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# Free Minds Journal

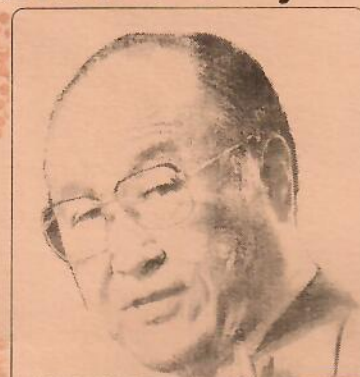
promoting awareness of the Watchtower and other  
authoritarian religions

Can the  
Watchtower  
Be Reformed?

Creating  
Paradise in  
Watchtower  
Art

The Heavens  
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vol. 16,  
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May/June  
1997



# Can the Watchtower Be Reformed?

Letter from a "liberal elder" to Randy Watters (Liberal Elder in italics)

*Hello Randy,*

*It's been sometime since I spoke with you. I wanted to see how you've been, and run a few things by you. A number of former Witnesses seem pretty convinced that reform is not possible. I was wondering what your thoughts on this are.*

Reformation in a religion comes in two different forms:

1) true repentance of wrongdoing and a new commitment to honesty as well as an openness to critical response. Always accompanied by a new sense of kindness and grace toward others, as a result of the humbling nature of the experience. If it is historically Christian in nature, it will be accompanied by intense prayer and the seeking of forgiveness from both God and others wronged.

2) reform based on practical reasons, such as retaining numbers, wealth, or power or all of the above. A change in leadership style, new programs and more lenient policies, and a fresh new look to the public are examples of this type of reform. Often mistaken for "God" touching them or "healing the organization."

An example of the first: The recent massive changes in doctrine and leadership in the Worldwide Church of God was due to the repentance of at least one major leader. The results of such an about face was predictable: the church has splintered into various factions and the changes are painful for all involved. Hearts are bared, egos are exposed.

I believe the Watchtower is currently becoming an example of the latter, though belatedly, as evident by recent changes. They are feeling the heat from their lawyers over the child custody issues, their policy on blood transfusion, the failed "donation" arrangement and its illegal implications, and the keeping of records and secret documents. To pre-

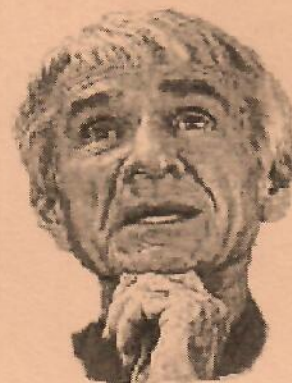
vent expensive lawsuits and scandalous news releases, the Watchtower leaders appear to be positioning themselves for a more polished and attractive appearance to the public. They have even formed a Public Relations Office.

I do not feel that true reform within the Watchtower is likely, if you mean it in the first example as discussed above. Why? Are they "too far gone?" Not at all, true grace is a magnet for the impossible and hopeless in God's eyes. But there is just no evidence that any of the leaders are seeking true repentance. This could change, of course, but there currently appears to be no trace of it. This is typical among a group of older leaders who have "sat on the pot" for too long. Perhaps a change of guard may engender a sense of honesty and true repentance.

*I have read several books on cults recently, and I must admit that we have a number of cult-like characteristics. Still, the experts don't seem to agree themselves.*

Professional mental health workers who are trained in working with victims of cultic groups ARE in agreement. The eight points of mind control as defined by Robert J. Lifton as well as the more condensed four points as used by Steven Hassan (control of thoughts, behavior, emotions and flow of information) are widely accepted, if not particularly defined in exactly the same way. Those who seem to be in disagreement over the signs of mind control are generally Christian leaders who attempt to define a "cult" by doctrine and how far it veers from orthodoxy. While I may be a champion of orthodoxy and the historical/critical method of interpretation, I believe that using doctrine to define what is/is not a cult is confusing apples with oranges. Manipulative techniques, deception and control mechanisms are the apples, and doctrines are the oranges. Orthodox churches can be cultic in their methodology but relatively sound in doctrine, whereas non-Christian or unorthodox churches may have little or no history of abuse. It is my opinion that doctrine should be viewed as historically/unhistorically sound, or orthodox/unorthodox, as opposed to confusing it with mind control techniques used to manipulate members. Typically, the only ones in disagreement are religious leaders who are untrained in discerning mind con-

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## Letters to the Editor

### How Could Anyone Join A Cult?!?

With the Heaven's Gate tragedy still so fresh in all of our minds certain questions seem to come up: What kind of person joins a cult? Why do they stay and put up with the abuse? How could anyone be SO devoted that they would kill themselves? Can't they see that what they are doing is crazy? Are THEY crazy?

I feel that I am in a unique position to address these questions as I spent 10 years with a communal cult. Yet, now being out for 11 years, I also can look at the horrors that happened at Rancho Santa Fe and ask, along with the rest of a stunned nation, "Why did they die like this?"

For eight and a half of the ten years I was with my former group, each payday I would sign my check over to the group. I would receive a meager allowance in return and would have to beg for the basics of life such as clothing and medical care. Often I lived in substandard housing with rats, filth and overcrowded conditions in neighborhoods with extremely high crime rates. After working a full day at work, I often would have to spend several hours on the street proselytizing. After returning, I would have to sit in meetings that lasted to the wee hours of the morning. These meetings were intense. Public humiliation was common place, and sometimes we

would sit in silence for hours on end believing ourselves to be too reprobate to even speak. After getting an insufficient night's sleep, I would be expected to repeat the same routine of work and group activities all over again. In other words, there was no doubt that I was in a cult. Yet, if you had passed me in the street during the 10 years that I spent in the group, I can tell you that I wouldn't have been all that different from others in the crowd. My skin had not turned green, and I did not grow antennas. I had eyes, ears and a nose just like anyone else. I looked both ways before crossing a street. If somehow we got in an idle conversation that didn't involve my trying to recruit you, you may be shocked to know that I had likes and dislikes just like any other person. I still liked pizza (even if I didn't have much access to it) and still hated pork sausage. Blue was still my favorite color, and I still loved sunsets. People who are in cults are just that PEOPLE—although sadly cults suppress much of what makes an individual unique. Heaven's Gate, I believe, has forced all of us to come to grips with the realization that they were people not too unlike us, and that is indeed something tough to face. Whether one has been in a cult or not, the realization deep in our hearts that perhaps we could have shared a similar fate makes us want to turn away and believe that they had to be made of different stuff than we are. I am here to tell you that they are not.

Why did the people in Heaven's Gate seem to go willingly to their deaths? Why did I stay in a clearly abusive situation for 10 years? The activities I felt trapped to do while within the group give some generous clues to how this can happen. And, when we can come to understand how one person can gain control over another, we can peer into the world of an average cult member. Indeed, one human being controlling another is nothing new to civilization. We need only look at the Biblical story of Cain and Abel to see the lengths that a person will go to in order to be "on top"—even if that means murder. It is no secret that sleep deprivation hinders clear thinking and decision making abilities. Through instituting a poor diet and strenuous routines, a group can break a person down further, making them even more vulnerable to the group's ideologies. By virtue of my

physical existence, mentally and emotionally I was in a compromising position within the group. While the specific techniques may differ, almost every group has a way of inducing hypnosis. In my former group this was accomplished through the format of our meetings which in reality were the focal point of what had become an intense system of peer scrutiny. Sitting in silence for hours affected me. I remember leaving many a meeting in which we had not spoken for hours with a heaviness in my heart and feeling like my head had been put between two cymbals. Having to stand in front of my peers to be critiqued by them would seize me with panic. We would have to present ourselves one by one in front of a group of several hundred of our peers, stating what we did and where we were at in our hearts. The group would vote on us and the final vote became our guideline...it did not matter how we felt about things in our hearts. Often I was found to be deficient and would have to endure taunts by my peers between meetings. All of that was very intentional, coming from the leader himself and carried out through the ranks. There was no going home to escape all of this. I was home, and there was not a minute of privacy. I often could not think clearly and if I could get through a day feeling I held onto my sanity that was a major accomplishment.

My mind was too under siege to even think of packing my bags and leaving. This was purposeful as cults know that no one would make a rational decision to live like this and thus create an environment in which a person has no time or freedom to think. I have heard life in a cult compared to living in a fire constantly. Most of us can invoke images of people we've seen on the news who have lived through a fire. When a person is in the middle of a fire, they simply do not have access to certain parts of their thinking that they normally would have. However, when the fire is over, we see them collapse and say things like "Oh my God, I can't believe what happened. It was so terrifying." They are able to reconnect emotionally to their experiences and likely will be able to integrate what happened to them, thereby dealing with the trauma. Cults do not allow you to reconnect. I was kept so busy and off balance that the fire was never allowed to be over. Thus outsiders could look at the way my fellow members and I lived in sheer



horror; yet, while living in the midst of it, I simply could not get it. I get it now because I have been out and like a person after a fire who can begin thinking again, I now have my critical thinking abilities back. Along with everyone else who hears about what happened to me, I am horrified to have spent 10 years of my life like that.

What could have been done to "reach" me during the 10 years I was in the communal group? What can we do to reach others who are in groups who may be heading down paths similar to that of Heaven's Gate or the other groups in recent times who have committed mass suicide? The biggest mistake people can make in reaching out to someone in a cult is forgetting that they are people too and that there are some logical reasons behind what on the surface appears to be bizarre behavior. If we remember that outside of the group's influences, we would likely be dealing with a totally different person, they become less scary and more reachable to us. The dynamics of a cult are not too different from that of a battered wife staying with an abusive husband, or what happened in Nazi Germany or the Cultural Revolution in China. On the outside, they all seem to be beyond comprehension, but as we look at the underlying dynamics, their tactics are not that hard to understand. In our society today, all of us are being bombarded with huge amounts of information and people vying for our every dollar. Learning about techniques of influence and control can only benefit all of us as we are trying to navigate our way through an increasing complex world. When it comes to understanding someone in a cult or other controlling situation, it can literally be life saving.

The people who had the biggest impact on me were not the ones who screamed at me "You're in a cult!" (Believe me, I had plenty of those.) Rather the ones who made me think were those willing to care about me as a person whether I stayed or left. Despite their initial allure, cults do not offer unconditional love. When I saw people on the outside acting different toward me than my own supposed all-loving peers, it affected me. I may not have left right away, but I could not shake that there was someone who would be willing to be my friend and care about me with no strings attached. Like anyone else faced with a decision, someone "decides" to join a cult based on the information available to them.

Unfortunately, cults are notorious for not letting a potential recruit know about the full package. What I thought I was joining and what I actually joined were vastly different from each other. In other words, if the group had been up front about the kind of life I was going to have to live and what was going to happen to me, I would have never joined. Helping a person make a decision to leave a cult in reality is educating them by filling in the blanks that the group deceptively didn't. With more information, there is a good chance that a person will make an informed choice to leave. The information a person in an environment like this needs includes understanding techniques of manipulation and control—particularly how this may be practiced in his/her particular group.

People in cults are not stupid. After leaving my former group, I was so convinced that I had to be intelligently deficient that I actually took an I.Q. test. Much to my surprise, instead of scoring way below average, I scored in the 97 percentile. As I have learned more about the kinds of people cults recruit, I have found that I am the rule and not the exception. Because the rigors of cult life are arduous, these groups do not want someone who will break down easily. Cults go after the best and the brightest—robbing all of us of people who could be making a huge difference in this world.

What kind of people join cults? They are anyone you could meet anywhere. I was a teen living in a small town when I had been recruited. I may have been naive and not able to see through the deception like someone older may have been, but most teens are naive and easily impressed by those who are more slick than themselves. I was not a drug addict or a prostitute, but rather I had been a good student in school who worked two jobs.

So, the next time you are approached by someone whom you strongly suspect may be living in a far out commune somewhere, remember you are likely dealing with a highly intelligent person who was deceived into joining what may appear to us as a bizarre cult. Instead of looking at them as a freak or like they are crazy, keep in mind that if they had access to more information and saw that there was a life outside for them, they likely would not stay.

I was part of the Church of Bible

Understanding (or COBU for short). It began in the '70's under the name Forever Family, switching to the name COBU in 1976. They resemble the Alamo Foundation or the Children of God (minus the Flirty Fishing).

MGriffo@aol.com

## An anesthesiologist on blood...

Dear Gary Busselman,

As a practicing anesthesiologist I read with much interest your article, "Revisions on the Blood Issue" regarding the stance of the Watchtower Society and blood (Jan/Feb *Free Minds Journal*). You talked about exceptions that the WTS makes for the use of blood components such as albumin, immune globulins, and hemophiliac preparations and stated that the official reason the WTS gives for this is that only a small amount of blood is used. It is very obvious to me why the WTS has to make this exception. There are many preparations available at present (and have been for years) that are prepared from human blood. For example, Hepatitis B Immune Globulin (HBIG), used in the treatment and prevention of Hepatitis B, Tetanus Immune Globulin (Tetanus shot), used to prevent Tetanus in susceptible individuals, Rabies Immune Globulin, used to prevent rabies in susceptible individuals, Rh Immune Globulin, used in Rh neg mothers to prevent Hemolytic disease of the newborn in future pregnancies, Human Immune Globulin, used to treat and prevent Hepatitis A, Factor VIII concentrate, used to treat hemophilia A, Factor IX concentrate, used to treat Hemophilia B, other human immune globulin preps used to treat patients with immune deficiencies, etc. If the WTS did not allow use of these preparations, and was responsible for a child of JW parents to contract and die from rabies or Hepatitis B or Tetanus, this would not look good for the Society and would open the up local JWs to litigation or use of court orders to treat these patients.

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## Can the Watchtower Be Reformed? cont. from p. 2

trol and manipulation techniques.

Jehovah's Witnesses have all the typical marks of cults in that the Governing Body attempts to control the thinking of members, what they are allowed to read or not read, what emotional responses they are to have to everyday situations, as well as how to dress, groom, and act out in various social situations. They are also the "only true religion," and to leave is punishable by spiritual death and shunning. To disagree is to be proud and have a bad "heart condition." To stay away means the ultimate destruction at the hands of Jehovah God soon.

*It seems to me that we are a "schismatic sect" which might best be defined as a "high control group," that is in transition to a main stream religion.*

If you want to avoid the use of the term "cult" due to its stereotypical connotation by uneducated society (i.e., a "weird" group that follows a wacky leader) then "schismatic sect" is also appropriate. The use of the term "main stream religion" is misleading, as it suggests that size and age of the movement makes a group somehow less dangerous, which is not the case. The Moonies and the Ku Klux Klan could thus be considered as "mainstream," but they are no less dangerous than when they were smaller or in their early years.

*What do you honestly think? Do you see JWs as a dangerous sect a la "Heaven's Gate?" I just don't see this myself.*

I think that they are much more dangerous than Heaven's Gate, in terms of credibility and numbers, as well as in the end result, both (1) spiritually and (2) in its effect on the identity of the person involved. There are also the physical dangers. (I believe that more people die as a result of their "no blood transfusion" policy than with any other modern cult doctrine. It makes "Heaven's Gate" pale in comparison. These cases do make the news, but not as much as they should.) Let us look at these aspects:

### Spiritual Dangers

First and foremost, assuming one believes in the Bible as the Word of God, there is the stripping of the promises of the believer by Jesus himself, which are conditional:

Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you; unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:53,54)

and also,

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." and "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3,5)

"Judge" Rutherford, the second president of the Watchtower, stripped away this promise from the believer, declaring there were "two classes" of Christians, a "little flock" for whom the Bible was written, and a vast number of others who cannot partake of these promises, but who must rely on the few leaders to interpret what "scraps from the table" they are allowed to eat. This should be a major RED FLAG to any student of the Bible, yet the process of reinterpretation of the promises of Jesus is so gradual and insidious that it is amazingly reversed. In truth, according to the Watchtower, one is nowadays NOT to claim to be born again, cannot partake of the communion, will never see Jesus or be with him (compare John 14:1-3), and certainly will never see him visibly (compare Rev. 1:7), all in direct contradiction to his words. If these passages can be directly inverted, so can virtually anything else with a little play on words. The result is a vile adult taking candy (the simple promises of Jesus) from a baby (the "little ones" Jesus spoke of in Mark 9:42). The severity of their error is summed up in Mark 9:42:

And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

Hardly the type of religious leaders one should follow, at least if one takes Jesus seriously.

### Personal Identity Dangers

Typically, all cults promote the image of an ideal disciple, usually typified by the group leader(s). If one's conduct, mannerisms and language are acceptable to the group leader(s), all is well and

harmonious, and the group will enjoy success and growth. Yet the price is steep, the loss of one's own identity and self-respect. For the person who hates him/herself and is unhappy with their lot in life, or is insecure and seeks meaning in life or involvement with others in a more advanced form of camaraderie, cults are ideal. They teach you to hate your former self and habits, and to become a whole new person based on the model provided by the group leader. To mimic the leaders brings a sense of satisfaction and close friendship; to fall back into old ways of thinking, doubts, or a "critical spirit" brings guilt and shunning. Personal development is halted at the point of conversion in most cases, and later when the person decided to leave the cult, one's level of personal growth and maturity may be trailing their physical age by years or even decades. This is especially frightening if one has been in a cult through the adolescent years and the dating/courtship/family building years. To exit a cult in one's forties and to find that you don't have the necessary skills in dating or relationships, and may even have no job skills or future aspirations, is devastating. Bitterness and even a destructive lifestyle may result. This is why exit-counseling, even after leaving the cult, is often vital in rehabilitating the person.

### Physical Dangers

While the above two factors are typical in all cults, the aspect of physical danger varies widely depending on the group. Some cults use protein deprivation, long hours of hard work, or neglected medical conditions to endanger the victim. Others may promote good living but pose a danger to the individual in times of crisis, such as with Christian Science (reluctance to seek medical help) and in Jehovah's Witnesses (life-threatening emergencies and the denial of blood transfusions in certain forms). Thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses, perhaps tens of thousands, have died needlessly over their pharisaical interpretation of Acts 15:20. In the case of Jonestown, guilt and despair as well as the hypnotic leadership of Rev. Jim Jones led to the mass suicide/murder of 900 innocent victims. In the recent Heaven's Gate incident, 39 people willingly, yet under the charismatic leadership of Marshall Applewhite, took their lives fully believing they would not die at all.

*I also have come to the conclusion that the reform process is going to be extremely turbu-*



lent and dangerous. For some, I believe that leaving the organization may be the best option. For those of us heavily invested with friends, family and business associates, the options are not as good. I am starting to re-structure my business so that leaving might be feasible if reform fails.

The expected political changes in Watchtower policy will make it easier for some to remain in the organization, but will signal the time to depart for others. Some will see the Watchtower as being corrupted and leave in disgust, looking for something more pure in ideology. Yet nowhere will they find an organization corresponding in size and influence as the Watchtower, which will lead them to wonder what hand God has in the whole matter, if he cannot maintain an organization on earth.

Others will leave and through a historically-based study of the Bible may conclude that Catholic or Protestant orthodoxy more accurately represents the teachings of Christ, whether their organizations follow suit or not.

Many will leave with a bad taste for religion altogether, and seek no further spiritual pathways, at least in the traditional sense.

Most will remain in the Watchtower organization because they "don't know of anything better," in spite of many disagreements on a personal level. At that point Jehovah's Witnesses will more than ever resemble the Catholic Church, with its wide degree of toleration.

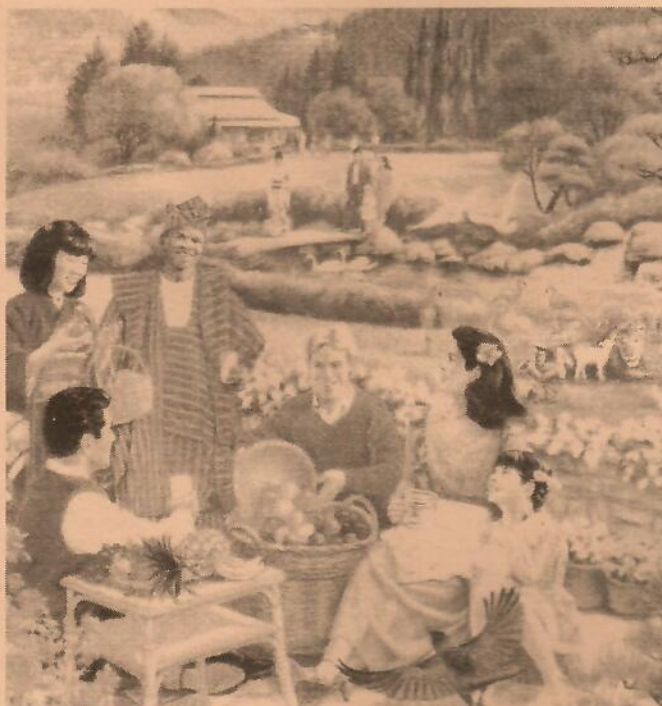
*I was wondering if you had kicked around the thought of putting some video clips of former Witnesses on the net. This might be very powerful.*

I have most of the technology to do this already, it is more a matter of my having the time to learn the process of digitizing video material that I already have. More funding is also needed.

*The last thing that I wanted to ask you about has to do with the blood issue. I am getting a lot of requests for a brief synopsis of the facts and evidence on blood. I am trying to put something together that can be used with Witnesses, and it dawned on me that perhaps something already exists. Do you know of any tracts or booklets?*

An informative article on "revisions" on the blood issue by Gary Busselman was published in the Jan/Feb 1997 *Free Minds Journal*. Others have done much to advertise this subject. We are getting somewhere! More is needed though. As the Watchtower continues to clarify its position on blood in the days ahead, we will keep our readers up to date.

Yours truly,  
Randy Watters



cover of "Look! I Am Making All Things New!" Watchtower, 1986

## How to Create A Vision of Paradise by John Sefton

This is a tongue-in-cheek look at WBTS artwork depicting the future "Paradise on Earth." It didn't take me long after reading several WBTS publications to notice that there is a definite formula involved in representing the future for rank-and-file Jehovah's Witnesses. All such visions of paradise contain most or all of the following features:

1. Mountains (or high hills) in the background (preferably snow-capped). The more like the Rockies the better. Usually a hint of coniferous forest on the

slopes.

2. A weather-board house or two in the near background. Sometimes people (see point 3. below) are building the houses. The builders are always male.

3. People of various races (Caucasian, Asian, African and occasionally Hispanic) engaged in various tasks and social functions. Caucasians are usually represented as being sensibly dressed while other races are usually in (as far as superior Caucasian Bethel Art Department workers are concerned) outlandish national costume. Couples are NEVER mixed races.

4. One of the tasks in point 3 involves the gathering of fruit (and/or vegetables) in baskets. The produce is usually from temperate climates (except for bananas) and is nothing a staid Anglo-European brought up on "meat and three veg" would be uncomfortable with (I have never seen a mango, lychee, papaya or wasabi in any of those numerous baskets.) The produce usually consists of apples, citrus fruit, pumpkins, cucumbers, squash, melons, grapes, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, and onions. Women are usually picking flowers.

5. Off to the side there is invariably a child (or domestic herbivore) playing with a carnivore (usually a lion or a leopard) or at least an animal not usually known for its domestication (a koala or a deer, for example).

6. Some kind of water feature (usually a waterfall or lake; sometimes a river or stream). A particularly good representation of paradise involves a river which cascades down a small cliff or embankment into a lake (all three!).

7. There are usually large stretches of rolling lawn. In the foreground upon this are the baskets of fruit (point 4), the children playing with animals (point 5) and usually some sort of picnic which involves several different races (but never mixed couples; see point 3).

There you have it: the definitive guide to producing visions of paradise. One could also mention the occasional use of subliminal images or symbols, but as we all know, these images don't officially exist!

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# Father Images In Cults: Why They Have So Much Control

*location:* the South American Socialist country of Guyana in 1977, the new home of over 900 American followers of pastor Jim Jones, most of whom just migrated from San Francisco. Meetings are held at night to discuss their perceived enemies, and the discussions are fraught with paranoia.

Jim Jones asks his people, "What do you think should be done to your relatives [who have left the church]?"

*male voice:* "I'd like to KILL my so-called brother and Bill Aarons for the crap that both of them have caused over the years since they've left."

*female voice:* "Sandy knew that this was the last hope for many people including children and when she wants to ally herself with people who wish to destroy this place, I think she should be wiped out."

"How?"

*female voice again:* "...If her skull was split it would serve a good purpose."

Parental bonds are not just a social phenomena, they are very primal. The mother is the nurturer, the father is the protector and also serves to provide the direction and "religion" of his children. If a child is abandoned or rejected by his mother or father, no amount of corrective reasoning can take away the emotional pain that is experienced by the child, and it does not go away with age.

The family unit also includes many primal experiences, so that if one's family is missing one or more of such experiences, a distinct need may be felt to take part in what one has missed along the way. Among such primal family experiences are the following:

- a hierarchy (chain of command)
- a strong leader over all
- direction/goals
- common enemy to rally against
- something sacred (a "religion")
- exclusivity (family pride)

- customs and taboos
- justice and punishment
- favoritism

Such aspects of family life are not "evil," they are normal and present in all human societies as well as in the higher animal kingdom. Good parents promote healthy experiences that become part of one's personal identity and style. The trouble begins when a parent abuses his authority and commands others to their harm. Physically and sexually abusive fathers, dictatorial attitudes and harsh rules designed to legislate the actions of all without regard to their personal needs or desires are quite common. Negative experiences such as these also become part of one's identity, hence the need for therapy groups dealing with children of alcoholics, the physically and sexually abused, etc.

The human psyche will look for ways to fill this "family void." Perhaps we are still looking for that father image we longed for as a child. Perhaps life has become too uncertain; we just lost a job, a mate, or moved away to a strange place, and we need something more secure to put faith in. Maybe we are tired of being a "nobody," and wish to tap into the power of a charismatic leader, and share in their limelight. Maybe we just want to live a good life away from drugs or alcohol, and a new family with a strong father will help us do that through the strict guidelines that are practiced.

People don't join cults over doctrine; they commit to the group because they want a new family. Doctrine merely becomes part of the family baggage.

## Cults as Extended Families

Cults are simply extended families with a new hierarchy. There is a father image in most all of them, or in a few

cases a very strong mother image instead. The "pecking order" in this extended family is obvious once one is initiated, the direction or goals become very clear, and the common enemy is preached against constantly. There is no question among the initiates as to what is sacred and what is profane. Such is learned through both written and verbal instruction, as well as observing and experiencing the rod of the judicial system of the group. Favoritism is unavoidable, but when coupled with the abuse of power it is oppressive.

The difference between the family experience and the cult experience is generally found in the *degree* of abuse experienced, as well as in the use of deception. Ministries and individuals who attack the concept of "modern cults using mind control" are missing the point when they say it doesn't exist. In reality, it is their straw-man concept of what "mind control" means that is out of date, i.e., the picture of the cult that uses brainwashing techniques to change a person against their will. Such brainwashing techniques are really not that powerful in the long run and have been abandoned for the most part; whereas the "extended family" scenario with its complex and subtle forms of absolute control, deception and abuse is by far the most classic and powerful form of cult mind control. It is also a model that is much easier to understand, assuming one has been raised in a family of their own, especially an abusive one. The concept of "cults" is no longer mysterious or strange, but is quite predictable and readily observed in society.

Religion (as a belief system) is often

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# The Heavens Gate Cult

by Bob and  
Gretchen  
Passantino



The Heaven's Gate cult is one of literally thousands of millennial cults, including hundreds of UFO-based cults around the world. They attract followers by promising escape from expected cataclysmic events that supposedly will signal the end of this millennium. The Heaven's Gate cult is the last stage in the almost three-decade transformation of a vagabond couple's UFO delusions into a sophisticated Internet suicide cult.

The Heaven's Gate cult was led by a man named Marshall Applewhite, who claimed that his spiritual name was "Do." He began his "Star Trek" in the early 1970s with a female partner, Bonnie Nettles, who used the spiritual name "Ti" (pronounced "Tee"). (She died of cancer in 1985.)

At that time, the two, who met in a hospital (Bonnie was a nurse, Marshall a mental patient), came to believe that they were humans inhabited by the souls of extra-terrestrials from "the Kingdom of Heaven." They believed they were to be "the two witnesses" of the biblical book of Revelation (Rev. 11:3ff). They came to be called, first, "The Two Witnesses of Revelation," and then simply, "The Two." They traveled around the country doing odd jobs and leaving "calling cards" at local churches announcing their mission. As they gathered "students" around them, they realized that they were like "Bo - Peep," looking for her lost sheep. They called themselves "Bo" and "Peep" for some time. They taught their followers that they could only enter the Kingdom of Heaven (leave earth on the space ship for a higher plane of existence) by renouncing all human possessions — including family, fortune, and material assets. Bo and Peep took care of disposing of the assets of their followers for them.

Bo and Peep (Do and Ti) believed that they would fulfill Rev. 11 by being killed, lying dead in the street for three days, and then being "raised" from the dead into the space ship, along with their followers. As the day for their "sacrifice"

approached, they preached that their death and "resurrection" would prove the truthfulness of their preaching.

It was during this time (late 1974 - 1975) that we encountered them as we investigated more than fourteen UFO-based cult groups in the greater Los Angeles area. As we questioned them and their followers about their backgrounds and their evidence for their beliefs, they all pointed to the coming "demonstration" as the final proof. One evening, outside one of their public information meetings in late fall of 1975, we encountered both "the Two" and a rival UFO group, the Academy of Atlantis, which we had also researched, debating each other over the relative merits of their inter-galactic theologies. We reminded the Academy of Atlantis representatives that several months earlier they had promised us that we would know they had the true UFO gospel because one of their UFO entities would hold a public press conference with the President of the United States on the lawn of the White House — during the summer that had just ended. "What had happened," we asked, "to your adamant assertion that you would produce the proof? Are you false prophets?" They assured us that they were still true prophets, that the world "just wasn't ready" for the full disclosure yet. To this, the Bo - Peep followers derisively mocked, "We wouldn't pull that! You're false prophets! We have the truth! Do and Ti will be a demonstration no one can deny!" However, it didn't surprise us when shortly after, Bo and Peep got a new revelation — they had been "massacred" in the press, so they didn't need to be killed physically after all!

The Two and their followers disappeared by early 1976, and over time most of the followers returned to normal life. The group resurfaced at various times with various names during the subsequent decades. They paid for full-page ads in many newspapers nationwide during 1988, and again in 1993. (Ominously, their ad in USA Today and other

newspapers warned that anyone who truly desired to enter the Kingdom of Heaven would have to give up everything — including their human existence. In 1995, the group entered its final phase:

The final act of metamorphosis or separation from the human kingdom is the "disconnect" or separation from the human physical container or body in order to be released from the human environment for the Next Level. . . . We will rendezvous in the "clouds" (a giant mothership) for our briefing and journey to the Kingdom of the Literal Heavens.

Tragically, Do evidently received no last-minute "new" revelation allowing the group to escape the final removal. Their last web site message reads, "Hale-Bopp Brings Closure . . . . Our 22 years of classroom here on planet Earth is finally coming to conclusion — 'graduation' from the Human Evolutionary Level. We are happily prepared to leave 'this world' and go with Ti's crew."

It would make us all feel more safe and comfortable if only fools or insane people succumbed to such destructive theology. Sadly, the cults recruit members from all walks of life, all levels of intellectual prowess. People who want to believe that there is more to life than mere existence, that there are eternal values, and that Someone greater than they cares for them are seduced into cults like the Heaven's Gate cult because they are ill-equipped to make responsible, evidentially supported, rational religious commitments. A well-reasoned, cautious, and fact-based approach to questionable "gospels" is the best antidote to falsehood, and the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit will show the true Gate to the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:13; John 10:7-10).

Very few people have depth of commitment to be willing to die for the truthfulness of their spiritual claims. However, once that commitment is made, it doesn't take enormous power to execute. Only One had the power to prove the truth of his claims by rising from the dead. Don't follow any religious leader to death until he's proved his credentials, not only by dying, but by rising again victorious over death.

courtesy of Answers In Action  
P.O. Box 2067  
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-2067  
phone (714) 646-9042  
web site: [www.answers.org](http://www.answers.org)  
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## Father Images...

continued from page 7

cited as a major devisive force, both in ecumenical as well as political matters. In actuality, however, doctrine is only one of the many forms of control within the extended family. Most of the abuse and deception actually has its origin in the father figure who is the leader, rather than whatever "scriptures" are held in esteem. In the case of abusive father figures who use the Bible, all sorts of distorted concepts are taught using the Bible, where passages are usually taken out of context or totally misinterpreted. Why? For the sake of control, and for pretending that one has all the answers. Aren't fathers supposed to have all the answers? Many people think so, and go looking for a system or ideology that provides simple answers to complex subjects. What they don't realize is that for every over-simplified belief system (whether a religion or secular ideology), there is an abusive father image behind it.

### the Evil Cult Model

Few natural fathers are intentionally evil, if you define evil as being morally bad or wrong. Abusive fathers justify their behavior as necessary to keep the family in line. More gentle and heart-warming ways of guiding a family are not even seriously considered. A "firm hand" is believed to be the only way to bring them up.

The root of such thinking lies in the lack of trust of the family members and the lack of candid communication with them. An abusive father may know very well the behaviors and tendencies of his family, but rarely becomes intimate with the individual members in a vulnerable setting, unless it is to use it as a further tool to abuse them. Since he doesn't know them well, he can't trust them, and ascribe all sorts of evil motives to them. His personal guilt over his own moral failure complicates it even further, making him less and less vulnerable to his family. He must provide a strong, invincible outward appearance so that the family will always respect him, lest the members of the family learn something that can be used against him as a form of revenge.

Using the "God" card is the ultimate tool; if the father is supposedly being guided by God in his actions, the family simply cannot question his actions or motives, and they will be labeled as fighters against God for doing so. This is intended to make them feel too guilty to question "dad."

Leaving the family due to the abuse is always portrayed as a moral flaw on the part of the member who leaves, not the father. Guilt and fear thus prevents most from leaving or even complaining. The father, lost in his own moral depravity and mistrust, cannot fathom how life could continue any different. He does not understand the concepts of grace, forgiveness and love, and seldom has any true empathy for others. He understands guilt and fear, the two most powerful forces motivating him, and so uses this power to control others in like manner. Whether he eventually becomes a monster such as Jim Jones or not will depend largely on circumstances and the degree of power he eventually accumulates.

If you want to experience the power of a cult leader over his family, I highly recommend the cassette tape, "Father Cares: The Last of Jonestown" (on our materials list). It was assembled from the many hundreds of cassette tapes (900 hours of preaching) found after the Guyana massacre in Jonestown, and edited into one tape, complete with the authentic expressions of individual members, such as those at the beginning of this article. Put yourself in the audience, thousands of miles away in a jungle, totally separated from family and society as we know it, and you can imagine how you, too, might have eventually succumbed to such a monster. Education is ultimately the best protection. Just be-

ing a Christian or good moral person is not; many of these died under the spell of Jonestown. Many Christians are even now being outwitted by an extended family or church, as they don't understand the abuse scenario.

Educating people as to correct versus incorrect doctrine is not the ultimate answer, and will do little to confront the abuse of a father/leader. The victims of his abuse, while still under his spell, will always stick up for him in an argument with strangers. That is the nature of this type of control. Some call it hypnotism and some call it mind control, but it is primarily the power of a father image. Satan and his demons, hypnotic spells and black magic are not even needed for such control to work effectively. You are wasting your time discussing doctrine in such cases. While many ministries focus on teaching the cult member correct doctrine, or spend much of their time trying to sell you books on passages of scripture and how they are twisted by cult leaders, they often miss the boat by a mile. If a wife or child is being beaten by their natural father, you expose the abuse first, and later when you have time you can investigate the reasons the father gives for his crimes. Similarly, once the victim of an abusive father image is freed, it will be quite easy to discern how the abuser twisted the Bible, though it may require a little help from friends who can demonstrate proper study habits. ###

### Father Cares: The Last of Jonestown

by James Reston, Jr. and Noah Adams. "Dad" was once head of the San Francisco Housing Authority, and praised by the mayor for his accomplishments. But something went wrong, very wrong. Listen to "Dad" extend his clever charisma to his 900 followers, and listen to their comments of devotion. Understand this article even better! On cassette, \$5.50 postpaid.

### Symptoms of Inner Peace are:

A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than from fears based on past experience.

An ability to enjoy each moment. A loss of interest in judging self.

A loss of interest in judging others. A loss of interest in conflict.

A loss of interest in interpreting actions of others.

A loss of ability to worry.

Frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation.

Contented feelings of connection with others and nature.

Attacks of smiling through the eyes of the heart.

Susceptibility to love extended and the urge to extend it.

Increasing tendency to let things happen rather than to make them happen.

Bernie Siegal, M.D.



## Letters...

### Continued from page 4

In addition, human albumin is often times used intraoperatively in very large quantities as a safe substitute for blood until the red blood cell mass decreases to risky levels, at which point blood is then used. Our department anesthetizes at least one JW per month and in 12 years I have never seen or heard of a JW accepting albumin. If the WTS teaches that albumin is okay, which apparently they do according to your quote, then the average Witness doesn't know that.

Finally, I would like to relate an ongoing story about a patient being treated at our hospital whose parents are JWs. The patient is a six month old infant who was born with a VSD (a hole in the heart between the two large chambers). Unfortunately, the defect in this infant is fairly large and will require surgery if she is to survive. Normally, this operation is done very effectively and safely, and the average patient would go on to lead a normal, healthy life. But since this infant's parents are JWs, they have refused the surgery, since the procedure would require placing her on a cardiopulmonary bypass machine, and at her age, this would require that the bypass machine be primed with blood. I have talked to the surgeon and cardiologist several times about her, and even though they have tried to go through Social Services at the hospital to get a court order, they have been very frustrated. The last time I talked to the surgeon, he told me that they were not going to be able to do the procedure, which would save the life of this infant, because "nobody wants to fight with them" (ie., the parents). This case has a lot of people, including me, feeling helpless and very upset. Without the surgery, this child will without a doubt die a very slow agonizing death due to cardiac and/or respiratory failure. A court order may eventually be forthcoming when she eventually becomes critically ill, but by this time, it may be too late since irreversible damage will have been done to her heart and lungs.

When this otherwise healthy child eventually dies, you can chalk another murder up to the WTS. I once read someone say that the WTS "kills kids." I don't doubt that any more. I hope that eventually this cult will change their mind about blood and I

hope that if and when they do, the whole Watchtower comes tumbling down. I'm sure there would be a lot of very angry Witnesses who have lost a loved one because of this teaching. If you would like to see references that the products I mentioned in my letter are made from and contain human serum, look in the 1997 edition of the *Physicians Desk Reference* (PDR).

HBIG - pg 619, 1706  
Tetanus Immune Globulin - pg 621  
Rabies Immune Globulin - pg 618  
RhO Immune Globuli - pg 622  
Human Immune Globulin - pg 612, 615  
Antithrombin III - pg 631

Anthony (geneha@ibm.net)

## Spiritual Abuse... At Bethel and Beyond

by Jeffrey Schwehm

Adhering to essential beliefs and presenting them in a sensible, loving way doesn't cause spiritual abuse and seldom brings out resentment in children. Moving beyond the clear doctrines and teaching minor issues as if they are matters of life and death can and often result in spiritual abuse.

This is something that \*really\* bothered me as a JW. They made such major things out of minor things. Like the time they marked a friend of mine for going to college. Or the time they gave a service talk to the congregation telling people not to attend the wedding of a brother to a woman who was studying to be a JW. Or being counseled that you should not smile while you are working at Bethel because it is weird (I actually had an overseer who called me into his office and told me that.) Or not being allowed to keep a Georgia Bulldog Coke Bottle on your dresser at Bethel. Or not being allowed to have any rock and roll music in your room at Bethel because your home overseer believes that polkas are the only non-kingdom song music approved by God. I could go on and on.

I can remember an incident when I was growing up as a JW where my father came home one evening on a meeting night with a bunch of gifts for me and my brothers. I think this might have been around Christmas time but I am not sure. Anyway, he comes home

with all of these gifts and we all stood around and opened them and we all had this really marvelous time. My father was smiling, my mother was smiling, and all of us kids were smiling. It was one of the times I think we really bonded as a family. Then after about an hour of this carrying on and fun, my mother reminds us that we are missing a meeting. Well, all of us kids did not care, getting new toys was much more fun than sitting for an hour or so listening to a bunch of old guys say things that we did not understand that much. Well, my mother proceeds to tell my father that he should get the books out and conduct the book study material that we would have gone over at the Congregation Book Study had we gone instead of playing with our new toys. Well, my father makes us put all of our toys away and he gets the books out and the poor man is so tired that he starts falling asleep while he is conducting the "study." This gets my mother very angry and a major argument between them ensues and we get to go to bed while they fight. I remember after this experience believing that God probably caused them to fight to punish us for playing with our toys while we should have been at the meeting.

Actually, it was not uncommon for my parents to fight after our "family study." My father, unlike me, is not a very studious person and my mother always nagged him about conducting a "family study" with us. He would do it from time to time, but I never got the impression that he enjoyed it, and I often felt like he did it just to get my mother off of his back. Actually, our "family study" was more miss than hit, but my parents were still really diligent in making us follow the WTS rules on things. For example, my father, who never \*really\* liked us to be involved in clubs at school, mainly because he did not like being in clubs at school, loved that rule that the WTS had, so he enforced the "no school clubs" rule. My mother who was very protective of us loved the no playing sports in school rule so she enforced that rule and my father went along with it. Interestingly, neither of them had any objection to me playing in the school band in high school. Actually, I think they enjoyed seeing me play in it although I very rarely got any kind of compliment from them.

The most interesting thing about growing up as a JW is the requirement from my parents to be very different



from the kids around me and the little support that I would get from them. I remember many times going to my parents with problems and being told either directly or indirectly that my problems were not important. I know that my parents, who were not raised as JWs, had no idea what it was like being raised in that way. It was not uncommon for me to be spit upon, beaten, hit, etc. by other kids just because I was different and not allowed to do the things these kids were allowed to do. I went to a school that was filled with a lot of "close-minded" individuals and parents and I am convinced that a lot of the reasons why they treated me so poorly was because of my lack of involvement in the school community and perhaps they felt like we were somewhat snobbish because of our lack of involvement.

I can remember a few years ago when I was still living at home that my father came up to me with a shocked look on his face and told me that my younger brother Jack was upset because all through Jr. High and High School people thought he was a homosexual because they never saw him with a member of the opposite sex and because he never went to school dances. He asked me if people ever thought that I was a homosexual when I was in school. I told him that people used to call me that and more. My father became even more shocked. I, to this day, wonder where he was when we were growing up.

I was the obedient child who went to Bethel and did the things my parents wanted me to do. My younger brother Jack, had more of a mind of his own growing up. I think he saw the JWs for what they were earlier than I did when he saw how they treated a young friend of his who became addicted to drugs. Anyway, after I left for Bethel, my brother decided to break the family/WTS (I have a hard time distinguishing between the two.) rule about no college. Evidently, this caused some very heated and, unfortunately, physical confrontations between my father and my brother. My brother does not talk about this much and I think it still bothers him greatly but he pretends like he does not care.

My other brother Andy dropped out of high school a couple of times before he finally finished. He also used to live a double life. He would appear to be a the "good JW kid" sort of and then he would come home drunk and sneak in the house before my parents

found out. I guess he also hid his hangovers fairly well. He eventually settled down and now he tells my parents what he used to do when he was younger behind their backs. He quit going to the meetings once he got caught french-kissing an elder's daughter in the French Quarter in New Orleans. Someone turned him in to the Circuit Overseer and this Circuit Overseer would have disassociated him, I believe, if it had not been for the fact that the week before the WTS changed the rule about disassociating kids who were not baptized. This CO, his name was John O. Mason (This is his real name.), was something. I will tell you the story about the judicial committee that my brother Andy went before some other time. They already had my brother convicted before he got in there and they had my father all scared. My brother handled himself pretty well for being only 15 or 16 years old. Andy is now a professional waiter at a five star restaurant in New Orleans. From that point on he has been out of it.

My youngest brother Steven, is a free thinker. He loves Seattle grunge and he has green hair right now and a pierced tongue (ouch!). He knows that the WTS is full of it and I believe that he tells my parents that although they believe he is just sowing his wild oats right now and that someday he will be back. Right now, my brother Steven wants to be a psychologist but sometimes he thinks about being an anthropologist also.

As far as my sister, Christine is concerned, the jury is still out on her since she still lives at home with my parents but, I suspect her brothers not being in it will make her think twice before she becomes a JW. I believe this because she tries to get me to tell her things by asking questions. I try not to answer too forthrightly because I know that my parents monitor my communications with my sister and because I do not think my sister is mature enough to handle the information at this time.

Well, I did not mean to make this a description of my siblings and myself as we were "Growing Up Dub," but that is about the size of it. I think that the most influential thing in all of our lives is the religion that our parents raised us in and how all of us have decided to deal with it or not deal with it.

jmschweh@comp.uark.edu

## FYI...

Feb. 01, 1997 -- The Society's Writing Committee has announced that beginning on this date they are establishing a Public Affairs Office in Brooklyn. It will be international in scope and will work to promote the public's understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses and their activities.

Its goal will be to provide the media, educators, and the public at large with information on our activities and purposes. Local news service will still be handled under the direction of the Teaching Committee.

from Tom (the Ragman)  
ragman@cybercom.net

## Rumor Mill

Posted by "Mr Bean" on April 10, 1997 from Australia (via Internet):

At the service meeting this week there was a letter read out to the congregation. It said (paraphrasing) that there had been many reports about using the Internet and wasting time and how dangerous pornography was, etc.

It also said that some brothers had been using the Internet to witness to folks and may have been contacting apostates without realizing it.

It ADMITTED that the Society would be putting up a site (it's already there) in the NEAR FUTURE and that it's meant to be only a guide on what JWs believe for UN-BELIEVERS who happen to surf the Internet.

It stressed that it would not change much and the late-breaking news would not be included on it. No doctrinal changes would be presented on the Internet.

It also said that the Society DID NOT EXPECT most brothers to look at the site and it was not meant to be a method for witnessing.

They finally acknowledge the Internet is the place for the truth about Jehovah's Witnesses.

<http://reflections.nethosting.com/~jw/wwwboard/messages/10.html>



# Armageddon Okies

by Gary Busselman

(Gary sez: These "Letters from Home" I do for fun and it started out as a dumb reply to a letter Randy Watters sent. Several of the stories are true.) *When God decided to spiritualize the judgment upon the wicked at Armageddon, and to plague them with cults instead, he forgot to tell a few Jehovah's Witnesses in the backwoods of Oklahoma. They still take him literally! This is the story of those whom He is using to plague the wicked. As papa would say, "half of us are here to test the other half."* (Disclaimer: Randy Watters was born in Oklahoma City.)

*From Paradise Lost To Paradise Regained, p.  
209, WTB&TS, 1958*

## Hope We Don't Have Cars in the New System

Dear Randy,

This will be just a quick note. I've got to run Bubba over to the junk yard over by Monett to pick up a couple new fenders and some doors for the Lincoln. We had a pot-luck supper over at brother Newly Ben Haad's trailer Monday night and I took some of my elderberry wine. Well, Bubba's not seeing too good when he comes home about midnight and when he comes to Jenkin's Creek dog leg bridge he sees two so he says he shuts one eye and heads for the middle one....takes the front left fender and both doors off. If that wasn't bad enough he stayed after the book study Tuesday to help Newly finish up leftovers and when he gets to the bridge comin' home he sees two again so he says that he's not gonna make the same mistake twice so he closes the other eye and takes off the right front fender and both right doors. He says that service really bothers him this morning when people slam their doors. This persecution is really getting bad.

I been workin' on a book-shelf fer all our new books we got when we got in the truth. I got it all done except for the shelf. Maw says that we should line em all up kind of by color so they go together...blue, green, yellow, yellow, purple, brown, and tan. Me and little Mike decided to paint the barn so we got the paint at the railroad using Theochronic warfare and we decided to rig a sprayer up using the John Deere and an old hose. Little Mike took out a sparkplug and cross-threaded a 3/8th nipple in there and wired that hose to it. Then he set a tee in the hose and run a spur line over to the paint vat and when he fired up that poppin Johnny we had paint balls the size of oranges sailin' 30 feet in the air. We got a fair amount on the barn before we ran out. Things was happening so fast that we didn't notice the circuit servant, Jup Setter and his wife Missev, drive up in their big ol' Buick dyna-flo. It's one of them slip juice drive clutch jobs with the

fake holes in the hood. He's had this tick ever since when they was on the Huntsville to Brashears run back in May an lightning struck the tree where he was reliev'in' himself. She's nice though. Ran away once....up in the brambles. Coon hunters found her and brought her back down and she's been kind of prone to quiet spells after that....giggles to herself more than usual too. He says that we got the fastest growin' congregation in these parts but then practically all the sisters was pregnant after his first visit so I suppose that accounts for a lot of it but still we is always glad to get good news from the Society.

That Jup Setter and his wife Missev, they's stayin' with us for the week while he works with the congregation. He says that we get in the most hours of any of the congregations that he is assigned to. He said that he'd like to work with Bubba tomorrow. That'll be good for Bubba cause Monday's the big trash day since he don't make his run on Sundays. Sis told ol Jup to dig out his old clothes....he just stared at her. Maw blew a spit bubble when she said bye just now. Sis' new boyfriend Ben, son of widow Loyal's by her forth husband Hazz-Ben, was here for supper last night. He goes before the draft board again next Thursday. He's hopin' they'll sentence him back to Springfield. He said the two terms he did there was the best of all of em. These last times is sure hard to deal with all right.

Love from all, don't forget to write.

Clem

visit the Free  
Minds, Inc. web  
site at: [http://  
www.freeminds.org](http://www.freeminds.org)

PS: LeRoy almost got in trouble for dirty pictures in the bus depot toilet, he would have except he signed your name.