

Interview with Lonnie Davis, Claire Borowick, and Phil Edwards

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

July 11, 1996

LD = Lonnie Davis, CB = Claire Borowick, PE = Phil Edwards

Q: July 11, 1996, and an interview with Lonnie Davis, Claire Borowick, and Phil Edwards. And in a group interview, it's always a little hard for me to know where to start. Maybe one of you could give me a little bit of history of the community, and then start talking about how you, personally, became involved.

LD: You mean from the founding of The Family?

Q: Yeah, that would be interesting.

LD: How much of the details of the history do you want? A bit about our founder, and how, the birth of the movement?

Q: Yeah, if you want to give a synopsis of that, that would be nice. I'm sure Tim knows a lot of it, but just an outline would be nice.

LD: Okay. Our group was founded by David Grant Berg [?], who later became known as Moses David, and who, before passing away, was known as Father David. He was originally, he was a pastor in the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination. But he left the denomination, because he didn't feel that they were effective. In other words, in evangelizing the world. And in his search to find a way to reach people with the Gospel, he, through a series of events, ended up in Huntington Beach, California, where, actually, his mother, who was an evangelist during the '30's, '40's, and had a radio program called "Meditation Moments," and was on the road for quite some time, had settled down there at Huntington Beach, and she had seen -- this is about '67 -- as she went out, she would see all the hippies, during the Vietnam era, wandering aimlessly on the streets, on drugs and all. So she invited her son, along with his four children, who were at that time teenagers, to come out with us to the kids there. From that witnessing, or just them going out there and getting to witness on the streets, is how The Family was born. Of course, in the beginning, it was called Teens for Christ, and then later a New Jersey newspaper reporter dubbed us "The Children of God," which stuck. And actually, when Father David got out there, he didn't really want to have anything to do with the hippies. He said, "Forget it." He felt like many of the mainstream Christians felt at that time, that they didn't want to have anything to do with the hippies. In fact, there were many evangelical leaders at that time that were saying that they couldn't believe that a hippie could even get saved. They were that far lost or gone. But one day when he was walking down the street, Father David was seeing the hippies sitting there, laying there, whatever they were doing, and the Lord really spoke to his heart, and asked him if he would be willing to take up the call to shepherd these lost young people. And he accepted it. And so he got his children out there, his teenagers, and they took over a club there on the beach, which was called the Light Club, which, actually, another denomination, a group of Christians, were running, but because they were running it in such a mainstream church fashion, none of the kids would come, it was too straight laced. So they got in there, took out all the seats, just put up a stage, put rugs on the floor, and turned it into a hippie pad, so to speak. Then the kids were willing to come in. When Father David saw that, then he began dressing in beads, and he had a beret. He became one, as we call it, with the youth there. And so did his kids. So they started packing that place out. They would go witnessing on the beach every day and invite the people they met to the Light Club that night for a Bible class, which Father David would give. He did all kinds of radical things. He began, number one, by calling us a revolution for Jesus. It's a revolution. Of course, he wasn't preaching a violent revolution, as many people were at that time, but a spiritual revolution. He'd jump up on the table, start shouting, jump down into the crowd, just really raise a

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ruckus, and the kids loved it. They were just, "Wow, this is a much better sermon than I ever got in any church!" And they really went for it. We had a lot of disciples join, right there, on Huntington Beach. And because of the success and what was happening, they were run out of town, so to speak, by the local authorities, who were prompted by parents who were losing their children to this "crazy cult." They were stopping it for anything, like they'd be driving down the street, the cops would be harassing them, and stopping them for the light bulb out in the back of their car, and giving them tickets and everything. So finally, they decided to leave, and they left on a caravan across the U.S., and ended up in Texas, where they opened a very big commune there, which was called Texas Soul Clinic, which was donated by a pastor that Father David had worked with before all this took place. And that's basically how things got started. From there, they just opened community after community, across the U.S. They had a long caravan, I think it was about 25 cars to begin with. They would just camp out in state camp grounds, and then go into the university the next day, and witness to the young people there. As they went across the U.S., more people would join. And, until by the time they got to the Texas Soul Clinic, there was about 300 people there.

CB: That was kind of the time where they had to begin building a communal society. Father David started teaching those who were there at the time, how to make it work. Because before that, it was like a group of hippies getting bigger and bigger and bigger. But all of a sudden it was like a communal society. They had to organize, and learn how to live communally and work together.

LD: Have schedules, when to wake up, when to go to bed.

CB: Have food on the table. So that was even a major turning point in itself. And then when the community got too big, they started branching off into smaller ones, which were still quite big. The smaller ones that branched off, they were still 100, 200 people.

LD: Would some of the letters that Father David wrote at that time, in getting the family organized and learning to live communally, would that be helpful for archives?

Q: Tim would love that !

LD: Okay.

CB: There are a lot of really interesting -- it's like history, because all the kids that came in had been like teenagers, hippies, they didn't know how to cook, or how to drive properly. So he's written thousands of letters explaining every detail, how to change a baby properly, all these different things.

LD: It's interesting too, is that a lot of the people, when they looked at the hippies on Huntington Beach, they thought they were just like bums or like the homeless of today. But the reality was that many of the kids that were out there, were the sons and daughters of the rich, who had become disillusioned with the Vietnam War, and also just with society in general, materialism. Their parents wanted to them to follow, be a doctor, be a banker, be this and that. But they realized after just even living 16, 17 years of that, it wasn't what they wanted, and they were in search of some spiritual realities. Because a lot of people tell us, "Oh, yeah, you were born a bunch of bums on the beach." Some of us were, but not all of us.

CB: Also, in having to organize the communities, because most of the folks that joined were just teenagers, immediately Father David would put teenagers running the communities. He would appoint a couple of them. That was also one of the early training endeavors, when Father David would train leadership, because he saw the movement kept getting bigger and bigger, and there wasn't that much

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trained leadership to run the colonies, teach the new disciples how to go out and witness, and live by faith, all the Word they needed to learn from the Bible. That was when he started instituting more, different leadership, and also different structures for the new disciples so they could grow up properly grounded in the Bible, the Word.

Q: About what time was the caravan across the country?

LD: I think it was about '69. Because didn't Dad leave for Israel like '71, somewhere in there?

PE: He left early '70.

LD: For England at least. Early '70.

Q: And that's when things started going international?

LD: Yeah. Well, first, it went from California to Texas, and then from there, from the Texas commune, it branched off into many different areas. They took a trip up to Larentine [?], Canada. We had colonies in Cincinnati, and Chicago, and different places. And then Father David said, "Well, we've got it going here, now we need to obey Jesus' command to go into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature. So he and Maria were always the pioneers -- that's wife, Maria, who is now helping to shepherd [unintelligible]. So they were always the pioneers, so they took off and went to England, and then on to Israel. And that's where they hoped to bring us all, and live kibbutz style. That was Dad's first vision. We call him Dad. But once he got to Israel, he found out things were not as he had been told. He found that the Palestinians and the Arabs were quite persecuted within the state of Israel. He was just very disillusioned with the whole situation. And there he received some revelations about -- that Israel was not the place to bring us all. So he left from there, and did some more pioneering in Europe. And that's where the first teams from the U.S. went over and opened up communities in England and Amsterdam, all over Europe.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your religious beliefs?

PE: I guess our communal ideology breaks down to something very simple: Jesus said that "All that believed were together and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, so that no man would have mean or would lack anything." That's kind of the basis of our communal ideology, which is taken from the book of Acts of the Bible. That was always taught in the very beginning, as it is now, as the blue print for our communal society, as it was for the early church. And so a lot of our, the way we go about evangelizing the world is, number one, to make new converts, to tell somebody that you first meet about Jesus, about his saving power. But then, once they get saved, and if they show that they have an aptitude, or they have the desire or they have the enthusiasm to want a more fuller Christian life, then we can easily introduce them to communal living, or further witnessing and telling their friends and their family about it, or we can invite them to come to our homes, which is the reason that we have the communal life, is so that we can show people a sample of the way Jesus, and his followers lived, so that they can see that the words in the Bible are not just pretty pictures or fancy promises, or just a bunch of allegories, but that there's something you can live by, because it governs our life. As much as we can, as humanly possible, we've patterned our lives after what the Bible teaches. So it kind of works two-fold. We can offer people a lifestyle, although our main purpose is to just tell people about God's love, to show them his love, to be a help to the world, and also

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to warn the world about Christ's second coming. So that's kind of our philosophy in a nutshell. And I guess, too, because we live communally, we also want to raise our children in a Godly environment, so we see our homes not only as witnessing outreaches or witnessing centers, but also home schooling centers. So our whole purpose is -- that's our philosophy in a nutshell. It's actually rather quite simple to understand.

Q: Now, are there differences between you and say, other Christian groups that live, that share all things in common, like say the Bruderhof [?], or the Jesus People, or, I'm trying to think of what some other ones might be, like Koinonia down in Georgia, or Rheba [?] Place in Chicago? Or would you say you're all very similar?

CB: Well, one difference perhaps, for some of us, is that we believe that God still speaks today, and has his prophets, and we believe that Father David, and now his wife, Maria, are prophets of the end time, and they're proclaiming a message, and leading and guiding. That's one difference that's important between us and some of the church groups. Besides that, also, our sexual doctrines are quite different as well than most other Christian communities.

LD: It seems to be what divides us and keeps us in somewhat of a separate category.

CB: I don't know how aware you are of that?

Q: Not much, really, so if you wanted to let me know.

CB: I'll sum it up for you. We believe -- you know, in the Bible, the Golden Law of Love that you hear, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind," it says that's the first commandment. "The second is like unto it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'" It says, "And on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Well, Father David, many years ago, way back in '76 --

LD: --No, earlier than that, '73, '74.

CB: He presented, he had studied the word, and the Lord had shown him that that could also be applied to loving sexual relations between mutually consenting adults, whether they're married or single, whatever their marital status is. So, for example, in our communities, if there's a married couple and a single person who doesn't have anybody to have sex with, we wouldn't consider it a sin for one of the spouses to have a sexual relationship with that person, so that they can be happy and have all their needs fulfilled. So basically, we don't believe that sexual relations and love between consenting adults is a sin, as long as it has a mutual consent by all those affected by it, and of course, it's performed in love. That of course differs quite drastically from the other church groups, who usually have quite a strict idea about sexual relations, and often there's a tone of sin involved in any kind of sexual relationships outside of marriage. But, for example, we wouldn't see it as a sin for two consenting single people to have sexual relations before they're married.

Q: Now, I assume from what you've told me already, that you guys share all things common, all your income?

LD: Yes.

Q: Can you describe a little bit how that works, because you're such an enormous group, it seems like that would be sort of a nightmare, administratively.

LD: It is. I'm just teasing. I was going to mention that, one thing that does make us different from other groups, is that, I know for instance, Jesus People USA in Chicago, I've met and talked with some of them, but most of the groups I know of, do hold secular jobs. Like, at least some of the people within the communities do. For the most part, except for some very rare exceptions, and I can only think of one at this point, in our, what we call deo communities, or our inner circle communities, for the most part we don't hold secular jobs. We "live by faith," in other words, through contributions, and donations of the people that we meet and witness to, whether it be to the distribution of our posters and our tapes and videos and all that, or just simply witnessing to people door to door, whatever, and either because they're thankful that you came and gave them the Gospel, or they like what you're doing, and they want to help support. That's how we live, and that's how basically, I'd say 99.9% of our income is derived, through those who want to help. That's what Dad built The Family on. One of the things that made him a bit upset regarding the mainstream church system was that they kept telling him that it was impossible to live like Jesus and the early church. Like you couldn't live just by faith. You had to have jobs, and that was for back then, and it was just the past, but now today, being a Christian is much different. But he could never come to grips with that and accept that. So he was determined to find a group of people that would be willing to at least try it. And we tried it, like Phil was saying, he just drew up the blue print from the book of Acts, and it worked. I mean in the beginning, we ate doughnuts maybe three times a day. Dunkin Donuts would donate -- after the day's over, they have to get rid of it anyway, so they would give it to us, and everybody would chow down. But then things got better as we learned to live by faith, and our faith was increased, seeing God do miracles.

CB: As far as how the finances are managed, each home is actually autonomous, and self-supporting. So each home is responsible to finance, pay their bills and their rent, and doesn't really hinge on the overall organization in any way. We do tithe as a Biblical precept, we tithe to what we call "world services," like a central organizational point, publishing, administration for The Family. So they take that money, and redistribute it, whether to needy mission fields, or publications that get sent out. We have a video and tapes that are produced. So the funding for all that comes from the tithes that we all send in.

Q: So each individual household will tithe to the central organization? Where is headquarters?

LD: Nobody really knows. I guess since Dad and Maria left the U.S., he pretty much lived in seclusion, and behind the scenes. Only a very few people ever knew exactly where he was. A lot of people say, "Well, that's crazy, he's got nothing to fear, let him come out in the open." But it wasn't just for security reasons that he lived behind the scenes. In the very beginning, he received a revelation where the Lord showed him that in order for him to be "on the mountain" so to speak, symbolically, and hear from the Lord, he would not be able to be in the midst of, like in one home somewhere, in one of our communities, because just the day to day business details would drag him down and distract him from what he was suppose to be doing, and that was like leading and shepherding the whole Family. So he received this revelation where he saw this quill and this pen in the sky, held by God's hand, that from that pen, rays of light were coming all over the world. So he took that, well he called the letter "I Gotta Split," in other words, he had to leave, from having that personal touch with all of us, and being away and writing to all of us. It was similar to what the Apostle Paul did, back in the, during the early Christian

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era, where he wrote letters to the Galatians, and Thessalonians, and all. And he did a lot more for the church during his time under house arrest there in Rome, by simply sitting down and writing to all the churches, than he did when he was just travelling all around, because he could sit down, get the messages, what he needed from the Lord, and then pass it along. That's what Dad did. So as far as headquarters ...

CB: We have had persecution in different countries around the world, which have been quite serious with members incarcerated, and children taken to institutions. So we try to somewhat shelter and protect -- for example, this center is not only administrative, but all the publishing that goes on in The Family goes through there, so it's quite a focal point of our operation, so basically, we maintain this out of public knowledge.

Q: Do you experience persecution in this country?

CB: From time to time, negative media.

LD: Sometimes, there'll be some harassment, like say, from social services, regarding our children, because we home school them. And that draws the fire sometimes. Like in California, when I was there a few years ago, we had some ex-members who called social services, saying that we were abusing our children. So then, social services came out, and paid us about 3 visits, I think, and took the kids aside, and grilled them, how they were being treated and all. Of course, the kids said, "We love it here, we love our parents, they take good care of us." At the end of their investigation, they just had to sit there shaking their heads, "I don't know what these people are calling us, because your kids are beautiful children." They said, "Now we have to leave you and go check on some truly abused children." They were used to seeing really bad things. So, outside of little pockets of harassments, like that, in the U.S. we haven't had any major persecution.

Q: But in other countries, it sounds like it's been a lot more serious.

CB: Yeah, it's crazy.

LD: Well, Claire was in Argentine prison for 3 months.

CB: My son was placed, along with -- I was in prison with 20 other Family members, and our children, there were about 150 of them, were placed in state institutions.

Q: I think that would be terrifying for the kids.

CB: It was quite traumatic for the children.

Q: And that was just because the government didn't agree with your religion?

CB: Well it was kind of a three-prong attack here. One part was the media was attacking, and we had ex-members that were inciting the government and the media. On the other hand, the government was also under a lot of pressure from the Catholic church at that time. It was kind of a political maneuver going on. The Catholic church was kind of pressuring the government to control small religious movements more closely than what they had been in the past. At the same time, the rest of the country was fighting for greater religious liberty, in keeping with modern times, democracy, having become a democratic government themselves. Finally, the law got passed that was being pressured at the time,

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which was limiting more religious freedom there. Our case was kind of used as a spring board to push this new law through. So it was coming from several different angles.

Q: So have you had to abandon Argentina?

CB: We have a small community there, because we have so many friends, we've been there for 20 years. But most of the missionaries decided to move on to other places. They preferred not to risk their children being harassed again. We had several court cases in Argentina too. It was like a constant, ongoing process, all around the country. We would have raids, and social services coming in, people put under house arrest at the best, or touted off to jail at the worst. So, we decided it was a little too repressive.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about how individual households work? Has The Family come up with an algorithm, the number of people that work best for a household, and how chores and divided, all those kinds of things.

LD: I'll get our bulletin board, and explain a little about that.

PE: I guess a little bit about like Claire has mentioned, and Lonnie, that over the past 27, 28 years, the numbers within our communities, which we call "homes" now, has differed. We started out large. One of the earliest communities I was in had 350 people. It was mainly young adults, and some children. And then we went through periods where the communities were less in number. In fact, there was one period of time in the '70's where a community was like 12 people or something like that. Twelve to 18, max. And then if it got beyond that number, then it needed to work out to where it would be 2 communities instead of one, so the number would remain about 12 to 18. And then in other periods, it went back up to 30, 40, and 50, and sometimes we had as many as 100, because we also had schools. And we were getting home school -- we were experimenting with home schooling, and then at the same time we were trying to make it work within our communities to where if a community was small, or a community was big, the home schooling aspect of it could function. So, depending upon the need of The Family, was kind of had to do with the shift of how many numbers you would have within a home. Right now, we're shifting back to the small size, which is what I think we all prefer, because it's a lot more manageable. So our communities now hover between I'd say, 15 and 25. Our maximum number can't exceed 35, now. From experimentation, like I said before, it's a very nice number to be able to manage, because it's easier to financially support. As you can imagine, supporting 150 people is a lot more work than supporting 25. Also, it's a lot easier to schedule. We believe that every member -- well, not necessarily our youngest children -- but those who are active members, who are carrying the load in the home, whether it be financial, or cooking, or laundry, or home schooling, which is normally our 16 and up, each one has an appropriate share that's not too much, and neither is it too little. So we've learned how to schedule our basic chores, which is cleaning up our house, and doing our cooking, to where it's distributed amongst all members. Younger members are also trained. Our teenagers, they show a lot of desire to not only learn the 3 R's and the three G's, but also they thrive a lot learning practical aspects of life. We also feel that way ourselves. For example, I was reared in a very wealthy household. I'm from California, and I was a part of the hippie era. My folks are very wealthy. And my mother never let me close enough to a stove to learn how to fry an egg. And if I ever did toast, I was so nervous I would burn it, and then she'd say, "Out of the kitchen! I'll take care of it myself!" And I was treated like a baby. And I

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was 13, 14, I lived with my parents until I was 19 years old. I was still treated like a baby, I couldn't even do my own laundry. I didn't even know how to run a washing machine. I knew all sorts of -- I took calculus, and I took physics, and I took all this kind of stuff, but you know, frying an egg was like ridiculous. The first time I lived with a bunch of guys at the university, they said, "Why don't you cook breakfast?" I said, "Well, I can make cereal." Pour it in the bowl and pour milk, and I know it's going to work. I couldn't do anything else, I didn't know how to fry an egg! My friends taught me a few things, I was like an invalid. I felt like I was handicapped. So we as parents appreciate the value of learning practical life skills. Because that's what the world's all about anyway. Once you go -- the school is to put those theories into practice, and then make a life. I guess I'm taking a tangent. But we do just believe in sharing the load as far as the household chores. And so we schedule. And our home is also run or governed by what we call a teamwork, which is three or four, as many as five people, who are young adults and adults, working together to perform these functions in the home, to work out the daily schedule, to make sure that the load is not heavier on one than it is on the other, and that the home is functioning smoothly, and also that our kids are getting training in practical things as well as schooling. So we have a lot of rhyme and reason to our communal madness. And it works out quite well. A lot of it is due in part to what Father David taught us. He taught us simple things like, "If you don't schedule, it's human nature that some will work harder and some won't. So to get everybody into the show, you've got to schedule, so everybody's got an equal load." And that actually works. It's been a lot of fun, and it's fun to learn how to do things. It's fun for me to learn to do dishes. Now I'm really good at doing dishes. I can fry an egg now. I can even cook a meal. My kids say, "Dad, you really know those things!" And I say, "I've had a lot of experience, now." Before, never, but now, I've been in charge of the kitchen. We also made what we call ministries, to where a person is in charge of the kitchen, it isn't like a free for all, you just put 5 people in the kitchen and say, "Here's a recipe, go for it." But we have somebody who has had experience in kitchen work, or the home-ec side of things, so that they can teach and train those that don't have very much experience, or they might be new comers in the home, and don't know where things are, or how things are done, because each home does it a little bit differently according to their set up and the amount of members that they have. So we have people that are the ministry heads, or sometimes we call them the deacons, or the kitchen overseer. And so we divide up our home life to different ministries, such as schooling and kitchen and laundry and outreach, and putting a person over that. But we work together, in very much the spirit of cooperation and training. So that's the method. It's actually very practical.

Q: Now I know, a lot of the groups that I've visited have had big hassles over work sharing, where people won't put in their fair share, or like you were saying, it's human nature for some people not to work as hard as others. Do you have those problems, and if so, how do you deal with them?

CB: We're all kind of committed to doing a job, and everybody knows before hand, that if you're going to live here, you're going to have to do your share, so I wouldn't say it's been a problem.

LD: I mean, at times somebody may feel that they don't want to do anything, and you have to go after them to bring them back in, but they know when you go after them, they have the understanding that they need to come in and pitch in and do their share. So it's not really an issue.

Q: Do you have some special secret or something that makes it work, do you think?

LD: Actually, it's the Holy Spirit.

CB: And our faith. The whole point, the reason why people are here is -- when it comes down to it, it's a sacrificial lifestyle, we're very happy, and we like the way we live, and we're thankful that God's given us the opportunity to work full-time, witnessing, and winning others to the Lord. Of course, on the other hand, it's the sacrificial lifestyle, and when people join The Family, they realize that they're forsaking their own desires, their own privacy to some degrees, because you're living in the same house as other people, forsaking a lot of your material well-being. So I think that it's kind of like a concentration that people make. So you have that dedication to a cause and to the Lord, to sharing his love with others. And I think that's what motivates and kind of oils the whole mechanism so it runs smoothly.

LD: Yeah, because the vision unites us to one -- we're all running in the same direction.

CB: Father David was also quite pivotal in that, in his writings, and Maria and the other leadership structure, because through his writings, which was the point Lonnie was originally sharing, he was able to reach out to all the family members all over the world. He was like equidistant from them all. And I think that keeps us all running in the same direction, with the same goal and vision. Even though our communities are all very different, because we're all autonomous. You'll find that the mode of operation in one community can be very different from another. The witnessing methods, the ministries they undertake. Maybe one community has 20 children, and most of their ministry is teaching and training their children, taking their children out singing and witnessing in orphanages or old folks' homes. Whereas another home may only have 4 children, and their ministry may be reaching out to the poor, going to help the homeless. It's like it differs quite vastly from home to home. Each home gets together and prays, and hears from the Lord about what they're supposed to do. Which is something Father David instilled in The Family from the very beginning. Each one of us needs to hear from God, personally, individually, for the directions of what he wants each one of us to do that day. So although he's given us a lot of direction in how to do it, the actual way that we carry it out, he's always taught us that he expects us to hear from God. And we do that as a home. We get together, and talk about our goals and what we want to accomplish, how we want to go about it.

Q: So this is your system?

LD: Yeah, this is our goals. Here, you have a daily schedule. This is just a form that we've adapted for our home, but maybe wouldn't necessarily apply to another home. But, there's one person for revelie, that means "wake up." Everybody gets up at the same time. One person does breakfast. Another person is in charge of devotions. This is CC devotions, child care devotions. And people are all scheduled. They're all scheduled for the different activities that need to be covered in the home every day. And then there's the JJT jobs, JJT means "Jesus job time." That's something you'd hear a lot, if you live in a home for awhile, every morning, it's like, "Okay, who's on JJT."

CB: That's a way of doing the cleaning.

LD: So there are different people in charge of different areas of the home. Like one person in charge of the garbage in the garage, another person the downstairs bathroom, and on down the list.

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Q: Well, it's beautifully clean! I've never been in such a clean community. You're obviously succeeding.

CB: We have a pretty high standard of cleanliness in the family. We feel it's important. Most communities will strive -- especially because we have a lot of children.

LD: So we even have it scheduled down to the dish team. It says, "New temporary dish team," because it always changes. So down here, like for instance, dinner dishes is Team 2, so you look on the schedule, and all five people on that team will pitch in. One person will sweep and mop the floor, another person will wipe the counters. Another person puts away the dishes. So it's a team effort, so it doesn't take very long. And there's also the daily schedule, what time wake up is.

Q: So you all get up at the same time.

LD: Yes.

Q: And that's so you can eat breakfast together?

CB: Our devotions, especially, is important.

LD: In our communities, a lot of people say, "You're just a bunch of lazy bums, you live by faith, you don't have jobs." But the truth of the matter is, that you have to work twice as hard to live by faith. In other words, you have to be even more united and working together and gelling together. So if we all got up at different times of the day, like say 2 of us get up at 7, two of us get up at 9, a few more get up at 10, it would be very difficult to have a cohesive unit. Wake up is a very important detail.

CB: We're quite flexible with people's needs. If somebody's up all night with a baby, it's not like a rigid, army-like -- but it does help us. For an hour, we get together and we read the Word, a few Bible verses, and sing inspirational songs together. We pray for the day, for our friends, for God's work anywhere around the world.

Q: So is the morning time the most important time, then?

CB: As far as meeting goes, yes. We try to get together. In our home, we do it every morning. Every home has their own schedule. But we found that getting together and praying, we start the day off on the right foot. And then we go to work after that for the rest of the day.

Q: Do you have any special way of eating? Like are you vegetarians, or follow any special diet?

LD: I guess in that area, we follow the Old Testament guidelines that are found in the book of Moses. Although we're not -- like if we go outside of those, we don't feel like it's going to be detrimental to our health in any way. But there are certain guidelines in our eating. Like we don't have white sugar in our homes, and we discourage people from eating products that are just packed with white sugar.

CB: We don't eat junk food.

LD: In other words, we try to eat honey instead of sugar, or brown sugar, unprocessed type foods. And we don't eat shellfish, oysters, things like that. We don't eat pork, although we will eat bacon once in awhile.

CB: All-beef bacon.

LD: We try to stick as much as we can to the guidelines in the Old Testament. Not because they're the "law," so to speak, but because we've found that they are good guidelines for health.

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CB: We also try to balance out our meals, like have a green vegetable, a cooked vegetable, protein, starch, some of the basic nutritional outlines, we try to follow those in our meal planning. Also we try to avoid some of the junk food, we don't eat candy, that kind of -- except rare occasions.

Q: Do you believe in insurance, health insurance, car insurance, those kinds of things? No?

PE: Car insurance we go for.

Q: You kind of have to, right?

LD: Yeah, it's the law.

Q: What happens when a person gets sick. I guess, like you were saying, you live by faith. I guess I answered the question.

CB: Well, people do go to doctors. We believe that healing by faith is possible, and a lot of us have been healed just by faith. We've had folks in the home come and pray for us, lay hands like it says in the Bible, and many of us have experienced, over the years, healing. But if a member wants to go to the doctor, it's entirely a personal decisions. We've had folks who have had cancer that have gone through radiation treatments. And how they go about funding that depends [tape ends] ... benefit of the work we do. We just, there's not really a set pattern. Sometimes, maybe relatives will be happy to fund the medical care needed.

LD: One thing that -- for the most part you won't see in a Family home a big medicine chest full of Tylenol, aspirin, every kind of drug in the book, packed full. If we have a headache or we're feeling a little run-down or whatever, we usually try to drink or eat healthy things to combat that, along with prayer. And then just take time to rest. That usually takes care of itself.

CB: We're all getting older, so I think the medical issues come up a little bit more. In our early, first 15 years, we rarely hear of serious health problems. It was a very exceptional. But we've all gotten older, so from time to time -- we have a prayer list, that's what we call it, that is sent out to all the homes around the world. And if somebody has some kind of physical affliction, whether it's cancer or any kind of tumor, serious sickness, they'll send in their name and a prayer request. So we have what we call "prayer vigil," and we'll take a list like that, and just be praying for different people all over the world, and the different afflictions they have. It's really quite exciting, because in the following bunch, you'll get answered prayers, which is a little section in the back of the prayer list. And there's just so many of them. It's -- since they've asked for prayer, they got healed, they were doing better. Also gives a lot of support to members that have serious illnesses. And even through these testimonies, several times, different family members will offer to fly to -- for example, there's a girl who was here with us temporarily, and she heard of a woman who was passing on in Canada. Or Alaska, that's where she is. So she flew out to Alaska to help the family through this time, because the mother is dying, there's little kids and all. So that also is another thing that comes about. There's a lot of support and prayer. We do have a little bit more affliction than we used to, because we are getting older.

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Q: I have encountered a lot of groups that came out of the '60's and '70's, where the members are getting older, and they're starting to get concerned about things like accessibility in their homes, and retirement planning, stuff like that. For some of them, their members were all the same ages. They don't have lots of kids like you do. So they're starting to worry. Are you concerned about that at all? Say, in 30 years, what's going to happen?

CB: Well, we're hoping the Lord is going to come back before then. That's our belief. If he didn't, I guess, at the end, folk would have to make way.

Q: Do your children tend to stay in The Family as they reach adulthood?

LD: Before, I'd say a couple of years ago, the retention rate was a bit higher. Now, it's -- we're finding that some of the young people are choosing to leave. So, the retention rate at this point may be around a 70-80%, maybe a little higher.

CB: We're not really sure. It used to be about 95%. Our young people rarely -- thing too, is that they've gotten older. So as they get older, some of them have made personal decisions to opt for another lifestyle.

Q: That still seems really high to me, though.

LD: Yeah, it is.

Q: Since there are so many groups around the country and also in other countries, are you able to travel a lot and then have a home in different places? Stay at different households?

LD: Yeah. Like wherever you go in the world -- I wouldn't just take my family and leave and go to England and arrive at the doorstep and say, "Hi, here I am." There's a lot of organization that goes on. You have to apply for clearance to the next field. But we're very free and mobile as far as being able to move around. We've been around a lot, probably in a lot of different countries. Claire was in Argentina, Phil was in East, I was in the East, Mexico. So we are free to move. And if there isn't a community where we're going, or where we'd like to go, then we're free to open our own home, our own community. There's a great deal of flexibility around that. Where we go.

Q: Do you get sent to a particular household, or do you choose to end up somewhere?

LD: Before, we used to get sent. Now it's more of a choice type situation, like if for instance, if I wanted to go to Toronto, the Lord showed me, "You need to go to Toronto." There's several communities in Toronto, so I would need to contact them and let them know what my desire was as far as going there in Toronto, and would that be okay? Would they take me into their community, or would it be okay for me to open a new community there? Once that community considered my request, they would send back an answer, "Oh, yes, we'd love to have you," then you'd make the preparations to go. But it has to be done with the consent of each community and all that you're moving, the area you want to move to.

Q: On that same line, how does membership work? How does a person become a member of The Family?

PE: We have a procedural basis. Like Lonnie was explaining, we don't haphazardly move and all of a sudden, somebody gets a whim, and they're here today, gone tomorrow. So we have set up procedures

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on how to go about changing from, whether it be city to city within one country, or whether it be country to country, as well as if you're going out completely on your own. So we have down definite procedures, because we want to do it most effectively. Like Lonnie was saying, we do it with consent, so that it's done with the support of everyone in either that geographical area, or if it happens to be bridging two continental areas, for the sake of making a successful move, to establish a work where we can evangelize, or we could serve a purpose. So the same thing with our recruiting, if you will. Although we're not really -- one of our main purposes is not recruiting, as though we want to grow into tens of thousands of members. We're not out to recruit the world. But if a person does show that kind of desire, after they, well, number one, have received Jesus, or what we call, have had the first initial step of being saved, then what we try to do is we try to bring that person along with our contact, with our contact with them, to number one teach them the Bible, so that they know what the Christian life is all about. So before anybody would really consider membership, we want them to be sure that they'd considered or that they have at least a good concept of what Christianity and our Christian lifestyle is about. And so we begin to introduce them to our basic theology. We have, for example, a statement of faith, which is a publication that wraps up the basic tenets of our Christian beliefs in one document, if you will. That's one thing that we go over step by step, and even add additional classes or Bible studies to them, so that the would-be disciple or the would-be recruit has a clear picture of what living for Jesus, and our style of Christianity, is really all about. Because it is a full-time commitment. And it's not a forced commitment. Neither is it a commitment that is binding with us. We don't make a contract with a person for the rest of their life. If anything, they're making that commitment to God, and they're making the commitment to the members of the home that they would be joining. But it's from day one till ten or 20 years from now, that's still a volunteer commitment, and a person's free to come and go at their choice. If they've thought it through as far as leaving, then that's great. We don't want to force anyone, or try to convince them against their will to stay and continue this type of lifestyle. Even though we feel like it may be very beneficial to them, it's their choice, it's something they have to be personally persuaded about, otherwise it just doesn't work. So in getting back to recruiting, we have a procedure to where the main thing we're looking for is that they've got a clear picture of what our lifestyle is about, and that they want to make that type of commitment to our organization. Once they do, and they've made that decision, then they go through a 6 month period of living in, or, depending upon the situation, they might , because, as you can probably imagine, we encounter people from many walks of life. When, for example, to just use the simplest example, if you met a single person, they're over 18, they're legally responsible for their actions, they can join this group or that group at their own will. And they don't have any binding commitments to the military, or something that would prohibit them, to where they get into legal trouble or legal contracts would have to be worked out. But if they were footloose and fancy free, like many hippies were, then it's very simple to have them get involved, begin to move into one of our homes, and go through a six months process where they are treated as a new disciple, which we call "babes," given our basic doctrine over a 6 month period of time. And then at the end of that six months, they would evaluate, they would come to a final decision on evaluating, "Yes, this is what I want to do," as well as the members of the home who know them, would also be given that choice. We would decide together. So there's like a 6 month procedure, to where they join, and they become a full fledged member. During that time, they're participating in home activities, we are teaching them what we believe in full detail, very expansively. They are going out witnessing. They might participate in

different ministries according to their aptitudes and their talents, or they might get trained in a lot of different facets, get a well rounded view, and actually participate in it. That's one way for a person to know that this is their lifestyle. Which is again what Jesus told them. He told his people, "If you want to know my doctrine and whether what I teach is true or not, come and see." What he meant was, "Come and live with me. Come and follow me. And then you'll know exactly what I do, what I say, because what I say is what I do." And that's what we tell people. So that's the best way they can make that commitment. So after 6 months, a person is usually pretty well persuaded, one way or the other. Actually a lot of times, it happens a lot sooner than that, but we insist right now that they go through a 6 months, what we call a "babe's training," or a "new discipleship program." And though they made that commitment when they began, they have to kind of make a final commitment after 6 months, and then they become a full fledged member, with full privileges of living in the community. Of course, during the 6 months time, there's certain privileges they wouldn't have, as far as the -- it's not really anything different but decision making. Since they're new, it's kind of difficult for them to make decisions on what the home is doing.

CB: Especially if they're not fully committed yet.

PE: That would be true of any organization that you would join as well, whether it be a company or whatnot -- you're not going to make executive decisions if you've only been in that company for 3 months, and you're just an employee. So that's understandable, it's not a deprivation.

Q: Let's say I wanted to join your household after six months -- would I be expected to give up all my assets and possession to the community? Is that the way it works?

CB: Generally, that's one of the requirements for discipleship, is that you forsake all your worldly goods. In some cases, we've made some concessions on that, in the sense that, for example, if an older person joins The Family, they only own an apartment, for example, we've often told them just to hold onto it for a long while, to make sure this is really what they want to do with their life. Because otherwise it can be complex after, if all of a sudden an older person wants to go start up a new life, and they don't have any assets left. So we're pretty careful about that, that people need to really know what they're getting into. It's definitely a dedication. But that is the basic rule, it's a Biblical one.

Q: And if a person decides to leave, do they get any assets upon leaving?

CB: We don't own any assets, that's the problem. Basically, we own the furniture inside our house, most of which is not worth much, and once in a while we'll have a car or two or three. But we rent houses, and we don't collect properties. But usually when somebody leaves, we try to give them some kind of a parting gift that will tide them over until they can get on their feet, whether it's going to their relatives, or to rent a place and start living. That's why it is important, and we do stress and explain and actually, Father David suggested we paint it pretty black before they come, so people know what they're getting into. Of course, most people that come, I'd say it's a very small percentage that have very many worldly possessions to offer the community. Some people will come with a car, but it's just a car. If you live with a community 3 years, and all you have to offer is a car, it's not really that much as if you'd been living under someone else's roof, it would've cost you a lot more. So in most cases, I think most people realize that if I've been living there for 10 years, and in the beginning I have up 3 or 4 thousand dollars that I had, it's not really that much, because for 4 or 5 years, all my needs were supplied. I lived in a proper

house. So it's not usually an issue. I'd say rarely. And when it has been an issue, we've just tried to give some kind of parting amount of money to help them get started.

Q: Now, I know you mentioned that you have morning devotions. Do you have a time set aside for having business meetings?

CB: Yeah, we do. There's certain required meetings that we have in our homes. One is a financial meeting. What we do, because our finances are all in common, therefore the financial deacon is not actually the person who decides what to do with the funds. The home votes on all aspects of finances. The deacon is simply the one who administers the home's decisions. He has to answer to the home. For example, all the funds that come in are recorded, and then it's decided in the home how to spend them. Of course, there's basic things of the rent, the bills, usually that covers just about everything, there's not much left. But if there's any extra, the home decides. We'll get together and vote on if we want to get a new crib for the baby here. That kind of thing.

Q: Do you have a particular way of making decisions? Like do you follow consensus process? Or majority rule?

CB: Majority rule. In financial matters, though, it has to be 2/3 majority. In every other vote, it can just be a simple majority. Financial voting members in the home have to be 18 years of age. By the same token, any kind of debts that the home would incur, any kind of financial difficulties, are only the responsibility of those 18 and older. The younger folks are not to be burdened or responsible for financial matters. So basically, once a month we have a financial meeting. We also have regular business meetings like on a weekly basis. One day a week, we personally, in our home, will get together to discuss how we are going to do our witnessing, and we'll decide, plan teams, and where we'll go, and how we'll do it. We also usually have at least one meeting a month if not two, on childcare. It's required that we all agree upon a certain disciplinary standard within the home, as to what we expect of our children -- for example, we don't want to allow fighting or hitting, we all have to agree on certain points. So that's another meeting we have. And then we have what we call home council meeting. What that is, it's not up there right now, but normally, we have an envelope up that says, "Home council points." Any person in the home can put a point for an agenda for a home council meeting, any matter that they want brought up to the body, whether it's wanting popcorn Saturday nights, or you know.

LD: Or you might want a different kind of toothpaste.

CB: Yeah, or more serious things, like, "We'd like to plan an outing."

PE: If you want to plan an outing, or change the dish schedule, if you want to change the basic daily schedule, because certain -- maybe it isn't working right, or maybe there's some new factors. Or witnessing methods.

CB: Or if somebody's unhappy with how something's running with the home, that's their opportunity. Because when they put their little point in, we have an obligation to discuss it as a home within 14 days. These are -- I guess it's 2 years ago, The Family put together what's called a Charter -- Tim would know about that, I think we had sent him one, didn't we? The Charter is a compilation of basic Family beliefs and our responsibilities and rights of individual members and families. And so we kind of codified a lot of our procedures and beliefs to insure that each member of the Family could have a platform to bring up anything [unintelligible]. The financial issues, too, that each member has a vote and a say in how the

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money's spent. So that's how our council meetings work. We found them to be quite successful, because people are a lot happier. They express whatever they have. And if they're not happy with some aspect, they have a platform to bring it for discussion. If the home votes to continue the way it was, well, the home voted. You can either exercise what we call "the right of mobility," which is to move on to another home, or live with it the way it is.

Q: So in the home council meeting, would you bring up personal issues. "I'm not getting along with so-and-so," or is that not something that's usually brought up?

CB: Not so much. I mean, if there was, for example, if there was an issue that was effecting everybody in the home, then maybe it could come up. But that's more of a rare occurrence. Usually if there's personal problems, the team workers will work it out with that person. Or even if it's two adult people, they'll often just talk to each other, pray together, and try to work it out.

Q: Do the team workers, do those positions rotate, or are they set?

CB: You vote on them, and then every six months, we vote for the team workers. And every three months, there's a vote of confirmation. So if the home's not happy with the teamwork, after 3 months they can work them out. Bring in a new set of folks.

Q: Is there leadership in The Family beyond the individual household leadership?

LD: Yes. There used to be more levels of leadership than there are today. [unintelligible]limitation of the Charter. But along with downsizing our communities to make it easier and more manageable, we also downsized the leadership structure as well. So what we have now is the homes, and then there's the home teamwork that helps to administrate the functions of the home. But then above that, we have what we call visiting servants, who are different ones who visit the homes to make sure that things are running properly, and that people are happy in the homes. They don't have the authority to tell the home what to do, except for what is outlined in the Charter. Like if the home has certain ministries, they can't tell them, "We feel that this other ministry would be more fruitful, so you need to do this." They can't do that, they don't have the authority to do that. But they're basically there to help and make sure people are happy, and that things are running smoothly, and that different things are being taken care of, needs are being, people feel fulfilled in their ministries and what they're doing. And then above that, there's what we call the CRO's. And actually what that stands for is the central reporting office, but each area, each continent, has its central reporting office. But the CRO's, as we call them, are those that administrate the office. So there maybe three to a continent, there may be 7 to a continent, there's no set number, it depends on the need, the number of homes in the area, the number of ministries going on within those areas. And then from the CRO's, there's World Services, which is Mama, Peter, and Gary and their teamwork, helping in the administration of the overall Family.

Q: And Mama is -?

LD: That's Maria.

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Q: And the other people? Those aren't her children?

LD: No, they're others about our age -- Mama's about our age too . So they help -- like Peter, for instance, has been working with Dad and Mama for quite some time, almost 16 years or so. And Father David trained him to help Maria after he passed on. And so now they're married, actually.

Q: What do you all think is the best part of living together in community?

PE: Wow. There's a lot. I guess, what first pops into my mind, is not necessarily the priority, but because I have a family, and Lonnie has a family, and Claire has a family, communal life is tremendous, because there is such support for the children and families. Because all of us are very involved with meeting people outside from all walks of life, different cultures and different societies, the family unit right now is undergoing a vicious attack that is tearing it apart and tearing it down. What you see in society, divorce rates, and husband and wife having to have jobs, so they get estranged from their children, and their children become latch key kids, the whole day care syndrome, and everybody's just growing further and further apart, which I experienced in my own personal family, even though there was only four of us. I can see it now, it's much more escalated than when I was a child. But in our organization, the family unit is very, very important, and children are very much well-respected and well-taken care of. And not only that, we have single mothers who have children, and just that support and that cooperation and that sharing and that help that just goes on day by day, is a tremendous benefit for the family, because nobody has to feel like they're out there fending for themselves, supporting themselves, and having all that stress and pressure, and difficulty. Which people do face. It's very real. But in our society, it's very been resolved -- we're not a perfect society by any means, but compared with society at large, this is a real heaven on earth. And when people come to our homes, they often comment that, whether just coming to see what it's all about, or if they come to scrutinize us. They say, "This is just tremendous, the peace and the cooperation and the support." They can see it, you don't have to tell them about it, you don't have to have the charter and say, "Here, read it." They can tell, because you can't fake it. We can't fake it amongst ourselves, and neither can we fake it to the outsiders. Neither do we intend to. But that's one of the biggest miracles that people see. And they see that Jesus works, and that a belief in Christ works, because they see it in our lives now. We live together, and how people feel that support and comfort and help, and working together. So that to me is one of the most tremendous things of living communally and being in the family. And as a result, it also makes us stronger Christians, because we also have that daily fellowship and encouragement to live the Christian life, and support when you are going through a particular difficulty in your personal life, or not getting along with someone else, or finding your ministry difficult, or under a lot of stress, or approaching old age -- there is support at every angle, in every corner. People are trying to understand, and people are trying to help you, and are also seeking solutions for you and are praying with you. All that is what I'm talking about. You should stay with us a few days.

LD: I would say for myself, number one it's like seeing the vision and the dream come true, and living the way Jesus said Christians should be living. I don't mean that critically to other Christians, because each person has to find their own, the way they feel they should live out their beliefs and convictions. But I know for me, I went to church all my life, but I became very disillusioned with it, so I didn't go to church for several years. But then I met The Family. My sister was in The Family before, when it was The Children of God. Her and my brother-in-law, she was married at the time, they came out and stayed at

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my apartment. At that time, I was just a druggie musician, playing in studios in California, night clubs and all that. But just seeing, the peace of mind that they had, and hearing about this communal lifestyle, and that they could really live the way Jesus said could be lived, it was intriguing. At first I didn't believe it, and I refused to go any of the meetings. Until one day I got tricked into it. And when I went there, it was just very hard to believe how a group of 30 or 40 people could be living together so harmoniously. And I said, "Everybody's being real good right now because I'm here, right?" I was talking to my sister. And she said, "No, this is the way it always is." I said, "Oh, that's hard to believe." And so I left, and I didn't go back for a long time. But it's like the Holy Spirit was working in my heart, and there wasn't a day in my life that I wasn't thinking constantly about my experiences visiting the community for an hour. So finally, I said, "Okay, I'm giving up everything I have, and I'm going to try it, and see if it works." So I sold everything I had, left my music career, and just ended up at the doorstep of the community and said, "I'm here. I'm joining." I lived there, and after a week, I realized that this is not, that it is real. You can live the Bible, the way Jesus said Christians were supposed to live. It can be done still, today. And just that alone brings about a real peace of mind, for myself personally, to know, I feel like I'm God's highest will by being in The Family, because I'm dedicating my whole, 100%, morning, noon, and night, to reaching the lost with the Gospel. There's not much more you can do than 100%.

Q: What year did you join?

LD: 1976.

Q: So this is your 20th anniversary! Are you doing anything to celebrate?

LD: No, not really. Every day is a celebration. What Phil was saying about the support, I was just thinking about it the other day, because a couple weeks ago, my back went out. And I was down for about 10 days, 2 weeks, just pretty much flat on my back. I mean, I could get up and walk short distances to the bathroom or whatever. I was just thinking the other day, if I was working at a secular job with my family, and say my back went out -- there would be 2 weeks of my work where I wouldn't receive any money. But in The Family it's not like that. Like my back went out -- everyone else just pitched in. It's like you feel like what Phil was saying, that support, in almost every area. With your children, with yourself personally. Like I don't sit up at night worrying, "Gosh, if get sick tomorrow and can't go to work, what's going to happen to my children?" Those kind of worries don't exist. I mean, we have other problems, but the problems that most people encounter in their day-to-day life, we don't. And that's one of the big benefits of communal living. I'm sure other people who live communally experience the same thing, but you really experience that in The Family, that support and that help which kind of takes away the fears of tomorrow, of the future. Like for me, thinking about a retirement plan; well, I'm never going to retire. I'll keep preaching the Gospel and keep being a missionary till the day I die.

CB: It used to be that way in olden times. In olden days, people didn't just close up shop at 60. The farmer kept farming till he went on, and the storekeeper kept opening his store, and the judge was a judge at 75 and 80. It's just more of a modern thing about people retiring.

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Q: I think you were gone when I asked this question, but what was the main benefit for you of living in community?

CB: Well, besides all that I heard them say, which I could easily say myself, one thing I went through is I was always a very introverted kind of person. I grew up in an atheistic family, and I didn't really have any friends. I had a severe hearing problem, and I was always very lonely, I really didn't have any school friends. I always felt like I didn't fit in, and people didn't understand me much. And I've just always felt like I didn't fit in with the "in" crowd in school, I felt like a misfit. And I felt that way my whole life until, when I was 18, I met The Family. And the thing that struck me most was that immediate love and acceptance. It was like, they didn't really care who I was, if I was the girl who everybody thought was the weirdo in the class, or whatever, they just loved me, because the Lord gave them that love, and didn't really have any conditions to it, or matter what I was, or how I was, or if I had a great personality or I didn't. I think that unconditional love and acceptance brought about major changes in my life. When my mother saw me two years later, she couldn't even recognize me. She was flabbergasted, because I had been such an introverted, quiet person. I'd been going to psychiatrists before I joined The Family. I had quite a hard time. I just couldn't see anything worth living for. I left home when I was 16. When I was 18, I met The Family in Brazil, and -- but when I came back, I had gone from being a totally introverted kind of person, very serious, had a hard time communicating with others, to being communicative, outgoing, optimistic, happy. And it was quite a change, and it brought me a lot of happiness too, and I felt happy helping others. The other thing too that happened to me was that, although my family was atheistic, I had found the Lord when I was about 12, I guess, and I started going to church. I was really looking around for some church where I could do full time work. I wanted to do something with my life. I got so disillusioned, because I went to so many places, and nobody really opened their doors to me. Because I didn't have my family, I was just a young girl. I'd go to the church, and it was almost like, "Thank you, but no thank you, we don't need you here." It just further accentuated that feeling of loneliness I had, because even in the church I couldn't find it. So I felt, it just must not exist, there mustn't be that real caring kind of concern and love. At one point I thought of being a nun, I was really seeking for some kind of full time religious work. When I met the family, it was just so immediate. I walked through the door, and I just felt at home. People made me feel immediately welcome, and immediately I became useful, and I found a full time work, something which I had been looking for. So that's kind of what The Family did for me. Besides all the things they said before.

Q: How about the flip side? What are some of the hard things about living in community?

CB: First of all, you go through a continual process of learning how to communicate, get along with others, understand -- even though you feel like you've learned it, it seems like a new test comes along every time, and there's a whole new aspect to learn about loving others, and forsaking oneself. So it's like a continual -- we call it "dying daily." It's the term Father David gave it, because in the Bible, Paul said, "I die daily." It's like dying daily to yourself, because it's so easy to get selfish, independent, and so you have to really be constantly forging forth toward these goals of loving, understanding, communicating, giving, sharing, sharing of your life, of your heart, of your time. Although it's wonderful, because there's a lot of joy in it. Of course, it costs something too, so it takes a little bit more effort than selfish living would, although the benefits are so great, it's not really a worthy comparison. But it does take effort.

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LD: It's hard to think about the cons, because the benefits so overshadow the negative aspects that -- it's true, what Claire was saying, it's not so much any one thing, but it's more like the continual process of learning to give your all to the Lord every day. Which, you know, society is so different. It was a real crunch for each one of us that joined in the beginning. I went through three months of, I didn't know where I was. Not because things are so strange, it's just that I was always taught all my life to get, get, get. And I came into a society that was just give, give, give. That in itself, it short circuits the fuse upstairs. You have to start learning to give, and that takes a little bit of time, and then it takes even more time to give cheerfully, and with your whole heart. But once you start seeing the fruit of the giving, and the fruit of putting other's needs and others before your own desires or wants, then you start receiving that joy of giving, in seeing someone else happy and loved and cared for. I think it's just that daily process, I die daily.

Q: Is the lack of privacy ever difficult? Like do you ever wish that you had just a house to your own family or something?

LD: No, I don't, not at this point. After 20 years -- and when I first joined, I was in a living room, about twice the size of this. But it was sleeping bag to sleeping bag, all the way across. And you didn't want to be back in the corner, because if you wake up in the night to go to the bathroom, you had to step between everybody. That was really no privacy. And only the married couples had rooms, and sometimes there were 2 or 3 married couples in a room. Because there was no room . No space. So usually you had all the boys in sleeping bags, side by side in one room, and then you had the girls upstairs in sleeping bags in another room. That's what it was like in the early days. So I think after going through all that, what we have today is just a lot of privacy in comparison. We'll give you a tour of the house.

CB: Occasionally, single folks sometimes can be in a situation where singles have one room for several -- we've been trying to cut down in having so many in one room. Before [unintelligible] ... happened from time to time because of having too many people in one room, so you end up having six people sharing a room with 3 bunk beds, and in the privacy level, that could get a little bit hard for older people. The younger kids don't really mind, kids enjoy it. But when you get to be older, I think most of us have had to refigure that angle for older single people. Because the married couples have their rooms, so they have their privacy. It's not so much privacy though. I'd say the question is not really privacy, it's a quiet place to rest. As you get older, it seems like they need it more, the quietness. We've come across that lately with our older folks, they just need a quiet place where they can sleep, and if there's four people walking in and out, opening and closing doors, then, you know. But I think most of the homes have worked around by cutting down on size, therefore making accommodations, maybe having two older single people in one room, which is great.

Q: One big question I have is that, a lot of the communities that came out of the same time period that yours did, crashed and burned really quickly, but yet The Family is still going strong and has these centers all over the world. What is it [tape ends] ...

LD: ... what's kept us growing was that, Father David taught this, we had unified leadership. Whereas I know in a lot of other groups at that time were splintered or faltering, and they would join us along the way. Like, for instance, in Atlanta, they had a place called The House of Judah. They were a Jesus People

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group as well, and when we came through there, their leadership me with our leadership, and they agreed to join. Some of the folks stayed, from The House of Judah, but some left, because the leadership of The House of Judah thought that they would immediately assume leadership within The Children of God, but it wasn't quite as automatic as all that, and there was jealousies that came about, and so many left. Actually, quite a few from The House of Judah stayed. But I think more than anything, it was the unified leadership, the unified vision that was given through Dad in the letters. We all received the same word, the same direction, and so everyone was moving in step with each other. Even though our communities were autonomous, we all were following the same vision, so to speak. And it just grew. Whereas the other groups, they didn't have that unified leadership. They would all -- like most of them, when you talked with them, you asked, "Who is your shepherd? Do you have a unified leadership structure?" "We just follow the Bible." Well, the problem with that was that every man was following the Bible according to his interpretation of the Bible, whereas in our case, it's like, Dad was teaching us and showing us the different interpretations of the verses, and what that meant. He'd been studying the Bible for 40 years, and had read it through from cover to cover, many times, and had made that his whole life study. Through that, the Lord was revealing to him the vision for the end time. Plus, our belief in the end time also has a lot to do with our unity. We had an academic friend who's writing a book on us now. He said that "You're the only group of Christians that I know that not only talk about the end time, but believe it, that it's here. Your lifestyle and your actions and everything are patterned around that." That's what gives us the conviction, the zeal, to get out and win the lost. Because we believe there isn't a lot of time left.

CB: I think too, another factor is that Father David taught us to be what he called "dropped out," totally dropped out of the system. Whereas most of the other groups because secularized little by little, I think. Through secularization, it reaches a point where it's hard to even see why you're living communally anymore, because the original goals and visions and aspirations that united you, they almost seem to crumble. As people go off and do their daily jobs, and send their kids off to school, it can weaken the movement quite a bit. Whereas we have maintained a united vision on home schooling our kids, giving our lives to witnessing every day. So I think that also maintains the movement a little purer and stronger.

LD: In fact, Father David wrote a letter which I guess we can send to you, it's called "Jesus People, the Revolution." And it was his explaining what the difference was between us and other groups. Basically what he was saying was they don't have a revolution, they have a reformation. They're trying to reform, but they're trying to reform within the church system. They're not really breaking from it. And because of that, like Claire was saying, because they didn't make a complete break with it, they eventually just moved back into it, and dissolved. Whereas Father David was continually -- you'll read in some of the letters, any time he felt us sliding back in, it was like boom, another explosion to get us moving in the opposite direction. Which has kept us --

CB: --And he also wrote letters actually saying, "Thank God for the sexual beliefs the Lord gave us," because that also maintains us somewhat dropped out and different, which avoids the secularization process. That's something that makes us quite different from a lot of the new religious movements we've been in contact with, is that we're not really seeking to become mainstream secular churches. We believe that we're supposed to live the way we're living, and be small in the sense that we feel that it's better to be small in members but where we're agile, and quick, and can move and be full time

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members, than to have a vast number of people in a church. So we're not actually seeking that type of acceptance, being a mainstream religion.

LD: A lot of people keep wondering why we're not.

CB: We've had people that tell us, "If you would just drop all your sexual doctrines, maybe we could squeak you through as mainstream." But we're not really interested in being mainstream, we wouldn't be here if --

Q: --So you don't actually have a building that you would call a church where you would go and have your services?

LD: No, you're looking at it.

Q: You do all your worship here?

LD: Right.

Q: Do you have a special worship service?

CB: No. Anybody can lead it. Even a 7 year old, if they had the ability to, they could lead our meetings. A lot of younger kids, maybe not 7, but we've had kids 11, 12, 13, have led communions, which is basically our only ceremony. We do [unintelligible] meetings in our homes. Different people lead devotions, inspiration, singing.

Q: Do you have Sunday services or anything like that?

CB: We have what we call a weekly fellowship, but we have it Monday nights instead of Sunday.

LD: Sunday doesn't have any more significance for us than any other day of the week. Every day of the week for us is pretty much the same.

Q: As a final question, do you have advice for people who wanted to live together in community?

PE: It would be helpful to know why they're seeking it. They could be in a communal society, and say, "Why doesn't mine work?" Like the hippies, for example, I was in and out of different communes, and some of the things you brought up earlier was why it didn't work, was that everyone was so much into the freedom and the love, and this and that, but then you went down into the dining room and the kitchen, and it was just a disaster. It just like repulsed you, and you couldn't motivate anybody to do anything. If you did, they'd say, "That's bad vibes." And if you were accused of that, you were putting a bad trip on them, "You're going to bring me down, man." It was kind of hard to offer general overall advice, except what kind of cements us together is that we do have a belief that we do all hold in common. Which is the Bible, the fundamentals of Christianity. And I think what makes it work is that we've tapped into the power of God. And that's what's alive in our lives. Jesus said something very simple: "If I be lifted up, I'll draw all men unto me." So that can be applied in just bringing people to the Lord as a primary experience of salvation, or drawing them unto him in a fellowship, a group of believers, which is what we are. Because he's at the center. It's not like I'm at the center, or our world service is at the center -- it's because God is at our center, Christ is at our center, and we're all trying to please him. In doing so, that's where the unselfishness and sacrificial lifestyle kicks in. It becomes a pleasure. It's actually an enjoyment to live that way. In going back to the example of the hippies, that's what they didn't have --

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they weren't unselfish. And they weren't sacrificial. And so, even though, they had the outer trappings of a fun, loving society, but when it came right down to making it work day by day, it just didn't work. And so a lot of the communes fell apart. Or they're central theme became drugs. And everybody was doped up, so they could get along with each other. But that's like a beer party, sure, everybody gets along with each other. Those kind of communal things don't work unless there's something that's a core belief that everybody has confidence in, and faith in it, and that does really work. We feel like in order to have a real communal society, you have to have Jesus. Communalism came from -- he was the one who originated it, made it work, because that's how he wants people to live, and how man originally lived in the very beginning. That's why it works today. If we could give advice, say, "Why don't you put Jesus in the center of your community?" But that's so easy to say. There are many different communal societies for many different reasons, and to just say, "Well, it isn't working because you don't believe in Jesus." They're going to say, "Huh? Where are you coming from?" We could offer some practical suggestions, of course, but it would be tailored to the need, or whatever a person was requesting. But what the bottom line, is, though, all the schedules, and sharing of the load, and ministries, and deacons, and all this is nothing unless there is the motivating force, which is love -- love for one another, and love for God. Without that, you know ...

CB: There's a verse in the Bible that says, "Serve one another in love." I think that's the real secret to community living, you have to, beforehand, make a commitment that you're willing to unselfishly give of yourself and your time, your goods, to others in the community. I think selfishness is a great enemy of communal living. Love is really the unifying force that keeps it together. Serving one another in love.

LD: A lot of people, too, if they're going to go into a communal situation, it seems that back in the '60's and '70's, a lot of people joined a communal society for what's in it for them. "How is this going to benefit me?" Which is joining under completely wrong foundation of just selfishness. When you join to take, you can't live communally. Living communally is a giving process. It's not a taking process. It's like Phil was saying, the kitchen is a disaster, everything's a mess, but it's bad vibes to think about cleaning it up, because nobody wants to give of their time, they'd rather just sit back and dope out, trip out, and let the kitchen go to pot. But a communal society has to -- it's from the same root word as communism. It's like communism doesn't work either unless everybody's unified and giving to the call. Communal living is the same way. For us, without Jesus as the center, it's impossible to have a really successful communal society.

CB: It's like a miracle of God's love, because it's just not humanly possible to have that kind of unselfish love, it's very rare. I think too, another key which also has to do with love, which we really feel is pretty much the most important factor as far as our relations with each other, is that to get along with others, to be able to tolerate our foibles and idiosyncrasies, it would take a lot of love. Unless you've got that supernatural love of God, I think it would get on a lot of people's nerves. Just the different ways that each of us are, the different ways we bring up our kids. Some people are strict, some people are looser. There's all different ways of -- so we've learned an awful lot about tolerance and loving and caring. I think that's also part of a very necessary ingredient to communal living.

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Q: I lied, I do have another question. It goes back to when you were talking about sexual relationships that you guys have in your communities, doesn't that lead to a lot of jealousy and problems? It just seems like it would lead to marriages breaking up, or people leaving in a huff.

CB: We've learned a lot of lessons, because one of the main factors about sexual sharing, is that it's to be done in love, and it shouldn't hurt any third party. So I think we've learned a lot since this was initiated back in '76. Fully initiated in '78. We've learned a lot that this kind of sharing is meant to be unselfish giving, and not to hurt others. And if it's not done on the right premise, of course, it could create jealousy. We also look at jealousy as almost like a sin that you need to work on overcoming as well. Of course, by that we don't mean that we provoke others to jealousy, but jealousy can attack you on other things besides your marriage. In communal living, you can be jealous of somebody else's kids, you can be jealous of their job. So we don't -- we strive actively to fight against jealousy, and see it as almost an enemy to unselfishness. I think that's helped us a lot. A lot of our marriages, sexual sharing has strengthened them. And maybe in some cases it has weakened them, or both people involved have had to reassessed, perhaps some of the situations were not the best carried out, and lessons were learned. It's kind of like everything in life, we've learned as we've gone along. But I think if you talk to most people, their experience have been very positive and strengthening.

Q: I suppose I ought to also ask how long you two have been part of the community. You said you joined when you were 18?

CB: Yes. So I've been here for 18 years.

Q: That's great. And you, Phil?

PE: I joined when I was 19, so I've been in 24, going on 25 years.

Q: So all three of you have been here long. Thank you so much for your time.