

Finding Your Community

How can you, an individual looking for a home in community, find one that satisfies your basic needs and shares your core values? The articles in this section approach this question from a variety of viewpoints.

Kat Kinkade of Twin Oaks gives a communitarian's perspective on visitors, offering practical advice on **How to Visit a Community**. She discusses visiting etiquette, and how to get the most out of one's visit. Based on her many years of community experience, she offers valuable insights about how prospective members may be viewed by existing community members.

Sirius Community's Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson, seasoned veterans of community living, share their perspective in **A Checklist for Those Wanting to Join a Community**. They address the question "Are you a community person?" (in most cases, they believe, "the answer is probably yes") and offer tips on self-assessment and advice on visiting.

William Schlicht, Jr., himself a community seeker, describes the insights he gained by visiting fourteen communities in the Eastern U.S. in the mid-80s. His article, **Finding a Community to Call Home**, suggests many useful questions for prospective members to consider in evaluating how well a community might fulfill their needs.

Communities for the Mainstream tells of Julie Mazo's search to find a home community in which she could reap the benefits of cooperative living while continuing a fairly conventional lifestyle. Julie, as one relatively new to community, examines her motives for joining, and describes the groups she visited during her search.

A Word About Cults, also by Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson, elaborates on the differences between growth-enhancing intentional communities and "cults" — groups which may restrict individual free will and personal freedom. Their analysis includes a list of traits common to such groups.

Like all major life choices, finding your community can be one of the most challenging, growthful, and enriching experiences you'll ever have... no matter what your background or what you're looking for. These authors' insights will help you on your way.



Gordon Davidson/Sirius

How to Visit a Community

The author, a long-term member of Twin Oaks, provides practical advice to visitors from the community's perspective. She describes etiquette in communal societies with helpful insights for those seekers wishing to enhance their first visits to intentional communities.

by Kat Kinkade

The mechanics of visiting a community aren't very difficult. One writes a letter, waits for a response, follows directions, and that's that. But assuring oneself of a fruitful and satisfying visit is another matter. Most communities spend considerable time and energy talking and worrying about this. Yet there are still shortcomings and miscommunication from time to time. Visitors can help by doing some thinking ahead of time to set themselves up for a good visit. This article is full of advice to the prospective visitor. Read it with your own plans in mind. Maybe it will give you some ideas.

It is useful to consider the question: Why is this particular community open to visitors at all? What do they want or need from them? I think it's safe to say that most communities who advertise in a directory are keeping an eye out for people who might join them. They may be openly seeking members, or they may be only selectively open, watching for someone with a high degree of compatibility.

There are other reasons for having visitors, and they will vary from group to group. Some may simply need help with their work. Others may welcome stimulation from outsiders. Several groups make their living from welcoming visitors at various conferences and seminars. Some organizations are interested in spreading their philosophy or religion. What you can be sure of, however, is that a group opens itself to receive strangers for its own reasons and its own needs. It isn't just exercising neighborly hospitality.

On your side, you have your reasons for wanting to visit. The sensible thing is to make plans to visit groups who not only have something to offer you, but also have something to gain from your stay.

No matter what a visitor's private agenda may be, helping the community with its daily work is quite likely to make the visit worthwhile on both sides. Work is appreciated, and good work is appreciated a lot! This is true on the smallest commune or the biggest kibbutz. Work opens doors to friendship

and mutual confidence that no amount of conversation will accomplish. Most people know this intuitively.

Over the years my community has hosted thousands of visitors, a large percentage of whom have pitched in willingly with everything from collating newsletters to bucking hay, and didn't begrudge the time. They have helped us build what we have today, and I, for one, am grateful. It's one of the reasons we will probably continue to be open to thousands more. The visitor who feels touchy about being exploited during the few days or weeks of a visit just doesn't understand the trade-offs from the community's point of view, and is unlikely to get much from the visit.

Sometimes a visitor is perfectly willing to work, and repeatedly volunteers, but the community members don't seem to take the time or make the effort to find an appropriate job. If this happens, and you aren't the sort who can just intuitively find ways to help out, make sure your offer is clear, and then enjoy yourself doing something else. Some groups are just not well enough organized to use the available resources, and there's no point in bugging them about it.

The mistake to be avoided is treating the communities like a sort of Disney World, put there for the interest of the public. For the most part, intentional communities are not showcases, are not kept up to impress outsiders, and are not particularly interested in being casually looked at. Communitarians may put up with a certain amount of tourism for income, or for outreach; but the main thing they are doing in communities is living their private lives, and they don't really enjoy spectators.

Occasionally an outsider who is not content with a guided tour becomes exasperating by insisting on "talking to the common people to get a real feel for the place." The common, as well as uncommon, people in any community are friendly enough, but they see too many strangers. The only way to get a feel for the place is to stay awhile, and the best way to do that is to invest yourself in a visit that is useful to both parties.

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where she is active in various administrative and clerical functions, as well as choral singing, barbership quartets and community musical productions.

Let us assume, then, that you are prepared to establish your welcome in a community by one means or another, and get on to other issues. One of the main other issues is the matter of expectations.

It's a good idea to read the printed material that a community provides. While no substitute for a visit, it at least gives you an idea of how a substantial part of the community views itself. Of course this material will contribute to your expectations, as it should. This can be upsetting when your actual on-site experiences don't seem to have much to do with the lofty sentiments expressed on paper. Just the same, there is a connection between a group's beliefs and its behaviors, and it is a mistake to ignore it, especially if you think of joining.

Years ago I knew a couple who read the philosophical material of a certain community and were appalled by it. They didn't agree with its tenets and didn't like the tone of the presentation, either. However, they happened to meet someone from the group who was highly personable, so they visited and found the entire group to be friendly, charming, and warm. My friends, figuring actions spoke louder than words, decided to ignore the declared goals of the community and to believe instead the day-to-day behavior of the people they were getting to know and enjoy. They joined up.

But as the months of their membership progressed, they found themselves continually at odds with the community's oldest members. Everybody was warm and courteous, but their goals weren't compatible. Before anybody quite realized what was happening, there was serious internal dissen-

sion, which saw my friends battling with the original leaders for directional control of the community. Eventually the couple left, and so did some other members, who were disillusioned by the bad feelings generated by the philosophical battle.

This left the group weak, angry, and exhausted. It was a community tragedy, and not an uncommon one. I say, before joining a community, read and believe its documents. The chances are they mean what they say.

Of course a visitor will have expectations of some sort, but it's useful to keep them to a modest level. I can think of three common expectations that frequently meet with disappointment.

There's the wealthy community vision. A person who doesn't understand why the community isn't bursting with artistic work or doesn't have its own school or isn't generating its own power or creating original architecture is frequently unaware that such visions depend on financial wealth. "But I expected a rural group to have horses", is a typical case in point.

More common, there's the sense of community vision. This person expects to be included and loved fairly soon after arrival, because of an idea that all the people in a true community love one another. It is a serious disillusionment to discover that this kind of love grows only after time and mutual commitment and cannot be grasped quickly.

Many people expect all communities to be wholehearted in their dedication to food self-sufficiency or healthful eating habits. I have seen some visitors to my community seriously

*Laundry day at
Twin Oaks,
Virginia*



shocked by our casual laissez-faire attitude toward diet. We eat meat and frequently serve desserts, as well as indulging in a small amount of junk food. To us this seems moderate and reasonable, considering our abundance of whole grains and tempeh and vegetables. To some visitors it seems like heresy and backsliding.

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Many visitors set themselves up for disappointment by expecting their visit to be blessed with a love affair (or relationship). Now, who am I to say this won't happen? In fact it has happened to hundreds of people in hundreds of communities, and maybe it will happen to you. But don't count on it. If you join, that's another matter. The chances of a long-term community member finding, at one time or another, a love relationship within or through the community are quite high if not absolutely guaranteed. But the visitor? My advice is to set the hope firmly aside and enjoy other things. Trying too hard will just make it less likely. As to the notion of finding readily available casual sex in the commune, forget it.

The most interesting community visit is that of a prospective member. Let's say you've read the materials, and you're ready for a change in your life. You've come with modest expectations, and the community looks pretty good to you. Even at this point, there are still things to consider in order to enhance the chances of a good connection to your chosen group.

Take this question: Shall I be on my best behavior while I visit, or shall I let them know what I am really like? By all means put your best foot forward! The experienced community makes allowances. We know that in a year or two you're not going to be jumping up and volunteering to wash the dishes, the way you do when you're just visiting. But the eagerness to make a good impression makes a good impression. We like you wanting to please. It says something good about your social skills. We know that the real you is somewhat more of a mixed bag. So is the real we for that matter.

That's not the same thing as hiding vital information. If you have a serious medical problem or a sticky child custody situation or a history of drug abuse, it just isn't fair to join and lay these problems on a community without its knowledge and agreement.

Then there's the related question: Shall I let them know my real opinions, or shall I just go along with their assumptions? I would say that this depends on the nature of the group. Are you joining a group that essentially has a religion it wants all members to adhere to? If so, it seems to me highly questionable ethically to join such a group without embracing its

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convictions. On the other hand, a group that is essentially secular should not concern itself with your private opinions. It is your behavior that matters. In my opinion, when someone in a secular community asks you whether you believe in this or that doctrine (and you're not sure you do), you could answer to the effect that you respect the community's stand on it and are prepared to conform to its rules and norms on the subject, and let it go at that.

Nothing is more obnoxious than the visitor who defies the important traditions of a community. Imagine, for example, a visitor surreptitiously passing out candy bars to the children in a commune that makes a big deal about pure food, arguing that this is personal freedom. Joining any community automatically entails giving up certain personal freedoms (different ones at different communities); and it is unmannerly in the extreme, to say nothing of ineffective, to insist on taking for yourself freedoms that the community members have voluntarily given up. A certain amount of "When in Rome" is certainly appropriate.

On the other hand, if you are thinking of joining, and your happiness depends on something that you don't think the community has, judging from what you see, don't give up too easily. Make it a point to ask, without being pushy. It might be that the community is more flexible than it looks. In my own community there are many things that can sometimes be done, within our rules, but aren't done very often for various reasons. If a prospective member looks good to us and wonders aloud if this or that could be arranged, maybe it can. Certainly it's worth bringing up the subject and checking it out.

The community you see during your visit is not the whole community. It is almost impossible for visitors to understand this, but it is profoundly true. A little slice of time cannot give

a deep understanding of the nature of the community. Your visit is influenced by many factors that are trivial in relation to the entire membership experience. For instance, a particularly influential member may be absent when you visit. Or there may be other visitors at the same time who by their presence skew your impressions. The seasons have a great impact on community activity, as do such things as getting out a big order of the community's main product, or participating in an emergency, or being there during a birth or a death. The particular ideological issue being discussed avidly when you visit is probably only one of many, and your visit will not give you an accurate impression of either its importance or its outcome. If you visit when somebody is angrily leaving the group, you will pick up on a different feeling from the one you'd get if you visit when things are going well and membership is solid.

Your impressions of the community will also be influenced by the group you hang out with. I strongly advise

all visitors to be cautious of information from a member who is angry with the community and wants to air grievances. Such impressions can give a sense of getting the lowdown on the community, but the value of this lowdown is questionable. At a minimum, a visitor who is subjected to it should make a point of bringing up the same issues with a member who is happy with the place. If you're looking for a communal home, give yourself a chance! The disillusioned member on the way out is not an objective informant, by a long shot. No place is perfect, but it's probably not as bad as it can be made to sound.

On the subject of community controversy, there's not much point in a visitor getting involved. In my community, public discussions are carried on in writing, on a bulletin board. The comments of visitors on these controversies are not usually welcome. Other communities argue in meetings, and the same thing is true of visitor comments there. I know that it may seem to the visitor that there is something quite

*Pitching in at
Twin Oaks*



Geoph Kozeny/Community Catalyst

relevant that hasn't been said, and somebody needs to say it. But this is virtually never true. No outsider can really understand these issues after a brief stay.

After joining, new members will still blunder and be gently helped by older members to a greater understanding of the issues; but it is too much to expect for this educational process to be extended to the revolving population of visitors. It isn't quite a matter of "Visitors should be seen and not heard," but there is value in listening a lot and reserving your opinions for later. It can be valuable for the visitor to listen to the controversial discussion and then ask questions privately, outside of meeting time. If your opinion is couched in the form of "But why is it so important that..." or "What would happen if such and such an approach were taken?" it will give you a chance to participate without being resented. Be prepared to hear answers to your questions, however, and don't be hurt if your input isn't taken very seriously.

Every once in a while a community gets a visitor who really does have knowledge that is immediately useful, and offering help in such cases is appreciated. Generally this is technical help. The community is having legal difficulties with a custody case, for example, and you happen to be a retired lawyer from a firm that did a lot of custody work. Or the community is building a house, and you are an experienced construction contractor. Or you are a doctor and notice with alarm that certain community norms are likely to lead to a particular disease you know about. Note that the helpful information is not philosophical in nature. It is practical, and it is the direct result of specialized training and experience.

In between solid technical expertise and personal opinion and philosophy lie many areas that may or may not be useful to the community. The one I notice most often is massage. A lot of people are trained masseurs these days. Good. Offering to give massages is a courteous and friendly thing to do. You may or may not get any takers. The same is true for various schools of conflict resolution, facilitation, and therapy, and for artistic accomplishments that you can teach. If you have such a skill, your best tactic is to offer but not push it. If your guitar playing draws a happy crowd, good, you've added something to the group's happiness. On the other hand, if nobody wants to listen, oh well, try something else.

Any community's favorite visitor is the cheerful, helpful one who is genuinely impressed with the community and not very critical of its flaws. Even if you don't join, leaving the group with a positive feeling about itself is a nice thing to do. Of course it's always possible that some group at a particular time doesn't really need congratulations; it needs a kick in the pants. Even so, be very careful before you elect yourself to the job.

A word about doing the community circuit. People often set out to visit many different communities, but few ever finish their trek. They find out what they need to know after

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being at two or three. This being the case, it makes sense to look at the list of groups that sound interesting, and visit the most likely-looking ones first. Directories get outdated quickly, too, so write more letters than you need. Some of them may not be answered.

When I mentioned to my fellow communitarians that I was writing this article about how to visit a community, they said, "Tell them this is our home," and "Tell them not to drop in without being invited," and "Tell them they sometimes have to take no for an answer." So I'm passing along all those messages, but while I'm at it, I should explain that 19 out of every 20 visitors are a help and a pleasure to us, and that these growls and groans all come because of the exceptional 20th. Furthermore, virtually all groups who publish their name and whereabouts do want and need a certain number and kind of visitors. So don't be discouraged. If you really want to live in community, you'll find one. ❖

(*A Walden Two Experiment*, 271 pages, is available for \$5.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling from Twin Oaks, Rt. 4, Box 169, Louisa, VA 23093.)

A Checklist for Those Wanting to Join a Community

by Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson

Are you wondering if you're a community person? Do you think you would fit in with a community? No matter who you are, the answer is probably yes, as there's undoubtedly a community somewhere for every type of person. However, here are a few qualities that are generally needed in most communities, so you can see how you'd fare in one:

1. A willingness to think and act in terms of the good of the whole, not just in terms of personal needs and opinions — in other words, good old-fashioned unselfishness (or at least a willingness to grow in this direction).
2. Tolerance for differences and open-mindedness toward different points of view.
3. A willingness to work out conflicts and not hold grudges, with a realistic belief in the possibility of resolving differences to mutual satisfaction.
4. A somewhat adventurous and courageous spirit, open to change, flexible and adaptable.
5. A generally social nature — liking to be with people much of the time (hermit types would climb the wall!).

Although perfection in all of these qualities is hardly expected (and rarely achieved), a willingness to change and grow into these qualities is important.

How would you know if community living was right for you, even if you had the above qualities? What should you look for in a community? This depends on what your personal values are. Here are some things you might want to explore and reflect on as you read about and visit various communities:

1) If you are mainly looking for a supportive and loving environment with lots of good friends, then spend as much

time as you can on a one-to-one basis with members of each community you visit. Get to know the members personally to see if you share an easy and natural harmony with them. If you don't feel a good heart-to-heart connection at first, it may be more difficult to become close friends later.

If an active social life is your interest, check out how much harmony or conflict there is among the community members. Observe how much time the members spend hanging out with each other, sharing social activities like parties or sports events. And feel out the "vibes" — the general atmosphere — of the community when you first arrive. Your intuition will tell you whether it could be "home" for you. Even though the community members you visit may be good people with whom you share common ideals and values, you may not have a basic "resonance" with each other on a personality level. So if support and nurturing are high on your agenda, keep looking until you find your "family."

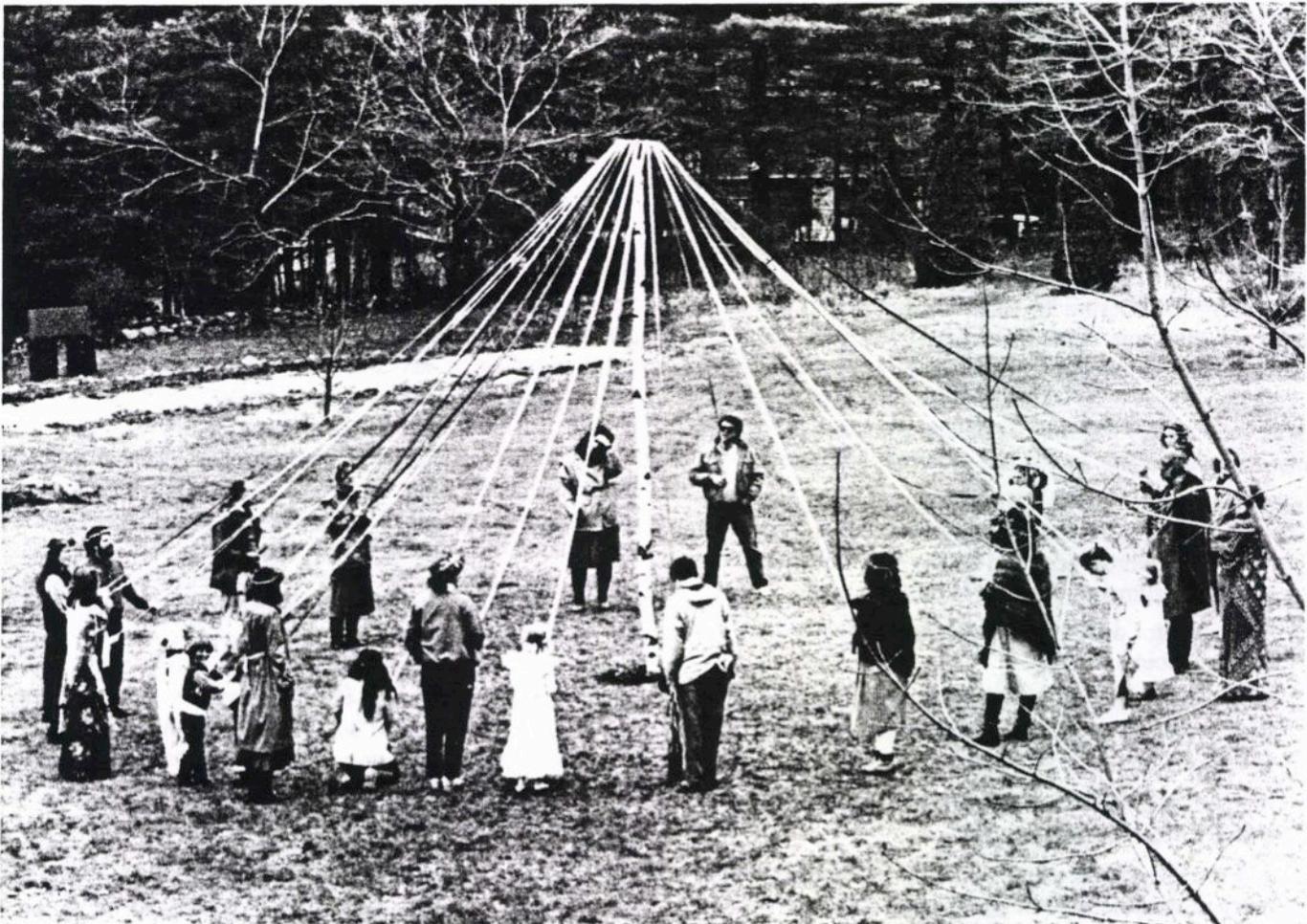
2) If spirituality is a central value for you, then explore the common beliefs and practices of the community. Are these in harmony with your own? Are there regular meditations or prayer times, study groups, yoga practices, a library of spiritual books? Are spiritual practices required or left to individual choice? Are they structured or unstructured? If practices are not required or structured, do you have the necessary self-discipline to practice on your own? If you seek some kind of authority structure or guru, are you ready to submit without rebelliousness?

Notice what happens day-to-day in community life. Do members actually work at *living* their spiritual beliefs? Do they inspire you? Is the general atmosphere uplifting and positive? Although many communities proclaim spiritual

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Corinne and Gordon are authors of the intentional communities reference book *Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World*, and numerous published

articles. They teach courses on community lifestyles through Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts. Corinne, a former editorial assistant at *Rolling Stone* magazine, is director of Sirius Publishing. Gordon is director of CERES, the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economics, which is described in "Home or Activist Community" on page 66. Other versions of this article have been published previously. (Copyright, 1985, Sirius Publishing, reprinted by permission.)



Gordon Davidson/Sirius

ideals — love, sharing, brother/sisterhood — you have to actually spend time in each community to see how their ideals work out in practice.

3) If equality, shared governance and decision-making are important to you, then explore how power and leadership actually function in the community. Again, go beyond the theory and the words and look at the practice. Are there authoritarian leaders or dependent, subservient followers? Who really makes the major decisions? By what process? How involved is the whole membership in decision-making? Is there openness to feedback in the leadership? Are members taking their fair share of responsibility, or leaving it to a few leaders? How decentralized is power in the community?

4) If economic equality and sharing of resources is important, then note how income is generated and where it goes. Are incomes pooled and all bills paid out of a common treasury, or do individuals maintain separate incomes? Is everyone required to work an equal amount of time? Is all work equally shared and valued — including things like cleaning and child care? How are land, houses, vehicles, machinery and other

resources owned — communally or individually? Or is there some mix of communal and individual ownership? How do members feel about their economic system?

5) If privacy and individual freedom are high on your list, then check out housing and financial arrangements. Does everyone live in one big house, or are there individual dwellings? Are these privately or communally owned? If houses are shared, are bedrooms and/or other spaces in the house designated as private? Is there internal soundproofing sufficient to provide privacy? Are members quiet enough when time alone is needed?

Are all meals eaten communally or individually? Is there personal choice of lifestyle? Or does everyone live in the same way? Do all members have the same spiritual and political values, or is there room for diversity? How much time and work energy are required for membership? How frequent are required meetings?

6) If a simple lifestyle with appropriate technology, organic gardening, recycling and “living lightly on the earth” is what you desire, explore how homes are built and how they



*Independence Day
Celebration at Sirius
Community, MA*

Resonating Values to look for in a community:

- Personal support
- Spirituality
- Equality
- Group Economics
- Privacy
- Simplicity
- Fe/Male Roles
- Child Support

trade-offs between a totally nuclear family setting and an active life in the community? Are there children of similar age to your own? Are there community playgrounds or spaces just for children? Is there a general sense of happiness and harmony among families in the community?

Gordon Davidson/Sirius

are heated. How many appliances and gadgets are in use? How is kitchen waste handled—is it recycled into compost? Is food home-grown and organic, or is it store-bought? How vital and productive is the garden? Are furniture, clothing, equipment, tools mostly new or recycled (used)? How extensive is the use of wind, water and solar energy?

7) If feminist values are important to you, then observe who does what jobs in the community. Do men share cooking, cleaning, child care? Are women working in administrative and leadership positions and sharing heavier work like construction and mechanics? How is sexuality viewed in the community? Are there a majority of celibates or families? Singles or gays? Are women's opinions as highly valued in the community as men's? Are certain behaviors deemed more appropriate for just one sex? Is there freedom of expression?

8) If a supportive and safe environment for children and/or shared child care is what you're looking for, then observe who has responsibility for children — individual parents, the whole community or somewhere in between? Notice also whether child care is structured or informal, and whether there are good teachers and schools in the community or nearby. Are there adequate accommodations available in the community or nearby for families?

How much time commitment is asked of community members, and does this leave time for family? What are the

No one community is Utopia, and no one community will meet your ideal arrangements in all of the areas discussed above. Each community has its special focus, based on its own values and philosophy. If you find a community you really like, but are disappointed that it doesn't provide something you feel is important, then perhaps it's a message to you to do something *yourself* to change or improve it, if the community members agree.

It's easy to throw stones from the sidelines. It's harder — and yet more rewarding — to create something better. So, make a gift to all those who will come later to the community. Consider joining to help provide focusing energy for that special something you feel would make the community better... another step closer to Utopia.

If you find that no community seems to live up to your ideals, then perhaps it's best to turn within and ask whether you are living these ideals yourself. Maybe you are searching in vain for something outside yourself that only can be found within. Perhaps that is the place to begin. Otherwise, you may visit any number of communities without ever finding your own community home. ❖

(Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World, 365 pages, is available for \$17.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling from Sirius Publishing, Baker Road, Shutesbury, MA 01072)

Finding a Community To Call Home

by W. J. Schlicht, Jr.

Recently I visited 14 communities in the Eastern United States while looking for a community to join for at least the next few years. During my search a number of considerations emerged which are listed below. Some of these issues are phrased as questions you might ask various members of the communities you visit, or questions you might ask yourself.

Any visit to a community for the purpose of seeking a home will have to be long enough for you to get a good idea of how the community operates. I believe this can be done in two days, but some communities feel that a much longer period, sometimes up to two weeks, occasionally as much as several months, may be required to get to know the community well enough to make decisions about major lifestyle changes.

If you plan on moving into a community with a partner or with a family, I believe it is important that your partner and any children involved accompany you on all visits. Bear in mind during all community visits, particularly when asking questions, that decisions about community membership are necessarily *mutual decisions!* The community has to want you as a member in the same way that you have to decide to be a part of the community.

No doubt the most important issue has to do with the question of how well you get along with the community members. Do you feel accepted generally by the group? Is at least some honest effort made to welcome you? Many communities have a specific member designated to be responsible for visitors. But even when this is not the case, some members, if not all, should make an attempt to meet your effort to get acquainted.

Naturally common sense applies here; if you visit a community that is in the middle of a major project such as completion of large-scale construction, then you should lower your expectations of the amount of time community members will be able to spend with you. Any visitor, however,

who expects to be waited on by the community members is no doubt due for a disappointment — and rightly so. Plan on helping out with some of the community work, especially in meal preparation or chores, if your help seems welcome.

In most communities your work contribution is expected and provides a wonderful opportunity to see how well you can work cooperatively with at least a few of the members. Do not imagine that you have VIP status, but do anticipate that at least some of the people will want to know something about you and what you are doing.

It seems to me important to trust your basic instincts about the vibes that community members put out to you. Do they seem simpatico? Are they “your kind of people”? This is not to say that you should look for a community of people just like you. Far from it. There is great benefit to be found in living with people who have divergent backgrounds and viewpoints. But there is no point in trying to fit in with people who are so different that there is insufficient common ground to form a basis for mutual communication.

How well do different members of a community get along with each other? Do they tend to share feelings with each other? Or is there a pattern of covering up feelings and dealing only with material concerns and things that need to be done? Are community members generally supportive of each other? Do you get the feeling that members are genuinely concerned that each of the other members is able to grow along self-defined paths? If a member asks for special assistance, are others eager to volunteer, or is it difficult to get cooperation?

Are there splinter groups within the community who have negative feelings about the community as a whole? The question of equality among the membership is very important. Of course some communities have definite hierarchical structures with designated leadership. But if there is inequality of position, with some members working to support other com-

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West Review, writes, and leads workshops at Unitarian camps and conferences. His spiritual pathway is a personal variant of Zen Buddhism augmented by what he's learned in his work with psychology.

munity members who exploit leadership positions, the community may not provide support for personal growth among the working members. Generally, a community that gets caught up in viewing some of its members as second-class citizens is a community that is bound to develop serious interpersonal problems.

Is the community you are considering made up mostly of families or mostly of singles? Depending upon your own status, this can be an extremely important consideration. If you are single and a majority of the community is made up of family units, you are likely to be lonely. However, if the community is located close to a fairly large population center, then this need not be a major concern. Likewise, if the community offers frequent programs of some kind that attract large numbers of people who visit for extended periods, such activities may provide the needed social contact with other people who are not in families. Speak to one or two single members about their life in the community.

Many people are drawn to a community that is spiritually oriented. If you fit into this category, then ask yourself whether you want a community that has a specific spiritual orientation or one that has a more general spiritual outlook. For example, you might consider a monastery or a lay community that follows a particular religion.

Alternatively, there are communities with a general spiritual orientation that have great respect for the need of individual community members to follow their own particular spiritual practice. In such communities, you may find Chris-

tians, Sufis, Buddhists or other religious living together with people following spiritual disciplines that are entirely unique.

Just how community-oriented do you want your community to be? Some communities are little more than land cooperatives where people build individual homes around a central building and land owned in common. Co-operative members may see each other only rarely, may hold business meetings monthly or less frequently, and may not know each other very deeply. More intimacy is required among those who frequently share meals and work together inside the community. Based on these and many other factors, the degree of interpersonal involvement and intimacy varies enormously among different communities.

Communities can be found in the hearts of the largest cities as well as in the most remote rural areas. If you want access to museums, concerts, libraries and a varied social life, you won't be as likely to find contentment out in the boondocks.

Climatic changes should be explored when considering intentional communities in unfamiliar regions of the country. What may appear as a beautiful climate in the late spring will look different with two feet of snow on the ground.

What size community are you seeking? If you are looking for some variant of an extended family, then you should probably consider communities of no more than 20 people. That would be a large family indeed! But if you want to live in a neighborhood similar to the small villages existing long ago, then a larger community would be more suitable. Be aware, however, that in a community of 50 or more people, there will be members with whom you are only slightly acquainted, even after you've lived there several years. So you will need to be comfortable with a wide variety of intimacy levels in your social contacts if you choose a larger community.

The practical question of how much it will cost to live in a given community is of great importance. You will need to know the cost of personal maintenance in cash and personal labor. What are the job opportunities available in the community or nearby? It is vital that financial arrangements be clearly understood well in advance of any decision to join a community.

What is the overall economic condition of the community that you are considering? If there is a desperate struggle each month to pay the bills, you will need to decide if you can handle routine financial pressure. Take a careful look at all the buildings owned in common by the community. Are they in good repair? Are the water and heating systems adequate and usually operable? Are tools, appliances, farm implements and vehicles in good shape?

What are the expectations of incoming members about financial and labor contributions to the community beyond the cost of basic food and lodging? Some common treasury, or income-sharing, communities require that new members

Do you get the feeling that members are genuinely concerned that each of the other members is able to grow along self-defined paths? If a member asks for special assistance, are others eager to volunteer, or is it difficult to get cooperation?

Bear in mind during all community visits, particularly when asking questions, that decisions about community membership are necessarily mutual decisions! The community has to want you as a member in the same way that you have to decide to be a part of the community.

turn personal assets over to the community, either permanently or for the duration of their membership. Other communities require the purchase of shares which may be very expensive. And some communities rely on member dues payments or assessments.

It is especially important for a prospective member to know what will happen if a member eventually decides to leave the community. If resigning members have to leave everything behind, leaving can become extremely difficult.

You should have in mind quite clearly how much time and effort the community will expect of you as a new member. In some communities a major part of everyone's day will be devoted to community labor. If you are engaged already in daily spiritual practice or other personal regimens, there may be time conflicts.

When you visit communities, share meals with members so that you learn whether the food meets your dietary preferences. While some communities adhere to strict vegetarian diets, many consume dairy products, eggs and occasional fish and poultry at common meals; a significant number feature a basic 'meat and potatoes' diet.

For many people today ecological consciousness is very important. If this is true for you, then you will be interested in whether the community employs organic agricultural methods, solar power for heating and electricity, energy-saving building design, water conservation and purity testing, and wind and water energy.

Are the relationships healthy between the community, neighbors and nearby villages and towns? A few communities have experienced very poor relationships with their neighbors in the regular world outside their own subculture.

It's important for you to understand the basis and current state of such problems, as well as the plans for improving any negative situations.

This is especially important if you are sensitive and perhaps a little self-conscious. It's one thing to be identified with a group that townspeople think is generally weird. Then, you may be looked at oddly when you go into the local general store. However, if hostility is present in serious proportions, you need to know about it in order to make a decision about your potential place in the community.

Is the community you are interested in part of a national or international movement? The main advantage of affiliated communities is that members are usually able to move easily to different parts of the country or even to foreign lands, while remaining within the affiliation. The disadvantages are that such community networks tend to be doctrinaire in their practice and may limit the autonomy of the local community.

Does the community you are interested in have important ties with the wider society? Some communities operate programs for visitors who may remain in residence for several days, weeks or months. Such programs affect the atmosphere of the community so that it is sometimes not as stable as a community with a population consisting primarily of resident members. If you seek the familiarity of an unchanging group, you should think carefully before joining a community based on active, on-site visitor programs. On the other hand, some people would not be comfortable in a community unless it contributes to the larger society, perhaps even the whole world.

You are looking at intentional communities with the idea of finding a group which meets enough of your needs that you will consider living with them. This article has mentioned a number of important considerations to be included in your decision-making process: emotional climate, spiritual outlook, financial arrangements, employment possibilities, physical living conditions, the way the community is governed, the general health and stability of the community, size and location, relationships with the larger society, ecological practices, and community expectations of new members.

All of these issues are relevant to the person who is looking for a community to call home. But, remember that no ideal, no perfect community, exists today, nor is one ever likely to exist. To complicate the matter, the idea of perfection seems to vary from one person to the next. So evaluating the answers to the above questions may not provide the basis for longer-term decisions until you have visited a variety of communities, and made several follow-up visits to those that catch your interest. If you listen carefully, you will know inside yourself when you have found a community where the chances of creating a happy life are good enough for you to take the plunge. ❖

Communities for the Mainstream

by Julie Mazo

The “maturing” of intentional communities has received considerable media attention in recent years. Articles on cooperative lifestyles have appeared in the *Boston Globe*, *Denver Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, among other major publications. Even the *Wall Street Journal* found it relevant to report on the evolution of the people and places once called hippies and communes, as gray hair grows more plentiful among the Woodstock generation.

This article tells a related story, the story of a search for community for the middle class. Six intentional communities are described, as I experienced them in 1989. Each is very different from the others. What they have in common is the offering of a viable opportunity for a lifestyle of one’s choice, from a home with as many or few “middle-class” accouterments as one may desire to a primitive cabin in the woods. In each of these communities, members can contentedly enjoy whatever they wish that mainstream America has to offer while snuggled in the comforting embrace of communitarian values.

My husband and I were not passionate back-to-the-land advocates, nor were we anti-urban in principle. We had been living the comfortable, relatively conventional existence of middle-class professionals, and were not looking to trade that for an ideal of spartan self-sufficiency. We wanted, however, the sense of “belonging” to something larger than our nuclear family, more consciously interdependent than our circle of friends. And we wanted to express and experience the generic community values described so well elsewhere in this publication.

But how to find “our” community? We used five criteria to help us sift through the masses of available information and identify those places that felt like a “good fit.” The criteria were:

1. absence of dogma or leader or required belief system
2. private dwellings designed to the member’s taste and means
3. self-responsibility for livelihood
4. proximity to a college town for professional opportunities and for cultural stimulation
5. relatively mild winters

People were intrigued and puzzled by our search. Few of our friends had even heard of “intentional community.” Their only frames of reference were the commune scene of the ’60s or Jonestown — and they had trouble fitting us into either frame. The more we talked about the large, varied world of the communities movement, the more interested they became, and the more they wanted to know.

That’s why this article is being written: to inform people like our friends about the existence of an option for the middle class, an alternative to city dwellings where one is cautious about walking at night, or suburban enclaves where common interests are rarely examined beyond the sports page or the travails of the daily commute; a living environment where doors don’t need to be locked, where significant relationships with neighbors are the norm rather than the exception, where generations mix and everyone has a role, where people experiment with commitment to something more than their individual interests; in short, intentional community.

MONAN’S RILL

And so we set out on our odyssey, in February 1989. Monan’s Rill, one half-hour from Santa Rosa, California, was the first

Julie Mazo first became interested in joining an alternative lifestyle community in the early ’50s, but she never made the jump until 1989, after visiting six communities in a cross-country tour. During the years in between, Julie became a mother, writer, editor, publisher, and business owner. This article was written in

response to personal requests from friends she left behind in her recent move from San Diego. A features editor for this Directory, Julie is a writer and editor who also provides consulting services in marketing, conflict resolution, mediation, and training.

Finding Your Community

*Mainstream embraces
communitarian values*



100 Mile Lodge/Emissaries

stop. The narrow dirt road twisting up the ridge prepared us for a rural experience, but not for the dramatic contrast between the exceedingly rugged landscape and the comfortable, modern, even luxurious homes tucked at different levels into the high land dividing the Sonoma and Napa Valleys.

Founded in 1974, Monan's Rill has 17 adult members, single and coupled, ranging in age from 30s to 70s, and five children. The wooden sign at the entrance gently suggests a 10 1/2-mile speed limit and adds, "We thank thee" — one indication of the Quaker influence on this non-sectarian group.

Some of Monan's Rill's members work in Santa Rosa full or part time (as nurse, teacher, therapist, etc.). Retired members divide their days between various "good works" in town and necessary chores on the land.

To become a member an interested person may apply for year-long visitor status after frequent enough contacts to be reasonably sure of one's desire. More intensive contact during the visitorship enables both the prospective member and the community to make a good long-term decision. It is not a decision to be taken casually, since membership re-

quires a substantial financial commitment based on a formula that includes a non-refundable portion, a lump sum (adjusted by age), and purchase of equity in the total value of the 440-acre property. Title to the land and houses is held by a general partnership of all members.

There are bi-monthly potlucks and community meetings, and work days when members volunteer for tasks decided upon by the Land Plans Committee. We were there for a work day that included chopping firewood for all the households, gardening, road maintenance, and scouring the inside of the water tower. There is an expectation of participation by everyone in community work, but exceptions for good cause seem to be made casually enough. Leadership of the meetings rotates annually, and decisions are made by consensus following the Quaker model.

The Process Committee, whose mandate includes keeping a finger on the social/emotional pulse of the community, brings to the surface issues that may lie beneath the calm, caring surface of personal interactions. After the first death of a member, the Process Committee created an occasion for

people to share feelings about their loss, and to explore the implications of growing old in the community.

Monan's Rill is a group of gentle people who care about one another, who live in relative independence and have the security of knowing they belong to a caring, supportive extended family. Friendships grow strong, and acceptance of a range of lifestyles is the norm.

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS

Our next visit represented the other end of the rural-urban spectrum. Santa Rosa Creek Commons is smack in the middle of downtown Santa Rosa, within walking distance of every urban convenience. A limited-equity co-operative founded in the early 1980s, it looks much like a small, two-story garden apartment development set between an original house facing the city street and what is affectionately called "the back 40," a large grassy slope down to the creek with a garden, a circle of tree stumps cut at comfortable sitting height, with plenty of room for children to play and for adults to enjoy the natural surroundings.

The front house has been divided between a private apartment belonging to one member and community space: a kitchen for community meals, a large room for community meetings and other events, and visitor accommodations. This community space was our first stop, since we had scheduled our arrival in time for the Saturday afternoon monthly meeting. These first few hours provided generous evidence of responsible, careful work on the part of committees, consensus decisions, good humor, sharing and caring for individuals and for the community as a whole.

We were particularly delighted by the "Other Friends" project, whereby an adult who wishes to be an "other friend" to any community child posts a notice on the bulletin board in the clean, well-ordered laundry room to announce that "Jane will teach baking to up to three children at a time. Most convenient schedule would be Wednesdays between 4 and 6 p.m.," or "John will take one child for walks around Santa Rosa on Saturdays and tell stories of the town's history," or "Mary will give computer lessons..." What a wonderful structure for the grownups to share themselves and their interests, and for the children to expand their adult relationships.

SRCC consists of 27 apartments in a series of low-rise buildings. Seventeen of the units have been bought by members at full cost; the others are subsidized, and available for rental. The membership includes minorities of all sorts: blind, black, hearing-impaired, Hispanic. The community building has a wheelchair lift, and ramps ensure accessibility elsewhere. The cooperative seeks renters who understand and are interested in cooperation, rather than those who are simply looking for subsidized rent, and the membership

In each of these communities, members can contentedly enjoy whatever they wish that mainstream America has to offer while snuggled in the comforting embrace of communitarian values.

process exposes potential residents to the full experience of SRCC.

The community takes its grievance procedure very seriously. Any member having a problem with a neighbor is encouraged first to speak with the neighbor directly. A three-person mediation team, consisting of a facilitator, a referee, and an active listener, can be called together to meet with the disputants. The belief that all members can develop mediation skills is borne out by the expectation that, after participating in the process as a disputant, a member can then become part of the mediation team, and learn to help others by sitting in with more experienced member-mediators.

SRCC is a successful model of urban community living, with commitment to intelligent, participatory management, sharing in community work, and cooperation in many other areas of members' lives. It turns upside down the stereotypical view that city apartment complexes are necessarily places where a smile and a nod to some of the other residents is the ultimate in neighborliness.

CO-HOUSING

Before we left California, we visited people involved in the burgeoning co-housing movement in San Luis Obispo, Berkeley, San Rafael, Oakland, Palo Alto, and Sacramento. This very exciting concept of intentional neighborhoods with clustered housing and common facilities, designed to enhance social contact, planned and managed by residents, is very worth watching — and supporting. Representing a broad spectrum of ages and income levels, considering both rural and urban sites, the co-housing groups were all highly motivated and dedicated to the challenge of creating their own community. The temptation to stay and work with these wonderful groups of people was strong, but we resisted — and headed east.



*Can you continue
a conventional
lifestyle in
community?*

100 Mile Lodge/Emissaries

CELO LAND TRUST

We drove as quickly as we could across the country, passing by some very interesting communities along the way for no reason other than their typically harsh winters. By the time we reached Celo Land Trust, near Asheville, North Carolina, we were eager for our next community experience.

Due to a mix-up with our correspondence, no one was expecting us. We found our way to the home of 87-year old Ernest Morgan, son of Arthur Morgan, Celo's founder and long-time inspiration for the communities movement worldwide. Ernest had just come in from cutting firewood and was deeply involved in his next project for the afternoon, filling orders of a self-produced videotape for the far-flung network of the Rural Southern Voice for Peace (RSVP). After a few moments of sorting out who we were and what we wanted, we found ourselves on the receiving end of a full measure of his personal charm. He conveyed the history and spirit of Celo, starting with his parents' purchase of Berkshire Mountain land in 1916 to site their dream of community, and the shift to North Carolina in the 1930s.

Celo members were described as "a bunch of fierce individualists," exurbanites generally, most of whom have chosen to locate their leaseholdings on the 1200-acre land trust in an isolated spot "at the far end of a dirt road," rather than in clusters. The thirty-some households are economical-

ly independent except for the few adults on the payroll of community enterprises such as the Health Center which serves the surrounding area, the Arthur Morgan School, a private residential school for adolescents, or the summer camp for children. Many members are craftspeople, possessive of the privacy and time it takes to produce the fine works they market cooperatively. Others commute to work in Asheville, an hour away, or to nearby small towns.

We also learned about many other cooperative activities, such as the RSVP, an active food co-op, a Friends Meeting, work days devoted to community upkeep or to helping neighbors, and community meetings. I interjected with "I'm getting a schizoid picture of Celo: on the one hand, fierce individualists; on the other, a lot of jointly developed, highly participatory activities..." Ernest chuckled in response. "That's Celo!"

Cabin Fever University, another cooperative Celo project, is a sharing of skills and interests open to all area residents, with no distinction between Celo members and others. No money changes hands except when costs are incurred for art supplies, food or the like. Seven photocopied pages listed a rich, stimulating collection of activities: ongoing groups and one-time events during the winter "cabin fever" season. The current offerings included a pizza party at the Health Center, yoga lessons, Games Night for Adults, a colloquy for writers, art lessons, a meeting to organize book-sharing, a support

group for mothers of young children, a glass-blowing demonstration at one home/studio, and dozens of others.

The "sane fringe" (Ernest Morgan's phrase) refers to the 100 or more people who live nearby but not on the Celo Land Trust property. Tucked into the river valley, scattered along the flatland, hidden deep in the woods, and perched on the hills that lap against the Appalachian Mountains is an extraordinary, vigorous collection of human talent and energy. Some of the "sane fringe" came because they were attracted to the Celo community, some to the Arthur Morgan School, some to the thriving crafts network (the nearby Penland School of Crafts has a national reputation). Some were attracted by the general acceptance in the area of alternative styles of life; and all are drawn to the beauty of the mountains.

The line between the land trust community members and the surrounding folk is blurred. The food co-op, for example, is on land trust property, sharing space with the craft co-op. Over 90 households belong to the food co-op; Celo members account for approximately a third of that number.

Celo operates according to 50-plus years of strongly cooperative tradition based on slow change, gradually achieved consensus. Respect for the land is a paramount value, as are helping one's neighbors and living a balanced life of work, play, and creativity.

SHALOM COMMUNITY

Shalom Community is situated just at the edge of Greensboro, North Carolina. Each of the eight adult members has an urban career (college professor, social worker, administrator, etc.), and retreats after working hours to the 46-acre rural paradise they own as a housing cooperative. Members are in their 30s, 40s and 50s, and there are two preschoolers and a teenager.

Member housing runs the gamut from the tiny original farmhouse to the newly completed, large, luxurious, ultra-modern dwelling overlooking the community's lake. Another building is an attractive, comfortable duplex which includes self-contained private space for two households as well as a community library/lounge and meeting/dining space used by all. Shalom has a pattern of members moving from one house to another, or moving in with another family for a while, as life circumstances change. Questions about who is to live where seem to have been easily resolvable.

Shalom has stayed small since its founding in 1974, and hasn't had the need for elaborate structure. A new member purchases shares in the co-op, and bears the cost of housing her/himself in a house that the co-op owns. Community issues are considered as they arise, and decisions are made by consensus. Without much attention to formal structure and without members feeling bound by precedent, the land gets tended, new buildings are designed and built cooperatively, specific projects get the time they require as needs surface.

A living environment where doors don't need to be locked, where significant relationships with neighbors are the norm rather than the exception, where generations mix and everyone has a role, where people experiment with commitment to something more than their individual interests... in short, intentional community.

Members have a commitment to attend weekly non-business meetings. This is a time to discuss feelings about current issues in their lives directly bearing either on community relationships or on outside experiences. The point of these honest, often moving exchanges (we were privileged to be invited to one) is to uncover childhood patterns that continue to influence present behavior, and therefore to have the opportunity to let go of old patterns that are no longer constructive. There is neither leader nor agenda for these meetings, simply a group of people experimenting with this means of increasing the harmony of their lives.

We were told of periods in Shalom's history when members had only minimum interaction with one another, and other periods when the group operated as a big family. Our time there included both spontaneous and scheduled socializing (the latter extending to non-member friends), cheerful cooperation on community tasks and assistance to individuals, and very real concern for one another.

NEW LAND

We headed north into Virginia. Our destination: the New Land. Sprawling across 800 acres of magnificent, hilly terrain about 30 miles south of Charlottesville, the New Land is structured as a subdivision rather than an intentional community. The land was bought in 1979 by Bob Monroe, author of *Journeys Out of the Body*, as setting for an educational and research institute dealing with investigation and expansion of

human consciousness. A substantial part of the property was subsequently divided into lots of three to 10 or more acres which are for sale to any buyer. This makes of the New Land an open community, intentional in appeal, but without a membership process. However, virtually all of the 25 or so households have been drawn there by the work of The Monroe Institute. Most of the striking, modern, custom-designed homes are sited in splendid isolation, which reflects the independence of New Landers. There is no common responsibility except for the roads, and therefore few issues that affect all the residents.

While the New Land does not fit most definitions of intentional community, there is a very tangible "community of interest" that bonds many of its residents. Some gather regularly in study groups on various topics; others come together to sing, publish a quarterly newsletter, engage in political, social, and personal growth activities, and just to enjoy the proximity of kindred spirits.

A few New Landers work at the Institute; one family operates a llama farm on the property; some are retired; others commute to nearby towns or pursue their business interests around the country and around the globe. New Landers are vital people across a wide age range, intellectually curious and active, who know they can look to their neighbors for stimulation and nourishment and support. To become a New Lander, one needs just the price of a lot and the resources to build a house on it.

SHANNON FARM

Shannon Farm, founded in 1974, is 10 minutes away from the New Land, tucked cozily into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. About two-thirds of Shannon's 490 acres are wooded; the rest holds gardens, pastures, hayfields, orchards, ball fields, a lake, and one of the seven residential clusters (the other six are in wooded areas). The houses give visual testimony to the wide spectrum of values, lifestyle choices, and financial resources that comprise this highly eclectic community. There are simple cabins, a geodesic dome, more conventional homes, elegant, custom-detailed structures, and a solar-powered group house with ample capacity for eight adults to enjoy their private space and shared living areas equipped with a full range of TV's, computers, sound systems, VCR's, and a well-equipped caterer's kitchen.

The 60 members range in age from 19 up to the 70s, and include nuclear families, single parent households, and individuals who choose to live alone, in couples or with one of the intentional groups. Parents are responsible for their own children (infants to teens), but there is much cooperation in child-rearing. A few of the 21 children have been home schooled, but most of the school-aged children go to nearby

public or alternative schools, and parents, grandma, or day-care providers look after the younger ones.

The membership process includes a minimum six-month provisional period; full membership requires approval of two-thirds of the community. There is no "buy-in," but members pay 7 percent of their income as monthly dues. All are responsible for their own livelihood, and for the cost of their own housing, which is owned communally and leased long-term by the householder.

The bulletin board in community space announces weekend work days when needed, anything from filling potholes to cleaning the sweat lodge, or a roofing party for a member's house. On weekdays members scatter to pursue their individual livelihoods in nearby towns, some of them to jobs in the two collectives (woodworking and computers), or work on the land.

Shannon Farm makes decisions by consensus at monthly meetings, after intensive committee work shapes a proposal for consideration by the total group. The community is proud of its decision-making system, which has grown through the years into an effective and potent vehicle to harness energy in pursuit of the common good. Widespread acceptance of difference, high tolerance for individual idiosyncracies, and profound respect for personal freedom are hallmarks of Shannon Farm, as either cause or effect of its processes.

These brief sketches are incomplete. I have not described the challenges and frustrations or the disappointments and the compromises that also come with living in community — as they come, in different guises, with living anywhere.

Living in community is not for everyone; but knowing about the options is important for making an informed decision. So here are six options — and there are many more — where elements from more conventional and familiar environments exist side by side in a comfortable marriage with the rich subculture of the intentional communities movement.

Personal Note —

At this writing, my husband and I are provisional members of Shannon Farm, work at professional jobs nearby, and are both deeply involved in the life of the community. Is our life in community an unending idyll? Of course not. Have we found what we were looking for? Yes: a beautiful, human-scale, peaceful environment; professional and personal stimulation; frequent opportunities to stretch the boundaries of our understanding of human nature; the experience of being part of a larger whole; a place to give of our talents and ourselves and to receive the same from others. ❖

A Word About Cults

by Corinne McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson

This discussion of cults is adapted from part of the fourth chapter of Corinne and Gordon's book Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World (copyright, 1985, Sirius Publishing, Shutesbury MA, reprinted by permission).

At the same time that the hippie communes were attracting major attention in the '60s and early '70s, the so-called "cults" – manipulative, authoritarian mass movements – began growing in popularity and attracting many young people who were burned out on drugs, or generally confused and lost. Today, the cults are still recruiting large numbers of people, and are still sensationalized in the media.

Many people are desperate to change themselves and to change the world. Some are so lonely and alienated from family, religion or friendships, that any group which looks loving and supportive is very magnetic, even if the price is one's personal freedom. The very legitimate search for truth, personal and spiritual values and transcendence is easily exploited by power-driven "cult" leaders.

There is a problem, though, in defining exactly what a cult is. The point at which a group actually crosses the line between what is acceptable and what is not, depends a great deal on a person's values. As Ken Keyes, author of *The Handbook to Higher Consciousness*, expressed it: A "cult" is a term you would use to apply to that which you don't like... so I don't really have much use for that term. I could tell you [about] the groups that I feel are sincerely trying to do something good for the world and that I like... I don't consider them "cults".

It may be hard to define exactly what a cult is since it is such a subjective, emotionally laden label. However, we would warn people about groups that manifest many of the following traits:

- encourages the violation of personal ethics or encourages deception to prove loyalty to the group
- encourages relinquishment of personal responsibility for actions
- restricts access to outside people or information
- inhibits critical thinking so that "group think" predominates, and many subjects are taboo for discussion
- restricts the ability to leave the group
- restricts privacy
- uses intense indoctrination

- demands absolute obedience
- applies intense pressure towards group conformity
- demands stereotyped behavior, physically or psychologically encourages over-dependency
- manipulates feelings in a conscious way
- appeals to fear of not being saved or enlightened
- appeals to greed
- appeals to power
- appeals to the glamour of being the elect
- appeals to vanity and flattery
- uses guilt to control behavior
- uses humiliation to control
- uses intimidation or threats
- plays on low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy
- encourages sexual relationships with group leaders
- uses high-pressure sales pitches and plays on loyalty of friends to attract members
- evidences extreme paranoia and the stockpiling of firearms for "protection"

In our view, the element that distinguishes a cult from a healthy, participative community is the interference with a person's free will rather than the nurturing of its use. Free will is the most basic and inviolate spiritual principle on Earth. A benevolent community or spiritual teacher will respect a person's free will and encourage members to freely make their own choices, to take responsibility for any mistakes made and to learn from them. ❖

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(Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World is available for \$17.95 plus \$1.50 postage from Sirius Publishing, Baker Road, Shutesbury MA 01072.)

[Editor's note: Inclusiveness was a guiding value in creating this Directory, and information on a wide array of choices is offered. As editors we have relied primarily on information provided by local community sources, and have taken the position that it is not our place to judge. Still, there are "cult" communities — so the above guidelines may be helpful in distinguishing them from the vast majority of benevolent and self-affirming intentional communities.]



The Evolving Culture

What is the role of intentional community in the evolution of culture?

Griscom Morgan of The Vale Community discusses the relationship between **Individuality and Community**, maintaining that the societies that survive and endure are those in which membership is based on diversity rather than disciplined conformity to an ideology. Stressing the need for balance, Griscom warns that "the community... must not take the place of a person's direct relationship to the universe."

Allen Butcher, a former member of both East Wind and Twin Oaks, presents a historical overview of the intentional community as a tool for experimenting with social change options. Noting today's increase in "popular awareness of the need for change", he believes this trend will provide signals for **Community in the 1990s**.

This Directory explores many ways that individual, group, and broader society can interact... and how every person or element in the communities movement is a potential catalyst for the evolution of self, community, and culture.

Individuality and Community

by *Griscom Morgan*

The author received a letter from a person who had made several valiant attempts at intentional community. That person concluded "human nature is not yet ready for community." Alternatively, we should question whether the conventional concept of intentional community is right for human nature.

Individuality and Community

Certain presuppositions characterize and harm the life and relationships of our dominant Western society, and these presuppositions extend to the revolutionary movements and intentional communities that are outgrowths and reactions to our society. D. H. Lawrence advanced this thesis at length in works such as *Studies In Classic American Literature*.

Mary Freeman summarized Lawrence's concerns as follows: Lawrence... concluded that abundant life was not to be found in the main currents of our culture... He also found inadequate current versions of social reform and revolution. It seemed to him that they failed to free themselves from the limitations of past ideals, and, as a result, took forms too lean, too barren. Neither established culture, nor our ready-made panaceas for its ills, appeared conducive to more abundant life.

Eugene Goodheart quotes Lawrence:

There must be... love, a wholeness of humanity.
But there must also be pure, separate individuality,
separate and proud.

In *The Community of the Future*, Arthur Morgan warned that "Mediocrity is at home in the crowd. The discriminating mind and spirit make their best growths when they have opportunity for periods of quiet and solitude."

Elsewhere he wrote:

For the purpose of keeping clear our ultimate aims and of keeping strong our sense of validity in them, it is necessary that we have regular periods of retirement, either alone or with others who have the same purpose. In the quiet and peace of these periods we can renew and refresh loyalty to the ultimate and controlling purpose for which we should live.

Neither the family, the community, the church nor the nation must take the place of each person's direct relationship to the wider reality of mankind, nature and the universe, however that might be conceived. Albert Einstein expressed such a view with regard to his life:

I ... have never belonged to my country, my home, my friends, or even to my immediate family, with my whole heart; in the face of all these ties I have never lost an obstinate sense of detachment, of the need for solitude—a feeling which increases with the years ... (such a person) is largely independent of the opinions, habits and judgements of his fellows and avoids temptation to take his stand on such insecure foundations.

The Origin of Healthy Individuality

The individuality of the child finds its origin in the family. From the small world of the family the infant emerges into the enlarging world of experience and association—the small neighborhood, the community, and then the progressively larger society.

If one of the early steps in this social emergence is broken, a gap is left in the child's personality development. A secure biological family, well-integrated into a secure small neighborhood or community, is essential to the healthy development of both the individual and society as a whole. In fact,

Griscom Morgan is a long-term communitarian theorist, writer and organizer. Gris was a founding member of both Celo Land Trust, North Carolina, and The Vale, Ohio. He followed his father as a leader of Community Service, Inc. (CSI), which provides consulting services, maintains a catalog of mail order books, and holds annual conferences on small community development. CSI founded the Fellowship of Intentional Communities which, in turn, spawned the CESCO business loan fund and this Directory. This article is abstracted from *Guidebook for*

Intentional Communities, which Gris helped edit and write, along with a number of other books, including *Hope for the Future*, all available from CSI. His personal interests focus around his activist family — his wife, Jane, and children, Faith and John. Gris' spiritual teacher is the Great Spirit of the Universe known by the original Native Americans, who was called Father by Jesus. (Copyright, 1988, Community Service, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio, reprinted by permission.)

the disintegration of small communities eliminates the inter-family support systems which have maintained nuclear families through the ages. When this community-based support is lost through moves or other causes, the modern family becomes ever more isolated and difficult to sustain.

In *Successful American Families* Zimmerman and Cervantes reported on the characteristics of families in American cities that had survived without symptoms of social breakdown. They found that such families had associated themselves with a number of other such families in close bonds like those of small communities, providing mutual aid, common cultural values and a milieu for supportive child development.

The Common Denominator

How are we to achieve the new society, the new community, the new family and the new individuality at the base of the new society? By what kind of interpersonal relationships can we attain harmony of *individuality and community*? The common denominator of people is their universal aspect, their more fundamental being. Lawrence's insight is that, at the level of the deepest self, people can relate to each other without mutual destruction or loss of individuality. But trying to impose unity upon diverse people at the more superficial level, whether by love, coercion or group process, is to do violence, to make human anthills or beehives, as in Orwell's book *1984*.

People may be oriented and attuned to each other only as a family, community or nation. But they can be attuned also to the universe, inclusive of all humanity and nature. Then they can be truly attuned to each other and effectively integrated in community, and beyond into the ever-widening ecology of the universe.

Not only the individual person, but also the family, the community and the nation need similar mutual attunements to be free from imposition, warping or domination by the other levels of society. Each needs integrity and its own orientation to the universe. On the basis of this kind of integrity, each becomes a better family member, neighbor, communitier and citizen.

Though inspiring to think about, these are general and abstract statements. Ex-

amples will illustrate some of the ways personal egotism can be transcended without communal domination of the individual.

The Common Denominator in Action

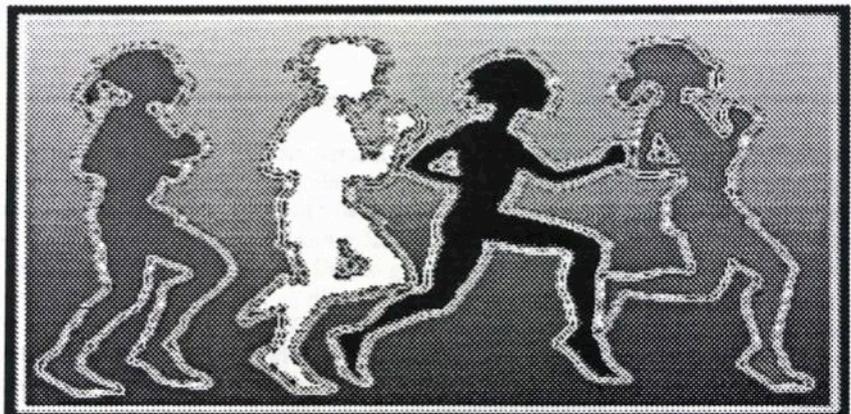
Thomas Banyacya tells of an intertribal meeting of Native Americans in Denver. The meeting began with the usual business agenda, but soon degenerated into the factionalism and semi-futility that characterizes so many political procedures. Banyacya then suggested that the meeting start over again, beginning with an Indian orientation to the universe and the powers of life, addressing those powers and giving verbal recognition to them. After this new beginning, the proceedings developed with power and good spirit.

In a very different context, there was a bitter labor-management conflict in Philadelphia years ago. The city was suffering from an extended deadlock in negotiations. A Quaker respected by both sides, Will Biddle, was called in as a mediator. He asked that the two factions join in a half-hour of silence before beginning business. After the shared silence, the conflict was resolved quickly and in good will.

In still another situation this same procedure worked again. A young coal miner agreed to take the pastorate of a church so divided by strife that trained ministers had given up on it. The miner announced at a Sunday service that the following midweek meeting would be held in complete silence. He had no experience with silent meditation, but he knew that the quality of communication within the congregation was such that verbal exchange would certainly continue to be ineffectual. The church members needed to go to a deeper level to achieve unity.

Midweek meeting was fully attended and members were deeply moved during a long period of shared silence. Reconciliation began and the church progressively regained power and vitality.

"Interlocking at certain points."



In each of these situations, people transcended their personal egos and their group inclination toward conflict. They became attuned to a larger reality and to each other. Such attunement is necessary for sound relationships — between individuals, between individuals and community, between groups of people and the rest of the environment.

Awareness of the balance between the need for individuality and the need for community can provide basic insights necessary to the survival of intentional communities. Rather than exclusive conformity to an ideology, such an awareness of balance can provide the basis for communities to encourage a wide diversity of individuals among their memberships.

Community as a Work of Art

We have to learn to balance varied features of community life that have hitherto been considered irreconcilable, either-or alternatives. Herman Melville wrote a poem on art that applies particularly to the art of community development:

In placid hours well pleased we dream
of many a brave unbodied scheme
But form to lend, pulsed life create,
what unlike things must meet and mate;
A flame to melt — a wind to freeze;
sad patience — joyous energies;
Humility — yet pride and scorn;
instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity — reverence. These must mate,
and fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
to wrestle with the angel — art.

From our intellectual background we tend to have preconceptions of what it takes to make a viable society. Society looks to us so arbitrary and ill-organized that we assume that we ought to be able to create a better one without too much difficulty. Each community that is thus developed tends to be creatively significant in the one area of particular interest and awareness of its original members. But each is handicapped by lack of awareness of developments in other cooperative living groups.

For instance, some intentional communities seek to avoid considerations related to the exercise of power, responsibility and authority. In our revolt against the old, outdated structures of power, we tend to overlook important organizational principles.

Yet, in every group there must be a committed core of leadership within which there is a depth of mutual trust and capacity for teamwork. This core group must be secure in its purpose and impregnable in its dependability and selflessness.

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In many successful societies, power is consciously apportioned according to the capacity of individuals and groups to wisely yield it. Such a system evolves by necessity and a long train of natural selection. At best a power structure is free from self-will, arbitrariness, exclusiveness and is shared by all members. Those communities that neglect to develop a responsible and dependable power structure are faced with the alternatives of frequent membership turnover or exhausting internecine struggle.

Another preconception is that the practice of living and eating together necessarily creates brotherhood, intimacy and sharing. But even common ownership of property does not of itself liberate communitarians from the characteristics of selfishness. In fact, a community as a whole can be just as selfish as an individual. Intentional communities can develop a culture of selfishness, or a culture of brotherhood and sharing with each other and with humanity in general.

Openness to Wider Associations

Communities need to maintain an openness to wider associations. The reality of intentional community culture is that the local unit is too small a world for members to live in without other associations in the larger society. The local group is only a small fragment of the total world; when isolated the community may develop personal tensions and internal preoccupations to the point that wider perspectives tend to fade. The result can be a self-centered community that is as pathological as a self-centered individual.

In some cases communities have found that they needed more freedom from interpersonal contact during the workday. So, they deliberately took jobs outside the community to

balance the intensity of contact during the remainder of their lives together.

Modern companies and other institutions usually involve outside directors and consultants to bring perspective to the activities of local organizations. Adventist communities, Lama Foundation, Fairhope Single Tax Corporation and Koinonia Partners all have non-community members on their directorates. Communities of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities and the Emissary Foundation International rely on each other for mutual development assistance and member exchange.

Martin Buber referred to the importance of the kibbutz movement in Israel as a "community of communities" that gives a wider context to life in local intentional communities throughout that country. North American communities could benefit from such a communities movement on this continent, or at least a much wider array of community networks than are presently in operation.

Open-Ended Intentional Communities Balance Individualism

A philosophy of balance lies behind the intentional community endeavors that arose from the work of Arthur Morgan and Community Service, Inc. A sociologist studying Celo Land Trust in North Carolina perceived that Celo's longevity since 1939 is based on a wide horizon of diversity rather than disciplined conformity to an ideology. The researcher found this to be anachronistic in that the opposite condition is widely accepted as necessary for the survival of intentional communities.

Beyond the diversity of both Celo and The Vale OH, founded 1959, there was the conception of a deeper base of unity such as D. H. Lawrence envisioned. These communities and a number of others have a similar awareness of the balance between individual and community values. As a result, they have enjoyed stability over the decades and continue to thrive today.

May Valley WA, Alpha Farm OR, Tanguy Homesteads PA and Bryn Gweled PA, as well as Celo and The Vale, are all outgoing in their involvement with the wider

society. None of these communities conform to communal stereotypes. Rather, they strive to be open-ended, living organisms. Their group lives are designed around the changing needs of diverse individual members who are continually evolving in the ever-changing order of the universe. Such communities confirm the community development philosophies of D.H. Lawrence and Arthur Morgan, who call us to free ourselves of limitations and look beyond our past ideals of established culture, social reform or revolution.

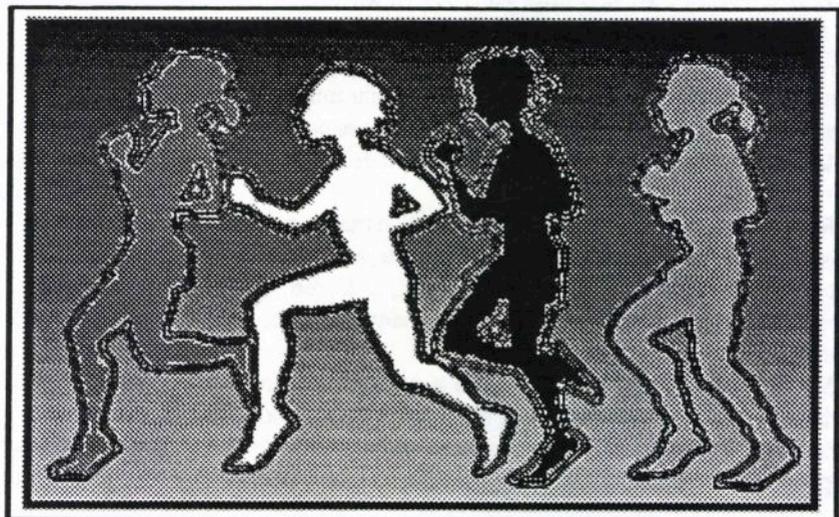
There must be... love, a wholeness of humanity.
But there must also be pure, separate individuality,
separate and proud. ❖

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(*Guidebook for Intentional Communities*, 41 pages, is available for \$5.00 plus \$1.00 postage and handling from Community Service, Inc., Box 243, Yellow Springs, OH 45387, 513-767-2161 or 1461.)

*Balancing group
and individuality.*



Community in the 1990s

by Allen Butcher

We are in the midst of a major era of change, as significant as any in our history. The contemporary melange of conspicuous poverty and affluence, of ecological awakening and technological advance, of spiritual renewal and political integration, is effecting every level of society. As in every past era intentional community will play a role. The challenge for us today is to develop communications and a broad-based movement strategy among those involved in community organizing.

Social change. Evolution. New Age. Paradigm Shift. Cultural Transformation. Planetary Awakening. — Each of these phrases speaks of change within individuals, or change in relationships between people, and of change between people and their environment. These words express both our perception of what is happening in the world today and our hope for the future.

Change in society comes gradually, often with two steps forward and one step back. Change can also be described as a progression through waves or cycles, or even as moving in ascending spirals, repeating old themes but in changing contexts.

The futurist and communitarian William Irwin Thompson offers a model of cultural change as a progression through four phases. The first is mystical and cultural awareness. This is followed by the expression of cultural change through art. Then the changes are reflected in technology and economics. Finally, politics and government begin to respond to the forces for change, but usually not until change has spread throughout society. We can illustrate Thompson's model by looking at the progression through history of the ideal of participatory communication and decision-making processes in religion and government.

The theme of the individual intentionally choosing a lifestyle of social responsibility begins (in Western history) with the primitive Christian church inspiring "all those who believe to hold everything in common." This theme of social responsibility was later expressed as the individual electing

to follow one's "Inner Light" rather than an external authority. In the 16th century this experience, called "self-election," inspired individuals to become lay leaders, gather congregations, and challenge the spiritual status quo. There still exist today intentional communities with histories dating back to those times: the Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and Quakers, each founding different traditions during the period.

These 16th century socio-spiritual movements were part of the cultural transformation we know as the Protestant Reformation.

At the same time, the growth of the market economy began to transform feudal systems and encourage technological developments, including those used in warfare. Technology further spurred on the transformation, and the newly invented printing press made the Bible and reformers' tracts widely available. Religious wars broke the secular power of the Roman Catholic Church.

Revolutions transformed governments. Eventually the concept of individual election, practiced first by the 16th century mystics, moved from religion into politics and law, and became the basis of the democratic tradition written into the constitutions of the United States and many other nations of today.

The concepts of the "inner light" and individual election are inspiring further cultural change today. The issue of worker participation in workplace decision-making is changing the old hierarchical and adversary structures of authority into more cooperative, consensus-based, decentralized-authority models. In some cases worker involvement includes employee ownership and participatory management — a clear trend toward economic democracy. With participatory communication and decision-making processes influencing the business world, and beginning to be practiced in education, we might wonder what this suggests for the future of our government.

Change often begins with individuals purposefully choosing a life of social and environmental responsibility. Com-

Allen Butcher, former member of East Wind and Twin Oaks, is a librarian and historian of contemporary communities. He has been a regular contributor to *Communities* magazine for a number of years. Allen is a member of the Communal Studies Association,

and a founding member of the Fellowship for Intentional Community. He has traveled widely among communities and is now studying political science at the University of Southern Indiana, site of the Center for Communal Studies.

*Building a social tradition
tolerant of the differences
among people.*



municating one's convictions to others leads to the formation of groups, communities, and networks — and these often eventually influence the larger society. The waves of community movements throughout history have mirrored, and even influenced, the development of participatory decision-making processes in the larger society.

Transformation Today

The transformation we are experiencing today is likely to affect our culture on a scale similar to that of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Spiritual, technological, economic, and social forces today are quickening the pace of change.

Peter Russell suggests in his book *The Global Brain* that the direction of change is toward a mutually advantageous relationship between human culture and the Earth's natural systems. The Gaia Hypothesis presents the Earth as a single, self-regulating organism. Russell presents human awareness as a gradual spiritual evolution toward planetary consciousness. We are awakening to the realization that we must accept responsibility for our actions as they effect society and nature.

Russell refers to the complexity of the human brain, necessary for consciousness to evolve, as a parallel to how human society must also be complex in order to support the evolutionary leap to planetary Gaia awakening. This complexity involves both the infrastructure of electronic and laser communication technology, and the sophistication of interpersonal decision-making process and spiritual awareness.

The Gaia Hypothesis may be a cultural myth for our New Age, a paradise that we may continually work toward achieving. The effect of Gaia awakening upon human culture may have best been projected by William Irwin Thompson in his concept of a steady-state climax culture. Elements of this future society would be: an integration of Eastern and Western philosophy, technology, psychology, and culture; innovation being a permanent feature of science, technology, and economics; and a multiple political culture composed of nations, world-class cities, citizens' groups, and non-

governmental organizations. All of the characteristics of this new society would involve the enhanced and expanded role of participatory communication and decision-making processes among the world's peoples.

We are working toward more individual participation in the decision making structures that control our society. Flexible social systems encourage a diversity of social patterns and programs, making options available to fit a wide variety of individual needs. The many different community and co-operative projects of today are a beginning. Expansion and increased networking among such projects will ensure that the growth of these ideals will accelerate change in our culture.

Individual participation in social institutions requires flexible rather than rigid control systems, and tolerance for differing opinions and lifestyles. The resulting diversity in human society could then reflect the ecological diversity that we hope to maintain in our biosphere. As the world rushes toward greater economic development and integration, there is a parallel between the loss of natural biological diversity and the loss of human cultural diversity. It is not clear at what point this trend may be reversed, but the way to effect this reverse is clear. We must accept and encourage spiritual, cultural, technological, philosophical, racial, and other differences among people, sometimes within our own communities, always among different communities, regions, and nations.

The futurist Robert Theobald clearly states this point: "Our need is to discover ways in which we can live together in a world of diversity, using this diversity to increase our ability to change and adapt. The need is for flexible systems which respond to this diversity rather than stifle it. ... We must learn to move beyond a culture based on violence to one with new attitudes and values which use conflicts to promote creativity."

A Coming Wave?

If we hope to see a future of diversity and tolerance among cultures, we need to provide for those values within the intentional communities movement. Too often we are guilty of thinking, in the narrow parochial view of our home community, that ours is the only truly valuable social design. This communitarian chauvinism keeps us apart and limits our potential for creating a larger movement that is greater than the sum of our individual communities. Even as we reach out to each other, we can take pride in our differences and validate the uniqueness of all intentional communities, just as we appreciate the cultural and ecological diversity of our planet.

It is precisely our diversity of communitarian designs that provides our movement's ability to adapt creatively to changing conditions and opportunities. The potential for communitarian development increases as the level of stress in the wider society rises. With the increase in homelessness, single parent families, violence, ecological degradation, and the potential for economic catastrophe, communitarian models of a human scale society will become more and more relevant. Applying various forms of these models to an ever wider span of urban, suburban, and rural lifestyles is the challenge of the next wave of intentional communities.

Communitarian activity has been most noticeable during times of significant social change in the past. Communitarianism has progressed along with the dominant social design, in both pace and sophistication.

In the early 12th century, Catholic monasticism occupied approximately a quarter of the developed lands of Europe and preserved much of ancient culture. In the 17th century, with the opening of the New World, the first wave of North American communitarianism came with the first colonists, the religious sects such as the Puritans and Quakers. The second wave landed in the 1840s as a result of continued religious and political persecution in Europe. The excesses of the European Industrial Revolution encouraged the beginning of economic and social communitarian traditions such as the Owenites and the Oneida Perfectionists.

The third wave came in the 1890s, largely in response to the economic recessions and industrial labor strife of that era. These involved the single-tax, socialist, and anarchist communitarian designs. Forty years later, the fourth wave came during the Great Depression of the 1930s, with New Deal government-sponsored Green Belt towns, as well as the Catholic Worker, Socialist, and Emissary communities (many of which also still exist).

The fifth wave of North American communitarianism crested just 30 years later, in the 1960s and '70s, with the New Age, Christian, back-to-the-land, Egalitarian, and other

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movements. Notice that the length of time between waves has grown shorter. Many communities have built upon earlier communitarian experiences, sometimes even occupying the same physical sites.

With each period between waves being shorter than the last, and the most recent wave of the '60s and '70s now being roughly 20 years past, we might expect the 1990s to be another time of communitarian growth. Certainly most of the issues of the '60s are still unresolved, and many new concerns have arisen.

If we are to encourage a new wave of communitarianism in the coming decade, we might do well to focus upon building a tradition of individual participation in, and responsibility for, the institutions that control our lives. In order to achieve a balance between the values of competition and cooperation, we may be most effective by building a social tradition which is tolerant of the differences among people, provides a diversity of lifestyle options, and educates individuals for social and environmental responsibility. Communitarianism anticipates, reflects, and quickens the pace of social change, and the surest way to bring about change is to live it! ❖

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The Tribal Vision

What vision brings people to community, and what sustains them there?

Eve Furchgott of Kerista Village believes that — in addition to voluntary membership, cooperative economics, and social contracts — every successful community needs a “soul”. In **The Soul of Community** she explores how this “inspirational sense of mission and future vision” is achieved, in part, by “truly dynamic self-development and interpersonal relationships development process.”

Rich Miller, a long-term member of the now defunct Kindred Community, reflects on the challenge of maintaining personal motivation and direction while engaged in the process and goals of cooperative living. In answering the question **Why Do We Do It?** he gives new meaning to the word ‘faith’.

David and Carol Thatcher of 100 Mile Lodge describe spiritual values common to most communarians — even those who don't consider themselves to be at all spiritual. Their thoughts on **Why Live Communally?** point to the wider connections and common values emerging in the far-ranging communities movement.

Yogaville's Swami Satchidananda speaks about equality, individuality, the basis of inter-religious strife, and the common purpose that can hold us together. **Let's Come...Unity**, based on one of his Satsang addresses, closes with a dream common to those seeking to rediscover “the tribal vision”: “Then we can live harmoniously. That would certainly make a heaven on Earth!”

Ten Aspects of the New Utopian Vision, compiled by the Tarrytown Group, is a concise listing of values commonly held by contemporary intentional communities. Though some groups do not share all ten of the values, the list is valuable for highlighting the trends of the overall communities movement.

Intentional communities emphasize a vision which simultaneously nurtures the individual and works for the common good... so that we can all help create that “heaven on Earth.”



Gordon Davidson/Sirius

The Soul of Community

by Eve Furchgott

In the beginning there were tribes. You were born in the midst of your people and lived out your life there, safe in your social niche. The structure of traditional tribal life was clear-cut and static. You belonged by reason of blood relatedness, and you were expected to carry out all the obligations of your social position in the tribe, something that most often was determined at or even before your birth.

Then came the agricultural revolution, followed eventually by the industrial revolution, with radical societal changes and disintegration of old patterns. This has left us, in the Western world, with nuclear families and a continually increasing number of people who live alone. The material and intellectual benefits of our modern civilization are offset by a whole new set of psychological problems, many of which can be traced back to people trying to figure out their place in the world — something a tribal person knows implicitly.

Traditional tribalism — an involuntary form of community — makes no room for the kind of experimental individualism most of us take for granted. On the other hand, freedom to do one's own thing, and access to the technology to carry it out, are of little solace to someone suffering from loneliness, boredom, and feelings of social alienation.

Intentional communities — voluntary tribes — combine the most desirable elements of both traditional and contemporary or even experimental lifestyles. Intentional communities have been around for a long time, dating back to groups like the Essenes in Biblical days, or the community of Pythagoras in ancient Greece. The most successful modern, secular intentional communities, in terms of population, are the Israeli kibbutzim and moshavim. All these communities share at least three things in common: 1) the members are there by choice, 2) they practice some form of cooperation at the economic level, and 3) they agree to live by a code, or social contract, as a condition of membership.

Many communities fit these fundamental parameters, yet lack a quality I describe as "soul," a certain spirit that goes beyond the purely prosaic, economic elements of life.

Most people attracted to group living have some degree of idealistic vision, some expectation of a better way of life. My

vision was of a close circle of friends who shared everything, including the inner recesses of their psyches, who were imbued with a "one for all and all for one" expectation in which material sharing was only a small element. The relationship of people to one another and to humanity as a whole was paramount. I wanted to attach my energy to something that could work toward solving humanity's massive problems at the same time that it took care of my own.

Arriving in San Francisco, I first heard about a "gestalt kibbutz." It was an encounter weekend that never ended, an outgrowth of the sensitivity/human potential movement. Having begun to peel away neurotic habits and negative attitudes, people stayed together and took the process further rather than return to the environment which created the unsatisfying habits and attitudes. This was what I was seeking.

Superficially, the gestalt kibbutz model may seem self-indulgent, but it is also eminently practical. Poor interpersonal relations tear communities apart more than any other single factor. Kerista, the community I joined, came up very early with "inability to hold a steady course" as a definition of neurosis. However well you get along with someone initially, eventually you meet her/his "other side," which might be macho, sneaky, schleppey, stupid or stubborn. In many communities, this is what leads to individuals leaving or the group's disintegration. Our solution is a process capable of creating genuine dialogue so that individuals can root out basic issues, see them objectively, and work on them.

Without commitment, such a process will not do the job. Desire has to be very strong; and what fuels that desire is a future vision larger than the immediate situation. When the going gets tough, we have to know that the effort is going to be worthwhile. This inspires us to keep on and nurtures a healthy sense of vanity, a conviction that we are involved in something of significance within the sweep of human history. Without boosts like these, morale could decline and members could be drawn back to isolated lifestyles.

Any intentional community is, to some degree, a utopian experiment, an attempt to create a new model of association that uses cooperation to create a "more perfect union" among

Eve Furchgott, a member of Kerista in San Francisco since 1971, is editor of the Kerista publications *Rockhead* and *The Node*, and is art director of Abacus, Inc., their computer service bureau. She

is a graphic artist animator and a community outreach activist who has visited many different communities. She enjoys backpacking and singing in Sex Kult, Kerista's rock band.

Future vision...



100 Mile Lodge/Emissaries

people. Any model that holds together, functions harmoniously, and succeeds economically is a potential prototype for future communitarians.

Sometimes members of my community are perceived as arrogant or too critical by other communitarians. We do practice direct confrontation of apparent contradictions when we think we see them — that's part of our operating culture. We believe that debate is healthy and can stimulate deeper thought than bland niceties or tips about composting techniques. We defend our model of communal life enthusiastically, and seek others who do the same.

In my experience, the intentional community movement seems to be characterized by soft-spoken, anti-judgmental interactions, wherein negative opinions or critical analysis of strengths, weaknesses, and underlying motivations are considered gauche. This, I believe, is counter-productive to the development of a strong movement. There is plenty of room for all sorts of people, living in all sorts of co-operative arrangements, and the more dialogue there is about differences the better. I don't believe all intentional communities have to use the communication process my group uses. Nor do we have to agree about other aspects of community life in order to be supportive colleagues and friends.

Intentional communities in the post-industrial world must forge their own ways to success. I maintain that, whatever the variations, the successful models need (1) cooperative economics, (2) a social contract, (3) voluntary membership, (4) a truly dynamic self-development and inter-personal development process, and (5) an inspirational sense of mission and future vision that gives members their *raison d'être*. These, taken together, are the soul of intentional community. ❖

Self development for health and direction.



100 Mile Lodge/Emissaries

Why Do We Do It ?

by Rich Miller

When people ask us what we do in community, war resistance, service, living simply and so on, it's usually not too hard to answer the questions about details — what, where, when, how. The hard questions are the ones that start with "why": *Why* do we do the things we do? Such questions are so hard we often have trouble asking them of ourselves as a community, and even as individuals. "Why" questions are fundamentally different from the others, and have to be answered in a fundamentally different way.

When we face a Why question, the first thing we have to recognize is the deeper question that lies behind the Why. The

essential question is not "Why live simply?" or "Why do service?"; it is "Why do *anything*?" The question is a universal one. Whether we live on the fringes of society or in the dead center of the mainstream, we all do something. And the same question confronts every one of us: Why do we do the things we do? Make the choices we make? Live the way we live? What is the point to our lives? To life in general? Is there a point to any of this?

If one were to ask Martin Luther King Jr. why he did the things he did, and then ask Jerry Falwell why he does the things he does, both might give the same answer: "faith." But

*Sharing a meal at
Camphill Village*

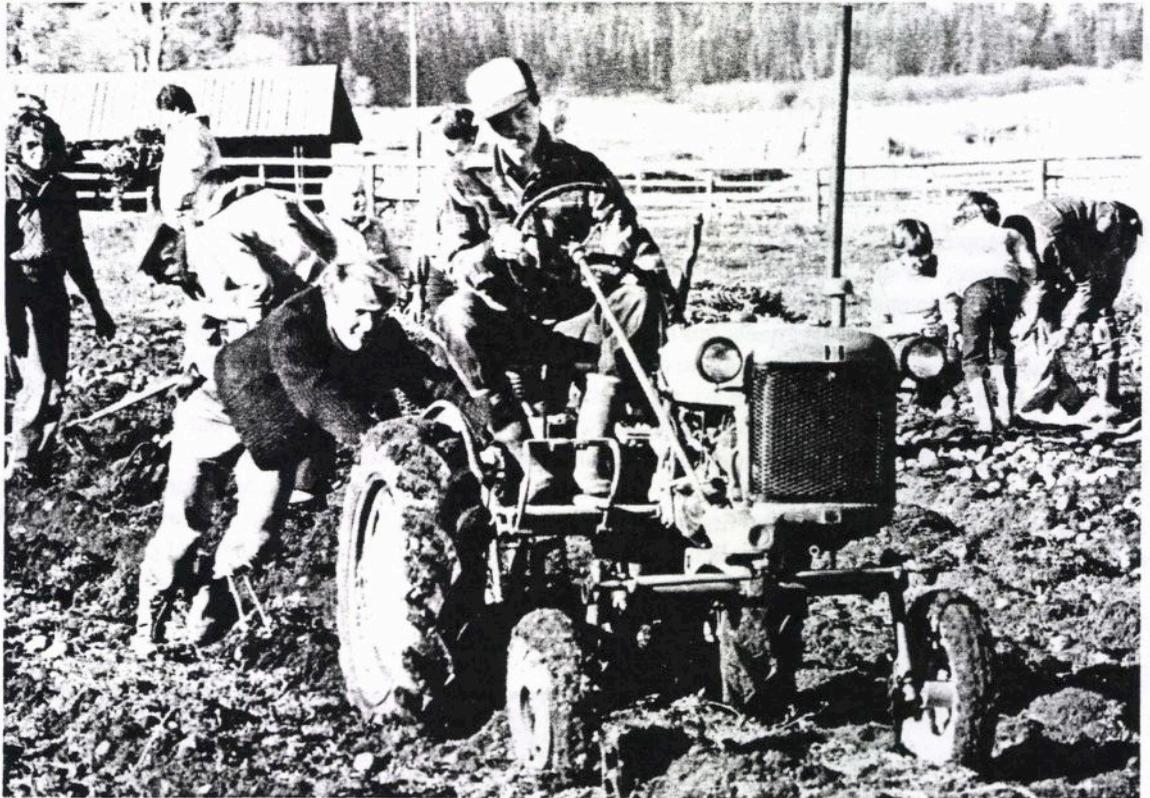


Stephan C. Rasch/Camphill Village

Rich Miller was a member of Kindred Community and writer for their community newsletter. As a peace activist he has participated in demonstrations against U.S. nuclear bomb

testing and is now imprisoned as a result of his physical opposition inside the testing zone.

Plowing the garden after a wet spring at Oakwood Farm



Oakwood Farm/Emissaries

they would clearly not be talking about the same thing; what faith means to one is radically different from what faith means to the other.

Faith gives us all assurances that there is a point to life. Faith is also the source of our answers to what that point is. Yet we have to be careful here: “faith” as a word is so abstract and ambiguous that it cannot stand by itself as an answer. We have to find a clear way of showing what we mean. This is where the Why questions differ from the detail questions.

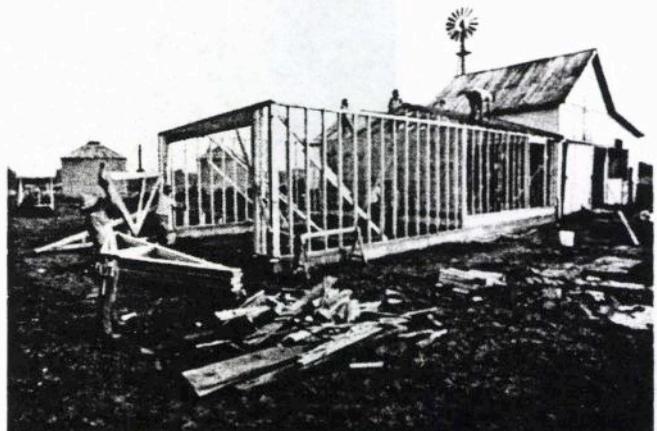
How, then, can we know what a person means when they say faith is why they do what they do? The only way we can really know is simply by looking at how those persons live their lives, at the specific things they do, and the choices they make. For no matter how much we try to add to that basic answer, the words have no life of their own. Unless they are placed in the context of a person’s life, the words mean nothing.

This leaves us with a paradox: The answer to “Why do we do what we do?” can only be found in what we do.

We do what we do because of faith, yes, and because our faith tells us that there is more to life than meets the eye. But the only way we can give meaning to our answer is to show what this “more” is — to actually do what we are trying to explain: community, service, living simply, and all the rest. Our lives are the clearest exposition of what we mean by faith.

Our lives speak the truth as we see it far more directly than our words ever can. In this sense our lives are the most authentic answers that we can give to the question “Why do we do what we do?” ❖

A construction project at Oakwood Farm, Indiana



Oakwood Farm/Emissaries

Why Live Communally?

by David Thatcher

Why live communally? The answers are as varied as the community residents themselves: to reconnect with deeper personal currents; to get away from our frenetic, overpopulated, yet ironically lonely world; to connect with the rhythms of nature; to follow a particular spiritual path. Yet as varied as the reasons may be, most community residents I know acknowledge their reverence for the sacredness of life. Some living in community don't consider themselves spiritual in the least; others speak of spirit as the very essence of community, of life itself. Beyond such beliefs, I find that this fundamental reverence for life provides the common ground vital to allowing the deeper nature and purpose of community to be seen.

Several years ago I acknowledged that it wasn't valid for me to achieve "enlightenment", or ultimate fulfillment, atop a mountain, isolated from others. I noted that my consciousness, my living experience was and is inextricably intertwined with the rest of humanity. I found myself drawn to participate in a collective process perhaps akin to marriage, in which I acknowledged my responsibility to honor and respect, to love and support my fellows through their ups and downs, and through my own vacillations of clarity and energy. As a certain steadiness has been maintained in my living experience over a number of years — and I know I speak for many others — a depth of fulfillment has been discovered which overflows and connects with others the world around who share a concern for the well-being of the global community.

At my home, the 100 Mile Lodge, we speak of our community as a unit, an essential part of the world community. Webster's Dictionary defines unit as "a single thing or person or group that is a constituent of a whole." This whole initially may be seen as the community of which one is a part; yet living in a collective setting does not separate you from the rest of the world. In fact, as responsibility for the "marriage" agreement just mentioned is assumed, you find your-

self more deliberately connected to the world, because your current of respect, of love, for the fellows around you who represent many others worldwide, must consistently be maintained. The purpose of intentional community living is not to pleasantly interact when you wish, and retreat when situations become uncomfortable. Rather, communal living requires continual clarification; it requires expansive, balanced vision and maturity.

The proliferation of communities in the late 1960s and early 1970s has been useful in helping many to release isolated, self-serving habits and open to a more transcendent and consistently loving experience. Such a broad and unifying interrelatedness is undeniable.

The desecration of the Brazilian rain forest, for example, directly affects the ability of the earth's atmosphere to dissipate carbon monoxide generated on Los Angeles freeways; all the world's PCB incineration takes place at a plant near Birmingham, England; the brutal suppression of Chinese students in Tiananmen Square immediately shifted the world stock markets. Such examples are legion. Yet on a brighter note, the heartfelt experience of community, shared by some people in communities worldwide, contributes to the greater experience of world community. This spirit of world community, despite the suppression in China, actually runs deeply in the hearts of people everywhere. So deeply that even barriers between the Soviet Union and the western world, most notably the USA, appear to be dissolving.

Rupert Sheldrake, a well-known British plant physiologist, speaks of the morphogenetic field, the fact that the world doesn't function so much by preordained fate as by precedent. As precedents are set, the way is made easier for further developments of similar nature to occur. Scientists seeking to create new crystalline formations in laboratories are required to painstakingly prepare the components and environment, and may, after numerous failures,

David Thatcher, and his wife Carol, are long-term residents of 100 Mile Lodge, Canadian headquarters for Emissary Foundation International. Carol lived at Findhorn in the middle '70s. David is author of the book *Earthrise: A Personal Responsibility*. Together they have over 35 years of association with the communities, consciousness, and social change movements.

David and Carol's lectures, workshops and seminars have taken them throughout North America, Europe and Australasia. The Emissary Foundation International operates over 200 centers and communities worldwide. The Kripalu Center, also mentioned in this article, has some 75 closely associated support groups, primarily in the U.S.



*Young Emissaries from
100 Mile Lodge,
British Columbia.*

communities, noting the obvious resonance between them and those they represented, they acknowledged the ultimate importance of the consciousness of the individual. On the surface the lives and practices of the residents of these communities are quite different. Yet the deeply shared interest in expressing noble qualities of character through the simple circumstances of daily living revealed a depth of individual communion with the innate design of life which was thus able to be

100 Mile Lodge/Emissaries

facilitate the appearance of a new variation of crystalline structure. But once created, such new forms appear as if by magic in laboratories the world around, totally unconnected in any visible way with the initial experiment. I expect this parallels the pioneering being done by many who have chosen to live their lives with reverence for the sacredness of life. Such pioneering surely helps the spirit of community appear more easily throughout the world.

Recently Michael Exeter, who coordinates the International Emissary Community, met with Dr. Amrit Desai, founder of the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, headquartered in Lenox, Massachusetts. In an address to these two expansive

shared collectively. It was acknowledged that "groups" can't come together. Only as communion is known within can it be shared with others. Thomas Merton, a 20th century Trappist monk, recorded in his diary:

I have the immense joy of being a man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now I realize what we all are! And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are walking around shining like the sun.

We live in a time that invites, indeed requires, as many as are willing to abide in a living experience which cannot be explained, shining like the sun. As reverence for the sacredness of life is maintained in living, the experience of community long sought on earth is sure to become more present. As sure as the sun rises and shines each day. ❖

(*Earthrise: A Personal Responsibility*, 165 pages, is available by writing to David Thatcher, P.O. Box 667, Lynden WA 98264.)

*We live in a time in which
global inter-relatedness is
undeniable.*

Let's Come... Unity

by Swami Satchidananda

On March 12, 1988, at Yogaville, InterCommunities of Virginia held its Fourth Annual Conference, which was attended by communitarians from Common Ground, The Gathering, Gesundheit Institute, Innisfree Village, MSH Association, New Land, Shannon Farm, Springtree, Twin Oaks and Yogaville. The day-long conference was followed by Sat-sang where Swami Satchidananda, founder of Yogaville, spoke on the topics of community, equality, individuality, and interreligious strife:

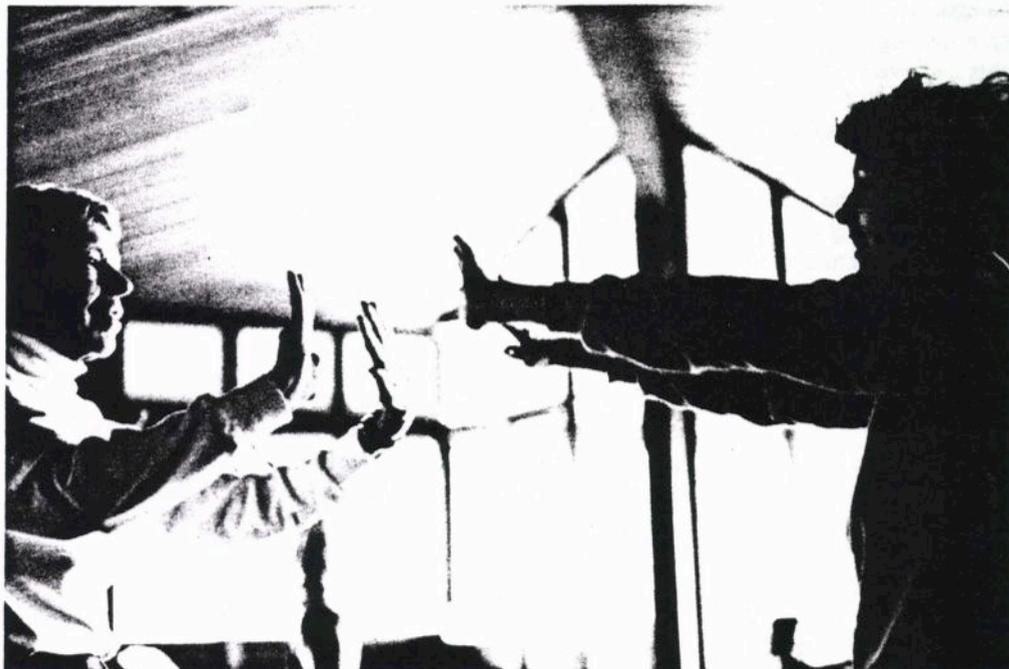
It was so nice to have the InterCommunities gathering. In a way Yogaville is expanding.

Mohini gave a nice story about the watch and how important it is to recognize and respect even the littlest swinging wheel. That clearly showed that everything is important. Nobody is insignificant. Everything has its own place. And so it is with intentional communities.

But sometimes that philosophy is misinterpreted. Just because everybody is equally important doesn't mean that everybody should be doing the same thing.

We have our own individuality... at the same time, equality.

Equality in function for a common goal. The functions may vary because we're all individuals. But nobody can substitute for you. You have a special purpose, a special mission to fulfill. And you are the only one who can fulfill your mission.



Josh Gitomer

*Mount Madonna Center
in Watsonville, CA.*

Swami Satchidananda is a spiritual leader and yoga teacher, participant in ecumenical religious services around the world and founder of Integral Yoga Institutes (IYI). In the late '60s he moved from India to the United States, where he has founded a number of training centers and intentional communities. Swami Satchidananda leads peace delegations and spiritual pilgrimages to major shrines throughout the world. He now resides at Satchidananda Ashram/Yogaville, an intentional community of diversity in

the mountains of central Virginia where the international headquarters of IYI is located, as well as the site of the Light of Truth Universal Shrine (LOTUS). The LOTUS is a beautiful South Indian-style shrine which contains the holy scriptures of all the world's major religions and includes public displays of sacred objects dedicated to the ending of strife and violence among all believers. (Copyright, March 12, 1988, Integral Yoga Internat'l, Buckingham, VA 23921, reproduced by permission.)

Common Purpose Vs. Ego

Equality comes in realizing that we are all doing different jobs for a common purpose. That is the aim behind any community. The very name community means let's come together to recognize the unity. Come... unity. We are coming to experience the unity.

I'm very, very glad that at least the communities have a community feeling among themselves. How often that is forgotten or ignored. Take for example the religions. Each religion is a community by itself. But when some of the so-called religious communities function, they seem to inject their own egoism into it and say, "What we're doing is right. What you're doing is wrong. Our way is the best way. Unless you come and get onto our bandwagon, you can never go to the place where we are supposed to be going."

Often we come across this even in the name of Yoga. Some would say only Kundalini Yoga is the way. Others, no, no, only Tantra Yoga. Or Mantra Yoga. There's nothing wrong with Yoga; but we limit it by our own egoism.

In this way so many quarrels, fights and even massacres happen in the name of religion; each one says, "Mine is the only way." If we can only rise above our egoism, we can learn to respect and accept everybody's approach.

The Bhagavad Gita says that you have no business in disturbing somebody's faith. If someone is following a way, help them if you want, to go in their way. Show them how to reach the goal, but in their own way.

If anybody comes and says that this is the only way, "My way is the best," that means they are far away from their own path. They have not reached it, but are only talking about it. Experience is really different from talking about it.

So let us realize the importance of learning to respect each other. Variety is the spice of life. We want variety in people and in communities. But it can be enjoyed only when we recognize the purpose, the common purpose behind life. Then respecting each other becomes easy. We don't criticize the other person. We don't claim superiority. All those things just drop out.

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Then we can live harmoniously. That would certainly make a heaven on Earth! ❖

(Books by Swami Satchidananda, including *Kailash Journal: Pilgrimage into the Himalayas*, 148 pages, \$6.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling, are available from Satchidananda Ashram — Yogaville, Rt. 1, Box 172, Buckingham, VA 23921, 804-969-1500.)



Gordon Davidson/Sirius

*University Program at
Sirius Community, MA.*

Ten Main Aspects of the New Utopian Vision

by the Tarrytown Group

1. **A dual commitment to transformation**, both personal and planetary: dedication to individual growth and to serving the needs of humanity and society.
2. **Cooperation**: a community based on sharing, pooling of finances and human resources, rather than competition and being "Out for Number One."
3. **A deep respect for the environment**: restoring ecological balance and "living lightly" on the earth; developing organic agriculture, and solar and wind energy.
4. **A spirit of experimentalism** in both work and relationships: committing to "working through" the shadow side of the personality, to confront conflict between individuals and within the self, to bring out the dark side for transformation into affirmative alliances.
5. **A new economics**: finding businesses and ways to manage them that put human values on the bottom line and still return a healthy profit.
6. **Common sense**: determination to find practical solutions for conquering society's problems of pollution, inflation, violence and alienation.
7. **A holistic approach to health**: exploring alternative healing — such as herbs, acupuncture, nutrition and massage — and preventive methods aimed at helping people take responsibility for their own health.
8. **Building a positive vision**: creating examples of a better society, and striving to live tomorrow's world today — then making their insights available, through outreach programs, to local communities and the world at large.
9. **Self-government by consensus**: working with group process and evoking the intuition of community members in the decision-making process.
10. **A world network**: cooperating with similar communities throughout the world; sharing skills and services, taking political action, and forming the vital nucleus of a new civilization. ❖



Editor's Note: This vision statement is reprinted, with permission, from the March, 1983, issue of the Tarrytown Letter. It concisely captures the major trends of today's communities movement, and outlines some of the cultural alternatives frequently mentioned in our research. This vision is VERY general — there is considerable variety in the degree to which any single community embraces any particular value mentioned.

It is our sense that most communities share many of the values listed above, or at least agree substantially with the underlying principles (though not necessarily with the specific forms). This list is offered as an observation, not as an endorsement.

The Tarrytown Group may be reached at Box 222, Tarrytown NY 10591.



100 Mile Lodge/Emissaries

Personal Growth

How far-reaching is the effect of community life on an individual's personal growth?

Geoph Kozeny of the Community Catalyst Project depicts the cooperative lifestyle pressures that can induce us to "spread ourselves too thin, and eventually burn out." In **Long On Idealism, Short On Time** he suggests alternative perspectives that can help us become happier, more effective and creative, and more oriented toward personal growth.

Patch Adams is a "happy hippie doctor" from the Gesundheit Institute, a community based on free and bartered health services. In his **Prescription for Community** he describes the personal growth and security he experiences in his own life, and suggests that shared living is a generically sane and healthful lifestyle.

Women in Community, edited by Julie Mazo, combines insights from two conversations — one among women at Springtree, and another among women at Shannon Farm. The participants elaborate on their experiences and growth as individuals in community, and offer thoughts on support, work, security, family, companionship, privacy, and other aspects of community life.

Dan Greenberg is a University of Minnesota student doing graduate work on **Children in Community**. Based on extensive correspondence and visits with North American communities, he concludes that for children and adults alike, "the most important product of intentional communities (may be) process itself... how groups can work and grow together in joyful and humane ways and, at the same time, get things done."

In each of these four articles, personal growth and the process of community are seen as being inextricably and joyfully intertwined.