyone is responsible to add items to (either when they use down an item to need level, or if there is something that they particularly want that isn't on the standard list). We also have an agreed-upon list of staples that we keep stocked, with back-ups, so favorite foods are available. "Luxuries" like alcohol and food that only one person wants are usually handled by the individual through their own funds – although we have made consciously agreed-upon trade-offs (for example: I don't drink coffee, but other members do -- but they don't drink my green tea, which I consume a lot of -- so it's pretty much a wash -- we have agreements to bring up anything that seems out of balance -- again, checking in weekly, so we rarely get into any dynamics around food stuff -- basically, if it's in the fridge or pantry, it's fair game for all).

We have a mixed group in terms of diet -- some strongly vegetarian, others (like me) fairly omniverous, although I usually want meat only at certain times (like right before my period) -- our cook is a person who actually needs meat in his diet regularly to feel fit and healthy. That said, I do find that we all tend to gravitate more to light vegetarian meals in the Summer -- sometimes just a salad and baked potato, other times stir-fry or a casserole. Checking in on a weekly basis gives us all information about both our own appetites and the group appetite.

Mezza style menus (like a big mediterranean or indian style meal with pita here, dal there, a raita here, a salad there) have a couple of advantages, especially if you've got more than one cook. In our

community, certain members seem to have "specialties" -- so one person can prepare the day before, or while, someone else is prepping the pitas or making the raita. This allows us to have a meat dish available for the meaty types, but not mixed into the rest of the menu. When I was a mom, I also found that mezza menus were great for my kids, who had VERY distinct food preferences (OK, let's just say here that there were times when one of my kids would eat only four foods at ALL -- Cheese (any kind), Broccoli, Bread (any kind), and fish). I didn't eat meat at that time at all, so his diet was not exactly in sync with mine, but a meal of steamed broccoli, cheese sauce on the side, pita bread, a big salad, and a little broiled fish for the little meat-head served us all just fine.

One of the challenges for me with "eating in community" has been that, as I've become more attuned to my body over the years, I've found that there are certain times that my body seems to "switch on" or "switch off" to certain foods or seasonings. We eat pretty clean here – all organic, as much of our own food and local as we can get it.

A thing that I love about the weekly meal check-in -- I can tell the cook that my stomach is feeling a bit delicate about spices this week, or tell him that I've been craving something really spicy. We outline a general idea about what we want (veggie, light, soup, heavy, more meat, less meat, more potatoes, less potatoes, etc.). This gives him some creative room, but a general direction.

Here are some suggestions that I might offer for "cooking for a crowd":

1) If you make a meal that's a universal "hit" with everyone in the community, Make a note -- WRITE IT DOWN! We have a few menus that everyone here loves (they are rare, but they do exist). I think this is helpful to the cook(s) too -- they can look at this list when they're at their wits end about what to make.

2) Check in at least weekly (briefly -- no process overload) about what people have been wanting/not wanting in terms of meals or available foods. If you consider this a bonding element in your community, make sure that you give it some weekly attention.

3) Have some discussions about how and why you value group meals in your community. We discovered, after eating together "haphazardly" for a year or so, that we all really valued gathering together for food in a certain way, so we made a conscious commitment to share meals at least 4 times a week. This meant that the important part was to gather together for the meal -- not necessarily the eating part -- and allowed people with different blood-sugar needs to snack beforehand if they needed to -- or to simply gather, whether we ate right then or not (right now, there is a delicious quiche sitting in the kitchen, plus oven-blasted potatoes -- which I can smell – vividly -- but because this is not a "gathering" night, I will sit here and type my email until I'm ready to eat. On a "gathering" night, I would stop what I'm doing, and go to gather with the community, whether I'm hungry or not.)

4) Consider evaluating your agreed-upon "eating times". Depending on what your individual community-member time-commitments are, you may want to choose to eat at different times than the "normal" status-quo breakfast/lunch/dinner times. After a long while of eating in the evenings at a "normal" supper time (5 - 7 pm), we all found that we preferred to eat our main meal of the day much earlier (usually 3 to 4:30 pm). Since we are all "self-employed", we now usually share our group meals at about this time, rather than waiting for the evening. My digestion likes this better, and that's the report I hear from my community members as well. One of the reasons that I live in intentional community is that I want to live as much as possible in "organic time". There are still days that my belly wants a different time-line, but this schedule fits much better for me, as a rule.

All the best, Carol

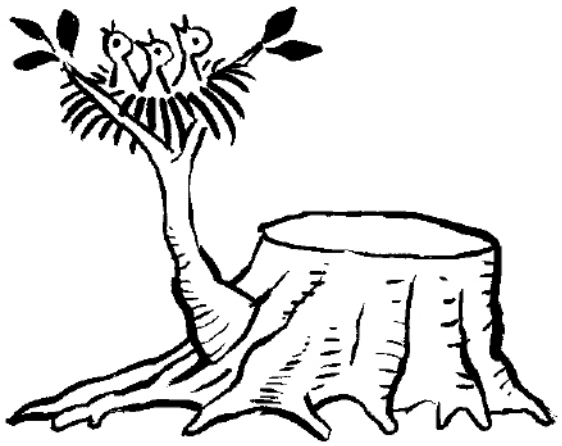
# A Summer We Would Like to Forget

**The Kibbutz Movement Under Attack**

Ostrich-like, we could have omitted this item and most of you, our dear readers, would have been very happy to see no mention in CALL of that dirty word "war". Unfortunately, the kibbutz movement is part and parcel of the one country in the world which is regularly threatened to be destroyed and is often under attack. 50 years ago, my son and his pals didn't have any toy guns – not through a formal kibbutz decision, but because of the pacifist ideals we all share/d. Now, my son is too old to be called up for reserve duty, but his son is into the second of his 3-years compulsory military service.

I am not defending the way the war in Lebanon was conducted, but must point out that it began with a murderous attack on a routine Israeli patrol inside this country's border with Lebanon and the kidnapping of 2 of our soldiers. For over a month, the northern third of Israel, with its 65 kibbutzim, was under daily fire of katyusha rockets (with their metal pellets) and 25 of them were actually damaged. The weaker population (mainly children) were evacuated from most of the kibbutzim and absorbed by those beyond the firing line. Altogether, some 15,000 souls were rapidly and willingly made welcome, with some kibbutzim taking hundreds of "evacuees" into their homes. Apparently - despite all the privatization processes in the Kibbutz Movement - "solidarity", "mutual responsibility" and "partnership" are not just empty slogans. On the other hand, many of the older members of the besieged kibbutzim – in their 70's and 80's – refused to be evacuated and worked in the orchards and factories whenever it was safe to do so. At the same time, practical means - including a stream of volunteers - were instigated by the Movement to help these kibbutzim carry on.

Not only kibbutzniks were catered for. Many inhabitants of the northern towns were absorbed into safe kibbutzim, while the Kibbutz Movement found ways and the personnel to donate and distribute - directly to the shelters and private homes - food (and products of kibbutz factories) to the weaker populations who stayed put. For the young among them, regular activities were organized, as were holiday trips and camps in the safe parts of the country. The urban communes in the development towns and the kibbutz-associated youth movements in general played a vital part in this massive operation. All these efforts were highly praised by the media and governmental & local bodies – not always sympathetic towards the kibbutzim in the past.



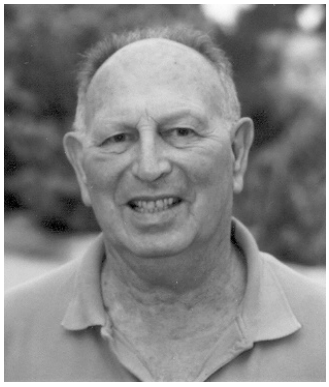
No less important was the fact that, after the war, the lessons learned the hard way were analyzed and documented by the Kibbutz Movement, so as to facilitate future such actions, if and when the need should arise again. Ways and means are being sought to continue in peace times the ties forged under fire with the various sectors of the population.

Despite all the above positive "achievements", this was a summer we would like to forget. Unfortunately, we won't be able to do so. I am fully aware that the loss of any one life on either side is a tragedy, but - imperfect being as I am - I mourn more for those closest to me. 18 of our kibbutz sons were killed in this short summer war.

Sol Etzioni, Kibbutz Tzora

# KALEIDOSCOPE

The Communitarian Scene from all Over and Under
Compiled (and partly translated) by Joel Dorkam



**The initial kibbutz settlers were youngsters in their early twenties, who perceived themselves as possessing everlasting youth; they gave little thought to minor issues like old age, insurance, social security and retirement planning. Besides, they assumed that the community represented a complete, all encompassing security system that ensured their future welfare. What really mattered were the chances of increasing the irrigation water allocation and the milk quota, the number of newborn calves and new members, and the wording of their party platform. Only a very few cared to provide for the far future.**

**That is until the Beit Oren incident; the kibbutz on top of Mount Carmel went practically bankrupt, leaving the senior members without any income or means of subsistence, lots of debts and commitments they had no way to cover. Suddenly this issue became very central to thousands of elderly kibbutzniks and their offspring. They began looking around for instant solutions, in part quite creative ones, consisting mainly of selling off assets they had jealously kept intact for later generations. Case in point, a fierce debate is presently raging inside the Kibbutz Movement about selling the controlling shares of the "Tnuva" cooperative, which processes and markets most of the milk and dairy products of Moshavim and Kibbutzim in Israel, for the purpose of covering the actuary debt of about a billion dollars for retirement funding, as well as some pressing debts. Fact is that we belatedly realized the need to secure our future independently of our respective communities and central movements.**

**Incidentally, it appears that similar insights are gradually spreading around mature communities everywhere, as indicated by the following excerpt from Communities #132 of Fall 2006 , entitled "Graying in Community" by Darin Fenger:**

## Can we continue to live in community as we grow older?

Will Kennedy loves the cohousing lifestyle, raves about neighbors, enjoys being around young people, and quietly fears nursing homes. Kennedy's mind booms with ideas and his choice of words tells of great mental articulation, but two strokes have wracked his body of 86 years with considerable injury. The resident of Frog Song Cohousing in Sonoma, County, California said he would never easily choose to leave his beloved ark of friendship, safety, and comfort. Kennedy erupts into handsome chuckles of glee when he describes the life he so greatly enjoys today. "This is a wonderful adventure," the retired social worker enthused, his excitement breaking through the normal slur of his labored speech. "I really can't conceive of any other way of life. I benefit all way around from being here. There just isn't enough I can say about how wonderful it is to benefit by living with this group of people."

"I was strictly a city gal," Allison, 89, said chuckling. "I'd heard about ecovillages from my daughter for years, but I sure never dreamed I would ever be part of one. But let me tell you, I have not had one regret. I am so glad that I'm here." Like most elders interviewed, Allison pointed to the rich companionship that intentional community can promise, all compared to being isolated in an apartment or tiny house somewhere in regular society.

Allison stressed that Earthaven not only gives her a life right in the middle of the most beautiful mountains she's ever seen, the place also blesses her with the best sons and daughters - her neighbors - that her dreams could ever design.

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**I once asked a friend of mine for news about a mutual friend of ours and was told with a sigh: "well, she's afflicted with O.A.". Thinking this might be another, hitherto unknown plague, I looked at my friend enquiringly and was told this referred simply to Old Age.**

**In Francesco #29 of Advent 2006 we found the following, somewhat wistful little item by Brother Fritz Giglinger:**

"At this time, when I feel more and more clearly that I am growing old, I like to sit at my very ancient writing desk, looking at the precious carved cross of my master Jesus and at the pictures of Brothers Franz, Charles, Carlo, Bishop Florian and other beloved ones on the wall across my room, or to the left, through the window into the garden - and listen into myself. Yes, my body reveals several weaknesses and infirmities. It acted as a faithful "Brother Donkey" , as Franziskus used to refer to his own body, served me dutifully and fulfilled many wonderful wishes of mine. Many houses have I built, twice did I undertake a pilgrimage to Assisi , to Lourdes I preferred to ride on a bicycle - where haven't I been around? My body was always my quiet, obedient servant. By now it takes more and more frequent commands, slightly chuckling. And I submit myself smilingly , but at the same time sighingly . Nobody is able to evade the laws of space and time, they allow us to initiate and terminate, they create a unity by birth and by death amongst humans and other creatures. Nothing escapes their earthly power. Being human means being born and dying without any limits, coming to earth and sinking into it and rising again. Where is it leading us?"

**The recent visit of former Communes Deskman Jan Bang and his wife Ruth Wilson from the Solborg Camphill village at Yad Tabenkin - a treat by itself - brought us a little report of what's going on there:**

What's news from Camphill?

Well, here at Solborg in Norway, the feeling of Christmas is in the air. Every year, in preparation for the various festivals, plays are performed. This year is no exception, and two are in preparation right now – one the traditional Christmas story of the birth of Jesus, which takes place in our very own Stable, the actors surrounded by the cows and sheep, the floor a thick bed of straw. The other play was written by Karl Konig, the founder of Camphill.

The audience will be small, because most people who are around will participate in the plays. The actual process of putting on a play, the building up during rehearsals, the role playing, the doing-something-together, the dressing-up, the final production – all these elements are seen as much more important for community building and communal experience, than having an audience to watch us!

Of course, all the "Villagers" take part too – it is great for everyone to have the chance to dress up and have the opportunity to pretend they are someone else for a while and there is no end to the number of angels and shepherds you can have in a Christmas play!

Another beautiful Christmas tradition at Solborg is for everyone to gather a few days before, to go high up into our pine forests with our traditional Norwegian work horse (called Goliath!), to choose a tree to cut down for each house, and the most lovely one of all for our Communal Hall. The trees are then decorated, not with commercial plastic goodies, but with real candles (terrible fire hazard!) and 33 red and white paper roses, along with other traditional anthroposophical symbols.

Soon the clocks turn and we look forward to lighter days and a peaceful 2007 to us all!

Ruth Wilson

**A few glimpses into a survey by Lisa Paulson, courtesy of Commentaries #132, asking present and past communitarians : "Would you live in community again?" incidentally, a question we ask ourselves more than once nowadays…**

No, I wouldn't choose to live in community again. It was an incredible experience - from its buildup and preparation from 1976 to 1981, and then through some 12 years of intense togetherness as a very earnest, idealistic little group committed to living the experiment, to attempt modeling a more honest, more conscious, "clean" way of living than we felt we were seeing in the world at large. There was both exhilaration and terrible pain at various times, successes and gratifying public recognition, as well as personal and collective dark periods with false starts and stumbles. There was often an excruciating flashlight shone on each of our foibles and missteps, and then the wonderful, close friendships and just plain fun as we labored shoulder to shoulder and knew we were breaking new ground in this corner of Sheboygan County. There was personal growth and greater self-understanding. There was validation of what we were about, even though at times it seemed we'd crawl forward a step and then fall back two steps. Often it was hard to see what we were accomplishing, what we were achieving and stood for in the eyes of the public; we were too close to it and tended to judge ourselves mercilessly.

So it was quite wonderful and even amazing to look back and realize that I had stuck it out and could feel positive about the whole experience. I knew it had been valuable, important. I think most of the others in the community felt the same.

But when we decided to loosen the bonds we were holding ourselves in - the lock-step closeness in how we functioned together, made decisions, assessed our interpersonal relationship skills obsessively in regular meetings - it felt not only right but enabled us to draw a huge collective sigh of relief. We could say "we did it!" and not feel guilty about morphing into a more loosely supportive neighborhood of friends who were suddenly free to pursue our own passions and interests. It needn't mean giving up the values we'd championed so fiercely about conservation and a sustainable lifestyle. We realized we might even become more effective in our loosely structured setting as neighbors with shared values, when we weren't under constant group scrutiny. We could also flower as individuals.

Frankly, I wouldn't have the stamina to do it all again. And after so much intensity when we seemed to almost live in each other's heads, it was wonderful to just take a rest from all that. I realized how much I prized my freedom, my privacy, and the solitude I could indulge in when I needed it. It felt as though I had paid my dues, done my bit to inch public awareness along.

I can't exactly say what I'd do differently if I were to do it again. As some have noted, with all the stumbling toward creating something good and worthwhile, in the end it was really "perfect." The joys, the pain. It was a glorious way to learn and to point others on a path of awareness too. But I wouldn't want to try it again - not for myself anyway. Perhaps a model with more viability or longevity would be a less rigidly structured regime. Just as the Israeli kibbutzniks after awhile often opted out of their strictly communal situations to join or create the moshavim (where their families had their own homes and people could hold paying jobs, but where there was still a strong community cohesion), maybe a similar structure could work better here. Maybe the answer is some kind of cohousing community. But we often remark that we wouldn't be the close group still living at High Wind if we hadn't gone through the "bath of fire" together. We'd be just a bunch of exurbanites living in energy efficient houses in the same vicinity. We shared a lot and that is a precious bond.

*Lisa Paulson is co-founder with her husband Beldon Paulson of High Wind Community in Wisconsin (no longer an intentional community), and the nonprofit Plymouth Foundation.*

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**Browsing through a newsletter from the "La Poudriere" communities of Easter 2006 we discover a striking metaphor of life in community:**

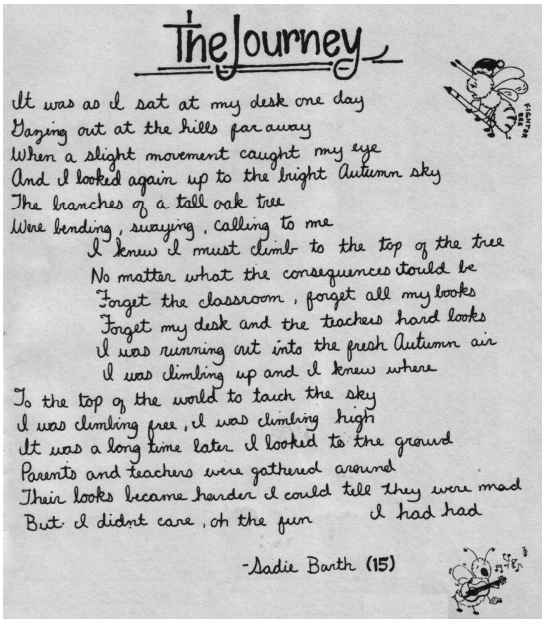
"It was a real "Life Train" which invited us for a trip. In that train we filled up 5 wagons, named respectively Pe, Vi, Bru, Rum and Anderlecht , all drawn by an engine with the cute name of Presence-Friendship-Justice-Hope and Modesty.
But who are the passengers? Of course there are those who boarded the train from the outset and carry on appreciating the landscape, at the same time collecting new passengers...
.... A few board the train and get off again before we can check their tickets . There also are student commuters and school youngsters who arrive for a few days of reflection, each one of them bringing along his enquiries, his smiles, his wonderings.
And there also are a few complementary travelers. And those who have come to a decision to get off the train after an extended trip with us.
On the train , some unusual events also take place .. And so on and so on: stations on the way , exchanges between wagons, ticket controls, communications, oncoming stations, destinations - and the terminal? Well, we'll leave that to the readers' imagination!

**Out of the FEC's "Dirt and Dreams" (quite a significant title by itself) of Spring 2006, we borrow some aspects of decision-making by consensus , as observed by Parke:**

Democratic Self-Governance

According to our bylaws, all FEC communities use a form of decision making in which "members have an equal opportunity to participate, either through consensus, direct vote, or right of appeal or overrule." This principle reflects the political dimension of our egalitarianism, the aspiration to realize an equality of power.
Different FEC communities have evolved different ways of sharing decision-making power. The two largest FEC communities, East Wind and Twin Oaks, have developed systems where all members have equal access to powerful roles within the community, such as the Board of Planners at Twin Oaks, even while there is a wide range of degrees to which different members participate in community decisions. At East Wind, for example, community-wide meetings are relatively rare and seldom attended by everyone.
In the smaller FEC communities, where it's much easier to assemble everyone together, community meetings tend to be a regular feature of life, and everyone is expected to participate whenever possible. In most cases, the smaller communities practice some form of consensus. In FEC Assemblies, the community delegates also operate under a consensus model as they make policy and set budgets for the organization.
These structures enable FEC communities to avoid some of the most obvious abuses of power that might otherwise intrude, but by no means do these structures insulate our communities from all problematic power dynamics. While we tend to measure power in units of votes, we often overlook differences in the persuasive capacity to win those votes in the first place. People who are persuasive tend to have more power than those who aren't. Some are more persuasive because they're more articulate or charming; others because they have greater seniority; still others perhaps because they're more savvy - they know who to talk to outside of the meeting, how to approach them to secure their support, and so on.
Addressing the abuse of power represents, I think, the most important work we do in community. The inequality of self-knowledge and skill may represent the most challenging of all inequalities of power found in community, and the world at large. Community affords the experimental ground upon which we can wrestle with this issue in a deep and honest way. Happily, the communities movement abounds with inspirational stories and models related to this theme - along with myriad cautionary tales. But we must go much further. That better world toward which we all strive only becomes possible, I believe, when we have become much more skillful in recognizing and restraining our own abuses of power.

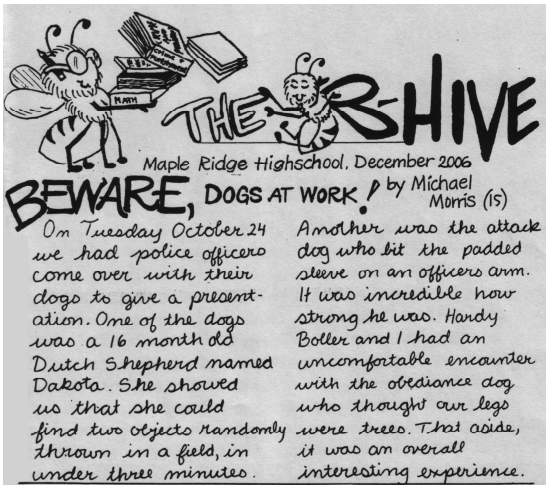
**Out of the Bruderhot's Maple Ridge Highschool newsletter, carrying the cute title "The B-Hive" of December 2006 we harvest 3 excerpts - one rather hilarious, one rather surprising, reporting on a visit of our friends Channah and Shulti Regev, and a third one presenting a promising young poetress named Sadie Barth.**



The Journey

It was as I sat at my desk one day
Gazing out at the hills far away
When a slight movement caught my eye
And I looked again up to the bright Autumn sky
The branches of a tall oak tree
Were bending, swaying, calling to me
I knew I must climb to the top of the tree
No matter what the consequences could be
Forget the classroom, forget all my books
Forget my desk and the teachers hard looks
I was running out into the fresh Autumn air
I was climbing up and I knew where
To the top of the world to touch the sky
I was climbing free, I was climbing high
It was a long time later I looked to the ground
Parents and teachers were gathered around
Their looks became harder I could tell they were mad
But I didn't care, oh the fun I had had

-Sadie Barth (15)

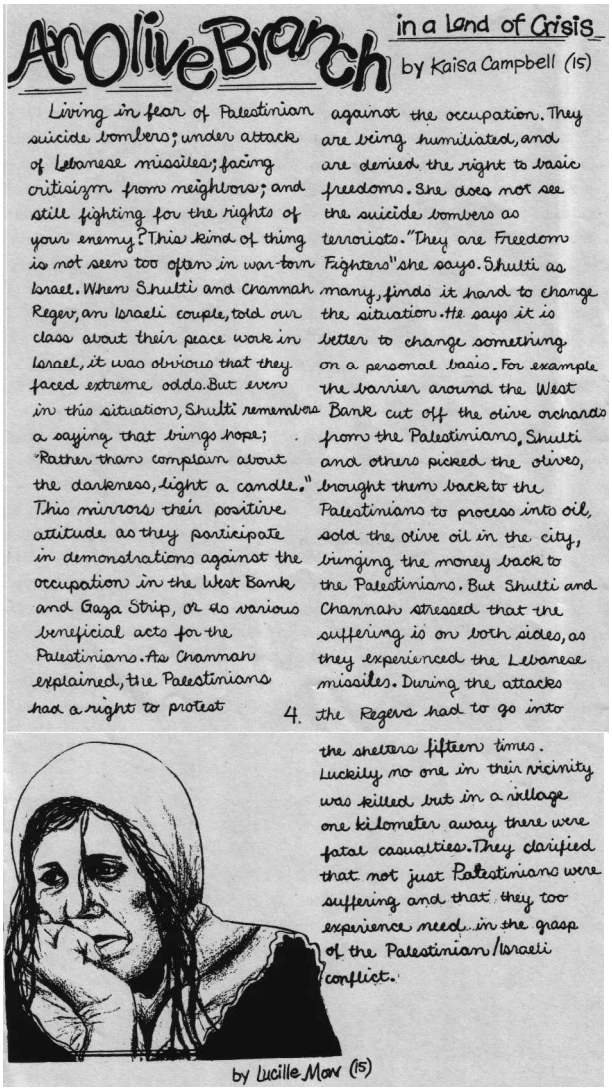


THE B-HIVE

Maple Ridge Highschool, December 2006

BEWARE, DOGS AT WORK! by Michael Morris (15)

On Tuesday October 24 we had police officers come over with their dogs to give a presentation. One of the dogs was a 16 month old Dutch Shepherd named Dakota. She showed us that she could find two objects randomly thrown in a field, in under three minutes. Another was the attack dog who bit the padded sleeve on an officers arm. It was incredible how strong he was. Hardy Boiler and I had an uncomfortable encounter with the obedience dog who thought our legs were trees. That aside, it was an overall interesting experience.



An Olive Branch in a Land of Crisis by Kaisa Campbell (15)

Living in fear of Palestinian suicide bombers; under attack of Lebanese missiles; facing criticism from neighbors; and still fighting for the rights of your enemy? This kind of thing is not seen too often in war-torn Israel. When Shulti and Channah Regev, an Israeli couple, told our class about their peace work in Israel, it was obvious that they faced extreme odds. But even in this situation, Shulti remembers a saying that brings hope; "Rather than complain about the darkness, light a candle." This mirrors their positive attitude as they participate in demonstrations against the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or do various beneficial acts for the Palestinians. As Channah explained, the Palestinians had a right to protest against the occupation. They are being humiliated, and are denied the right to basic freedoms. She does not see the suicide bombers as terrorists. "They are Freedom Fighters" she says. Shulti as many, finds it hard to change the situation. He says it is better to change something on a personal basis. For example the barrier around the West Bank cut off the olive orchards from the Palestinians. Shulti and others picked the olives, brought them back to the Palestinians to process into oil, sold the olive oil in the city, bringing the money back to the Palestinians. But Shulti and Channah stressed that the suffering is on both sides, as they experienced the Lebanese missiles. During the attacks 4. the Regevs had to go into the shelters fifteen times. Luckily no one in their vicinity was killed but in a village one kilometer away there were fatal casualties. They clarified that not just Palestinians were suffering and that they too experience need in the grasp of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

by Lucille Mow (15)

**Lastly, some refreshing thoughtfood by Valerie of Twin Oaks for Harry Potter fans, all rights reserved!**

Everything I needed to know about Living in Community I learned from Harry Potter... by Ultra Violet Waterfall (aka Valerie)

If you're at all familiar with the Harry Potter books, you may already have made some connections between the community life of Hogwarts (the school attended by Harry and his wizarding friends) and intentional communities everywhere. Shared meals, shared housing, multi-dimensional interpersonal relationships, struggles about whether to close or remain open, and more. Here are some community lessons we can all glean from the series. We can learn:

From Hermione — that sometimes the most effective and skilled communitarians come from Muggle (noncommunity) families.

From Dumbledore — to make it a lifelong habit to believe the best of all of those around us.

From Voldemort aka He Who Cannot Be Named — that not naming things only results in giving them more power, and increases our fear of them.

From Hagrid — that those who appear superficially the least competent have other gifts to offer.

From Fawkes, the Phoenix — that the presence of tears is sometimes what is needed for true healing to emerge.

And from Harry himself - that being connected through loving each other is one of the strongest powers we can draw upon in our time of need.

**Yallah Bye, send us some more stuff, thanks, Joel**

# Jan and Ruth Bang at the Communes Desk

At every meeting of the International Communes Desk, we try to have a "guest speaker", in order to enhance our understanding of the communal world. It is usually either a communard from abroad or an Israeli who has visited one or more intentional communities. The November meeting was exceptional in that the "guests of honour" were ex-kibbutzniks – "ex-" by force majeure – and are now members of a Camphill commune. Active members of Kibbutz Gezer, Jan and Ruth Bang left when it became privatized – "decided to stop being a kibbutz" – and moved to Solborg in his native Norway. Jan had been a member of the Communes Desk and was very active in pushing ecology in the kibbutz movement as a whole.

Anyone unfamiliar with Camphill should read up about this worthy communal social movement. (For starters, have a look at our website www.communa.org.il .) In brief, the Camphill Movement consists of communities, where vulnerable children and adults, many with learning disabilities or mental illness, can live, learn and work with others in healthy social relationships based on mutual care and respect. It recognizes the spiritual uniqueness of each human being regardless of disability or religious or racial background. 120 Camphill villages exist in 25 countries, 6 in Norway alone. The Camphill Movement is inspired by Christian ideals as articulated by Rudolf Steiner. However, Sekem in Egypt is Moslem. In Israel, Kfar Rafael is in effect a Camphill community, without this religious aspect.

Some 48 people make up Camphill Solborg: 18 "disadvantaged" members (mainly young adults), 12 co-workers and 10 volunteers (from various countries). The Bang household – typically – includes 4 members, the family itself and 2 volunteers, all living together. Each one works at something, contributing to the housework, the branches of the community and to work in the village, according to his/her ability. Solborg is run on ecological lines, producing organic vegetables and fruits, unpasturized milk, etc. Tasty preserves and candles are made and sold, and condiments are grown. The surrounding forest provides heating – and work opportunities - during the 6-months long winter.

At Solborg, Jan runs a seminar for ecological building. Houses are made out of straw, and are not based on squares – just like humans beings. Their building team has even worked abroad in Eastern Europe.

Cultural life is rich and varied, with lectures at a high level, the members being addressed not as children but as people. Drama is very popular, with its opportunity to be somebody else.

In many ways, Solburg resembles a classic kibbutz, being run by the general meeting, supplemented by various committees. The economy is communal with everyone receiving according to his/her needs, with "pocket money" for minor personal needs. The economics of the village is largely based on the government stipends for the disadvantaged members. (This is cheaper then having them in other supportive frameworks.)

There is considerable assistance to the co-workers in their very difficult role. Besides pre-training, there are regular meetings, refresher courses and a 3-year long seminar.

Sadly, this account doesn't get across the enthusiasm and dedication with which Jan spoke, inspiring all of his listeners. Summing up, he stated, "Working at Camphill isn't a job. It's a lifestyle."

Having finished his second book about eco-villages, Jan had plenty to say on this topic also, but time permitted only a brief survey.

Jan's wife, English-born Ruth, briefly gave us some idea of what it's like being a house-mother at Solburg Camphill.

**In conclusion, someone asked Jan for his opinion on the Communes Desk. His reply: "The Desk is vitally important as a crossroads of community networks. Through CALL, you have a chance to bring more community to the eco-villages and more eco to the other intentional communities".**


**Welcome to "Kibbutz Shorts", where we discover what's new on the Kibbutz in an update from around Israel.**

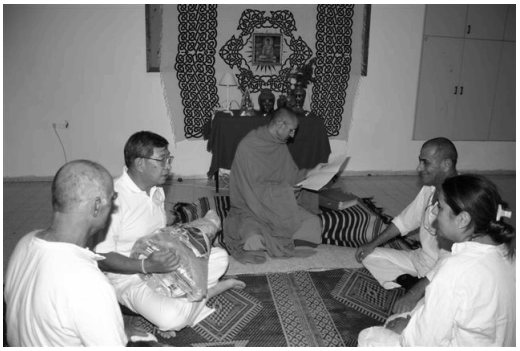
Compiled mainly from the Kibbutz weeklies by Yoel Darom, Kibbutz Kfar Menachem

**Kibbutz Dialectics**

During their first years the Kibbutzim were very ideologically minded and spent a great deal of mental energy in building up plans for the "ideal society", not only for their own framework and content of life, but the whole universe. Many of us were attracted by Marxist (but never communist) thought and theory, and we were very clever at analyzing history and explaining how "Dialectics" formed and wrought changes in the ruling regimes of (mainly European) countries, how economic and social forces in every society brought about fundamental, sometimes revolutionary changes.

But after having formulated and actually realized a viable Kibbutz society, we forgot all about dialectics. We believed that this communal mode of life could only be improved, would conquer Israel and then maybe the whole world, but never suffer from comedowns, never fail! So nowadays, when many Kibbutzim have abandoned their original principles and way of life, people stand there and wonder: how could this happen to us,. the most perfect lifestyle in the world? There exist, of course, a multitude of possible answers, but one of them is certainly this: the old and forceful truth of dialectics has caught up with the Kibbutz, too!

**The Meditating Monk**



A center for meditation opened at Kibbutz En Dor, lead by an Israeli Buddhist monk, equipped with all the necessary gadgets for full operation. This maybe an ordinary piece of news for many communes, but for a Kibbutz this is a completely new experience. Some of the Kibbutzniks (mainly women) declare that it helps them a lot to regain calm and quiet after a long strenuous workday.

**Co-existence and Co-operation**

Close to a hundred people, many of them Kibbutz members, are spending a lot of energy and hard work, to activate and consolidate the Organization for Toleration and Jewish-Arab Co-operation. Half of the activists are Arabs, half Jews, and their aim is encouraging close relations between the two peoples, meetings of young groups and encouraging the study of each others languages, culture and traditions.

**Human oriented spiritual philosophy**

A new kindergarten has opened recently in Kibbutz Bet Keshet, with its education and equipment according to the anthroposophical theory: all games and toys are made of natural materials, no television and no computers. Soon they will work on their organic garden, and the plan includes a whole anthropological farm for the surrounding areas, for all the different religions.

**Two is better than one?**

Within the last two years the two large Kibbutz movements have united, although it took quite some time until both of them agreed to submit their special and separate sub-organizations and funds to the joint management. Now, only the two weeklies remain separate, and although there is no actual (or historic) justification for two newspapers serving one movement, the editors and journalists keep on fighting for the continuation of this arrangement. Both papers are well written and succeed in expressing the views of leaders and ordinary Kibbutz members, so let's see how long the "interested parties" will be able to stay apart…

**Germans encounter the real Israel via Austria**

Erik Koenig came from Austria to Degania Bet - joined the Kibbutz and stayed there ever since. For the last decade he has worked as a guide for German pilgrims and tourists, with a message: "If you believe what you media tell and show you - that Israel is a place where bullets fly all over your head - you are truly mistaken. People here are not only normal, but nice and welcoming, and in many places Jews, Muslims and Christians live in peace and harmony." And he talks a lot about commune and socialism, too, as "this seems to catch their fancy" .

**Global prize for Kibbutz Ecovillage**

The annual prize for the Best Ecological village 2006 was awarded to Kibbutz Lotan (at the southern end of Israel) by the Global Ecovillage Network Europe (GEN) for the outstanding work of this Kibbutz in the area of ecological building, full recycling of all refuse, and ongoing education towards ecological awareness. The prize givers also stressed the intensive activity of Kibbutz Lotan for fostering a climate of peace and building bridges between the different cultures and minorities.

**Come to Kibbutz!**

Tzvia Cohen joined Kibbutz Yassur a few years ago, when it went through a heavy economic crisis, and is most satisfied with her decision: "Whoever comes here acquires an excellent deal for a lifetime. Wherever would you find such ideal combination that makes for a good quality of life: the baby and children houses so nearby, a nursing home for the old, even a cemetery - all in one settlement? And there is so much we can do here to enrich the life of all members!".

# A tribute to Eileen Caddy

*Eileen Marion Caddy, 1917 - 2006.*

**Jonathan Dawson, a sustainability educator based at the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland and President of the Global Ecovillage Network. Published in the New Statesman, 21 December 2006**

This week saw the death of Eileen Caddy, one of the co-founders of the Findhorn community, at the age of 89. Eileen has been a treasure and a huge source of inspiration to the community.

The last of the many gifts that she gave was the clear instruction that her passing be a cause for thanksgiving rather than mourning and, true to her wish, the community seems almost to have an extra skip in its step this week.

So many glorious stories surround Eileen and the other early pioneers who were involved in the creation of this settlement back in the early 1960s. Most centre around her unwavering obedience to the guidance she received from the inner source that she called 'the God Within'.

This guidance ranged from the bizarre ('Build a community centre that can seat 200 people' at a time when there was neither money in the bank nor any plans to create a community as such) to the unexpected ('if the caravan you are sharing with six others is too noisy, go meditate in the public toilets' – she did, for years) to the many gems of wisdom on achieving stillness and connecting with inner divinity that were later collected into the book 'Opening Doors Within'.

Whether it made obvious sense or not, Eileen's guidance was the compass by which the emerging community steered.

The key moment in defining the nature of the community came in 1971 when Eileen returned from a meditation with the guidance that it was now up to members to get their own guidance – no longer would she be the sole source of authority. This mirrors a tricky moment in the evolution of many intentional communities: how to stage the transition from the founders to the next generation?

This is all the more difficult in cases like Findhorn, where the authority of the first, founding generation is recognized as being divinely inspired. Eileen's guidance ensured the transition to a mature community that had to find the wisdom and inspiration to make its own decisions.

# International Communal Studies Association

**Ninth International Conference**
**DAMANHUR, Valchiusella Valley, Italy**
**29th June - 1st July 2007**
**Conference Trip: 2nd & 3rd July 2007 (Optional)**

"communities: yesterday's utopia, today's reality"

We are pleased to inform you that the Conference Website set up by Damanhur now contains more up-to-date information about the conference programme and details about the post-conference trip, which will take place on the 2nd and 3rd July 2007. This promises to be a wonderful conclusion to the conference and bookings will be accepted until the 30th March 2007 only.

Please check out the Damanhur Conference Website at:

http://www.damanhuricsa.org/html/home.asp

Please note that all enquiries concerning the conference should be sent to Damanhur at conference@damanhuricsa.org and not to the ICSA Office at Yad Tabenkin.

**Stop Press:** The international news media had a heyday when 97-year old Deganya Aleph, the "Mother of the Kibbutzim", decided by a vast majority to go over to "graded salaries", while maintaining a generous Social Security network for its weaker members. (Thus, Deganya will remain far more communal than most ICs.) Some of the media compared the event to the breakup of the USSR!

## The “Socialistic Self-Help Group, Mülheim” (SSM) by Heinz Weinhausen
## Self-determined living and learning

***Gunnar is a new member of the “Socialistic Self-Help Group, Mülheim” (SSM) in Cologne. Not long ago he lived in his old Fiat because he could not stand living in his parents' house anymore. As it became too cold outside, he visited one of our daily morning meetings of our self-help group. He had read in “Querkopf” - a magazine of homeless people - that he could live and work with us.***

Ranne explained to him how the SSM works: “We are about 20 people who live in this old factory site and every one of us has his or her own room or apartment. We do not have a boss. Everything that matters for the community is discussed and decided in common in our daily meetings. We earn our living with our van by moving people’s households and clear up old apartments. If furniture and other discarded goods are still in good condition and are not needed by us any longer, we sell them in our second-hand shop. Self-sufficiency is a very important issue in the SSM.”

”Self-sufficiency, what does it mean?” asks Gunnar and Ranne replies: ”The apartments here are all reconstructed, expanded and maintained by us. We saw the wood for our ovens by ourselves and mostly we find our clothing, furniture and equipment for our households amongst donated goods or leftovers. From Monday to Friday we have lunch collectively. The term “work” is used for all matters which are important for the group - not just for moneymaking. That means not just the moving of households or selling of goods is defined as work. Even the care for children is work, as is someone is sweeping the court, planting flowers or being committed to a citizen’s initiative. We call our concept “new work”: Every one of us shouldn’t just earn money, they also should show their social commitment by engaging themselves in the borough or in other new projects. We want to be independent, that’s why we don’t apply for any appropriation of funds.

Socialistic Self-Help Group, Mülheim

Every member of the SSM gets the same income. Anyone is allowed to join the group - disregarding his or her level of education. Even handicapped people are welcome. At the moment Freddy and Pit, both mentally disabled, live in the SSM. We don’t expect any Olympic performances, but we expect that each member integrates themselves according to his/ her possibilities. Luckily there is a room available. You can come here right now and see if it is the right thing for you.“

Since the foundation of the SSM in 1979, its concept demonstrates that working without a leader is possible and that self-determined cooperation creates chances for self-development. No one has to do the same thing the whole week long. Everyone can and should change between different fields of work. Everyone can do something that he/she is really interested in. This rule is valid for people of all social backgrounds of all ages and also especially for people who were pushed to the edge of society. On the other hand, this way of working includes a lot of tension between people, especially when agreement between them is not achieved. So a lot of problem solving is being done in the daily meetings. Many issues can be sorted out and this also shows that not only the individual can learn from a situation but that for a group coping strategies for conflicts are developed.

# Urban kibbutz youth steer at-risk teens away from life of crime

Haaretz 27th December
By Fadi Eyadat

**It's early evening in a neighborhood of downtown Haifa, and a few members of the Noar Haoved Vehalomed youth movement were waiting for the rest of their group, when suddenly a woman screamed "Help! Stop, thief!" A tall young man in a black coat had grabbed the woman's purse, but after being chased a short distance by a young man in the street, the thief threw it away and disappeared. In another case that same night, a couple was arrested for robbing an 82-year-old woman. Robberies, drugs and street gangs are not as common as they used to be these past few months. Not since the municipality of Haifa, together with the police and social action groups started a project to restore the center-city neighborhood to its former glory.**

The city called on 70 young people from all over the country, members of the Noar Haoved Vehalomed youth movement, to establish an urban kibbutz to work with the neighborhood's at-risk youth.

"Instead of a kibbutz raising cows, we are cultivating education," the coordinator of the kibbutz, Yuval Becker, 27, said. The goal of the group, known as Kibbutz Mechanchim (Hebrew for "educators") is to create an alternative to street crime for the neighborhood's youth. "Some of the children we work with have a police record for drugs and property crime," Keren Sagi, 26, said, "and our goal is to prevent them from getting into even more serious crime when they get older."

The group's youth counselors keep on the lookout for kids who appear to be neglected and wandering around, and direct them to the welfare services, or accompany kids who have gotten into trouble with the law to the courts or the police. Some work in the schools or community centers, teaching in the classroom and informal educational frameworks. Others work to restore abandoned neighborhood parks. Last summer, before the war, they opened a coffee shop for the kids, operated by the kids.

The counselors, who receive a tiny salary, live in a number of apartments in the neighborhood, which the youth movement rents for them. They share a kitchen, a common area, and a petty cash fund.

Tulik, Gina and Hiba, 15, are members of the movement and the kibbutz. "Before, life was just passing me by," Gina says. "Now I'm not wasting my time. There are programs and activities and I feel like I'm doing something," she adds. Tulik says most of his friends are into drugs and alcohol and hanging out in the park. He, on the other hand, has found a way to work and develop.

Every Tuesday and Thursday the counselors and members hold what they have dubbed "the night birds" program. They stroll the neighborhood looking for kids to help. "The goal is to reach as many kids as possible," says Sagi, who knows almost every teen in Nordau park, where the interview was held. "We start to talk to them, to talk and to listen. Some of them open up quickly and it takes others a long time," she added.

Becker and Sagi grew up in the Noar Haoved Vehalomed movement, completing a year's volunteer work in the community before their compulsory army service. Sagi says the movement's goal "is to move a kid ahead in community action," and that the movement is "a force that has been around for many years but the idea is to refresh it".

Becker explains what brought him here: "You see the amount of violence and crime in society, children who are hungry who don't have proper education are in constant battle, and you say things should look different. You should build a society where people know they have the right to be happy without danger hanging over them, and the right to education and health services."

**This is a translation of parts of an interview with Amos Oz, the best-known Israeli novelist, a former kibbutz member, and which was published in Hadaf Hayarok, (a kibbutz weekly) on 23.3.06. Amos Oz personally gave C.A.L.L. permission to translate and publish these excerpts:**

**How do you interpret what is happening in the kibbutz movement today?**
"There is a correlation between the spirit of solidarity that used to be in the kibbutz society and the whole of the Israeli society and solidarity within the home. When one is weakened, the other is weakened, too. I won't try and say which began to deteriorate first, but it is quite clear that when the kibbutz movement began to feel that it was no longer the moving force responsible for everything that was happening in the country, responsible meaning involvement, then the internal solidarity between individuals within the kibbutz cracked.

Without solidarity, all that was left of the kibbutz was a collection of rules and regulations. I have nothing against rules and regulations, and I don't contend that a kibbutz that exists only according to its set of rules has no right to exist. Rather have a form of living organized by rules than a jungle. I don't scorn that, but we all know that once upon a time it was much more than that, and it has been lost."

**What is it that we had and has been lost?**
"We have lost the very ambitious attempt to function as an extended family. The kibbutz was always a problematic experiment and I won't idealize the first generations. They are not worthy of idealization. It was based on great hopes, but also on great mistakes. They had an almost childlike view of human nature. The founders of the kibbutz were young boys and girls who somewhere in their hearts hoped to establish a sort of continual summer camp. They weren't properly equipped to deal with such issues as families, and certainly not with human nature. In some cases they tried to reinvent the wheel. It was partly out of ambition, partly out of naivety, but also out of ignorance in some instances."


Amos Oz

**Such as?**
Such as the ancient idea of creating separate authorities. The legislator is not the judge, and the judge is not the executor. The kibbutzim didn't separate the authorities. The general meeting was actually the legislative body, and also the judge and the executor, especially the judge and the executor. If two neighbours on a certain kibbutz disagreed regarding a bower that one of them built in their garden, the subject would be brought to a committee, and then to the general meeting where divisions could be a result of personal connections, family bonds or even revenge, and the deep wounds caused by this, poisoned kibbutz life. It took many years until the penny dropped, and the simple possibility of bringing in a mediator from another kibbutz, was deemed possible. For example, if two members of Kibbutz Nachson were fighting over a bower in their garden, someone from Kibbutz Hulda could decide who was right. Such things could have saved much bad blood in kibbutz life.

I think that the present generation of leaders in the kibbutzim have a more realistic view of human nature, maybe even more intelligent as far as how to organize things and learning from others. The second generation went with the flow, and reforms which could have saved the kibbutzim from themselves, if they had been carried out thirty or forty years ago, were too late, and were postponed until signs of decay appeared causing a major confidence crisis regarding the very essence of this way of life. When people undergo a crisis of confidence regarding the essence of their way of life, when they perceive themselves as being trapped, and ask themselves how to escape or how to stay there without getting hurt while coping the best they can, that is a terrible situation. Terrible, but not impossible."

**Is it possible to survive, or is the kibbutz movement doomed?**
"From an historical point of view, the kibbutz has a great future. I don't know if it will be in Israel. Maybe not. Of course I'm not talking about a kibbutz with cows, chickens and people dancing the hora, but the idea that people relinquish their natural right to compete with each other economically in order to get a little social and economic security and to get a small component of the extended family, will be on the agenda sooner or later. We are still within the huge tsunami in which the Titanic called the Soviet Union drowned. Everybody who was close-by got dragged down into the whirlpool. Including the Kibbutz Movement. I have no doubt that the thought that socialism is diametrically opposed to human nature, and that human nature means each man for himself, and compete or die, will exhaust itself. All around me I see people who work beyond their limits in order to make more money than they need, in order to buy things that they don't need, in order to make an impression on people they don't care about. There will be people who will wake up and say, "What am I doing? It is against my better nature, I cannot live like this, I want something else. When they look for something else, and will be prepared to relinquish some of their rights to devour each other and to trample on one and other, the core of the kibbutz idea will be there on the shelf. I don't know when it will pop up, I don't know where it will pop up, but it will pop up."

Translated by Dina Bookman

Dear Sol ,

Our community has existed now for more than eleven years. We are situated in the region of Apulia in South Italy - one of the poorest regions of Italy. We consider ourselves to be an agricultural community. That means that not only is our economy based on agriculture, but that we orientate ourselves to the philosophy of subsistence. In this way agriculture is in a certain way in the centre of our life; it determines our way of living, our relationship between nature and man, our form of political action: in contrast to industrial agriculture, multi-national business, the destruction of energy resources and their privatization...

It may sound a little old-fashioned, but we consider ourselves to be a libertarian community, which strives to avoid any type of hierarchy, trying to establish equal responsibilities; we make our decisions in a collective way (consensus); equality in both the economic and social spheres. From the beginning, we established our community as an open community. This means that, in addition to the members of Urupia, there are always other people living with us for some time whose life aims are similar to ours and who want to experiment this way of life. We have built up a network of like-minded people in our region who want to change society in similar directions. We have fostered relationships with hundreds of groups, mainly in Italy and Germany; groups and individuals with whom we are united by aims, philosophy, way of living and political action. One such group is 'Via Campesina', the agricultural branch of the anti-globalization movement, or other groups who stand for an alternative way, an anti-capitalistic way of handling agriculture, anti-racism groups, groups who try to develop a relationship through solidarity with people in other parts of the world .

The only community network within which we participate is the network of 'Kommuja', which you are familiar with. In Italy there is only an eco-village network, of which we don't take part. In the past we have felt that many of the members are far from our aims and way of living. Actually, they have changed some things, but we don't know exactly in what way.

We aren't a community of writers, so there are not many documents about us. The documents which do exist you can find in the editions of 'Kommuja' over the last ten years. We have nothing in English.

If you have a chance to visit Italy, you are welcome to visit us. Since we are sometimes overcrowded, you must contact us in advance.

Best wishes to you ,

Rolf Lindemann
Urupia Commune
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# A utopian way of life

Leelanau families share ownership to preserve land and their chosen lifestyle

Telford Farm, LLC is a group of 9 families who own an 88-acre farm just north of Cedar, Michigan in scenic Leelanau County. Along with the rolling landscape of an old working farm, we have a 7-acre vineyard where we grow Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Vignole grapes.

BY CARI NOGA
DETROIT FREE PRESS SPECIAL WRITER

CEDAR -- Follow the 1983 Mercedes with the biodiesel decal. Follow it outside the rural Leelanau County town of Cedar. Follow it as it turns up the hill covered with grapevines. Follow it to the end of the asphalt, onto the dirt road and into its own driveway, up to the straw-and-clay house where Bill Queen, his wife, Kate Fairman, and their two children live.

You've arrived at Telford Farm.

Depending on the day, the residents might be working in the vineyard, wrapping up an afternoon of homeschooling or preparing for the weekly potluck picnic. Their kids might be at any one of their four homes, out at the chicken coop feeding the flock or roaming somewhere else on Telford Farm's 90 acres.

Telford Farm is an intentional community, one of only a handful in Michigan. After almost a decade in the works, the community is rising on a Leelanau County hillside. Four homes have been built and a fifth is expected this year. Eventually, there will be at least nine homes on the property.

The barn at Telford Farm

While residents own their own homes, the remaining 80 acres is owned collectively, as a limited liability corporation in which each household has an equal share. The LLC also includes a handful of old farm buildings and a seven acre vineyard.

Residents share the labor, from pruning vines to harvesting grapes. Any profit made from the vineyard is deposited into a farm account from which expenses such as taxes are paid. The residents drafted and abide by restrictive covenants like a 3,000-square-foot limit on home size. There's a monthly meeting -- held out at the barn in good weather -- where decisions on issues such as vineyard work and whether to allow chickens to be raised on the farm are made by consensus. If anyone wants to sell, the group has the first rights to purchase the property back.

To Telford Farm residents, it's utopia. "It's the best of all worlds. We get to live in a rural place, but we have neighbors," said Hood.

During wrangling with Solon Township over zoning, residents continued planning Telford Farm, using the services of a consensus facilitator, a landscape architect and an architect and urban planner. The consensus facilitator was the "single most important thing we did," said Ursu. She taught them the collaborative decision-making process they continue to use today, rather than a majority-rule system.

# Niederkaufungen, Germany - Dec 2006

At present, I am busy milking cows and making cheese, feeding and mucking out. (I try to think of the muck as a valuable natural product that is essential for soil fertility, but, in the end, when you fall over in it, it is still sh……!) At the moment, my colleague, Volker, and I are alone with the farm work, which is a bit stressful. So not much time and energy is available for other things.

On my return from holiday to the commune last January, it was clear that our colleague, Marion, would go off on a sabbatical starting in the spring. Someone had the idea to ask a friend of ours, Carla, if she would come and help us for six months, milking and making cheese. She agreed, so we had her support for much of the summer and the start of autumn. During that time I learnt a couple more cheese recipes, and began to take over much of the cheese making. My first attempts were not so good, but in the meantime I am quite satisfied with the results. However, Marion has not yet decided if she will return to the commune (she has up to next November to decide) and Volker and I have been unsuccessful in finding people interested in joining the commune and doing farm work. Within the commune itself there is also no one who wants to join us, and little chance of getting much help. Some other commune enterprises, such as the market-gardening collective and the carpentry and joinery are also under-staffed, and most people have more than enough of their own work to do. Initially, we will try to get by through reducing the number of cows and the quantity of cheese made.


In July I went with a group of communards to do our coffee and cake stand at the Burg Herzberg festival. This was great fun, with wonderful weather and some good music. It is a hippy festival, with quite a lot of bands from the sixties and seventies. It is good to see some of these bands, but some others should give up and go into retirement.

During the year, I hosted quite a number of visitors to the commune. A couple of people came from Italy, which gave me a chance to keep practicing my Italian. Plus one guy came from Sweden (actually from Albania on his way back to Sweden) and a month ago I was host to Yolanda, from Amsterdam, who is writing her degree about communities. In addition, I try to keep up email contact with a few other people "overseas". I think it is both interesting and important to meet people who are either from other projects or who are interested in starting something new. I enjoy giving guest guided tours of the commune (in German, English or Italian) and have also given a couple of "talks" with a slide show outside the commune. This sort of publicity/educational work is something that I want to do more of in 2007.

After over 8 years, I feel quite settled here. It was no problem for me to invest the money I got from the sale of the house in Rugby in the commune. This is being used to buy an old farmhouse directly next to the complex of commune buildings, so that we can expand. We have been stable at just under 60 adults for a number of years, partly because there was not enough space to fit many more people in. (Although, in the last few weeks, my living group has shrunk, as two men are away on sabbaticals, and one guy has just started a new living group).Occasionally, I think that it might be nice to go back to Italy, but 99% of the time I feel that here is the right place for me. From visiting a few other intentional communities, I find that it is the project closest to putting my ideals into practice.

Of course, there are always problems where lots of people live and work together. There are a few people who are on different wavelengths and I wonder why they are here. On the other hand, since the summer my contact with one or two "problem" people here has improved.

Love,
Frank Richardson - Schäfer
ausmister.frank@web.de

## A Short Visit to Israel

In early May 2006 I was privileged to attend the Conference of Kibbutz Researchers at Givat Haviva Conference Center in Israel. Just where the kibbutzim will go from here remains a question of great interest in Israel, for privatization seems to have unstoppable momentum. I made a short presentation discussing the evolution of communal forms in the United States; it seems to me that evolution and change are inescapable in intentional communities of all types, not just in kibbutzim. The real highlight of the conference for me, however, was the presence of four Canadian Hutterites. They gave remarkably frank and open presentations about Hutterite life and the changes the colonies are experiencing.

Yaacov Oved and my other hosts arranged for me to visit three quite different kibbutzim while I was there. One, Mishmar Ha'Emek, might be called a "classic" and most successful kibbutz. It retains its fully communal economy and enjoys considerable prosperity with a large plastics business in addition to agricultural operations. Another, Kibbutz Tamuz, is unusual in that it is urban, located in the city of Bet Shemesh, near Jerusalem. The third was Kibbutz Palmachim, which has gone the way of privatization but retains common ownership of the property in its stunningly beautiful setting on the Mediterranean.

I also got a chance to spend a few hours in the archives at Yad Tabenkin. I would earnestly encourage anyone interested in communal studies who is traveling to Israel to schedule some time there. Their collections are excellent and contain a good deal of material, including some on North American intentional communities, that can be found nowhere else.

Four days are hardly enough even to begin to explore the fascinating ways and byways of this country at once ancient and modern. I appreciate the opportunity I was given to participate in the conference and to get an all-too-brief change to sample Israel.

Tim Miller
Past President, ICSA

*Dr. Timothy Miller is a member of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas, USA.*

## A Visit to Communal Israel?

Are you planning to be at the ICSA Conference at Damanhur next summer? If so, you might consider the following idea. It has been suggested that some participants might like to travel a little further and visit the current communal scene in Israel. As you may well know, this includes a variety of urban communes and various kinds of kibbutzim: communal/traditional, new-style/privatized, urban, educational and ecological. And, of course, there is much more to see in the Holy Land.

Regretfully, I have to point out that no financial assistance can be provided and even a short stay on a kibbutz may have to be paid for. However, we will do our best to make such a visit to Communal Israel a success.

If you are interested in this suggestion, please drop a few lines to one of us and include an indication of your specific interests. Realization of the idea will depend on the response to this call.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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The following encouraging news is probably from the largest intentional community of the world. It is **Colonia Manitoba** of the **Old Colony Mennonites** in **Mexico**, a land co-op with 17,000 residents.

**New library signifies changing attitudes in Mexico colony**
**Gladys Terichow**

Biblioteca Colonia Manitoba staff, Franz and Anni Harms

The opening of a community library in a conservative Mennonite colony in Mexico signifies changing attitudes towards literacy and education, said Peter Enns, a civic leader (Vorsteher) in the Old Colony church.

"We are noticing that there is a better understanding of the scriptures when people can read it themselves." said Enns, speaking in Low German in a telephone interview following the official opening of the library named, Biblioteca Colonia Manitoba.

The library will improve literacy skills and raise the educational level of people in the Manitoba Colony, he explained. "We believe the library is a good thing and wanted to see it completed."

The 2,800 square foot/260 square metre library is located in Lowe Farm, a village in the Manitoba Colony near Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua, Mexico. The library is located on the same property as the municipal office and is owned and governed by the colony.

In consultation with the a school committee, the library project evolved to include a resource centre for teachers, storage area for school supplies and a retail store for sale of school supplies and books.

"Now the teachers have a place where they can feel at home - a place where they can sit down to prepare their lessons, read, study and have meetings," said Enns, who played a leading role in making the project a reality.

Another significant change in the Manitoba Colony is the introduction of a central school committee responsible for school curriculum and teachers training. Seven Old Colony schools are part of this committee and about 25 per cent of the 1,600 students in the Manitoba Colony attend Old Colony schools that are part of the school committee, said Friesen.

Manitoba Colony has a population of 17,000 people and is the largest Mennonite colony in Latin America. The colony was organized in the 1920s following the mass migration of Mennonites from the Old Colony church in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Posted on 'Living In Community' Listserve, Sun Oct 8, 2006

After more than 20 decades of living in various communities and settings I still learn every day. Patience helps. Keeping your heart open is essentially.

When I get frustrated with one of my fellow communitarians, I look to myself to see what in me is causing me to react this way to their actions.

Most of all I try to be gentle with myself and everyone around me.

We are in a struggle with our own inner demons because living in community does set on apart from society in a sense like any kind of seekers after truth would do. Sometimes we are just not as prepared for dealing with those truths as we should be.

I also try to look back to models of the village and rural community in general and long for some more established system of honoring people's need for personal space and working with people that are not pleasant helpmates.

Ultimately, being social pioneers has to be some of the reward for the effort. Having enough people in one place who can work together in a functional fashion and meet their needs rather independently of society as a whole is just the most rational way I can think of to live.

May more of us find the motivation to persevere.

Blessed Bee
Susan Stoddard-Brown
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