

# PEPTALK

GROUP  
MARRIAGE  
NEWS

Vol. 6, Issue 2

MORE LOVING ♥

JULY 1989

## WHO ARE WE ANYWAY?

by Ryam Nearing

Last year PEP surveyed some of its members and a few other interested people to try to determine just who is in or wants in to a group marriage. Here is a brief report of the findings which reflect the answers of the approximately 50 respondents.

To start with the basics, 60% are either currently in or have been in a multiple adult committed relationship. Although 40% of those currently in such a relationship have been in it for less than one year, 60% reported their relationship lasting longer than one year, and 42% reported that theirs was longer than 4 years. 100% of those who were currently or had in the past been in a group marriage stated that the size of their group was 3 to 4 people. Children were relatively few with only one quarter of respondents having two to four children; three quarters had 0-1 child in their family.

At the time of the survey, 33% of those who participated stated they were currently in a committed group marriage. Of those in this kind of relationship about 80% said their group was sexually exclusive with 20% in open group marriages. Satisfaction levels for those who either currently were in or had in the past been in a multiple adult family were reported as high by 55%, medium by 42% and as low by 3%.

Other lifestyle options received the following percentages of identification by the remaining survey participants: Open couple: 20%; Monogamous couple: 30%; Open single: 10%; Single polyfide: 12%; Celibate and looking: 20%; and Undecided: 8%. For these individuals the reason given most frequently for what stops them from being in a committed group marriage right now was difficulty finding the right people.

In averaging the ranking of motivations for choosing group marriage, the most important reason noted was companionship. Following this, from next highest down to the least important reason, were variety in

intimacy; personal growth; financial security; spirituality/religion; shared parenting; and anything but monogamy.

The average type of person participating in this survey was 38 years old, lived on the west coast, earned \$26,000 yearly, had 16 years of education, parented just over 1 child, was raised a Protestant, and identified politically as a democrat. The range of people responding varied from 23 to 55 years old; lived in places from California to Florida to Maine to Hawaii; earned from \$5,000 to \$80,000 yearly; had 7 to 20 years of education; parented 0 to 5 children; was raised as a Catholic, Baptist, Jew, Christian Scientist or Atheist; and identified as Libertarian, Anarchist, Green, Peace and Freedom, Leftist, or Republican.

### COMMENTS

From this small but relevant sample of our subgroup, comes some interesting data. The percentages and averages cannot do justice to the impact of reading each individual survey form with its unique comments and self descriptions, so here are a few and more personal insights gained by having had just that opportunity. First, a good number of people who responded have never even been in a committed group, but still are very enthusiastic in their desire for the experience. Of those in a group marriage, most had fairly short experiences objectively, although from comments, it seems the intensity (positive and negative) was high!

"Well, it was terrific and terrifically stormy—but I'm not sure that equals medium." "I'm not sure this category applies...the experience was intense: wonderful/difficult." (Both in answer to describing the level of personal satisfaction within the group marriage.)

The ranking of motivations for choosing the lifestyle showed that companionship, variety in intimacy and personal growth were all the highest driving factors. The desire for more than one close relationship and the accompanying stimulation and personal growth seems a common factor among all who are interested in group marriage. More practical and perhaps mundane issues like finances and parenting responsibilities ranked lower, although this could be due to the fact

*(Continued on page 5)*



## PEPCON'S COMING!

It will soon be conference time again: the place to meet new and old friends and to discuss a subject near and dear to all our hearts—multiple adult committed relationships. On August 11, 12 & 13 we will meet in Eugene in the comfort of the Koinonia Center near the University of Oregon to share our experiences and ideas in a stimulating and fun atmosphere. The activities will be varied and plenty of time will be available for simply getting to know each other in more informal ways. The workshops will all be participatory and good avenues for better understanding what others are doing and thinking about their relationships. Topics will range from Polyfidelitous Parenting to Tantra: from Courtship to Current Issues for singles, dyads, and three or mores.

The most highly prized part of the conference is something beyond the scope of description here. The contacts and friendships with people who share a desire for this lifestyle simply cannot be found anywhere else. Gathering our energy at one spot at one time is a way to renew and refresh ourselves in a supportive and fun atmosphere usually unavailable when we're all scattered geographically. Please come and be part of this face-to-face circle we are building! Write for a registration form if you didn't get one. ❖

## PEP'S NET WORKS

### Here's the plan—

1. Decide you want to make some new friends.
2. Write up a description of yourself (75 words maximum), including all the details you find most important about yourself.
3. Join PEP's Network (free to full members; \$5 one-time fee for supporting members) and send in your ad.

Reading small print raises intelligence

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 August 15, 1989. We'd love to hear from you! PEP, P.O. Box 5247, Eugene, OR 97405 © Copyright 1989  
Editor—Ryam Nearing                      Layout—Barry Northrop

4. Receive the Network full of people who are also interested in connecting with others each quarter along with your issue of *PEPTALK*.
5. Write to folks or call them. Plan outings or visits and meet in person. Develop some new friendships and enrich your social life!

Simple, easy, rewarding. So what are you waiting for? To be in the next Network, please have your entry in by September 1st. Remember that no one receives the Network without being in it themselves and that "swinger" type ads are not acceptable. The Network now also includes other groups of interest from around the country in its resource section. ❖

## THE NEW PRIMER

For some of our long time members, the Primer was the first piece of PEP literature they received. Produced over five years ago, it was a simple tabloid produced to answer a few of the basic questions about polyfidelity that get asked again and again. We ran out of them some time back and wanted to produce a new and expanded Primer to fill the same purpose as the original but in more depth and with added experience and resources.

This spring PEP published *The New Faithful: A Polyfidelity Primer*, a book which covers all the bases. It includes basic lifestyle choices and definitions, along with the essentials of courtship, process, decision-making, money, health, sex, parenting, and also includes several personal stories. There is also a resource section.

Great for beginners and even those who've been around awhile, the plan is to spread the word about the lifestyle in this easy to digest format. PEP plans to place books in libraries, distribute them to our members, and also to use the book to introduce the concept of polyfidelity to other individuals who can help us reach more people. Just as our regular advertising brings new members into the group, the book is another way to make contact and connect.

Help us and be part of this project. If you haven't received a Primer yet, buy one (\$7.95 plus \$1.50 postage). Sponsor a library (maybe yours?) by purchasing a book and donating it to them. Send in names of influential thinkers and doers who you think PEP should target to receive one of our books. Give us some juice in reaching out to more people who may be alone out there in the monogamous consensus culture! We need you. ❖



# ON FIDELITY

by Anna Ravenscroft

In certain cultures of ancient times, men were allowed as many wives as they wanted, on one condition—they must keep them satisfied, and the women did the deciding, on penalty of death, whether they were satisfied. I like that idea...

However, the purpose of this letter isn't to praise an ancient culture, no matter how amusing. What I want to discuss is definitions of words in our culture, specifically: fidelity, polyfidelity, and group marriage. I feel a certain need to explain what these terms mean to me. Recently my wife and husband and I were talking with another group marriage, who had just moved into the area. We were asked why we (my husband and I) didn't just consider ourselves an "open marriage," since by their definitions we weren't being faithful to each other, i.e. we had other sexual partners. How could we use the term polyfidelity to describe our marriage in this case?

Years ago, I ran into a warning to spouses or potential spouses of Scorpios, that Scorpios are very faithful, just don't expect them to be sexually faithful; I think this sums up my attitude toward sex and marriage. Too many people pursuing polyfidelity and other alternatives to monogamy seem to accept at face value the monogamists' definition of fidelity.

While sexual limitation may be an important, or even necessary, component of a marriage, it should not be simply assumed to be the only interpretation of fidelity. It must be defined by each group, for themselves, after thorough examination and discussion. Fidelity, for us, incorporates the concepts of duty, honor, responsibility, honesty, and putting the family first. Being "faithful" to my family (as I choose to call them) does not mean that I don't have other sexual partners outside the family. What it does mean, as far as sex is concerned, is that I ensure (by conscientious use of condoms, etc) that I don't expose my family to social diseases contracted in outside liaisons, that I don't take a friendship to sexual level without the "advice and consent" of my family, that I use birth control, and that my outside relationships do not interfere with my spending time with my family or with being around when I am needed or wanted.

I feel it is appropriate to say we practice polyfidelity and to call my family a group marriage, since the three of us are committed to each other and to the family.

We three are the core; we each have other relationships of varying levels of intimacy, including sexual relationships. These other relationships are with people who may or may not be eventually incorporated into the core family. If this happens, it will be done because that person fits in and has developed a relationship with each of us, not just because one of us happens to want to have sex with him or her.

I feel it is unlikely that our family will ever make sexual exclusivity a requirement, but it is possible that, if more members are added, we may eventually practice it simply because we have neither time nor energy for outside relationships. In that case, I, for one, will be perfectly satisfied. ♦

## EDITOR'S RESPONSE...

Some common issues are raised here: first, disagreement on definitions, connotations and common usage of the words fidelity, polyfidelity, and group marriage. Second, emotional charge over perceived lack of respect given a particular family form. These are repeating concerns and demand some basic intellectual and emotional response.

On the intellectual side, words do have definitions. Polyfidelity, when it was first coined, was designed specifically to denote a particular form of group marriage which, among other things, was sexually faithful. To use the word for a group which does not embrace this value/practice is objectively incorrect. Fidelity, while having several meanings, is typically used in reference to sexual fidelity when applied to marriage level relationships. Its other meanings are positive and great to include in a quality relationship. A group marriage is a long used, catch-all phrase for any group of individuals who see their relationship as such, regardless of specifics such as sexual exclusivity, long term commitment, all primary relating, depth of sharing and intimacy, etc.

On the emotional side, every person has a right to determine her/his own family and love style. Each person's choice, unless obviously harmful to self and others, deserves respect and social tolerance. Individual choices about sexual exclusivity or nonexclusivity, financial sharing or separation, or other simple variables are not the test as to whether a lifestyle is okay or respectable or family level.

Often, in trying to understand the choices of others, definitions and practices are questioned. This can feel threatening, but with experience (at both asking and answering) we can learn to celebrate each other's differences as part of our human diversity and strength. ♦



## READER'S FORUM

Dear Friends,

We, Phoenix, are very happily into our sixth year of group marriage. We have more love, more depth of relationship, more growth, more everything than we dreamt of. But fewer people. Thus one item still on our wish list is to add three more people to Phoenix—and our two woman majority lusts for two more men before we add our third woman. They want me to experience nights off—and I'm for that too.

Our group marriage has become increasingly transformative. Last year Phyllis and Ann both made major career moves that they grew into through our growing together. Several months ago we have a workshop on group marriage to a science fiction/alternative lifestyle group, and several members asked for an ongoing workshop. We had just recognized that we had learned enough of value to share, so we began meeting every two weeks with nine people to work toward total psychospiritual growth and transformation. We're sharing information, processes, exercises and other learnings from more than a hundred experiences we've had, in or group marriage, at "higher states of consciousness" (HSCs). We're also teaching all of them to sense and send what is called "prana" or "Kundalini," an intense whole body energy field which mediates healing, transformation and life itself. Two of the group members immediately began reaching HSCs between our meetings, and all of the married members are revitalizing their marriages, using means they're learning with us to deal with issues they had not dealt with.

Kundalini is thought to be hard to develop, but in Phoenix the combination of psychological clearing, group processes, and other things we do has enabled all three of us to develop it, and safely. At HSCs that we reach together we mediate intense energy and experience many miracles. We have reached Satori and various Samadhi states and have experienced many core religious experiences "of power" that various religions tell of. During 1988 we also learned how to reimprint our core psychological issues at levels deeper than "therapy" reaches, and to help others reimprint their issues content-free by holding an intense energy field open. We never read of that, and wouldn't have believed it's possible, but there's no end to what a group of people can discover when they live and explore together.

Since this began psychologically and developed spiri-

tually from our own experience rather than from dogma, we have learned to see the personal issues of almost anyone (or any couple or triad) we meet, within an hour or two, if they want us to. We can then show them ways to dissolve those issues. This is terrific within a group marriage—we can't "get away with" issues among ourselves—and it vastly strengthens our relationship. But frankly, it scares heck out of most people, because we see the very things they think are hidden, and that they don't want to give up even when those things are causing their pain and separation and devastating their relationships.

There are a few other mixed blessings. Though the energy we mediate and the insight we have can be healing, we can't offer healing as such, because we aren't licensed. Though all this has taught us how to build incredibly loving and stable group relationships, we can't find others who are compatible and share our interests. And all this frankly is daunting to us, and we can understand it intimidating others. We are continually having to grow further. When people come for help, we expect a lot of ourselves. As we begin exploring global issues, we are more concerned than ever for human survival, and the scale of those problems is intimidating. In short, it's a blessing to discover that we can all heal ourselves and sometimes heal others and even develop "spiritual energy," but the challenge is incomparably greater than anything we expected to do. It's exciting when we succeed, but we haven't learned to take failure gracefully.

So our second wish is that our progress continues this year. We're immensely grateful for group marriage and for all that we are being given. We want to share this, and more. Occasionally we can network someone with other groups, or help them through a crisis or into their growth potential, and we're open to meeting others who might want to combine forces. We can be reached at (213) 275-3730.

Yours in Friendship,  
Lyn for Phoenix

*(See Ann's Story in the new Polyfidelity Primer for more about Phoenix)*



Dear PEP,

All my adult life I have known there should be "something more," especially from the fundamentalist mindset that our generation had pounded into us (we're in our sixties). So I have always remained alert for that something extra. Anybody with an inquiring mind



should realize that no one person can supply all the mental and sexual stimulation needed by a mate. To have an "affair" is a common attempted solution, but integrity rules that out for most of us. Also, "open marriage," seemed to be no more than an affair with permission.

Then I seriously looked into swinging, bought and read dozens of books, and even talked to swingers. Yes, here seemed to be the key to some extra stimulation. But further research showed this extra to be purely mechanical—body to body—little or no mental, and the key, NO LOVE! An orgasm is not complete without love.

Then I encountered and devoured one of Robert Rimmer's books, then sought out and acquired many of them. He seemed to be onto the right idea except that he often slipped beyond practicality in an effort to hide his gold standard economic message in the story. However, the seed was planted. Now to find out if this was practical with real live people. The search was on, but how? Every lead turned into a dead end street, except one in a big city: youngsters who live together work together and sleep together in a rotating circle. Enjoyed their correspondence, but not really the lifestyle for a country kid in declining years. Then I found you!

HL  
Washington



Dear PEP,  
Unfortunately I won't be able to attend PEPCON 89. I will however be at WORLDCON 89 in Boston later in August, and if any of you are planning to be there I'd love to meet you. Write ahead to alert me (first choice) or post a note at the message center telling when you get there (chancier).

Signal flare on another subject: is there any sentiment for building a cohousing project in the Denver area, (or) forming an alternative lifestyle network? I'm moving back to Denver in about a year and am looking to connect with like-minded folks.

Marica Morrison  
56 Newton Street  
Somerville, MA 02143

**WHO ARE WE ANYWAY?** (cont'd from page 1)  
that participants reported having relatively few numbers of children and overall pretty high incomes.

The independent spirit of group marriage types was demonstrated by a wide array of political identifications—a large majority associate with minority parties rather than as one of the major two brands. Some individuals also added their current status when noting their religious backgrounds. Although having grown up in a variety of Christian and Jewish homes, those who noted their present beliefs declared themselves as Unitarians, experiential and non-dogmatic, or Pagan.

The group as a whole is highly educated, and those who don't boast as many years of formal schooling still seem to have quite high yearly incomes. Most likely they simply educated themselves. Some of those with the lowest incomes were still in school or had Masters degrees or more, perhaps indicating that their priorities were in directions other than income generation at this time.

The strongest statement on each and every survey from folks who want to be in families but are not currently (and also from some who are in families) was that finding compatible mates was the most difficult part of the endeavor. Some attributed this to the part of the country they lived in, "Texas, Ugh!" Others to running out of the energy it takes to find like-minded others. Others to running into problems locating people who share their desire for commitment, although it's easy to find "people who are open to one night stands." This, of course is one of the reasons PEP was started, to serve as a common connecting source for people who are interested in polyfidelity as a lifestyle and to provide materials to help in the formation of local groups everywhere possible. (See the section on networking in the new Primer for local ideas and also join PEP's member network if you're not already in it!

To conclude, this survey group came from places all over the United States (and included a few folks from Canada) and was made up of individuals who were willing to share a little bit of information about their own experience, personal attributes and motivations. This gives us one more simple but telling snapshot of who is interested in group marriage. A sincere thanks to each and every participant who added to the accumulating body of published information about our very own subgroup. ♦

**PEPCON: August 11-13th There's still time to register.**



## SPEEDWELL SAGA

### THE THIRD EPISODE

by Lowell Newby

*(In this third segment of this continuing story, the relationship of Lowell, Peggy and Vicki reaches clarity and commitment. Thanks to them all for sharing the details of their courtship so others might learn from it.)*

Peggy and I left Denver soon after she awakened that afternoon. The ominous sounding noise which had come from the rear of the truck the night before came and went, and so since it was Sunday and no repair shops were open, we decided to risk going on westward. We had so many futile fights on the drive to Oregon that we finally declared a moratorium on fighting until we were home and had our Wednesday night support group to mediate. That proved to be a good decision, because it allowed us to at least enjoy the last several hundred miles of our eagerly awaited vacation.

I did not expect Peggy to be open to the prospect of the two of us forming a family with Vicki. After all, my relationship with Vicki had been a sore point with Peggy almost from the beginning, and now this latest episode of Vicki and me rendezvousing for part of the drive up from Mississippi must surely have made her even more angry. She surprised me though and, without arguing, agreed to at least meet Vicki.

When we shared the news of what had transpired on my trip south with our leaderless support group which was made up mostly of people in Eugene's PEP community, some people castigated me for what they perceived as my dishonesty in not telling Peggy in advance that Vicki and I were going to meet. Some wondered if both women were only willing to meet each other because they were desperately looking for ways to "keep" me. Since Vicki was not present to speak for herself, I could only say that I believed her to be an honest person, and so I trusted her motives, on a conscious level at least, to be as she had presented them. Peggy said she wanted to meet Vicki because she, Peggy, was open to the idea of expanded family, and because my obvious love for Vicki and my certainty that they would like one another went a long way toward recommending Vicki to her as someone with whom such a relationship might be possible. Our group wished us well; they were to hear much more about Vicki over the coming months.

I flew to Minneapolis to visit Vicki during her Thanksgiving break. Peggy didn't go until the following January partly because of her work schedule and partly because she's a nut about snow and wanted her visit to coincide with the St. Paul Winter Carnival. She had met Vicki twice when Vicki lived in Eugene, but each occasion had been brief and perfunctory, so neither had gotten a feel for what the other was like. Peggy's flight dates were six days apart, and she tried to mollify her pre-trip jitters by saying, "If Vicki and I don't get along, I'll just check into a hotel and enjoy my vacation by myself." Vicki was also nervous. She could take some comfort in being on her own turf for the momentous visit, yet if things didn't go well with Peggy, then the form of Vicki's future relationship with me would be uncertain. For my part, I never doubted that they would get along famously, so the glowing phone reports I received from two giggly females fresh inside from frolicking in the snow were not unexpected. Yet, I did feel, I must admit, some small element of relief, and also a joy in hearing that their friendship was growing even faster than I had thought possible.

I made another weeklong trip to Minneapolis during Vicki's spring break. We were all so encouraged by Peggy's visit and by her and Vicki's telephone relationship that Vicki and I spent hours talking about the possibility of us all living in Minneapolis while she completed work on her doctorate in sociology. She even asked her friends to tell me what they liked about the city. I wasn't impressed. I hated the climate; I hated the looks of the place; I hated its largeness; and I hated the physical dangers that big cities represent. In fact, the only good things I could find to say about Minneapolis were that: "It isn't as ugly as it could be; and it has a liberal voting record." Everything within me rebelled against the thought of leaving my beloved Eugene and moving to a place about which I could find so little to like. I went home simultaneously telling Vicki that, "I can't picture myself ever living in this dreadful place," and promising her that I would consider the possibility of doing just that. She planned to spend the summer with Peggy and me in Eugene, and so I consoled myself with the thought that any serious talk of moving was premature until we saw how the summer went and maybe even had knowledge of options that we had not yet thought of.

Vicki arrived in Eugene on June 20, 1988. When Peggy and I picked her up at the train station, it was the first time the three of us had been together at once. Two days after Vicki arrived, Peggy's parents arrived for a three day visit. Peggy had reason to think she



would be forever alienated from them if they knew the truth about her relationship with Vicki, so she introduced Vicki simply as, "my friend from Minnesota who is spending the summer with us." Vicki and I supported Peggy's decision to keep her parents in the dark, yet we all felt stressed by having to pretend. Still, the visit went well.

After the company left, the three of us settled into seeing what it was like to live as a family. I soon had an issue with what I interpreted as Vicki's "neediness" towards me. I tried to empathize with how much like an outsider she must have felt to be the new kid with two people who have been together since antediluvian times. Yet, I kept feeling the growing desperation that comes when I suspect that someone wants more of me than I am willing to give. Early one morning, I finally did a freakout scene in which I sat trembling in a chair on the opposite side of the living room from Vicki and told her that I was feeling suffocated and that I couldn't take it anymore. Vicki, with her annoying ability to remain "masculinely" calm while I'm going "femininely" to pieces, heard me out, asking me to elaborate here and there and to list all the occasions I could think of when I had felt smothered. She ended by saying that she could see why I felt as I did, and that she would try to alter her behavior in some respects, although she very much wanted me to understand just how difficult her position as the new person was and how most anyone in her situation would feel insecure. After our talk, the problem did not disappear, but it was reduced to a now and again issue instead of an almost fulltime one. Looking back, I can see how I might have done better to have communicated directly before I reached a crisis point, but then I can say the same about other issues that have arisen. I don't know that my communication skills have improved during the course of this threeway relationship, but my communication inadequacies have certainly been pointed out on myriad occasions.

I suppose other problems and issues arose over that summer, but I don't have a good memory for such things. Vicki plans to write for the newsletter later this year, and with her damn near audiographic memory, she can relate such experiences better than I. I do know that Vicki and Peggy never exchanged a cross word, and I don't think Peggy and I did either. All in all, it was a fun summer, maybe even the best summer of my life. The only dark cloud on the horizon was the issue about whether Peggy and I should move to Minneapolis. Vicki made it clear from the beginning that she didn't know how we could survive as a commuter family. And then there was also Peggy's

growing need to live somewhere other than Eugene for awhile, both for career reasons and for the well-being of her relationship with Vicki. After brainstorming help from a friend, we finally decided to all live in Minneapolis. I tried to deport myself as a cheerful "loser," but I felt a little like a nonswimmer whose rowboat had just capsized.

Our wedding took place on Sunday, August 14th. We were so busy that day that the ceremony (which we conducted in private) had to be postponed until after the reception which was held in our backyard. Vicki and Peggy ordered a white cake with our first names on it plus our adopted family name of Speedwell. Vicki and Peggy also specified, most unwisely I thought, on our invitations that no gifts were necessary. I played my part as the nervous bridegroom so successfully that I don't know how many people attended the reception—somewhere around twenty-five, I would judge from the pictures in our album—or who to credit with bringing what goodies, silverware, party favors, lawn furniture, etc. The office of bridegroom strikes me as being similar (but in a happy way) to having been the victim of a traffic accident—you're relieved to know that people are doing all they can to help you even if you're not sure who they are or what it is they're doing.

I do remember that our sterling-hearted friend, Shirley Reeves brought three crowns, one king's and two queen's. Feminist Vicki, of course, good naturedly objected to my crown being bigger than hers and Peggy's, so when our pictures were made, the crowns had to be swapped around so that everyone got to be "king."

I finally got over my jitters and became so caught up in the warmth of our friendship circle that I was just getting ready to party when everyone went home so that we could be alone for our honeymoon. Or, at least that's the reason I was given later; at the time, my one conclusion was that people must not be having a good time.

Finally, on to Minneapolis. ♦

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***"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."***

—George Bernard Shaw



## EUGENE: A GEOGRAPHICAL CENTER FOR POLYFIDELITY

by Walt Powell

Throughout history, geographical proximity of vital components has proven catalytic to the onward flow of evolution. The development of life in our solar system has so far appeared to have happened only in one tiny place...this planet.

The development of *Australopithecus* from earlier primates and subsequent evolution into *Homo Erectus*, our species' direct ancestor, seems to have happened in a common geographical location: southeastern Africa.

The development of the Mesopotamian culture was geographically centered along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Egypt would have never existed but for the connection created by the Nile river. On the island of Crete, the small mixing pot was created that evolved into the great Minoan civilization.

Almost every valley in ancient Greece had its own distinct culture, while peninsular geographics bound them together in a larger but still unified structure at times. The greatest empire of the ancient world, Rome, found its beginnings in the cohesiveness of the Italian peninsula. The island culture of Great Britain has been responsible for many of the great ideas and basic structures that we value so much today. America started as settlements of very diverse peoples concentrated along the Atlantic seaboard. Britain was the mixing pot for Normans, Saxons, Anglos, Jutes and the Celtic peoples that developed into the highly influenced British culture just as Earth was the most diverse planet in the solar system in having the greatest variety of raw material and climate conditions that would lead to the formation of amino acids in the primordial soups of our ancient oceans that eventually evolved into such complex forms as "Otter the cat" and my next door neighbors.

People like Lowell Newby (author of *Speedwell Saga*, Parts I, II, III...) still pose embarrassing questions for the evolutionist to explain, and the fact that Allan Jensen (see Allan's Story in the new *Polyfidelity Primer*) is here among us does give one pause in discussing completely the idea of aliens having visited our planet. But again and again it seems provable that great diversity in components in a small geographical area can result in great developments culturally, physically and scientifically.

Not that all mixtures function harmoniously as any pharmacist for geriatric patients will confirm, but for us to successfully pull polyfidelity out of its infancy, a geographic center may prove to be of great benefit.

I personally believe polyfidelity is an idea whose time has come. We still don't have anywhere near all the answers as to what makes this very new lifestyle work. The 60's brought us the dream through the works of Robert Heinlein and Robert Rimmer. The 70's brought us Kerista, the first easily observable closed group marriage of all primary partners. The 80's saw the slow but sure gathering of people in Eugene, Oregon around the idea of polycentric lifestyles including polyfidelity.

So come join us for the 90's! Between us all we can and will make this bird fly!

(It is with warmth and affection that I poke fun at Lowell Newby and Allan Jensen, both past contributors and personal friends, whose readily shared and very diverse perspectives have been greatly valued catalysts in my own personal growth!) ♦

### THANK YOU BIG BROTHER

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

In a case involving a homosexual partner's right to take over his deceased partner's apartment, New York state's highest court ruled that the definition of "family members" should include adults who show long-term financial and emotional commitment to each other even if they don't fit the traditional meaning of family, i.e. related by blood, marriage or adoption.

Judge Vito Titone wrote, "We conclude that the term family...should not be rigidly restricted to those people who have formalized their relationship by obtaining, for instance, a marriage certificate." The Court of Appeals proceeded to order a lower court to consider the case again reviewing such factors as the fidelity and longevity of the relationship, the level of emotional and financial commitment and the way the participants presented themselves to society.

While the case centered around a homosexual couple, the decision seems to speak directly to polyfidelitous families as well. It's heartening to see the Courts respond to a changing society, rather than forcing a society to hew unerringly (and unwittingly) to a rigid legal or arbitrary moral code. ♦



## BOOK REVIEW

## OPTIONS

by Steven Parker

I have recently finished reading *Options* by Marcia Seligson (Random House, 1977), and I wanted to share my impressions with other PEP members. I discovered this book totally by accident while browsing a local cut-rate bookstore. Despite its age, I found that this book provided several valuable insights in the practical aspects of alternative lifestyles.

Over a period of several years, the author journeys from one coast to the other searching for "The Answer" (her use of capitalization for emphasis is often sarcastic and amusing). In her travels, she interviews and experiences interactions of various degrees with couples and groups each having little in common except for maintaining non-monogamous relationships. She probes deeply into the motivations of her subjects, as well as into the practical elements of their day to day lives. She performs a unique service for the reader by asking the questions that many would consider too impolite to pose, but reporting the answers that we all wish to know.

Subtitled "A Personal Expedition Through the Sexual Frontier," the book has a definite focus on the sexual aspects of these lifestyles. The years have certainly dulled the shock value of this focus (not that anyone experienced with or contemplating polyfidelity would likely have ever found it terribly shocking). Yet certain other concepts, such as dealing with jealousy or seeking to balance individual identity with sincere commitment, are still quite pertinent.

I think what I enjoyed most about this book is the author's candid exploration of her own feelings as she experiences each new lifestyle. Even though separated from the author by age, sex, and current stage of social evolution, I still found much in the author's self examination that I could identify with and learn from.

Does she find "The Answer?" No. There's no guarantee that her answer would have been yours (or mine) anyway. But it is the insights gathered along the way that speak to us all. ♦

## TRENDS IN THE NEWS

LAW GOES TOO FAR  
(Not Far Enough?)

by Barry Northrop

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco recently enacted a new domestic partnership law that was to have taken effect July 6th. But the law was suspended because a petition that places the issue before city voters this November was filed by the Rev. Charles McIlhenny, a pastor at the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and by Rabbi Lionel Feldman, who apparently is not affiliated with a synagogue.

The law extends health benefits to "domestic partners" of municipal workers. A few other cities have adopted similar policies. However, San Francisco's law also entitles workers to bereavement leave and hospital visitation rights. In addition, the law allows unmarried partners to file a "Declaration of Domestic Partnership" with the county clerk for a \$35 fee. The intent was to allow homosexual couples, who cannot legally marry, and heterosexual couples who don't want to marry an opportunity to publicly declare their relationship. But the fate of this new law now awaits the polls if the referendum qualifies for the ballot.

The good thing about this law is that it recognizes that committed relationships come in a variety of styles, not just one officially approved format. The not-so-good thing about it lies in its underlying definition of domestic partners: "...two people who have chosen to share one another's lives in an intimate and committed relationship...." Apparently the number of people in a committed relationship is still confined to two, which remains discrimination to polyfides.

I'm sure the supervisors and mayor of San Francisco had good intentions when they drafted this law, and they are to be applauded. But it does demonstrate that cultural conventions take a long time to chip away. I wonder what would happen if members of a polyfidelitous family each filed a Declaration of Domestic Partnership with each of his/her partners? If this referendum is voted into law by the citizens of San Francisco, perhaps some polyfidelitous family will do just that, and see how far the law can go. ♦

**NOTICE:** Family Synergy is holding its 15th annual conference at the Highland Springs Resort in Beaumont, California September 15-17th. Family Synergy is an organization "for people interested in nonpossessive, caring interpersonal relationships." For more information, write to Family Synergy, P. O. Box 2668, Culver City, CA 90231 or call the contact person for this event, Jean Bailey at (714) 825-8368.



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