

A SEXUAL MINORITY?

by Ryam Nearing

Gays, Lesbians, and bisexuals frequently describe themselves as sexual minorities because their choice in sexual partners differs from that of the majority. Those of us who see ourselves as polyfidelitous are also choosing something apart from the norm: our life includes multiple partners in the context of an all-primary family. Although many people are attracted to the idea of loving more than one spouse, rarely will they take relevant action in their own lives. This results in us also being few in number. For these reasons, polyfides clearly constitute a sexual minority.

Minorities serve society in significant ways. Diversity in any ecosystem is evidence of health and promotes survival. Culturally, having only one sexual option is confining and stagnant. Opening others to possibilities simply by living them out yourself is truly educational service. Actively defining a clear option makes it easier for others to follow the path and, of course, to go even further along it. This promotes ongoing human exploration and evolution. Artistically, pushing those boundaries set by convention and habit keeps life an exciting adventure and inspires others to design their own lives with some personal imagination. Diversity spices up bland old consensus reality, even if only via a vicarious thrill for most.

Thinking of yourself as a member of a minority does have a downside. Frequently, taking on a minority mentality means seeing yourself as a victim, powerless, and less than. Surrounded by an engulfing culture of serial monogamy, it can feel difficult to deal with the constant effort required to maintain differing, self-chosen values and goals. The presenting annoyances range from financial disincentives to social stigma. No access to married tax breaks, health insurance benefits for your partners, or automatic inheritance laws can stimulate feelings that someone's out to get you or, at least, treats you like you and your important family bonds don't exist (subtle shunning). Depending on

your own self confidence and flexibility in finding new ways to manage these challenges, you can feel victimized or simply choose to deal with them and move on.

While financial and governmental dealings are external, social pressures are less tangible and more internally insidious. Minorities are known to take on characteristics of the majority to increase acceptance. A member of a minority might find themselves behaving in certain ways to "pass" as a member of the majority. While from a practical perspective this may be expedient in renting apartments, staying in business, or maintaining your mother's love, it can still take a psychological toll and undermine your own self image. It adds a layer of falsity and artifice in social interactions and necessitates deceit, avoidance and partial truths. At times it can look easier to live like everybody else than to deal with the ubiquitous disapproval and discrimination. Of course, this is hardly possible. The psychological price of acting out mainstream roles everyday and even in your home life is much higher than the cost of using protective coloration to fit in on a case-by-case basis.

Dealing with the aura of moral and social "correctness" that the ways of the majority carry with them can also cost dearly. The assumption that intimate, loving relationships come in one man to one woman packets is so strong that everything else may seem wrong or peculiar by comparison. Vast numbers of people, who normally seem to have working brains, go dysfunctional when you talk about group marriage. They can't figure it out, despite the simplicity of the concept, because one man to one woman is all there is in their construct of reality. Other folks believe it's just plain wrong in the moral sense and this implies that if you choose this lifestyle you must be a bad person. It seems silly, but humans are susceptible to the opinions of others, especially when these opinions get codified into law, and so, when treated as immoral, minorities can start to feel like maybe they are immoral or even criminal.

Women who choose multiplicity are seen as "loose." In triads with one man and two women, the man may

(Continued on page 3)

PEPCON '89

This year, August is the month to meet in Eugene and talk to others in the lifestyle, get your questions answered, share your insights, and to laugh at and mourn those mistakes together. For PEPCON III we're planning another weekend of friendship and learning: a yearly time to reconnect, meet newcomers and celebrate our lifestyle together.

So mark out August 11, 12, & 13 on your calendar. Registration information will be mailed to members directly in May and we'll also include more details in the next issue of PEPTALK. We again plan to keep the costs down and maximize member input.

Everyone interested in putting on a scheduled workshop during the conference should contact Ryam Nearing as soon as possible with the following information:

Topic/title—
Outline—
Type of activities—
Materials or facilities needed—
Day/time you'll be available—

This year there will be only one scheduled workshop at any particular time, but we'll have plenty of room provided for additional, impromptu workshops and other activities simply for fun. Hope to see you there!!

(Please note that dates were chosen to maximize the possibility for great weather and also to coincide as closely as possible with the total eclipse of the full moon which will be visible all over North America on August 16th.) ♦

Official small print

PEP (Polyfidelitous Educational Productions) is a non-profit educational corporation. We publish learning materials and information about polyfidelity. Our materials describe direct experience and the ideas and theories which have developed from it. (See back page for publications.) Networking is another one of our functions. Peptalk is our official newsletter and is published quarterly. Return postage must accompany all submissions if they are to be returned, and no responsibility will be assumed for unsolicited materials. All rights in submissions, letters, and questions sent to PEP or Peptalk will be treated as unconditionally assigned for publication and copyright purposes and are subject to Peptalk's unrestricted right to edit and comment editorially unless prior agreements are made in writing. Deadline for our next issue is June 1, 1989. We'd love to hear from you! PEP, P.O. Box 5247, Eugene, OR 97405 ©Copyright 1989
Editor—Ryam Nearing Layout—Barry Northrop

COMING SOON

The new *Polyfidelity Primer* will be back from the printer this May (they promised) and we're looking forward to using this new book to get the word about polyfidelity out to more people. It's a basic resource text for newcomers to the idea and also contains a lot of information that will be useful to old timer's too. There are checklists, personal stories, resources, and plenty of lifestyle operating instructions and options.

It was an incredible project, our first bound book, and also a big printing expense! We were helped by a very generous grant from Syntropy Institute, a non-profit organization in California. And want to thank them very much for their support! (If you'd like to find out more about them and their activities, please write them at POB 51058, Palo Alto, California 94303.)

HOW TO GET YOURS

The *Polyfidelity Primer* will be automatically sent out to all our full members (thanks so much for your gracious financial support of PEP!). In addition, all our new supporting members since January 1, 1989 will receive a copy as part of their membership. For those of you who are already supporting members, we will happily send you a copy as part of your renewal process if you do so between now and June 30th of this year. And of course, any audience member who upgrades his or her membership before June 30th will also be eligible for a copy. To simply buy a book, please send \$7.95 along with \$1.50 for postage. ♦

FOR THE COMPLETE DICTIONARY

POLYFIDELITY (pol'ē fi del' i tē), noun, 1. a multiple adult committed relationship where each partner is primary to all other partners and the relationship is fidelitous, sexually and otherwise. 2. a fidelitous form of group marriage between all primary partners. 3. an exciting way to experience more love and more personal growth challenges than you ever thought possible.

LET'S NOT MEET BY ACCIDENT

Use PEP's NETWORKing service to connect with others interested in polyfidelity. Your 75 word self-description serves as an introduction to other participating members. Access details on page 10. Deadline for entry to summer issue is June 1st.

A SEXUAL MINORITY (continued from page 1) be seen as having a "harem," and deemed politically incorrect. In triads with one woman and two men, the men may be seen as pussy-whipped and the woman as having it all...two men to serve her. Those in group marriages may be told they're only in them to avoid the "true" intimacy that two perfect soulmates can know. And of course, last, but not least, there's always the ultimately pathetic "it's a sin" commentary from those who adhere to dogmatic and outdated interpretations of mythologies like Christianity or Mohammedanism (and countless others). These opinions of others may be a small or large irritant in your life, but they are one more pressure to deal with. They become extremely corrosive if you find yourself buying into them in times of low self-confidence or depression.

To counterbalance the constant negative input from the mainstream culture, members of a minority need to associate with one another and with others who are socially tolerant (or even celebrate diversity) to create some kind of supportive social circle. Within this circle, at least, the positive aspects of the group and the beneficial aspects of the lifestyle can be reinforced for mutual benefit. And always, a strong and positive self image is the best shield for deflecting social pressures from outside.

BORN A POLYFIDE

While members of many minorities are born belonging (race, religion, socio-economic status), sexual preference has both biological and cultural determinants. It is easy to find many gays or lesbians who have known from the youngest of ages what their preference was despite the fact that it was not the one that society told them it should be. This and studies in the effects of varying hormones on the later sexual preference of a particular embryo, support the biology theory, at least in some cases. It is also simple to find individuals who seem clearly influenced by experiences in their lives which directed them toward their current sexual preference status (this supporting the cultural or psychological theories).

Multiplicity has its own on-going argument. Some folks believe women are born monogamous while men are polygamous (few express the reverse of this). Or even that both men and women are born polygamous. Others think people should be monogamous because it's some god's or state's law, and therefore they condition their children towards monogamy right from birth. Most people simply assume the one man to one woman ratio with no thought involved at all.

Supporting theories for cultural determinants, include one which sees monogamy related to mothering practices. The desire to totally own one other person and the jealousy which arises when loss of this person is feared is viewed as a replay of the infant's intense involvement with his/her mother and their subsequent failure to disengage over time into healthy and independent, separate wholes. Bouncing off biology, some theorize that for reproductive reasons men want many partners to impregnate with their genetic material. On the other hand, women are seen as wanting one male partner whose child they can carry, believing that the male's bond to his child will keep him available as a resource in providing for the child over time.

Specifically in terms of polyfidelity, many polyfides seem to spring forth from the reading of science fiction fertile with intimate groups and from the desire for deeply nourishing family or tribal bonds. Early or ongoing experiences with having several good friends or a positive biological family group allow many to directly experience the benefits of more than one intimate relationship in their lives. Cross culturally, in all places where multiple partners are common, there are obvious economic advantages and social supports for this choice. Biologically, it seems absurdly apparent that few individuals live monogamous or even serially monogamous lives despite the widespread and dominating mythology about that "one and only." All recent surveys show that a large percentage of married women and men have had affairs, so almost everybody has had the experience of being involved with two (or more) lovers at the same time. Some theorize that when a behavior occurs in spite of a determined cultural ban, it probably has biological origins.

Beyond all the theories, polyfides are a minority. There is much more to the lifestyle than a simple choice regarding sexual partners and numbers, but it can for some purposes usefully be described as a sexual minority. As a minority we have a set of unique opportunities and challenges. We can serve our species as examples of diversity, educators for innovation, and models for new and human centered options. We can serve our communities by our mutual support and sharing of experience. And finally we can serve ourselves by working within to be self-loving and strong in our individually chosen values and styles. ❖

"Nobody would do anything if they knew what they were in for."

—from the film *Milagro Beanfield War*

SPEEDWELL SAGA

PART II

by Lowell Newby

(In the last issue of PEPTALK, we met Lowell & Peggy who were in an open marriage. Lowell described their adventures exploring different lifestyle possibilities, and they had just moved to Eugene, when...)

I met Vicki on April 27, 1987, the day she gave a talk about employee benefits to a group of us who had just started work for the University of Oregon. I was so enchanted by her looks that I could hardly concentrate on what she had to say. I went to her office the next day on the pretense of asking a question so that I might look at her again. The day after that, I mustered what little courage I had, shakily climbed the flight of stairs that separated my office from hers, and nervously asked if she would have lunch with me. I didn't want to risk looking as predatory as I felt, so I suggested that we ask my boss, Charlie, to go along. When she accepted my invitation, I reluctantly made good on my promise to ask Charlie. "You sly old dog you," he replied, "of course I'll go." I was soon disappointed to observe that Charlie was also attracted to Vicki, so we spent our lunch hour competing for her attention.

I wanted to play it cool, so I waited two whole days before I asked Vicki to have lunch again. My invitation included no mention of Charlie. Vicki and I spent a delightful hour ignoring our lasagna while we talked nonstop about women's issues, male/female relationships, and about her upcoming move to Minneapolis to pursue feminist studies in order to learn, in her words, "why, at age 37, I have never been able to maintain a lasting relationship with a man."

Encouraged by her off-the-wall manner of communicating and the sincerity of her desire to understand why men and women interact as they do, I wrote her a letter about the undercurrents—mostly sexual—that were happening with me in our relationship. When I took the letter to her office a few days later, I told her briefly what it was about and warned her that it was bluntly written. She smiled mysteriously and said, "So let's be blunt." When we had lunch together later that day, she didn't mention the letter, so I assumed she hadn't read it yet. But later, as we were leaving the restaurant, she said simply, "I've read your letter—twice. Thank you."

I was soon seeing Vicki regularly. She was ambivalent

about having sex with me so I didn't press the issue, although I did act as a suitor in other ways, such as swinging by her apartment on my way to work each morning and leaving a token of my esteem such as a gift or love letter on her doorstep. She soon came to expect me and would wave through her kitchen window as I was leaving. I did this for weeks before we became lovers, after which she would open the door for me when I made my six a.m. visits.

Vicki was not a fan of open relationships—such as I had with Peggy—yet she began having sex with me because she was planning to move in two months and considered me as someone who was emotionally safe to become involved with. "Safe" in the sense that she didn't think we had time to fall in love. Our hours together came to seem like one long orgy. We made love not only in conventional settings like beds, chairs, and the kitchen table, we also extended our lovemaking to passionate late night rendezvous in schoolyards and churchyards. We became a legend at the local Safeway because of our late night inquiries after items such as condoms, Cool Whip, and well-ripened fruit.

Meanwhile, my relationship with Peggy seemed on the verge of falling apart. She wasn't happy with my fulltime job because I had only worked part time for years, devoting the rest of my time to domestic projects such as housework, cooking, and an unending stream of home improvement projects, chores that I was no longer willing to be solely responsible for. Also, Peggy's parents were planning a visit and Peggy wanted me to complete a couple of remodeling jobs on our house before their arrival. My slowness at completing these tasks (due to my job, the time I spent with Vicki, and my need for alone time) annoyed her immensely. Also, she was hurt by my relationship with Vicki because, by not being willing to meet or even to talk about Peggy, Vicki seemed intent on pretending that Peggy did not exist. I contributed to Peggy's unhappiness by not telling Vicki how Peggy really felt, because I knew that Vicki would continue to see me only as long as she thought things were okay with Peggy. Peggy finally insisted that Vicki's attitude—and my seeming acceptance of it—was hurting our marriage, and that I should end the relationship. When I refused to do so, Peggy would have left me if she had not known that Vicki was going to move in a few weeks. Instead, she decided to have a lover of her own. She chose a good friend of mine and hers, but after going to bed with him once she began to worry that sex might harm their friendship, so by mutual consent the "affair" ended.

The plot thickened for everyone concerned as Vicki

and I began to grow in love with one another and to increasingly dread the day she would leave Eugene. I still had idyllic visions of polyfidelity in my head, so I tried repeatedly to tell Vicki of my dreams and to persuade her to meet Peggy, but Vicki assumed (as I later learned) that I wanted a Keristan size family so her response was always, "If you want to continue your relationship with me, you can stop right there." Vicki's last few days in Eugene were tearful ones for both of us. When the day came that her rancher father pulled up towing a large horse trailer with which to move her things, I helped with the loading, shook his weathered hand in silence to keep from crying, hugged Vicki, also in silence, and went home and crawled into bed for a few days.

I finally left my bed only to discover that I couldn't go anywhere in Eugene without remembering a happy moment that I had spent there with Vicki. I felt like a lovesick adolescent all over again. Peggy was very supportive of me during this time and suggested that I might feel better if I flew to Mississippi to get my much loved 1973 Datsun truck that I had parked in one of my father's outbuildings when we moved a year and a half earlier.

During the three days I was in Mississippi, I had many phone conversations with both Vicki and Peggy. I didn't tell Peggy about talking with Vicki because I didn't want to add further strain to our already stressed relationship. And so it follows that when I invited Vicki to take the train to Jackson and ride back west with me as far as the Greyhound depot in Salina, Kansas, so that we might discuss our future, I didn't tell Peggy about that either. I knew I would have to eventually, but I decided to wait awhile. Peggy, meanwhile, decided to take a mini-vacation of her own, so she bought an airline ticket to Denver where I was to pick her up so that she could ride with me from there back to Eugene.

The ride west with Vicki was sublime. I had become so unhappy in Mississippi before moving to Oregon, that I can no longer return for even a brief visit without coming away feeling physically and emotionally drained. Meeting Vicki at the top of the skyscraping Holiday Inn in Jackson was like being a tired swimmer and coming upon an island of safety. I noticed almost immediately how out of place she seemed in Mississippi just by virtue of being well-dressed (other than in the frilly way common to southern women) and using correct grammar—not to mention talking at twice the speed of most Mississippians.

Vicki had never been South and she was fascinated by

everything from the accents to the architecture to the cotton fields of the Delta. Each night after we checked into a motel, we would take a walk around whatever town we were in. I used these walks as occasions to once again try to talk to Vicki about my love for Peggy and about my dream of polyfidelity. I began in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, by asking her to share her fondest fantasy about our future. She talked at length about me moving to Minneapolis where the two of us would share an apartment together and pursue related fields in graduate school. The next night, while a riproaring thunderstorm bowled over the garbage cans of Joplin, Missouri, I told Vicki that I did not see us sharing a dyadic future, and so if that were her bottomline, then the most I could promise her was that I wished us to remain friends and possibly lovers. She became enraged and through her tears she screamed, "Why did you let me go on and on last night about my dreams for our future if you weren't ready to make a commitment? Why have you used me this way?" I answered that I hadn't meant to use her, that I had just wanted us to explore what we each wanted and could expect since we had not discussed our future while in Eugene. Vicki said she would be talking the first bus back to Minneapolis the next morning.

After many assurances that I cared about her and that I wanted us to spend at least one last day together, Vicki's attitude softened by morning. Our route through the hills of southeastern Kansas was beautiful. We arrived in Salina just before dark and checked into a motel. As we did every night, we prepared supper from the food in our cooler and then took a long walk. This was to be our last night together—maybe forever—and our sadness made the moments more precious. As we walked, I told Vicki about my fantasies for the future, and about how I loved Peggy for certain qualities like integrity, gentleness, trustfulness, her love of nature, and her childlike joy and innocence; qualities that I had never found in another person in so wonderful a combination. Yet, I told Vicki, she too had qualities that I adored—a zest for living, an analytical way of looking at the world, an intense desire to know the why of things, a love of art and things that are old, and an unusual perceptiveness to other people's feelings. Qualities that I had never found to so great an extent in any other person. I said that I would not leave Peggy to live with her, yet I did not want to lose her either. What I really wanted, I said, was to live with them both.

The idea intrigued her. She told me that although she had long admired monogamy, she liked the idea of having multiple sexual partner as long as she knew she was loved, and so she asked if I could foresee

having another man in the relationship. I said, "Yes, that would be my wish, because it would make the relationship more balanced." The more we talked, the more interested she became. When she expressed concern about feeling secondary to Peggy, I told her that my ideal was for all partners—male and female—to love one another equally. The prospect of being equally united with both men and women appealed to her philosophy of militant feminism. We closed the conversation by agreeing that I would report our conversation to Peggy and see if she would be willing to meet Vicki.

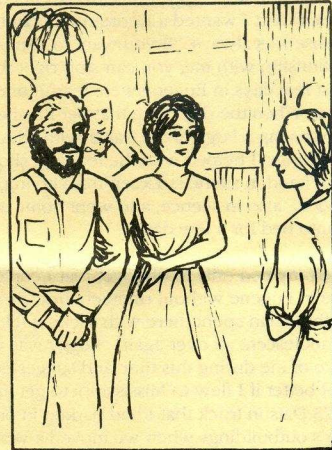
With much sorrow, I took Vicki to the bus station the next morning, yet this parting was not nearly so sad as when she left Eugene because we now at least had some small ray of hope for the future. I wondered how much of Vicki's interest in polyfidelity was motivated by her desire to be with me no matter what the cost, yet she had seemed genuinely interested, and I had never known her to engage in duplicity before.

The day long drive from Salina to Denver was horrendously boring. The landscape became less interesting and the towns further apart as the prairie turned into high plains. I spent the night on the sofa of a former lover named Judith who I had met on my last visit to Denver. Then, we had each been guests at a Thanksgiving potluck at a commune, after which we spent the next three days together snug in her utterly quiet house while two feet of early snow fell. Never once did we turn on the t.v. or even play a record. From dawn to midnight, our days had been spent, mostly in bed, sharing our life's stories.

I set Judith's alarm for 3 a.m., so I would have plenty of time to drive to the airport to meet Peggy's 4 o'clock flight. Since this trip was to be a time of healing for our relationship, I decided to put off telling Peggy about Vicki's trip south for a few days so the healing process could get a healthy start. Things did not work out as I had hoped. On the way to Judith's, Peggy asked if my drive had been lonely or if I had found people to talk to along the way. I couldn't lie to her, so I told her the whole story. At first, she thought I was joking; then she began to cry and demanded that I take her to a motel, because she didn't want Judith to see her crying. I reminded her that Judith was expecting us. She finally consented to go there, but her attitude toward me was one of such coldness as I had never seen her exhibit. I thought I was witnessing the end of our relationship. At that moment, horrible scraping and groaning noises began to come from the rear end of the truck. We drove on in silence. ❖
(To be concluded in the next issue of PEPTALK)

POLYFUNNIES

by Wahaba



"And this is my OTHER significant other."

RAZOR BLADE EDGE

by Suzanne Miller

Like all children, I was drawn to things our parents strictly warned us not to touch, to see, to ask—like father's razor blades, for some reason, on the bathroom shelf so smooth and shiny in their flat box one evening unable to resist slipping them from the cabinet taking one shiny sliver from the case barely holding it in my hand the red oozed up like ripe tomatoes bursting and I watched my hands spill out their secrets, amazed so much was in me, wouldn't stop spilling in the sink beneath the running, freezing water still kept coming after I had mummified my hands with toilet paper and crawled half secretly into bed sticking my hands beneath the covers to keep them from discovery

READER'S FORUM

Dear Friends,

I enjoy reading this PEP newsletter enormously, and I've been wanting to write for months. My partner of ten years, Gree, and I are currently involved with Kharus, a man who has lived with us in a heterosexual triad for about a year and a half now. I am thrilled to have this opportunity to work towards a committed group marriage, which has been one of my fondest, wildest dreams since I read *Stranger In a Strange Land* when I was 12. I know that this is my path in life, although I've had to do a lot of work on my blocks and attitudes to allow it to actually happen in my life. One of the major mental blocks was the thought "It's too hard, it's just not possible."

Just previous to partnering with Kharus, we had all talked about the possibility of living together, and thoughts of group marriage began rushing through my mind. Can it be possible? How could I even hope to find two beings who harmonize well enough with me, and also each other, to be able to stand the daily intensity of living together? It seemed, and still seems to me to be somewhat of a miracle, an event which can be asked for from the forces that move the universe, but cannot be forced to happen.

Since I have a very spiritual perspective on life, I had been praying for a new lover who would be added to our family. I was feeling a longing to begin bringing my dream into being, and there was definitely a need in our family (we also have a six year old child) for the energy, attention, warmth and physical supportiveness that Kharus added when he came. We had lived for years in communal houses, and enjoyed the many benefits of joining our resources with other adults, to lighten the burdens of daily maintenance on the physical plane, as well as the emotional and spiritual growth available. We had just been living for the first time as a nuclear family for two years, and this was a good time for us to "clear out" our space and find who we were as a family. It had become clear to me that I needed to live only with people I was in love with. Because of the extreme emotional energy I use in group living, I want to expend it with people who are my primary love relationships.

So I prayed for another lover/partner, and I also counseled in my personal therapy about the feelings blocking me from accepting such an event. I spent a lot of time doing affirmations, such as "It IS possible, it

WILL happen at some point, it's only a matter of time, it will happen because I want it to and it's right." I worked through feelings of not being attractive or lovable enough, and also fears of being attacked or rejected by relatives or society at large who would not approve of my lifestyle choices. Also, a big one for me was "I DO deserve it." The very idea of having another loving partner, and accepting all the extra warmth, attention and closeness, was very hard for me. After all, I was surrounded on all sides with people who were struggling to find even one, while I was already very happily married to one wonderful friend. It feels kind of like feasting in front of starving people, and arouses feelings of guilt. But logically, I won't help anyone by denying myself what is right for me. I do sometimes have problems with my single or coupled friends subtly "closing off" to me because of the uncomfortable feelings that arise for them around our triad.

As our relationship with Kharus evolved, it took a long time for me to believe it was actually happening. Even now, I hear myself telling friends that I never thought it could really happen. And today, as we consider whether to expand further by looking for another woman to join us, I find I must go back to my affirmations: "It IS possible, there IS someone who is right for us." It has taken us this long to get to the point of all wanting to be in a long term family. We let the courtship period go on as long as it needs to. Gree and I spent about two years together before wanting to be married, and we figure it might take equally as long for additional members to decide what was right for them.

Which brings up the question of falling in love. Although Gree and Kharus had a deep friendship beforehand, I did not know Kharus very well when he came to live with us for an experimental week. I was attracted to him, and we spent some time checking out our basic lifestyle values, interests and living habits, all of which checked out just fine. For myself I need certain basic qualities in a mate, which include skills in emotional processing and counseling, and dedicated involvement in some sort of spiritual practice. Once I have decided that I am open to being involved with someone, love seems to naturally evolve from that openness.

Contrary to the usual romantic concepts of love being some mysterious thing that strikes like a lightning bolt from Heaven (I think that particular experience has more to do with chemistry and magnetism than true love), I feel that it's possible to love anyone as much as my dearest friend, if only I can remain open. Love seems to be something that cannot be forced, but

READER'S FORUM CONTINUED...

it can be blocked. By removing the blocks (old hurts) within myself, I develop a capacity for love which is a depth that is available to my relationships with anyone, should we choose to explore it.

Loving and cherishing someone is a skill. It is based first on the love we have for ourselves. I found that within a very short time, I was able to feel great love for Kharus, similar in depth to what I feel for Gree. It's almost as though I had been practicing my loving skill with Gree all this time, developing my capacity to allow the love energy to flow through me, and when another being came close into my sphere I was able to use the same level of openness. This is significant to me because it means that it doesn't take ten years to get to the same level of love with each new person, and I can truly say that I love them both equally, although each is unique.

I also find that loving someone takes a bit of determination and strength. However lovable they are, eventually every person is going to remind me of my own inner hurts and weakness, do hurtful things, and bring up every possible emotion. I'd say that my own personal growth has been accelerated by about 300% since Kharus joined us, and it hasn't always felt great. I've had to use a lot of willpower to stay open and keep processing the intense feelings which arise, instead of turning off and running away.

But overall, it's more than worth it, for the intense feelings of joy which are available after the storm has cleared, and the deep satisfaction of watching yourself and your dear friends growing clearer and brighter as the time goes by. Also, the presence of another loving, clear thinking counselor in our house has made it possible for my relationship with Gree to get through some places where we were stuck in such comfortable restrictions that we didn't even notice it.

I'd very much love to correspond with other people who are involved with a multiple relationship. At times I feel rather like an isolated boat in a sea of a culture that doesn't really want to hear about what it's like for me. thanks to you all for being there!

Wishing you peace,
Wahaba, P.O. Box 1084, Cottage Grove, OR 97424

Dear Folks at PEP,
Polyfidelity is the first lifestyle relationship that has really worked out ideally for me. Folks used to say to me, "How do you ever expect to succeed and prosper at anything when you do not stick at anything?" I always replied, "When the time comes that I find the right thing for me, I'll stick at it." Sex, with love, in a highly intellectual, symbiotic, wholesome family, with top-notch companionate benefits, is the true right thing. My own family, The Purple Submarine, has 15 adults: nine women and six men. Most of us have been together over ten years, some of us have been together close to 18 years, and a few new members only a few years. We are practitioners of the values of Orthodox Spiritual Polyfidelity and also we are devotees of pure religious communal life. Actually, the religion of Kerista, a new idealistic and Utopian, American religion, is really a blend of Fritz Perls' gestalt, kibbutz, pure, orthodox polyfidelity as a social invention, modern mysticism, patriotism, Utopian capitalism, reason and responsible fun-filled hedonism. Our family loves fun, laughter and merriment, and we are building an ever-expanding estate together as team artists and Macintosh computer heads. We publish computer software, RockHEAD, The NODE, Kibbutz Life and other periodical publications, mostly for the artistic fun of it; although it's a wonderful way to make a living, as you can well imagine.

PEP, keep up your good work, and let's do everything we can to find those folks who would benefit by practicing polyfidelity.

Jud
Kerista Commune, 543 Frederick St., SF, CA 94117



Dear PEP,
Ten years ago the dream of 24 adults (with 19 children!) was to pool their possessions and start a therapeutic community where members live communally, striving for clear, authentic, honest relationships with themselves and each other. Today's reality is a rural intentional community of 200+ people (with 100+ children!) twenty minutes from the heart of Quickland, New Zealand (population 800.000).

Len Oakes' book, Inside Centrepoint, documents that first rollercoaster decade. A viable internal economy is established now, with a diverse business base including therapy services, art pottery, fashion clothing, cashmere goat breeding, tree nursery, and hot tub and free weight manufacture.

PEPCON: August 11-13th

I reveled in the variety of work choices, including internal needs like kitchen and preschool time. It was fun to see the youngsters arrive home from public school and spread around the 35 acres to get hugs from their parents. Nothing is secret even from the children—showers, toilets, sex, birth, changing loyalties, jealousy, etc. The teens, including the ten "original" kids, are amazingly honest and stable—they even run their own therapy group. Centrepoint seemed to me hectic, warm, noisy, startling, confrontive, friendly, sexual, hostile, and exciting—close to my idea of a lively "home."

Having a strong distrust of "guru" figures, I avoided Bert Potter (the founder, now 63), but later knew him as a simple, sexy, charismatic, wise gentleman. During my stay he moved himself "up the hill" and out of doing therapy or making community decisions—an extraordinary choice for someone with so much influence. Without Bert, Centrepoint would not have begun, and as a social experiment it is an important example to us that the tribal lifestyle can thrive, and that individualism can thrive within it.

Yet Centrepoint could learn a lot from the idea of polyfidelity: many couples exist there, including numerous marriages—all "open" in varying degrees, but not considering the possibility of multiple, egalitarian, non-preferential partners in a fidelitous cluster. Sometimes, remembering the things I hated about Centrepoint, I know I'll never go back, but other times, it seems the only place I could live the rest of my life as fully and authentically as I dare to imagine possible. Three intense months and two seven day cloistered therapy groups there turned my life upside down, or was it rightside up?

I welcome letters and questions from you, especially any Centrepoint "alums" out there. Maybe we can start someplace similar on this continent!

Karla Gipe
6515 Delmonico #1, Colorado Springs, CO 80919



Dear PEP,

For your information, the US government imposes a threat of deportation and cancellation of the resident status to all aliens living in this country if they are polygamists or advocate polygamy. This information is noted on an application for status as a temporary resident, Form I-687. As a resident alien, this makes me leary of participating in the PEP Network even though my wife and I are interested in meeting other

polyfides and possibly expanding our family. Thank you for keeping this confidential.

name withheld by request

Dear Friend,

If a person legally marries more than one other person, that is, actually goes through the state sanctioned process complete with licenses, that is polygamy and is illegal all across the United States. We do not advocate polygamy, bigamy, or any other form of marriage which involves the state. Rather, we advocate a relationship style which we refer to as a group marriage simply because it shares the same depth and commitment implied by the usual connotation of the word.

In many states, personal choice as to sexual partners is left up to individual, and any interpersonal commitments made between those involved can be handled outside of legal marriage. Unfortunately, some states still do make it illegal to have sex when not married or if married, to have sex with someone else. It is wise to check out your local laws and make sure you at least know if you are violating them. Then you can work to change them or simply get the hell out of there and move to a more civilized area. I hope this clarifies the issue for you and that you will feel comfortable participating in the network again! The next letter may also interest you. —editor



Dear PEP,

Chaplain R. A. Masse claims that the religious marriage ceremony he performs is binding before God, but not the federal government. The "In God's Eye" marriage is available to any single, divorced, or disabled person who would lose pension or disability benefits by marrying in a legal ceremony. "This kind of marriage does not require a blood test, a waiting period, or a state license," explains Chaplain Masse. "It is strictly a spiritual ceremony that allows the participants to enjoy the benefits of holy matrimony without the customary requirements of civil law." Anyone interested in this innovative and popular kind of marriage may obtain more info by sending a SASE to Chaplain Masse, POB 1077-P, Lawrence MA 01842.

(Please note that although this letter is oriented towards single folks who want to avoid state involvement in their marriage, this could also be used by groups who wanted a spiritual marriage ceremony to celebrate their union. —editor) ◆

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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- **PEPCON III** August 11, 12 & 13 '89
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