

C.A.L.L.

Communes *A* + *L*arge *L*etter



**INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNES DESK**



YAD TABENKIN



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Dear Readers,

There seems to be an abundance of articles and books being published today, claiming that there is a dramatic increase in those searching for community. Articles such as these can sometimes be found in the pages of C.A.L.L. (In fact, this increase is mentioned at least once in this issue!) Apparently, more and more people are recognizing the defects of modern capitalist society and are heading in their droves to establish/join existing intentional communities.



Now, I'm somewhat sceptical by nature, and therefore have my doubts about this explosion in communal living. I consider myself to be in a better position than most to see this phenomenon – I'm *au fait* with the communities movement here in Israel, and through my involvement with the International Communes Desk, I have a good feel too about what is going on in the world (at least the English-speaking world, if not the western world in general).

Don't get me wrong, I know all about co-housing and eco-villages, models that have spread like mushrooms after the rain. I know about the proliferation of young urban communes, similar to the one of which I am a part of. We even have a relatively new term to describe this wide variety of communities: Intentional Community. Eventually, I called Yaakov Oved, a world expert on communities, who reiterated that the period from the end of WWII until today has seen a quantitatively different reality materialize – and he encouraged me to read all about it in the books that he has written.

So why do these nagging doubts persist? Well, because the illusion that the dominant paradigm of early twenty-first century society being based around the individual is extremely powerful and all-encompassing. We, the alternative, are the underdogs, swimming against the stream, marginal and insignificant; we're weird. Outsiders. Unwilling to comply with acceptable norms.

So why do the facts get in the way of a perfectly composed inferiority complex? As a movement, we need to grow in strength and vision, eventually transforming the best kept secret into a great paradigm shift: Community will again be seen as the obvious basic building block of society.

I'm hoping that our work at the International Communes Desk can contribute to this critical process. So, without further ado, enjoy this issue of C.A.L.L., and let us know if there are others we should be sending it to too – let's spread the word far and wide.

You can send us your suggestions, corrections, contributions and retributions regarding C.A.L.L., to the usual email address,

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CONTENTS

- 3**
Ten Intentional Communities We Want To Live In
- 7**
Truth or Fiction Quiz
- 8**
Interview with Ann Zabaldo from the U.S. cohousing movement
- 11**
Upcoming Conference of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA)
- 12**
Kaleidoscope by Joel Dorkam
- 17**
Redfield Community, UK
- 19**
Answers to Truth or Fiction Quiz
- 20**
Kibbutz Shorts
- 22**
Movie Review: Wanderlust
- 24**
Community Visitors
- 25**
International Communes Desk Study Group



10 INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES WE WANT TO LIVE IN

by Stephanie Rogers JUNE 8, 2012 in ECOSALON

From tree house villages in Costa Rica to yoga communes in Hawaii, these 10 intentional communities are havens of peace, creativity and sustainability.

Imagine waking up to the sound of bells from a temple to share in a morning yoga ritual overlooking the mountains of Peru, or the glittering Pacific Ocean in Hawaii. Picking fresh vegetables from your neighborhood garden to cook in a community-wide meal in a spacious, shared kitchen. Building your own non-toxic, mortgage-free cob house in a low-impact neighborhood of like-minded nature lovers. Stepping out of your very own treehouse to gaze at a network of aerial walkways that look like something out of a sci-fi movie. These 10 intentional communities, from utopian eco-villages to cute historic houses in urban Los Angeles, bring people together with common goals of harmonic living, artistic exploration and sustainability.



Polestar Yoga Community, Big Island, Hawaii

What could be more relaxing than a yoga community in Hawaii? Polestar offers "an energizing lifestyle of daily yoga and meditation, karmic yoga or service projects, and outdoor adventure opportunities." Though it bills itself as a spiritual community, people of all faiths are welcome at this

cooperative living retreat which is home to full-time residents and also open to visitors and apprentices. Awakened each morning by the sound of music from the temple, a shrine dedicated to the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda, guests enjoy daily routines involving organic food grown on site, volunteer service, art and lots of community involvement.

Eco Truly Park, Peru

It looks like something out of a fairy tale: adorable little cone-shaped buildings topped with colorfully painted spires, dotting the hillside on the Pacific coast of



Peru. This ecological and artistic community, an hour north of Lima, was founded on principles of non-violence, simple living and harmony with nature. Both the architecture and the values of the community are inspired by traditional Indian teachings and lifestyles. Eco Truly Park has a goal of being fully self-sustainable, and currently boasts a large organic garden. Open to volunteers, the community offers workshops in yoga, art and Vedic philosophy.



Synchronicity Artist Commune, Los Angeles, California

Embodying the laid-back lifestyle of sunny Southern California, Synchronicity is a relaxed and welcoming intentional living community in the historic West Adams District of Los Angeles. Though it's small - nowhere near the size of the rest of the communities on this list -

Synchronicity is a great example of the thousands of similar shared households around the United States. Synchronicity has eleven residents and focuses mostly on artistic actions and holding monthly artistic salons that are open to the public.

Earthhaven Ecovillage, Asheville, North Carolina

Located in the mountains of Western North Carolina, Earthhaven is just one of many similar intentional communities focusing on sustainable living. You'll find virtually every type of natural building here, including earthships, cob houses and rustic cabins, with construction methods



that eliminate toxic materials, logged timber and mortgages. Set on 320 lush acres 40 minutes southwest of Asheville, Earthhaven frequently holds natural building workshops and welcomes the public to learn about permaculture, organic gardening and other sustainable topics. They offer camping and visitor accommodations as well as live-work arrangements.



Milagro Cohousing, Tucson, Arizona

Twelve minutes from downtown Tucson, Arizona, Milagro is a co-housing community with 28 passive-solar, energy-efficient adobe homes on 43 acres. Set against the Tucson mountains, Milagro is simply a community of people who want to live a green lifestyle, surrounded by like-minded neighbors. Each resident has access to 35 acres of undeveloped open space, as well as the 3,600-square-foot Common House, which has meeting and dining space, a library, a playroom and storage space. Gardens, workshops and a solar-heated swimming pool make it even more enticing.



Finca Bellavista Treehouse Community, Costa Rica

If you've ever watched *Star Wars* and wished that you could live with the Ewoks in their magical tree house community, take heed: such a thing actually exists. And it's in Costa Rica. Finca Bellavista is a network of rustic, hand-built tree houses in the mountainous South Pacific coastal region of this Central American nation, surrounded by a jungle that is brimming with life. The off-grid, carbon-



neutral tree houses are connected by aerial walkways and include a central community center with a dining area, barbecue and lounge. Gardens, ziplines and hiking trails make it even more of a tropical paradise. Prospective community members can design and build their own tree houses. Additionally, some of the tree house owners rent out their homes, and there are visitor accommodations available.

Tamera Peace Research Village, Portugal

Aiming to be a totally self-sufficient community, the Tamera Peace Research Village is in the Alentejo region of southwestern Portugal and is home to 250 coworkers and students who study how humans can live peacefully in sustainable communities, in harmony with nature. It includes a non-profit peace foundation, a "SolarVillage" test site, a permaculture project with an edible landscape, and a sanctuary for horses.





Dancing Rabbit Eco Village, Missouri

Another showcase of the beauty of natural building techniques, the Dancing Rabbit Eco Village is a sustainable community located near Rutledge, Missouri advocating low-impact living and dedication to social change. Everything from members' diets to the way they use water is dictated by a commitment to living lightly on the earth.

The village is on 280 acres including six ponds, a small creek and 40 acres of woodland, plus 30 acres where they have planted over 12,000 trees as part of a restoration program.

EcoVillage at Ithaca, New York

What would the ideal sustainable community look like? The EcoVillage at Ithaca is one example that is already thriving in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. It includes three co-housing neighborhoods called Frog, Song and Tree as well as an organic CSA vegetable farm, community gardens and over 100 acres of protected green space. The houses are all energy-efficient and share facilities like a common house, wood shop, metal shop, bike shed, playgrounds and centralized compost bins.



Conceptual Community of Tiny Houses

It's not yet a reality, but tiny house enthusiasts have a dream: idyllic neighborhoods where people who have committed to living in very small spaces can get together and share resources and camaraderie. Tiny house communities are hard to come by because of various city and county ordinances, which favor large houses and



conventional utilities. At TinyHouseCommunity.com, people who live in tiny houses - or want to build their own some day - get together to talk about making these villages happen. There are two tiny house communities currently in planning phases, in Washington D.C. and Texas.



Truth and Fiction Can Both Be Strange: A Cultural Reality Check

Leaves of Twin Oaks #112 - Spring 2012 by Valerie



It's said that it's a sign of a well-developed sense of self when you can laugh at your own quirks and foibles. Perhaps this is as true for a community as it is for an individual. Here, as with any sub-culture, stereotypes abound, and sometimes they're actually or at least partially based in reality. Even we roll our eyes at times....

Some of the statements below are true at Twin Oaks, and some are made up-see if you can distinguish fact from fiction: Answers on page 19 (no cheating!)

A) We've had members named Bucket, Bok Choy and Free Radical -Twin Oaks is a social experiment, and as part of that, members are free to experiment with any name they like.

B) We have a publicly-posted menstrual calendar - all menstruating women can write their name in each month and track their cycle.

C) We have a Tree Sanctuary - a portion of our 450 mostly-wooded acres that is purposefully set aside and no trees can be cut for firewood from that section of forest.

D) We have no cats or dogs as pets - our value of egalitarianism doesn't allow for one living being to own another living being.

E) We have a Nudity Policy that allows members to be naked, anywhere outdoors, during a thunderstorm.

F) We have a Saturday Tour Policy that requires men wearing a dress to explain themselves to the people on the tour.

G) We have a Housing Policy that requires every member to change bedrooms once a year, to overcome attachment to materialism.

H) We don't use diapers on our babies - instead we toilet train them with methods based on ones used by indigenous people.

Answers on page 19

Interview with Ann Zabaldo: A discussion with a leading voice in the U.S. cohousing movement.

Residents of cohousing communities live in private homes but create a communal lifestyle of shared meals, childcare, social activities and neighborly support. Members are deeply involved in the design and management of their community, investing both money and time for weekly meetings during the years it takes to develop the property and subsequently to ensure it runs smoothly. The village-like community model, imported to the States from Denmark in the 1980s, has since spread from Northern California to New England.

When it reached Zabaldo in 1991, cohousing gave a name and form to the group-housing arrangement she'd shared with friends since college. A business entrepreneur, Zabaldo's true passion was neighborhood organizing; she plunged into the cohousing movement and never looked back. Currently there are 120 cohousing communities nationwide, and 80 more in progress. Zabaldo was on the development team for two of them, including Takoma Village Cohousing in Washington, D.C., where she now lives. Zabaldo was a founding board member and served as president of the Cohousing Association of the United States and co-founded Mid-Atlantic Cohousing, a regional nonprofit organization. Now aged 60, Zabaldo is busy developing two new communities through her firm Cohousing Collaborative.

What does "responsibility" mean to someone living in cohousing?

Cohousing is the ultimate example of responsibility. People take on responsibility for each other and the community as a whole. And the community owns a lot of common property together. I open my front door and I say not only is this home mine - this whole community is mine. People feel responsible for the raising of children - even people who don't have kids. Our elderly get what they need. Somebody mentions to me, "I need to get to the doctor and I don't have a car," and I say, "Here are my keys. Take the car."

Is taking on that kind of daily responsibility mandatory?

Totally voluntary - none of this is written down - but it comes as part of the expectation. You wouldn't come to cohousing unless you were willing to become a good neighbor.

A majority of cohousing communities share meals in the common dining hall two to five nights per week. How does that work?

It's voluntary. People rotate the job - you're on a cook team and in exchange for preparing so many meals you get to eat so many meals without making anything. Some communities do it every night. I think there's no better way to get to know your neighbors than to sit down and break bread together. The more people talk to each other, the easier it is to resolve an issue.

How are conflicts in the community resolved?

Some groups have a mediation team; some groups call in outside mediation; some groups ignore the conflict. You cannot legislate behavior. Suppose you have a policy of no dogs off the leash. How are you going to enforce it? Kick them out? Call the animal patrol and have them pick up the dog? No - this is my neighbor! In ten years at Takoma Village, we've had very few meetings in which we've heard people raise their voice. Even when people are passionate about stuff, we don't scream at each other.



Ann Zabaldo



Takoma Village Cohousing

What kinds of people gravitate towards cohousing?

People come to cohousing because they want connectedness. They want to come into the community and have somebody know what their name is. I don't want to be a stranger in the place that I live.

The communities themselves seek diversity - racial, sexual, and religious diversity; a lot of them put it right in their mission statement. A few communities, including Takoma Village, are

highly racially integrated. Single women make up the majority here - 58 percent - and we've got a lot of single-parent households and adoptions. Blueberry Hill, in Virginia, is overwhelmingly families. Each community is different.



Is there an effort to provide affordable housing within these communities?

It depends on the group. At Jamaica Plain, in Massachusetts, the individual homeowners actually pooled their money to create four permanently affordable units. In Cambridge, they worked a deal with the city to make two units permanently affordable for people with disabilities.

Another way we're working to make cohousing units affordable is to build them highly energy-efficient so the long-term cost will be cheaper. And mortgage instruments have been created for people who live in energy-efficient homes that are usually less expensive than regular kinds of mortgages.



Jamaica Plain Cohousing

What about privacy?

It's a little bit of a fishbowl, yet sort of interesting how private things are. We've had several divorces people didn't know were coming. Sure, we gossip all the time. But if you ask for things to be private, they are private. It's just a sense of respect we have for each other.

What do you see as the future for cohousing?

I think we're going to see a lot of the principles of cohousing adapted in cohousing-like communities. A developer might put together a community without a lot of input from the future residents, yet provide training for them - to be a homeowners association, training in conflict resolution, stuff like that.

What made you want to dedicate so much of your life to the cohousing movement?

I recognized right away that if we could develop a model of living together - one in which people had to work out their differences - then we'd have a good chance of bringing peace in the world. I don't see how we're going to do that if we can't agree on who's going to take out the garbage and if we can't work out our conflicts one-to-one. Cohousing offers a place for big, serious discussions to happen over time.

Interview taken from Liberty Mutual's The Responsibility Project



Communal Pathways to Sustainable Living - Past, Present and Future Conference of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA) Findhorn Community and Ecovillage, 26-28 June 2013.

The 11th international conference of the ICSA offers a rare opportunity in a unique communal setting to share academic research and lived experience of collective life in intentional communities. Bringing together up to 250 communal scholars and community activists from around the world, the conference and associated events focus on the link between community and sustainability.

Catering for researchers wishing to present and hear scholarly papers, and for people who live communally and are seeking to gather with like-minded souls to share ideas, experiences and inspiration, the programme will include parallel sessions of paper presentations, participatory workshops and celebratory activities such as singing, dancing, storytelling and performance. At time of writing in July, 2012, the list of presenters includes more than 50 experts in their field coming from 20 different countries.



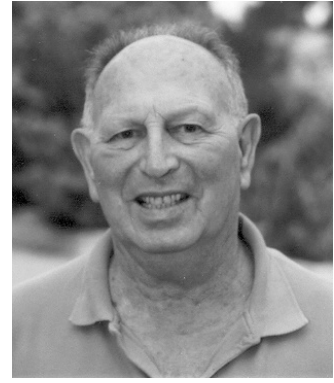
Findhorn, which hosts the ICSA
Conference next summer

There are two options for attending the conference: Option 1 is a full week residential and includes an opportunity for participants to fully immerse themselves in the culture and practice of the Findhorn Foundation and community via a three-day Experience 'Week'. Experience Week is the programme we offer to first-time guests, many of whom find it a poignant, heart-opening and, in some cases, life-changing experience. Option 2 is for the 3-day conference only and is non-residential.

For full details of the options and online registration, please see the conference web site at www.findhorn.org/icsa

KALEIDOSCOPE

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



The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (a rather pessimistic fellow) once compared human beings to hedgehogs, whose tactics during the freezing cold winter period consist of keeping near enough to one another so as to get enough warmth to stay alive, without getting too close to get pricked by their spines. I haven't been able to check the degree of success in the animal world, but obviously amongst humans there is little to be proud of.

*

The debate about the optimal size of a kibbutz has by now been going on for nearly 100 years, and it is far from reaching any kind of agreement. The debate apparently relates to both the economic aspect - monster settlements with 1000-1500 inhabitants are supposed to be more cost-efficient as opposed to smaller ones; and the social aspect - where people meet frequently in their day-to-day for meals, cultural events or parties. Obviously in smaller communities there is much more likelihood of closeness and intimacy.

*

Kim Scheidt from Red Earth Farms reread "Fascinating Womanhood" by Helen B. Andelin, and discovered what she calls "nuggets of wisdom". Here is one which I cannot help but share with you. Of utmost priority: Acceptance:

Complete acceptance of others is one quality that is often touted but seldom followed. How many times have we heard the adage that you can't go into a relationship with the idea of changing the other person? But so many people still try, usually with frustrating results. If we cultivate the attitude of complete acceptance of others it can be very freeing. Recognize that we are all human beings who are part virtue and part fault. Honestly accept the total person, including all imperfections, and don't try to change them. Being less concerned with the other's faults allows you to concentrate on all the good qualities they exhibit. And probably the best way to help someone else's self-growth is by recognition and belief in their better side.

(From Communities #151, Summer 2011)

*

So much for the individual. Now let us try to apply these ideas to the collective community, assuming that it has more power as a group than the sum of each member's strengths. However, there is one prominent difficulty, in the form of the need for group decision-making. The alternative is to turn to some powerful, charismatic leader, well-liked and respected, such as Jud Presmont of the late Kerista commune, or Traudl Wallbrecher of the K.I.G. or even Yitzchak Tabenkin of the Israeli "Kibbutz Meuchad".

What I strongly suspect, but cannot prove for lack of research facilities, is that these kind of leaders tend to prefer small, compact, intimate communities where they can easily keep track of their flock and screen newcomers at their convenience, so as to hitch them to their

ideological wagon later on. The one exception would be Yitzchak Tabenkin, from Ein Harod Meuchad, who was in favor of large, diverse, ever-growing kibbutzim.

Smaller, compact communities have closer social ties and are better equipped to overcome crises and hard times. There have been several attempts to create urban communes, like Efal, Ramat-Rachel and Glil-Yam, but they all failed for lack of cohesion, and because there was too little interpersonal contact at work and at mealtimes, since each and every member was allowed to choose a different place of work.

Of late, a new crop of urban communities have appeared, including Migvan in Sderot, Tamuz in Bet Shemesh, Reshit and Bet Israel in Jerusalem and Mish'ol in Nazareth Illit. A further variant includes educator kibbutzim like Ravid and Na'aran. All of which have the benefit of a kind of common mission in society, which provides them with essential meeting opportunities, but still leaves enough breathing space for the individual. In addition, even smaller groups of 10-15 graduates of Israeli youth movements have appeared of late, living communally and doing all kinds of community tasks.

Apropos, I am reminded of a recent article by a prominent Kibbutz writer, Ezra Dalumy, who wrote under the heading "Journey into Anti-Egoism" as follows:

I have a fantasy to fulfill: to find 30-40 comrades, tired of the infinitesimal discussions imposed upon them by the privatization struggles, and to set out together on a journey toward anti-egoism in a model-kibbutz, free of all the faults of present-day kibbutz. It would be located in one of the community expansions presently being built in some of those despairing kibbutzim.

Of late, this kind of thinking increasingly causes me trouble, produces inside my head a strange composite of retiring- and-giving-up- musings, alternating with flashes of fighting spirit lighting up and switching off in turn. Those reflections seem to appear each time when I try to consider within myself, what would happen, as a matter of fact, if there wouldn't be Kibbutz anymore?

Timothy Miller, a professor of religious studies at Kansas University had no difficulty in getting the figures about existing communities. By doing a bit of daring juggling, the professor reaches (and almost makes us reach too) the conclusion, that "the world wants and needs community".

Not that I am against giving the world whatever it desires, however let us first have some solid proof of the extent and stability of this surprising new trend!

I believe that people the world over long for community. While that assertion is just about impossible to test, a number of indicators point in that direction. Social alienation seems to me widespread, with large numbers of people dissatisfied with the prevailing way the world is organized. They may have radically different visions of an ideal world, but a fair number, it is reasonable to guess, see lack of community as a cause of much of the restlessness and anomie we see all around us. The kinds of community that can bring meaning into life are many, but it is another fair guess that more than a few of those longing for community see intentional community as something that could put meaning and fulfillment into their lives...



Communal Aspirations

One bit of evidence for the desire for community can be seen in the classified advertising section, called "Reach," in *Communities* magazine. In every issue there are ads seeking members for established communities, but also quite a few ads for new communities, typically ones that have not yet been actually launched, but concrete visions of community, at least, in the minds of would-be founders and members. In the Fall 2010 issue of the magazine, for example, people were invited to help start an ecovillage and retreat center in Kansas, a desert community in Arizona, a cohousing community in California, an urban cooperative in Hawai'i, and a shared household in New Jersey.

Another bit of evidence for community-mindedness is the traffic on the Fellowship for Intentional Community website. As of October 2010, that site attracted about 66,500 hits per month, or about 2,200 a day, with 6.5 page views per visit, and the numbers for 2010 were up 11 percent over 2009. While not everyone visiting the site is in the market for community, surely the numbers reflect to some degree interest in intentional communities - if not living in one, at least wishing.

Video sales also indicate increased interest in community. The FIC reports that it sold over 1000 total copies of the two volumes of Geoph Kozeny's video "Visions of Utopia" last year, and that included more sales of volume 1 than had been reached in any of the seven years it has been available.

Communities also attract attention from the broader public. There is a steady stream of media coverage of communities, as in the case of the photo feature on East Wind community in *National Geographic* in 2005. And there is a steady stream of visitors to communities - not just sightseers, but in any cases persons looking for a place to live in community.

The Hard Numbers

For all of the interest there seems to be in intentional communities, however, the number of persons actually living in intentional communities is tiny - a very small fraction of 1 percent of the population. Counting the number of active communitarians is a daunting task, to say the least, but the numbers are not large. I decided I would count up the population of the hundreds of American communities in the 2007 edition of the *Communities Directory* (the new 2010 directory was not yet out when I did my counting, but I don't think the results there would be very different) and in round numbers that would come to something like 10,000 adults living in communities of five or more members each in the United States. But there are so many problems with the numbers that getting within even a couple of orders of magnitude is dubious. For example, the Adidam community lists its population as 1060. But that apparently includes many locations, the majority of them outside the United States. On the other hand, the Bruderhof communities don't provide any numbers at all, and that group of communities, with a membership thought to be in the low thousands, has enough members that its numbers alone would have quite an impact on any total figure. And the most important skewing factor of all is that huge numbers of communities choose not to be listed in the directory.

Shepherd Bliss (can that really be his name?) elucidates in Communities Magazine #151 on how he favors diverse forms of intimacy:

Intimacy has many different forms and rhythms. It can pause, then resume. It can have cycles, seasons, and even be circular, rather than linear. Grief can open the heart and deepen intimacy, rather than cancel it. Longing, loss, and desire can stimulate intimacy. Mended mistakes can strengthen the ties that bind people together, rather than forever sever them, especially when forgiveness is involved. Yet like everything that lives, intimacy can fade and die, especially when not tended carefully.

Spaniard Antonio Machado starts a poem with "The wind, one brilliant day..." and ends it as follows: "What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?" Intimacy in fast-moving, machine-driven 21st century America can be like a strong wind on a brilliant day that passes by quickly. But deeper intimacy is a garden that needs to be carefully tended, from the ground up, so that it can flourish, rather than perish.

Tears can water intimacy and help it grow. The right food is necessary.

I began writing this during the longest nights of the year around Winter Solstice. It will be published during the longest days of the year. I wrote with the benefits of sweet darkness, as well as chill. Light and dark are an intimate, long-term couple.

They feed each other, though many modern people give the dark a bum rap. But where would we be without night, sleep, dreams, and chocolate?

It's time to praise benevolent darkness, even when it shadows the light, or at least to accept it. The sweet berries on my small farm need a winter break away from too much light, which helps kill pests and diseases. We hunger for intimacy, yet we fear it, knowing that it can fade and leave sad memories and a gaping hole in the heart.

Why love again, if it is only going to die? The fear of death is a primary thing that keeps us from intimacy and love.

Yet out of the deepest darkness, intimacy can rise. Most of us were conceived in the darkness and spent months in the womb. Intimacy can be the spark that brings life.

Intimacy can ignite dreams and fire us up. Intimacy can harvest gifts from dark corners.

And finally, to cap it all off, on the next page we feature a really different newsletter from a genuine, little known American community, situated smack in the middle of the headquarters of capitalism. When you go southwards from Manhattan, across the bridge to Staten Island, you will discover the Ganas community. There is such a thing as the weekly 'Ganas Friday Paper'. I was immediately struck by its original, unusual format, style and design. Aviva (formerly from Kibbutz Yad Hannah) and Richard Wonder recently visited Yad Tabenkin, and when Richard showed me an issue of the paper, I asked for more. It is a cross between an info board, including offers of exchanging a slightly used motorcycle for an upgraded Apple computer, personal announcements, little tips about bargains, ideas for visiting, good shows and so on. To subscribe to the digital version, email: news@ganas.org

Bye, Joel



MY DREAM HOME

I live in a culture where the aspiration is that "it is not important who is right and who is wrong". What is important is to include, understand and love each other.

Can you believe it? It sounds like science fiction.

To somebody who is embedded in the paradigm of right and wrong my culture sounds dysfunctional.

"What do you mean you don't care whose fault was it? How can you run a society without blame?" We are trying ... It's not that we don't have emotions

of anger, frustration, and that sort, but we try to remember that they are just feelings, and that the others have their own feelings which are not less valid.

I apologize if it sounds incoherent, but this morning when I heard (probably not for the first time) a member of my community say that it is not important for us whose fault it was, whose truth was valid, and whether they lied or not — my heart opened one more lock. I was so moved. It is so radical! Just to let you know...

Love, Aviva

Roy: An Introduction

My name's Roy Herndon Smith. I moved in on June 9. A number of you welcomed me to Ganas with a chain to move my mountain of stuff from the truck to my room on the second floor of 144. Many thanks. All my life, I've treated the places I've lived as temporary residences; I've always felt I would move on; and I always have. I've been surprised to find that, since I've arrived here, I am feeling a sense or relief to be settling into a home that I'm not imagining leaving. I am unpacking boxes that I have not unpacked in well over a decade. I look forward to time for us to get to know each other.

The best time to catch me is on weekends. During the week, I work in the city and am not around much. I'm on Facebook; and you can email me at royherndonsmith@gmail.com.

DO YOU SHOP THROUGH AMAZON?

Because I don't. Except for buying things I don't really need because someone gave me a gift certificate, as has just happened again.

Maybe it's time to break the cycle. If you plan on purchasing anything through Amazon, please let me know. I could use the cash, not more crap.

Thanks. — Matt Sweeney

BAFFLING MYSTERY OF 7

A bag of clothes in the closet on the first floor of 7 has some residents baffled.

Men's, women's and children's clothes in a big bag in the closet have been there for unknown many periods of time. Where is it going next? — Steve

Redfield Community, UK

Redfield is an Intentional Community situated in North Buckinghamshire, England. The house is a large old mansion with 17 acres of gardens, woodland and pasture surrounded by farmland.

Our legal structure is that of a Fully Mutual Housing Co-operative, where members are effectively both Landlord and Tenant. The legal structure merely forms the bare bones of a culture of collective living that has developed since 1978.

We live as a single household which means that we spend a lot of time together. The rewards that flow from this way of life are many, varied and sometimes unexpected. Sharing your life in this way, with a group of like-minded people, makes for an active and involved life where something is always happening. At the same time the personal challenge that this creates should not be underestimated. It constantly challenges us to take full responsibility for ourselves.

Decision-making is by consensus of all members of the community at the weekly meeting. As well as community business there is space for feelings to be



expressed in a supportive atmosphere. Communal life tends to highlight individual foibles and test self-esteem. As well as bringing us closer together, open

communication and shared feelings are necessary to limit the scope for misunderstanding.

Day to day life, whether necessary domestic tasks or large joint projects, is managed through the various systems that have grown up over the years but this is only a basis and lots of creative effort and joining in is always needed. As

well as gardening, building maintenance and animal management there is logging for the wood-burning stoves and catering for events large and small.

Some members also have jobs outside the community and these tend to be part-time to allow for full participation in community life. In recent years they have been as varied as working with children and older people, carpentry, computing, publishing, building, teaching, accounting, and planning.

We all live in the main house and pay a rent based in part on the space we occupy. The size of this is determined by need and availability. No space is occupied permanently as moves within the house are occasionally necessary due to changing circumstances.



A central feature of our life at Redfield is that we eat together. Everyone takes part in the cooking rota and all types of diets are catered for. We keep sheep, chickens, bees and pigs which are owned by the community and are looked after by various members as part of their community jobs.

Much of the house is communal space. The social hub of the community is based around the large kitchen, and the adjoining breakfast room, where there's almost always something going on. There are some very large rooms used for different activities like the regular sessions of singing, yoga and tai chi, as well as the extremely regular birthday parties. These rooms are also used for the variety of events happening throughout the year.

Our Ethos

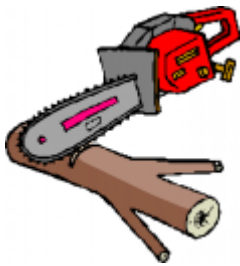
To sum up, we feel that to live here happily you will need the ability to give and take, a commitment to the group and a lot of goodwill. A sense of humour is definitely an asset. If it works for you, you can expect a fulfilling and supportive way of life, but it is not always easy and we believe that what you get out of Redfield is directly proportional to what you put in.



Answers to the Truth or Fiction Quiz

A) True. We've also had Winter, Summer and Autumn; Bubble Fiddle, Ghost, and Sunshine Chap (1 person, 3 different names over time), Lotus Vortex, Delicious, Lady Stardust, and a member named "Name".

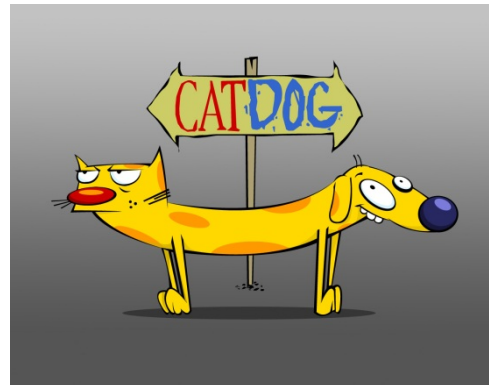
B) True. Each year, a member hand-makes a beautifully-decorated Collective Menstrual Calendar, correlated with the moon phases, with space for women to write in their name on the day their period starts. The calendar is posted in the bathroom in the dining hall.



C) False. Each year, we selectively cut storm-damaged or over-crowded trees from different sections of our forest, rotating sections over the years. We do have about 10 acres that are difficult to access, so we generally don't harvest from there, but that section is not formally designated as a Sanctuary.

D) False. Our Pet Policy allows for a limited number of cats and dogs to live here as pets.

E) False, sort of. This was true in our former Nudity Policy, but was left out when we updated the policy a few years ago.



F) True. "Addressing The Dress", as we call it, is an effort to educate people about our alternative gender norms while at the same time acknowledging what might be an unusual sight for new people visiting us for the first time.

G) False. Members live in their room as long as they want. It's not uncommon for people to change rooms a few times, looking for a different size of room, or a change in social scene by moving to a different building.



H) False, somewhat. While babies at Twin Oaks wear (generally cloth) diapers, some parents use Elimination Communication. This is a practice of "natural" toilet training which uses observation, sound cues and intuition to train the child to eliminate when encouraged (ie. when they're not wearing diapers), and is based on the methods of some earlier cultures.



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

Although Kibbutzim were formed by groups from different countries holding somewhat differing ideologies, they all adhered to the same way of life: an agricultural village of Jewish, ardent Zionists (meaning that they devoted their lives to the establishment of a new-old homeland for all Jews who want to join them). These were complete collectives, work without wages, as all necessities were provided by the Kibbutz: food and housing, clothes and shoes, health care, childcare and education. One of the main principles of this lifestyle was: NO PRIVATE PROPERTY or, in other words, no connection between your work and your "income". Income was a small budget that every member got, completely unconnected to their work, related only to his/her number of children.

This arrangement existed for about 60 to 70 years (never without its problems and arguments), until the second generation grew up and had their own children. They demanded more "freedom" and less commitment, dissolved the common sleeping arrangement for the children, demanded and were granted: freedom to study, to work where they like and receive (and keep) their own wages.

This caused an immense revolution in each Kibbutz, a process usually called "privatization". Many of us "veterans" fought this new trend but had to give in to the growing demand to part from some of the holiest fundamentals of Kibbutz life. For many this was a personal tragedy, others came to terms with the new "modern" Kibbutz life. And recently new voices have been heard on Kibbutzim: maybe this new reality is not exactly what many of us had feared? Maybe this is not treason, not complete abandonment of the old values, not a (by many long-expected) move from collectivism to capitalism? Maybe this is the proper way towards a new, healthier, promising way of communal life, which keeps taking care of the collective but allows much more individual freedom?

This discussion is running on, in private conversations, kibbutz meetings, in the Movement press (two weeklies!) and in sociology departments of universities and colleges. Would you, readers of C.A.L.L., want to join in and voice your opinion, or will you patiently wait for the next 50 years for the verdict of history?

*

KIBBUTZ SHORTS

In the process of "privatization" quite a number of Kibbutzim closed their traditional dining-halls, and everyone had to find their way of nourishing themselves. Over the last few years, a major establishment has flourished in the Kibbutz scene - the PUB. Some are open to outside visitors (most of whom are required to pay entrance fees), and this is the place where you can find a lot of creativity and originality: drinks and food, music (both from Israel and abroad) and an array of activities for different age groups. This is what many of the young members call "home". Come and find out for yourself!

*

Amos Oz, probably the most world-famous Israeli writer, was recently interviewed in the liberal daily Haaretz. Amongst many other subjects, he remembers his first years on "his" Kibbutz Chuldah. Like everyone else, young or old, he worked 8 hours in the fields and only in his free time did he sit down, with a copybook and a sharpened pencil - taking his first steps of his literary career. When his first stories were published - and acclaimed by the public - he turned to the secretary of the Kibbutz and asked humbly for one free day a week for his creative writing. This was of course something unheard of: a young man spending a whole day on a chair instead of working in the fields like everyone else?!

A meeting was called, first of the secretariat and then of the whole Kibbutz, and after lengthy discussion, his wish was granted. Later, when his books brought in a profit (for the Kibbutz, of course), he was given a second day. After some time his books became a "must" in every corner of Israeli society and a little later - in the world, something Oz himself had not foreseen. And then the work manager turned to Amos Oz and asked him, since his 'work branch' is so profitable, could he not employ some of the older Kibbutz members and thus increase the much-needed income!

Oz left the Kibbutz after 30 years, mainly because his sick son needed a cooler climate, but even his latest book returns to his Kibbutz period and examines again and again these pioneers who set out to build the ultimate just society, as a shining example for the Jewish people and the whole world.

*

Two British researchers compared the extent of inequality in 23 richest states in the world. Their findings were clear-cut, and pointed in the same direction: in the more egalitarian countries - the richer and the poorer alike - babies die less, life expectancy increases, children do better in school, violence decreases, less people sit in jail, people trust each other more - and other similar social characteristics.

The researchers offer a few explanations for this trend, the main reason would be that more equality breeds less envy and frustration, more health and more prosperity.

Sounds very sound to me, could it convince you too?



What happens when a Hollywood blockbuster pitches Jennifer Aniston into a 60's-style commune? How accurate a portrayal of a commune did it turn out to be? Paxus Calta of Twin Oaks Community, casts a critical eye over the 2012 movie, *Wanderlust*.

I went to see *Wanderlust* last night and really enjoyed it. Mostly because the film was pretty funny, but at least partly because it is an excellent parody of the culture I hail from. Someone had done a bunch of research on US communes from the late 60s and early 70s or they have lived at one.

One of the parodies was about doors. The bedroom that Jennifer Aniston and Paul Rudd end up in has no door. The charismatic leader explains that doors separate people and they want to create a more connected culture. While we never did this with doors to peoples individual rooms, it was certainly the case that there were some toilets which were not hidden away in stalls in the bathrooms in the community when I arrived. Mostly these have gotten covered up with curtains, but there once was definitely the idea/belief that we wanted to move people away from the shame of naked bodies.

The movie ends with Rudd closing the door to his "small and expensive" apartment, symbolic of creating the space and privacy which he needs.

It would be way too much to ask such a film to have the heroes decide to stay on the commune. The fact that one of them had gotten to the place of loving it and wanting to stay was slightly rewarding for me as a recruiter to a commune. We actually had a couple who just

graduated from Dartmouth come and live at Twin Oaks for a while and when he was ready to leave and pursue law school, she decided that she wanted to stay and enjoy the "good life".

I am inspired to go through some of the key points from this parody which need to be reclaimed.



Sharing: One amusing scene in the film is when one comunard asks the city folks to borrow their car "because we share everything here" and then puts the car in the middle of the lake. I have written often about sharing systems and how this is what the communities movement should be exporting to the mainstream. As we would expect from a Hollywood film, they get the stuff about sharing completely wrong. It is exactly these types of failures that we have designed our sharing systems to avoid.



Truth Circle: One of the more interesting scenes is where the city types are invited to a truth circle in which they are pushed and heckled, but ultimately both say things of significance which were being withheld. This mimics our transparency group work (and lots of mainstream folks personal growth work, communes have no monopoly on these techniques). But as happened with some regularity in the film, while the commune culture was being parodied, it was also pointing out how it addresses and heals the failures of the mainstream culture. At the point where Aniston's character somewhat dramatically reveals her inner feelings the commune charismatic leader says "Linda, I think you have just met Linda." This is exactly what we do on a good day.

Free Love: No movie about communes would be complete without the promiscuous sex theme. This was actually handled better than I had guessed it might be, with Jennifer Aniston pleading with her partner to go have sex with someone else after she had sex with the communes charismatic leader, so that they would be balanced. The sloppy agreements they made around their forays outside of monogamy were certainly reminiscent of many enthusiastic newbies trying to figure this complex stuff out. And while sexually permissive subcultures make great fodder for comic scenes, my take is that the real discussions around open relationships (at least

my commune) are deeper, more complex and far better thought out.

Drugs: Another classic commune stereotype is that most of the members are drug crazed or addled. The scene where George is asked by Linda "Are you stoned?" makes for an amusing moment in the film, but does little to recognize that early in the list of causalities in the communities movement were the places where people sat around and got high all day. Turns out that the accounting does not work when everyone is high and these places crumble and fall apart like tumble weeds.

Drinking the Kool Aid: When the films heroes realize that the commune is the wrong life for them, Rudd says to Aniston that he "drank the Kool Aid and then made some more." Wikipedia tells me, that "drinking the Kool-Aid" means that I am unquestioningly buying into someone else's ideology, without critical examination. A reference to the Jonestown cult mass suicide/murder in 1978. It is here I feel the most animated. The life in the commune that is depicted in the film is largely sustainable, crime free, largely fair and colorful (like my commune). The urban life the films heroes retreat to is on a collision course with climate change and peak oil, crime paved, abrasively stratified and grey washed. If you ask me who has drunk the mind altering hypnotic drug, my response is most clear.

Over the years, we have been fortunate to have welcomed countless visitors from all over the world; Communards have visited our kibbutzim and come to our International Communes Desk meetings to engage in a mutual sharing of community living visions and experiences. Our most recent visitors from Germany, Kerstin (Kommurage Community) and Patricia (Niederkaufungen Commune), embarked on a month-long tour of Israeli intentional communities. They visited Kibbutz Lotan, Kibbutz Ravid, Kibbutz Mishol, Kibbutz Harduf, Kibbutz Tzuba and an urban kibbutz in Holon.

The Kommuja network (of which both Kommurage and Niederkaufungen are members), is an umbrella organization which incorporates 30 German communes, totaling around 500 members. The common principles of the network are mainly political -living communally in order to foster solidarity, extolling libertarian, emancipatory, and



Kerstin and Patricia present their communities at our International Communes Desk meeting

ecological ideas in order to offer an alternative to the problematic nature of capitalist society.

Every two years the network holds a festival, attended by around 300 people, in order to help those wishing to establish new communes or join existing ones. In addition, every year they organize an information tour, traveling from town to town, meeting young people and spreading the word.

Niederkaufungen Commune was established in 1986, and Patricia has lived there for the last 14 years. It is situated next to the town of Kassel, in the centre of the country. Today, 60 adults and 20 children live in a community where the average age of its members is around 45 years old.

Kerstin comes from a three-year old community called Kommurage. With only 8 adult members and 2 children, Kommurage has formed a partnership with 6 other communes in the surrounding area - each of these communes having between 5-12 members each. Although there is no income sharing between the communities, there is within each commune. Monthly meetings are held and common tasks are undertaken together, as well as product exchanges between the communes.



Kerstin and Patricia and members of the desk

From the International Communes Desk (ICD) Study Group

THOUGHTS ON COMMUNITY

Excerpts from Rene Dubos, **A GOD WITHIN**, Scribners , 1972 (pp. 281 -290).
(Rene Dubos, French born American microbiologist, humanist and environmentalist. Author of the maxim: "Think Globally, Act Locally.")

"Correcting the damage done to nature by industrialization is probably within our powers, but to formulate new positive values for modern life will be much more difficult...

...In practice, the futures that we invent are viable only if they are compatible with the constraints imposed by our evolutionary past. This does not mean that the most desirable future is one which would take us back to the pre-technological womb. But it does mean that the unchangeable laws governing human nature and external nature must be kept in mind whenever plans are made to change conditions of human life. To discover these fundamental laws, we need to recapture the direct experience of reality out of which early man created concepts which remain basic to our own life today...



Rene Dubos (1901-1982)

...Our efforts have been focused not on reality but on the damage done to nature...I shall not consider these problems of the external environment but shall instead emphasize...the practical importance of some internal attributes which the human species acquired during the Stone Age and which still operate in our lives today. This emphasis is justified by the fact that the deterioration of the psychological environment is as dangerous as environmental pollution but less well understood...

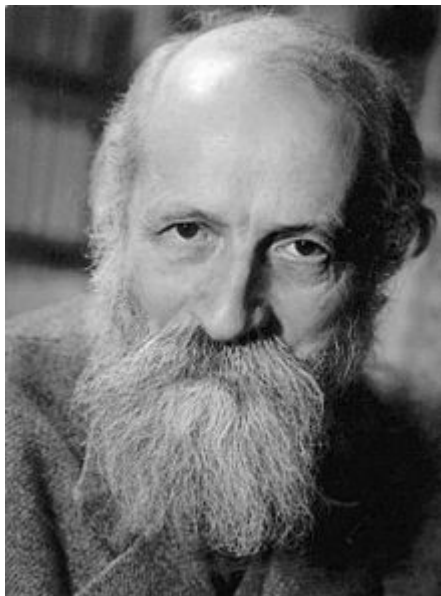
...Modern cities are unfavorable to human relationships probably because they are almost incompatible in their present form with needs created during social evolution. Early man probably lived in bands of a fairly uniform size... Ten male

hunters associated with forty women, old people and children probably constituted a camp of reasonable size...In most cases, however, the hunting band and the camp were part of a larger breeding unit of several hundred person living within a distance that permitted ready communication...social anthropologists use the magic numbers fifty to five hundred to define the range of group size most common to the hunter-gatherer way of life.

The practice of agriculture naturally resulted in much larger human settlements. But even though cities have existed for thousands of years, most human beings during prehistory and the greater part of history have lived in groups of relatively small size - whether as nomadic tribes or village dwellers. In **The World We Have Lost**, the English writer, Peter Laslett, has shown that the villages of some five hundred inhabitants constituted the fundamental demographic unit of England until the Industrial Revolution...

...Because he evolved as a social animal, man has a biological need to be part of a group and even perhaps to be identified with a place. He is likely to suffer from loneliness not only when he does not belong but also when the society of the place in which he functions is too large for his comprehension...

PRECONDITIONS FOR TRUE COMMUNITY



Martin Buber (1878-1965)

Excerpt from: Martin Buber, **TRUE COMMUNITY** (*Gemeinschaft*, 1919)*

Martin Buber, German-Jewish philosopher, utopian socialist author of "I and Thou" an examination of the human inter-relationships. He believed that flashes of true human interpersonal relationships necessitate community groups with shared ideals. He likened true community to a bicycle wheel. The members constitute the rim but what holds them together are the spokes extending to the hub which represents their shared infinite ideals.



(The Community of LAND, WORK, WAY of LIFE, BELIEF)

... Even if the modern state will be socialist, it will be unable to fulfill the yearning for fellowship. The state cannot give the individual the elemental feeling of togetherness which s/he seeks from fellowship. For the state is not and is not intended to be a fellowship. No large aggregate of people can be termed "true community" unless it is composed of small, vital social units of experiential togetherness. The relationships between the "true communities" must be as direct and vital as are the relationships between members of the individual "true community".

When the real-life relationships between people within their natural social units are fragmented** then the larger social unit can only pretend to relate to the desire for fellowship and partnership.

It is necessary to renew the real-life bonds between individuals. The revival of the primary community necessitates revival of local community, work community, fellowship and the religious congregation. All of these, whether they have withered or become part of a state-like machine, whether they exist in partial concealment or if they are tolerated by or ignored by the state - of these must become the home for beings of the spirit whose life on earth will be fulfilled in the community's precincts. The public life must become an expression of partnership in community. Only thus can we revive the primary community stemming from land and labor in common as well as togetherness in way of life and belief. These four bases of relationship parallel the above four types of fellowship.

Only the community (and not the state) can constitute the responsible bearer of land held in common (even if the formal ownership of the land is in the hands of the state.) Only the work-fellowship, (not the state) can be the suitable framework for collective production. Only the social fellowship - not the state - can generate a new way of life. Only in religious fellowship (as distinct from the formal church) can a new belief flourish...

*Translated into English from the Hebrew version in: Avraham Shapira, Ed., "Chavruta", **Nativot B'Utopia**, Sifriat Ofakim, Am Oved, 1983, p. 165 ff.

** Buber refers to the mechanical separation of the spheres of work, family, worship, and politics within modern society

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