

PEPTALK

GROUP MARRIAGE NEWS

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A GROUP MARRIAGE OF TWO?

by Sonia Lyris

So you are a group marriage of two, or even one, and you wonder if you're polyfidelitous yet. Maybe you've been looking to expand your family for a while and not having a lot of luck. Don't despair and don't give up! Polyfidelity is a lifestyle and an attitude, not a number.

We're a group marriage of two, and we've been looking for more family for about five years. There have been plenty of times when we wondered if there was something wrong with us, or if we would ever have a group marriage. We finally figured out that we already do have a group marriage, and that if it takes a long time to find someone we love with the same depth that we love each other, it will be well worth the wait.

But what do we do in the meantime? What are our strategies for finding friends who might be family? Are we too picky? How picky is too picky? And who are we, anyway?

WHO WE ARE

Glad you asked. We are Sonia and Devin, wife and husband. We've been together almost seven years, and our relationship is built on a passion for each other's company that continues to surprise and delight us.

We feel that while our time, energy and resources might be limited, our love certainly isn't. We know that one person, however wonderful and talented, is unlikely to satisfy all of our intimate needs for the rest of our lives. Yet we don't have an open relationship, nor are we interested in one. This means to us that we keep the lion's share of our intimacy and resources reserved for each other, our family, so that the resources and intimacy we give out comes back to us as directly as possible.

We base our family relationship on a desire to be together and love together. We believe that without a powerful desire to be together, we cannot hope to work out the often very challenging details of actually living together.

We believe in consensus for decision making when possible, and we aim for skill-based leadership. When we look at someone as possible family, we look together. When we choose, we choose together.

FINDING FAMILY

Well, we're fine ones to talk, if you judge success in this area by the number of mates you have. Yet we have a pretty fine marriage already, and continue to work hard to be good mates for each other. Perhaps we just got lucky finding each other, and maybe luck is a crucial ingredient in finding mates. But we feel it pays to give other strategies a try, too.

The main thing we do is not keep our expanded family goals a secret any more than we have to. We believe that telling people about what we want is the first step towards getting it. We were pleasantly surprised, when we started explaining our group marriage interests, to find that most people were both interested and supportive. The more we discussed our goals, the greater exposure we had to those who might be similarly interested.

To us, and perhaps to you, group marriage seems both reasonable and natural, but the social rules "out there" in the world don't generally include dyads who date. If our friends and acquaintances don't know our intents, our behavior will seem inexplicable and perhaps even immoral, so we try to let people know as clearly as we can what our orientation is.

Not surprisingly, we found that not everyone who is open to or interested in group marriage is listed in the P.E.P. Directory or involved in the polyfidelity community. Our single and most serious courtship was with a man whose only connection to polyfidelity was that he

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had read and enjoyed the novel *Courtship Rite* by Donald Kingsbury, which, among other things, shows a world where group marriages **are** the norm.

We are fortunate to currently live and work in an area where alternate lifestyles are well-tolerated. We might otherwise have had to be a lot more circumspect. When we aren't sure about someone's reaction to our lifestyle, we will often mention *Courtship Rite* or some of Heinlein's novels to see if they have a common base with us from which to discuss group marriages.

FINDING NEW FAMILY BEGINS AT HOME

Probably the best way to attract new members to your family is to have a fantastic family. So what to do in the meantime is to make your existing family the best you can. If your existing family is only one person, same advice! Work to make your internal and external life as clear and well-integrated as you would have your ideal family be.

I've heard it said that one is never happy in the future but only in the present, and the same thing is certainly true of your family. Make your family superb now, in whatever way your ideals dictate, and you will attract the kind of people who want to live the way you do.

ARE WE TOO PICKY? ARE YOU?

Well, we're picky, we admit it. We figure that you can't mold a person to be what you want them to be, you have to take them mostly as you find them, so it makes sense to look for what you really want in potential family members. We think you should be as selective as you need to be.

On the other hand, it pays to know why and in what way you are picky. When you write your list of requirements and preferences (you **do** have a written description of what you want in family members, don't you?), make sure that your requirements are essential in nature and that there are as few as possible. Review your description of what you want every now and then — you may find that it changes. The better you know what you want, the better you can explain it to other people, and the more likely you are to get it. Explaining your needs to other people will invariably improve your own understanding, so do it whenever you can. We have found that having a written description of what we want in our family to be quite valuable.

So how are we picky? Well, our essential criteria for intimacy is a sense of connection and love, a kind of

magic between us and another person. This is the connection that is the kernel of our love and commitment to each other. Without it we would never have weathered together the storms that we have passed through, and we doubt we could ever weather storms with other people without a similar magic. For us, the details of personal habits and such aren't primarily important. It would be nice if those things were compatible but when it comes down to it the **connection** is the essence of the relationship, and everything else is weighed against the strength of that magic.

While you are being selective, it's important to seriously consider everyone you look at. If you think someone is potentially family for you, why? If not, why not? We've found that examining our reactions to people teaches us a tremendous amount about ourselves and what we want. Look at people as often as you can, and again and again. People change, circumstances change, and you may even change.

So how picky is too picky? It depends on what you are after, of course, and how long you are willing to wait to get what you want.

REMEMBER, THIS STUFF IS HARD

Remember, this stuff is hard. It bears repeating. Relating to one's self is challenging enough, another person makes it harder, and when you add even more people you find out an awful lot about yourself and what you are made of. We consider group marriages to be post-graduate studies in relationships. Give yourself credit for what you **do** have.

Be careful how you measure your success. Finding just one other person to be family is tough. You shouldn't feel inadequate if you don't have a six person family yet. Finding the right people takes time, energy, and luck.

If you are a dyad and wonder, as we did, what is wrong with you that you are still "only" two, try to remember how hard it was to find (and keep) the one you already have. If you are currently a group marriage of ONE, you are probably acutely aware of how hard it is to find your second. You know the numbers—if you have a **successful** marriage of two, you are doing better than most people "out there" in the monogamous world already!

But if the dream of polyfidelity has you in its grip, don't stop looking just because it's hard or frustrating. It's the nature of good relationships to be at least

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READER'S FORUM

Dear Loving Friends,
I'm enthusiastic in renewing my supporting membership. I feel guilty because I promised you a long paper and I did not find any time to write it.

I would insist on several points: 1) Your action is an important contribution to a more general struggle to build a future civilization relieved of mutilating sexual and loving affective alienations. A civilization with a superior type of loving relations between persons. The present closed monogamous marriage will be considered in history schoolbooks as an aspect of life in the ages of barbarity! 2) Being able to assume fully, deeply a group marriage life supposes, requires, implies a psychological and affective reconditioning, rebuilding of the sexual and affective profile of many members. So explained perfectly many theoreticians (Wilhelm Reich, many feminists, etc.) in our societies, a conditioning for a "straight," conventional way of life is etched in the sexual, psychological, cultural, affective structure of persons, by the family and the society. This conditioning begins in the childhood. The personal reconditioning and rebuilding is important work. It could be done under the form of some therapies, consciousness-raising groups, bodysex groups, etc. To break inhibitions, dedramatize sex, destroy jealousy. To learn real loving relations with persons and not with sexual objects. 3) In this frame, learning to be bisexual seems important. Bisexuality is not an intermediate position between homo and hetero but a superior form of loving relation with persons. Being able to have sensual physical relations with a friend, regardless of his/her sex, naturally. Bisexuality is for me a superior moral value. Personally, I had the chance of being for familial reasons, a so called he-Lesbian. A conventional but rare sexual and psychological profile (so were Condorcet, LaClous, Fourier, Gauguin, Elvard and maybe Mozart). 4) The action of the feminist movement is essential. There is a deep convergence between their and our aims.

The most important basis to build a loving community is a common cultural, philosophical, social and moral vision of the world and the life. This leads to deep complicity, a total confidence of every member, a global loving structure in the group. Personal reconditioning and rebuilding for living in a group marriage must not be mutilation, a bondage, but a liberation, a way to bring out the own original richness of every person. A group marriage must be a superior form of happiness and of self achievement for every member.

If some member of PEP has access to the International University Electronic mail EARN/BITNET, here is my electronic address: Verroust @ FRP8V11 (My box in Paris VIII University Computer).

With Love,
Gerard
France

Dear Gerard,

I agree with all but one of your comments. Bi-sexuality seems to me to be simply a sexual preference, not greater than or less than homosexuality or heterosexuality. I do not find that dictating or inducing anyone to choose to express their sexuality in any way other than they themselves desire relevant. There are both physical and cultural determinants to a person's gender identity and sexual preference, but in the end, "shoulding" a person into political bisexuality is no better than "shoulding" them into heterosexuality.

For those who have found bisexuality a way to positively express their feelings for intimates of both sexes, bravo. For heterosexuals or homosexuals, relating platonically with intimates who are not their sex of preference can be just as rewarding and as much a bonding experience.



Dear PEP,

Here are a few resources that might interest members, especially bi-sexual ones. 1) The North American Bisexual Network is now in formation. Write to: NABN, 584 Castro St, Box 422, San Francisco, CA 94114 or call Lani Kaahumanu at (415) 821-3534 for more information. 2) Two computer networks: a) Utopian-Network: P.O. Box 1146, NY, NY 10156 for more information, or call Geir Blum at (516) 842-7518. Modem hookups available through (212) 686-5248. I've never used this service (which advertizes as being for bisexuals specifically), but have read of it in bi journals; b) ALTERNATIVE: contact on BITNET. alternates2dadla.la.tek.com I've been connected with this through Oberlin College's computers—a fantastic forum for all sorts of discussions on relationships, sexuality, gender, etc...Polyfidelity comes up quite often! Unfortunately, I've not been able to be in touch with them for quite a while, and couldn't be of much help in guiding you to them.

Good luck,
Thomas
New York



Dear PEP,

I have a few thoughts to offer to people in small groups, couples, or triads, looking for other family members. We may spend a long time looking for the right people without much chance to practice or reflect on what we'll do when we meet them.

Will you "uncouple" and let each person decide individually whether to be with the new people? Or will you decide together by some agreed upon process? What can you do about people having different senses of timing? Partners may need different amounts of time to feel comfortable making major life changes. How much support and reassurance will be given to a person who is feeling insecure or threatened by the changes, before it is felt that weakness and jealousy are manipulative?

I hope that addressing these concerns and treating yourself/ves as the nucleus of a new family will make for a smoother transition for somebody.

Susan
Pennsylvania

Dear Susan,

Good questions. I'd like to start by responding that if a family "uncouples" everytime they consider a new member then it doesn't seem to me that they were a family in the first place. A family grows by building, not by breaking down. If when I meet a new person I no longer know if I want to be in a family with my current partners, my current relationships must be of low quality or I must be experiencing quite a shift in values or life choices. To me it is clear that a family is the building block, and it adds to itself as it evolves and grows. This is not to say that if a twosome incorporates a third that this new person should simply be swallowed up, but neither should the two be broken down. Most families have agreements about incorporating new people into the group. It is usually a consensus decision, because obviously no one should become involved in a primary relationship with someone they wouldn't individually choose. It can happen that the courtship process brings to light differences among people who were in a family together and these might convince them that they should no longer be together.

Timing or the pace at which different people develop relationships certainly does vary, but setting some decision points can really help. Usually, it seems that if after six months of seriously considering joining together into a family someone still can't say "yes," the whole thing isn't ever going to fly. Group talks where

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somewhat challenging. It isn't easy. Remember to give yourself credit wherever you can.

REMEMBER TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF!

The self is the essential building block of any successful family. If you don't take good care of yourself, you can't take good care of anyone else. It's important to keep your home in order so that you can invite guests inside.

If, as a dyad, you barely have enough time to keep yourself or your mate feeling good, how can you expect to bring in a third or fourth person? Remember that the position of a third mate is a hard one, in some ways the hardest possible. Your third has to be the one making the relationship unconventional by society's standards, and has to learn about two new people when you each have only to learn about one. A dyad who brings in a third should be as stable and healthy as possible, and a healthy dyad takes time and energy to keep fit. If you live a busy life, have a few pans on the fire **and** an active marriage (nevermind children), you shouldn't expect finding and adding more people to be easy, if even possible.

You should take the best care of your self that you can. Make the time and energy to take care of the family you have, if you want it to grow.

We continue to believe that somewhere out there are the Prince and Princess Charmings we've been actively and not-so-actively searching for. We found each other, so we know it's possible to find someone we can each love deeply. But we also believe that we can't make our family bigger, we can only allow it to happen by being the best we can and by taking good care of ourselves. One way or another, the universe will send us family when it is good and ready, or perhaps when WE are good and ready. Or maybe we will never find anyone else. Learning to accept who we are and what we already have with joy has been a wonderful study for us. Our family, like yours—whatever its size—should be its own reward. ❖

**Love is the triumph of
imagination over
intelligence.**

—H. L. Mencken

SPEEDWELL SAGA

PART I

Vicki and Peggy and I entered into a threeway committed relationship in Eugene, Oregon, on August 14, 1988. Ryam has asked that I write a few words for the newsletter now and again about my experiences as a member of a group "marriage." I put the word "marriage" in quotes because I don't like the word. It's more specific than "committed relationship," but during its long history, it has picked up connotations that I don't like to think of as being a part of my relationship with Peggy and Vicki. They think differently about what the word implies, and even feel a fondness for it, so occasionally they call me "husband" and one another "wife." I wince a little, but it's a small issue on the BIG DEAL scale; certainly not important enough to spend much time discussing here. I just wanted you to know how I feel and what I mean when I write about "committed relationships" or when I refer to Vicki and Peggy as "partners."

Well, damned if I know what to write about. It'd be easy if I had a set of questions to work from. Not that that's what I want. What I want is just to sit here cozily on this wintry day writing "stream of consciousness" stuff while I sip from a cup of warm coffee and glance out the window every now and then to enjoy the falling snow. I love writing, but I hate having to plan what I'm going to say or to feel like I have to stick to the subject. I can do it, of course, once I decide what the subject is...

HOW I CAME TO BE INVOLVED IN A MULTI-ADULT COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP

by Lowell T. Newby

(Switching to a junior high school format sometimes helps)...Peggy and I have been together an awfully long time—seventeen years at last count. Before I met Vicki, I never loved anyone half so much in a romantic way as I loved her. No one ever brought me so much pleasure, stood beside me so intimately through life's hard times, or earned so large a chunk of my trust and respect. I adored her from the moment we met, and I've never regreted our becoming partners. So, when I encountered the idea of committed group relationships through a PEP magazine ad several years ago, I was delighted to envision the joy that Peggy and I had achieved with one another radiating outward like the warmth of a fire to include other people. Or to put it

another way, I can compare my relationship with Peggy to walking through the woods and discovering a hidden valley into which pours the most beautiful waterfall imaginable. And not only is the valley home to a pristine waterfall; everything in the valley is a great deal prettier, and happier, and more interesting than anything in the outside world. How could I not want to share such a find with other people?

I have other, secondary reasons, for wanting a group relationship: less loneliness; more social stimulation; greater emotional and financial security increased opportunities for personal growth and exploration; a desire to escape frequent feelings of boredom; an outlaw mentality which often causes my interest to be perked by lifestyles that my society condemns and a desire to build my career (albeit unpaid) as an intrepid explorer of the psychosocial frontier. Probably one of the few commonly mentioned reasons for my lifestyle choice that I have not mentioned is sexual variety. For someone like myself who spent years in an open relationship, the idea of being limited to two sexual partners seems more like deprivation (in quantity) than variety. Now that I think about it, the only serious reservation I remember having about polyfidelity was whether I could live with the fact that out of all the desirable women I might encounter, I would have to limit myself to relating physically with only two (or maybe someday three or four). If it hadn't been a bottomline issue with Peggy and Vicki, we would have an open group relationship, I'm sure. But since it was a bottomline issue for them, I came around to saying, "Okay, since it's more important to you to have a closed relationship than it is for me to have an open relationship, I am willing to keep things closed." So far, things have been so emotionally intense that I can't imagine it being any other way. In less than two months, I made a lifelong commitment with Vicki, my Mother died, Peggy and I sold our house in Eugene (a city whose ground I felt like kissing every day of the two years that I lived there), and the three of us bought a house in Minneapolis (a city whose frozen earth my lips would stick to if I even tried to kiss it).

One observation that made it easier for me to give up being sexually open was that I found so few people who were both able and willing to maintain the kind of longterm intimacy that I most value. I don't want flings, doggone it; I want friends to grow old with because nothing else seems real enough to matter. Other pleasures are like so many nice dreams—awaken and they're gone; by noon they're half forgotten. Maybe more is possible, but I seldom experienced it. Except for Vicki, the women I became involved with either wanted to keep things light, or else they eventually

wanted me to leave Peggy and be monogamous with them.

When I proposed the idea of forming a committed group relationship to Peggy in 1984, she wasn't unwilling to explore the idea, but she wasn't enthusiastic either. Before long, we entered into a correspondence with a couple from Ohio who were looking for the same thing and whose names we got from an ad in *Communities* magazine. The man and I quickly became intense letter writers. Two, three, even four times a week, I would hear from him, and letters were traveling from my hometown of Bogue Chitto, Mississippi, to his home with equal frequency. Everyday, Peggy and I (but especially me) felt better and better about the chances of us all someday living together. Finally, the four of us arranged to meet for a weekend at a cabin in a Tennessee State Park, a point chosen because it lay midway between our houses.

We all arrived with such high hopes that things would "work out" that we had sex within three hours, but by the time the weekend was over, our hopes were dashed. I found it incredible how much we had all managed to overlook in our letters. The differences had been recorded, yet in our enthusiasm we had ignored them. For example, Blaine and Sheila (I'm using fake names just in case) wanted to live in a remote rural area; Peggy and I wanted to get away from such a place. Blaine and Sheila wanted to raise pigs, chickens, cattle, and rabbits; I was a vegetarian, and Peggy was the next thing to being one. Blaine and Sheila were committed to their own offbrand style of Christianity; Peggy was an agnostic and as an atheist, I considered Christianity a moral and social blight.

The drive home seemed long and sad, especially in contrast with the ride up. Peggy and I had come to feel so lonely and isolated in Mississippi because of our "liberal ideas" that the thought of going away to Ohio to form a family with Blaine and Sheila had become like THE END to us. Peggy's reaction was to say, "Polyfidelity is just too complicated, and I'm so hurt that I don't want to try anything like this ever again." I didn't agree, but since we had no other prospects for family anyway, I let things ride. Peggy and I were in agreement that our values had become so at odds with most everyone we knew in Mississippi that although we both had Southern roots, we had no rational choice but to move elsewhere.

I proposed to Peggy that since having a sense of "family" was important to us both that we look into communal living as an alternative to polyfidelity. She agreed, so I began an active search by mail for com-

munes. We browsed through the resulting information like two kids through the Sears Christmas "Wish Book" certain that we would find many places where we could live happily. We even hoped to find a commune close to home so we could visit our families frequently. I suggested that she and I pull up stakes and visit communes that sounded good until we found one that we both liked. Peggy thought that sounded like more economic insecurity than she could handle, so we finally agreed that she would stay home and earn a paycheck while I went traveling, then she would make long weekend visits to places I thought she would like. My first visit was to East Wind in southern Missouri. I had planned to stay for a week or two, but I became so homesick for Peggy that I left after two days and drove all the way home that same day. Like a fledgling bird, I gradually began making longer trips. On two occasions, I was gone as long as eight weeks, and I visited communes as far away as New Hampshire to the north and Boulder to the west. I always missed Peggy terribly, but I had little trouble finding other sexual partners, and they alleviated my loneliness somewhat. They also helped me to feel like an okay person. Mississippi had become like poison to me. I had never experienced anything but the culture of the rural South, and although I had hope of finding a better place for Peggy and me, I often wondered if we wouldn't feel like outsiders wherever we went. So, for me to travel about and find people who seemed to like and accept me and who sometimes exemplified that fondness by taking me to bed meant a lot.

Months passed, and I discovered that finding a commune with which we were compatible wasn't going to be as easy as we had hoped. I soon began to avoid rural communes because the members usually seemed to work long hours at boring jobs and to live in near squalor. Also, they often required members to turn over whatever material goods they owned. This meant that if you ever left the commune, as most people seemed to eventually do, you left with only the shirt on your back. NowayJose.

Many of the longterm communes I visited, whether rural or not, were based on the members sharing similar beliefs about a wide variety of issues, and they were often dominated by a charismatic leader. Most of the few that remained were composed of people who came together for economic reasons such as sharing mortgage payments, and so their members were not necessarily that involved in one another's lives. I began to think that Peggy and I might have to start our own commune. Even though my findings were discouraging, she made several flights on long weekends

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to visit the places that I found least objectionable.

Finally, in March of 1986, I visited The Foundation for Feedback Learning, a large commune on Staten Island. From the first, I felt as if I had found a home. I called Peggy and told her to fly to New York as soon as possible because I had discovered a place where the members had developed strong longterm ties, where self-exploration and personal growth were goals, where there was no catechismic-like set of beliefs that people had to ascribe to, and where I felt such acceptance as I had never known before.

Peggy did fly to New York, but for several reasons her visit was not a pleasant one. She had been sick for months with relatively minor ailments, and was currently recovering from strep throat; she was tired of staying home alone and working while I was off having what seemed to her like marvelous adventures; she hated New York City on sight; the three large buildings which housed the commune were not as "nice" as what she was used to; and so on. Much to my astonishment, she practically came off the plane lambasting me for having done everything but assassinate Abraham Lincoln, but what hurt most was that she accused me of staying with her only because she supported me financially while I roamed about the country fucking everything in sight. We spent the three days Peggy was there in what seemed like one long session with one of the members named Mildred who was a marriage counselor. By the time Peggy left, Mildred had told us that the relationship was in serious trouble, as indeed it was. Months passed before Peggy and I once again felt pleasure in being together.

Peggy left New York with the understanding that she and I would move there for a trial period of one year during which time we would be monogamous. But just two days before she and I made this agreement, she had accepted a temporary nursing assignment in Fresno (we had reached the point of being willing to go anywhere to get away from Mississippi), so the plan we worked out was for us to go there for four months and then return to New York. We never made it back.

Our stay in California was a tough time for us. Peggy worked like a dog, and I hurt my knee playing volleyball our first week there, so instead of finding a temporary job as I had intended, I lay around our apartment in pain. We had no friends and could find few avenues through which to meet people, so, abhorring phones as I do, I sent letter after letter to New York describing how bad things were for us. I didn't specify

what my needs were, but expected people to intuit them and to give me some sort of overwhelming show of support. When that didn't come, I was disappointed.

Less than a week before Peggy's contract ended, she and I reevaluated our decision to move to New York. I took the seeming lack of concern for my unhappiness on the part of the people at the FFFL as a confirmation of something that I had come to suspect about communes—that their members are so caught up with the world within the commune that they have few resources left to share with people outside. This insular outlook was not something that I wanted for myself. Peggy's fear of the big city was another important factor in our decision, but the most important reason we decided against going was money. New York City is an expensive place to live, even communally. Although we had asked how expensive on at least two occasions, the conversation had always moved on to other things before we got an answer. When I pressed Mildred for an answer during a phone conversation from Fresno, I was astounded by how high the cost would actually be. When I told her of my disappointment, she suggested that money was too important a factor in my decision making. Maybe so.

With only four days left before Peggy's job was to end and we were to be out of our apartment, we still had no place in mind to move to (returning to the South was unthinkable), yet a decision came easily. We went to Eugene, Oregon. We had visited there before and had appreciated its size, the look of the town, its liberal social climate, its educated citizenry, its proximity to both the Cascades and the Pacific, its temperate weather, its low cost of living, and, of course, the PEP organization. The heck with West Virginia. "Almost heaven, Eugene, Oregon, Cascade Mountains, Willamette River..."

Catch you later. (To be continued...) ♦

The Speedwell Family is looking for contacts in the upper midwest for purposes of friendship exploration and a possible Minneapolis based rap group. We're Lowell, Peggy, and Vicki. Phone (612) 869-4685 or write us at 6725 Grand Avenue South, Richfield, MN 55423-2336.



READER'S FORUM

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everybody can be honest and feel safe enough to express their growing love or on-going fears can keep the group on a common path, especially when having a group family is the ultimate shared goal in the first place. Mutual support through any fears and insecurities is also a must. Some folks have a high need for reassurance because of their past relationship histories or their current life situation, but usually every person needs it at some point or another. As usual, in group relationships as in any relationship, each person is called upon to give as much as they can, to love as much as they can, and to work on themselves and their own limits as much as they can. Most people are not too experienced at intimate multiple relating and so need time to learn the necessary skills and to unlearn old cultural programs. Be generous, but don't relinquish your self-esteem in the process.



To all PEP members:

We are celebrating a quiet victory hereabouts, in a battle we hadn't intended to fight. I was re-reading some of the facts from *Group Marriage* by the Constantines, a research effort I greatly admire, and becoming increasingly smug as I read some facts to my family:

- almost all groups collapsed before the three year mark;
- only a few participants in the study were under 30, and none were under 25; and
- most group marriages formed from existing marriages.

You see, our core triad formed about three years ago; at almost 30, I'm the oldest; my partners range from 21 to 25; and we didn't have a legally recognized marriage among us until well after the group formed.

I think that re-reading has freed us from some delusions: one pioneering study, based on last decade's data, is no longer a valid benchmark. I hope that other families can find this as cheering as I do, freed from a sort of imminent deadline.

The Constantines are blunt about the difficulty they had in finding group marriages for examination. Thinking back, my first fiancée from over a decade ago gave long and serious consideration to building a group around the two of us. If her plans had worked

out (and it was a narrow thing), the Constantines would never have found us. We would have been a solo effort, completely apart from study groups, newsletters, and researchers alike. How many other independent pioneers have been overlooked?

So, here we sit, being a bad example for monogamy. While I sympathize with R.E. Ramcharan, we at Ravenscroft have put a lot of effort into establishing little rules and technical details, and now we have plenty of time "to know whose eyes meet whose..." without the tyranny of numbers, and we appear, almost accidentally, to be winners. And love, I think, has plenty to do with this victory.

So, raise a glass for Ravenscroft, for yourselves, and anyone else who dares risk happiness.

Anthony D. Blokzyl
for Ravenscroft Household
Maryland

*Dear Anthony,
Congratulations on creating a lifestyle that suits you. Based on the families I know of, most on-going groups were from existing partnerships; the ages of those involved range from their 20's through 60's; and probably most trials do end before three years are up. On the other hand, I know of several which have lasted over seven years—which isn't bad in this day and age when monogamy itself is so temporary. Perhaps, one day we'll have group photos of silver and golden anniversaries in the newspaper rather than just the current couples. Anyone who wants to put a notice of their anniversary or wedding, with or without photo, in PEPTALK, please send me the specifics. I'm sure we'd all enjoy reading about each others successes. ◆*

PERSONALS

Crystal Springs Florida: Create your own experience, meet other in a community relationship, for a weekend, week, month, or longer. All ages are welcome. There is no structure, obligation, or intention, just arrive open, non-judgemental, respectful, and ready to interdepend with others. Our property is relaxed, rural, with woods, and wildlife. There is swimming in crystal clear springs, pure drinking water, comfortable accommodations, and workshop space. All meals are family style. Bring: personal toiletries, towel, musical instruments, recipes, tapes, videos, crafts, art, bodywork skills, stories, or anything you wish to share with others. Inquire: (813) 782-4226

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

MEMBERSHIP

(All memberships are for one year)

● **Audience** \$ 9.00
(receive quarterly newsletter)

● **Supporting Member** \$18.00
(receive newsletter and will receive new Primer—available March '89. Also have access to the Network)

● **Full Member** \$60.00
(will receive new Primer —3/89, newsletter, and free entry to member network. Also complimentary copies of all publications and attendance to all activities)

MATERIALS

● **Primer**—New edition TBA
(available March '89. The definitive reference on the lifestyle)

● **Peptalk** Membership fee
(PEP's quarterly newsletter)

● **Audio tape** \$3.50
(lifestyle discussion on cassette)

● **PEP T-Shirt** \$10.00
(Show your colors! Stimulate conversation. Jade green. Beefy-T 100% cotton M L XL)

● **PEPCON III** August '89 TBA

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