

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

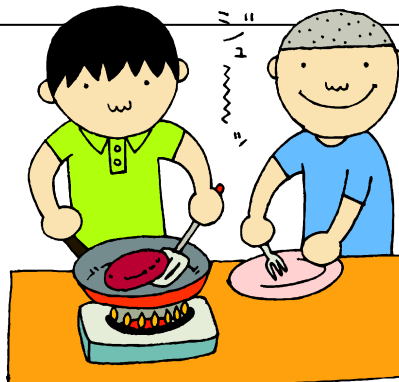
Number 59

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The newsletter is issued by a growing network of people in Britain who are committed to developing community building beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum', and as further developed by the Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA (FCE).

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From the Editor

Once again a big thanks to those who wished my family and me well for our silver wedding anniversary. Our holiday in Eilat went smoothly, and we all enjoyed it. I will never forget the experiences we had in Israel - particularly the vitality in the Jerusalem markets, the faith of curators and pilgrims, the crowds in the Palestinian towns (Nazareth and Bethlehem), the peace of the garden tomb, the delightfulness of Galilee, and the beauty of the Red Sea corals and fish.

Meetings and work

After the long Christmas holiday the various groups within CBiB are begin to meet again. Do remember them in your thoughts. To some degree I feel that I am part of each group, and perhaps you do too, as we work together to develop and experience this thing we call 'Community Building'.

I know 'Life is difficult' (as Scott Peck says in *The Road Less Travelled*). In many ways being involved in community building does not seem to make life any easier, and I even sometimes wonder if it seems to make working together any easier. But my experience is that it is something so deeply satisfying that it makes the difficulties worthwhile.

What is your experience? Would you express it differently? Do share with the newsletter if you feel moved.

Did you know that almost everything that happens in the CBiB network is because people have volunteered to do it? If you would like to help in some way, why not call one of the numbers on the back page? I can personally say I have received many times in return for the work I have put in, so there are benefits from volunteering!

Spirit

Thank you to those of who wrote to me in response to my pondering over 'Spirit' and

community building. One or two of the letters were, I think, for me personally - thank you. I have included one or two items that relate to the subject in this edition and I hope to be able to include more later.

What does 'Spirit' mean to you? Is it something that is outside, or does it come from within? Do we each have a unique experience of Spirit, or is there something common underlying our individual experiences? How important is spirit to us?

Have your experiences of community building been especially important in your experience of the spirit? Or have you found the strongest experiences to be in a religious context, or when faced with crises, or when surprised by nature?

Articles please

Contributions for the next edition should be with me by **14th February 1998** - now where have I heard that date before?

I love to receive your news, letters, poems, thoughts, pictures, and responses - indeed everything that you send me. If you feel moved to contribute, but are not sure about it, why not give me a ring and I can help you think about it? All technologies are acceptable, including spoken messages. I have not yet invested in machinery that translate what you say into text, but I am happy to type up what you tell me.

And finally ...

Subscription time is coming round again soon (the subscription year runs from April to March). The cost will once again be £8 for UK and EU subscribers, and £12 for non-EU. What else can you buy that has not increase in price for 6 years? There will be a subscription form in the next edition, but if you would like to send in your cheque sooner I would happy to receive it.

Peter Cooper (details on back page)

Scheduled Community Building Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1998 6/8 Feb	Nr Lyme Regis Dorset	Monkton Wyld 01297 560342	£110 (Residential)	CBE
20/22 Mar	Abingdon Oxfordshire	Sharon Usher 01235 848132	£120	CBW
28/29 Mar	Brighton	Jonathan Melville- Brown 01273 749520	£80 non-res (or £115 Residential)	CBE

Note: - **CBE** stands for “Community Building Experience”, which provides an opportunity to build community in a large group over two days. In a “Community Building Workshop”, or **CBW**, a third day is added so that not only can participants experience the building of community but they can also learn about the process through discussion and reflection.

There are two other sets of initials you might hear about (although neither types of event has been arranged in the UK for a while). **CBSS** stands for Community Building Skills Seminar, which deepens understanding of community principles and behaviour; it focuses on the skills of facilitation and leadership and teaches how to evaluate and monitor the processes of community building in ongoing groups. **LEP** stands for the Leadership Education Programme.

Announcement

Armando Magnino and Debbie Collins would like to announce that we are having a commitment ceremony on Saturday, 31st January 1998, to celebrate where we are at in our relationship, after five years of being together.

We would like to thank all of you, who have helped us along the way, and to thank God, CBiB and Alex for somehow ensuring, against all the odds, that we ended up on the same CBSS five years ago!!

It would be lovely if you could hold us in your thoughts that day.

On-Going Groups Page

Manchester

I hear that the small group planning the possible launch of an on-going support group, based on community building, in the Manchester area have had a few meetings. I understand that they plan to start off with some sort of event - so watch this space for more news. If you are interested in helping or attending why not contact Tania on 0161 736 1157?

York

I have also just heard from Chris Williams, who is now living in York. He and Selma Khan are hoping to form a group in the York area. It is early days yet, but if you interested I am sure Chris would welcome a call from you. His telephone number is 01904 426919.

Other groups

The north/central London group has a new contact number - see the back page. I hope to have more news from the other groups listed there, as well as from the one or two that are starting up in other places, in the next edition.

Booklet for Sale

Ongoing Community

(Small Share/Support Groups)

Formation and Maintenance

Fourth edition June 1994 By Jerry L.

Hampton - 48 pages

Includes

How to start an ongoing group, Model Meetings, Guidelines for meeting conduct, Ideas for group starters, Group maintenance, Ongoing groups and their characteristics, Why some groups fail, Forming groups in a workshop, What now? - After the CBW, Books on community, Study Guide - 'The Different Drum'

Copies available from Peter Cooper

Task/Process groups

Besides the geographically based on-going groups, I also like to remember the various on-going groups that have a task to do. They are all having meetings again soon. I am certainly finding being involved in two of them a challenge, and a valuable learning experience about building community.

As a reminder, the groups I would include under this heading are the holding group, the facilitators' training group, the new publicity group, the learning opportunities group, and the various groups that are formed to sponsor and arrange events, or to start a new on-going group. I know that each of these groups faces its own particular challenges and opportunities, and I wish you well in your meetings.

I suspect there are a number of other groups around that I am less aware of - perhaps you would like to let me know about them. If you are involved in a task/process group (whether anything to do with CBiB or not) why not share about your experiences in it?

Groups in Work

Finally, I have been contacted by a number of people who are seeking to use community building experiences and principles in work situations. I hope to bring more about this in general to future editions of the newsletter, but it reminds me that there are people and groups who meet and tackle task/process issues within a work or business context.

I remember when I was a christian being involved in christian groups at work. I wonder what it would be like to be involved in community building groups at work - whether officially or unofficially. Any thoughts?

Peter

The Holding Group: Report of a "non-meeting" 6.1.98

I'm bored with "holding " things. I feel a need to find a way to contribute to CBiB wholeheartedly, or get out of the way and let others get on with it.

Changes

I've been through a lot of changes recently, and identified quite a few more things I'd like to change. Or rather I'm willing to become a different person and I've identified some directions I'd like to go in.

Previously I've lived on a low income - benefits or occasional work, leaving me time to do things that I value. I now wish to receive money for doing the things that I value, to integrate my being creative in the world with receiving rewards. And I want financial security - financial well-being in fact. I wish to put lots of energy and focus into bringing this about. I don't think CBiB in its present form fits in with this.

Moving on

I also reckon that I tend to muddle through - lots of ad hoc actions that get me through the next few weeks, with little crises which give me the opportunity to enjoy rising to the occasion, but as soon as my head is above the surface, I return to treading water again. I'm not satisfied with this any more. I want to move on. I want my life in six months' time to be better than it is now. In every sphere of my life, I want to feel I'm getting somewhere. Is this possible within CBiB?

I want to grow, to become capable of more enthusiasm, energy and excitement. Achieve more. Meet and touch more people, and be touched by more people. More deeply.

I want to be more able to accept and receive love, and enormously enlarge my

capacity to feel and express love, and wonder, and awe. I want to live amongst others who value compassion and are consciously nurturing and supporting each other in becoming compassionate giants. (Lots of ferocity and tenderness, too, please!)

Running, flying

I want to stop sitting around denying or admitting that I feel crippled. I want to try standing up, and staggering and falling over; and I'm keen to run, and run, chasing along a fast-flowing mountain stream, leaping from rock to rock, nimble and swift. Then later to dance, graceful, and to fly, soaring and plunging. Does anyone know what I mean?

Collectively, can, does CBiB aspire to becoming much more than it is? Dare we speak what we want, and then co-create it? Could we?

Celebration

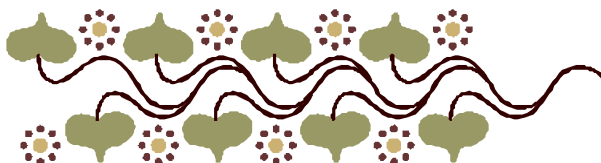
On 29th January, 1998, I shall be 40. I've been taking stock. I usually try to avoid my birthday. This year I intend celebrating it, gently, with friends. And marking Imbolc - an old fire-festival - a time of clarifying intent, of seeds germinating underground, ready to burst forth in the Spring.

I anticipate a few crises of confidence. I'm scared that I'll get clear what I want, speak it aloud, and then fail to bring it about. I find the whole birthday thing very daunting. I'm scared of growing up, taking responsibility for realising my potential. It would help, I think, to know that I'm not alone.

Cliff Jordan

Station Bungalow,

Colwall, Malvern WR13 6QH



Contact with Czechoslovakia

I have recently had contact via email with Julia Sadovska, who is a student of Psychology at Comenius University in Bratislava in Czechoslovakia. (I looked it up in my atlas and it is very near Vienna.) "Community" is the topic of her dissertation at the University.

Fascinated

She says that she has read about Scott Peck's idea of community, and is keen to know more about it. When she shared with a group of friends some of them became fascinated too. They even decided to try to build community by going away for three days and being open and speaking personally.

She says this was a very hard time for everybody, but as a result she is even more interested in knowing how to build community.

I have given her details of our events and invited her to come over, but I suspect this may be difficult.

Does anyone have a particular interest in this part of the world? Would you like to correspond with her?

Stop Press

I have just today (12/1/98) heard from Julia again via email. She hopes to come to the

event at Monkton Wyld, and I am sending her details, old newsletters etc. Would anyone like to offer accommodation, or to meet up with her?

I would rather not act as a go-between, but if you do not have email, I can do that for you. Her address is

Julia Sadovska
Sliezska 7
Bratislava
831 03
Slovakia

email: Julia.Sadovska@fphil.uniba.sk

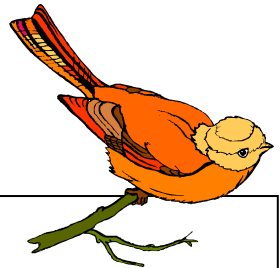
Peter Cooper

(details on back page)

and more...

(PS I have also just received an email from a business consultant in Germany who is interested in community building. I have no time to read it now, as this newsletter has to get to the printers tonight, but I shall respond somehow.

My simple internet email and web page seems to take me all over the world!



UKCB Mailing list

Do you have access to email?

Do you want to be part of a discussion about community building in the UK?

I have set up an experimental online mailing list called "ukcb" for doing this.

To join "ukcb", send an email message to "**majordomo@eejit.com**" (without the quotes), containing the single line "**subscribe ukcb**" (without the quotes) in the message body. To find out more before you join send an email message to

"majordomo@eejit.com" containing the message body "**info ukcb**", or email me at PeterCBiB@aol.com (*editor*).



'Bright-eyed' conversations over the breakfast table at the 1997 General Meeting.

The 1998 CBiB Network Gathering

If you are interested in helping out in any way with organising the 1998 Network Gathering please contact ...

*Teän Stuttaford
58 Lightwoods Rd
Smethwick. B67 5BD
Tel. 0121 429 8947*

Community by Stealth

Someone said “My understanding of the community building process is that everyone in the group has to commit to the process and the rules, otherwise the group is likely to disintegrate as it moves into chaos. If this is the case, how can one possibly build community on the job, in the neighborhood, etc. with a loosely defined group of people who may or may not be interested in the same outcome and may or may not play by the same rules? Can community be created by stealth? Surreptitiously? Can community invade pseudocommunity and spread? Can one or two people using CB principles have a positive effect on a larger group or will they be perceived as "troublemakers"?”

I'd say yes, yes, and yes!

I've had some measure of success creating a community at work "by stealth". (I love that term, by the way.) Not only were others here not really aware of what I was doing, but much of the time I wasn't totally aware. Scott Peck's books introduced me to a more organized approach to what I'd already been doing.

While my community at work doesn't approach what I experienced at a CBW weekend, it still is community. It's more harsh, raucous, annoying, and frustrating, than the intense yet "soft" weekend experience, but perhaps that's to be expected in a long term community where we have to deal with "real life".

Creating Community at work

I've helped create what community we have by being open, trying to speak and live with integrity, not backing away from the tough issues, insisting that others be co-leaders with me, and creating an environment where we can speak our minds, be supportive of each other, feel safe, and be valued for our various gifts. But I do that poorly, and only some of the time. Since others here don't understand the community concept, we have only partial community on and off again. But maybe that's also to be expected in a business-type community, where other goals often have to take precedence over community building.

I struggle with this nearly every day when I have time to think about it. I know others here at work struggle too, with how we best

include different views and different people, and with how we can be supportive when our very competitive business requires discipline, dedication, and a certain degree of like-mindedness for success. I've come to feel that as long as a core group of us here are struggling with such issues, then we are headed down the CB road, even if we don't all call it that.

We've become special

It's taken us years to get where we are, and we have a very special group of people. (I don't think we're much different than any other group. We've just become special, somehow, by the way we've worked together and created several business ventures together.) We are to the point where we welcome new people, love their differences and similarities compared to us, and solicit and thrive on their new ideas. I tell new people that I love their "fresh eyes" - they have such unprejudiced views of us and how we do things, and it helps us greatly to hear what their fresh eyes see.

I long to delve further into the CB process with these people I work with, but we don't have time and I'm not sure how they'd respond. I gradually reveal more of myself, become more vulnerable, let them see more and more of the real me. I feel like that's the best thing I can do to foster community. If I lead in that way by my own example, then others may follow. Most of the people here HAVE followed, at least part way, part of the time.

Beth Montes

(from the USA via the internet)

Living with Authentic Power

Gary Zukav is the author Of The Dancing Wu Li Masters, winner of The American Book Award for Science, and The Seat of the Soul, a best seller in the USA. A former officer in the United States Army, he graduated from Harvard with a degree in International Relations. He sits on a number of prominent boards having to do with business, Native Americans, education and concerns about the Earth.

(Reprinted from the Fall 1997 edition of Communiqué, the newsletter of the Foundation for Community Encouragement, Inc.)

Greetings to our FCE Family!

My spiritual partner, Linda Francis, and I asked Robert Reusing and Rusty Myers to facilitate a CBW during the first two days of our seven day annual retreat at Mount Shasta, California. The results were spectacular. We opened the evening prior with a ceremony to invoke the sacred, and ended with a family-arranged give-away. I have never been to a more powerful event.

Now we are cocreating a gathering October 24 - 26 with FCE in Seattle to celebrate the opening of its new offices. Linda and I have been looking for a way to create regional, short duration events that are convenient and inexpensive. Utilizing Community Building Workshops (CBW) may allow us to do exactly that. We are looking at this event as a possible prototype.

"You do it naturally!"

When we met Robert last year, he told us, "You do what we do, but you do it naturally!" "What do you do?" I asked him. "Create community," he replied. "How long does it take?" I asked. "Two days," he answered without a pause. Linda and I traveled to San Francisco to experience this for ourselves, and it was all that we hoped for.

Path to Authentic Power?

I found Scott Peck's articulation of community building to be the most helpful vocabulary to express the phenomenon that Linda and I stumbled upon during our first retreat three years ago. The title of that retreat was "The

Path to Authentic Power". As the first participants arrived, I realized that I did not want to talk about authentic power. I wanted us to live an experience of it.

That intention led to a version of what FCE calls a CBW. Our discovery of this congruence, and our love and appreciation of Robert and Rusty, and, later, many other members of the FCE family, has led to our enthusiastic support of the Foundation.

What humanity longs for

There is a limit to the number of events that Linda and I can arrange, and the need for the experience of community is far beyond what we can provide. It is far beyond what the Foundation can provide. In my opinion, the entire human species is undergoing fundamental and unprecedented change. Community, with a capital first letter, is what the emerging humanity longs for, and will create in every circumstance possible.

Cocreators

Community building with us, with FCE, and with the many, many cocreators that we all will encounter during our short visits upon this precious Earth are parts of the birth of a new human experience, at the core of which lies the experience of Community.

I am delighted to share these thoughts with you, and I look forward to cocreating with you as appropriate.

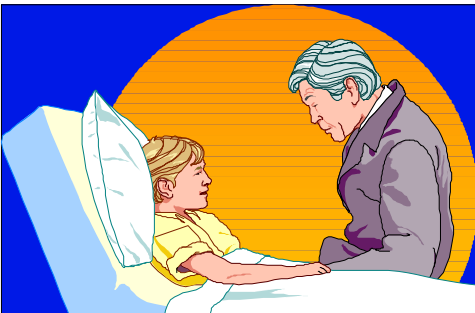
*Love,
Gary*

Dimensions of Diversity

During the community building events I have been to I have been conscious of a bit of my mind has been separating people into those I want to get close to and those I do not, those I initially like and those I do not like.

Experience

Part of the experience of community building for me has been a mixing up of my assumptions and pride. I think I have become more willing to be 'me' in the presence of others, and I think to allow them to be themselves. I cannot say I 'like' more people as a result, but the discipline of sticking with the process seems to give me time and opportunity to allow it not to matter as much. However this has meant that I am becoming even more aware of the diversity, or differentness, among people.



I have done some thinking about a few of the dimensions of this diversity (class, education, male/female, young/old, management/staff, active/passive) not only to help me think through community building experiences but also to help me make more sense of other life experiences. I know there are 'scientific' personality profiles. Indeed I have been exposed to one of them and found myself quite serendipitously identified by it.

Introvert/Extravert

However the aspect of diversity that I have recently found most helpful to ponder over is the introvert/extravert one - as understood in the book called "The Successful Self" by

Dorothy Rowe (published by Fontana 1988 - quotations by kind permission of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd).

My wife and I have talked a lot about the differences between us. The realisation that one of us is an introvert and the other an extravert has helped us significantly to be more forgiving as we relate to each other. We have both from our own viewpoints found it helpful to realise how little we can each really feel as the other does. We understand (as Dorothy Rowe asserts) that this is because each of us experiences a deep fear of annihilation for a fundamentally different reason.

Internal and external reality

Her use of the terms introvert and extravert is not quite the same as the popular usage. For her an extravert is not necessarily someone who is talkative and outgoing, but is someone for whom their external reality is more real than their internal reality. An extravert experiences their existence as "being a member of a group, as the relationship, the connection between their self and others" and hence they "see the threat of annihilation of self as complete isolation, being left totally, utterly and forever alone, thus withering, fading away, disappearing into nothingness".

Now I can understand those words with my mind, but I do not feel that threat inside me. I am an introvert, someone who experiences their existence as "the progressive development of their individuality in terms of clarity, achievement and authenticity". Hence I "see the threat of the annihilation of the self as losing control of myself and my life and falling apart, falling into chaos, fragmenting, crumbling to dust" (page 25). If anyone tries to invade my internal world (for example by making conflicting demands, or by imposing themselves on me for too long, or by representing me to others as something other than I feel am) then I do begin to feel that I am disappearing, dissolving, crumbling.

Healthier

That may seem strange to you, or it may not. Although it does nothing for my pride, I know I am healthier realising that when I feel uncomfortable with people, it is actually because being with people feels very dangerous to the real me deep inside. It also helps me understand those situations where the invasion has felt so intense that parts of my conscious mind have just shut down (as if for protection).

As Dorothy Rowe writes "the continuing problem for introverts is that it is very easy to lose touch with external reality. This is why other people are of vital importance to introverts... Many introverts work hard at learning the social skills that come easily to extraverts. These introverts are often taken as extraverts...Others may solve the problem of needing other people by marrying an extravert who has to socialise for both of them, or ..." there are other ways.

Defences

On the other hand, she writes "the defences that extraverts create against this fear always have to do with maintaining membership of a group...but if you do not accept and value yourself, then you will always be afraid that you will be rejected and be left totally alone. So to avoid this you spend all your time in trying not to be rejected." (page 56) Now as an introvert, although I also do not like being rejected, I will probably never understand what it really means deep down.

Life and death

You may or may not agree with what I have quoted above, but there is no doubt that Dorothy Rowe says some very strong things. Firstly, she says that for all of us inside this feels like a matter of life and death - for the extravert by being cut off from other people,

and for the introvert by being invaded by other people.

Secondly, and this is the most surprising (and testable) aspect of her views, she says that introverts are always attracted to marry extraverts, and extraverts are always attracted to marry introverts. Seemingly "each partner has what the other needs, access to a less real reality". However this has within itself the seeds of its own destruction - "we might be drawn to our opposite like iron filings to a magnet, but unless we are aware of the nature of the attraction we soon find ourselves pulling apart".

She says "Whenever a couple argue, separate, divorce, whenever one of them becomes depressed or agoraphobic, obsessional, manic, schizophrenic, whenever one murders the other, or commits suicide, whatever issues they fall out over, fidelity or money, careers or holidays, friends or relatives, the basic cause of their disagreement is that each does not understand and take seriously that the other has a different perception of the sense of existence and the threat of annihilation."

The basic cause of their disagreement is that each does not understand and take seriously that the other has a different perception of the sense of existence and the threat of annihilation

Any other useful books?

I have found this book fascinating, and I could go on about it more. It has certainly helped me to realise things about myself and how I relate, or fail to relate. It has even helped me to be more accepting of myself, and maybe even a little more accepting of people near me. Maybe it has relevance to you, or maybe not. Maybe it shines a little light on our community building processes, or on the issues around the relationships that develop between us.

Has another book helped you think about yourself in relationships? Would you be willing to share it through the newsletter? If so I'd love to hear from you.

Peter Cooper

(details on the back page)

Spirit and Community

I received the following from Don Skiff, a community building colleague in the USA, in an email conversation. Has anyone else read Ken Wilber? Does it strike a note for you?

I've been immersed in Ken Wilber for some months. Strange, how something seems to go "click" without our intention or even awareness. My scepticism of everything "spiritual" has barred the doors of my world for most of my life.

I don't know what it is about Wilber that allowed him to sneak past the sentries, but he's suddenly here, and I'm reading book after book. And it all seems to be helping me clarify in my own mind this curious phenomenon I've called "community."

Magic

What has been a great mystery to me for a number of years is the "magic" of a group suddenly coming together. Wilber makes it rather obvious to me (although I haven't integrated it fully yet) that this is an awareness in the group of a higher level of consciousness, beyond feeling, beyond thinking. There seems no other word for it but "spirit."

I've struggled with the phenomenon, trying to even describe it (to say nothing of explaining it), without any sense of satisfaction. "Of course," he says to me in my head, "words can't do it, because it's at another level. Just as you can't explain a thought by empirical analysis. It's accessible by direct experience. Those who have experienced it know what you're talking about; those who haven't can't really. You can't describe an orgasm to someone who hasn't experienced it, either. The experience is not in the mental plane."

Emptying

And of course, that doesn't help me much in trying to translate "emptying" into words, but at least it shows me the limitations. I've said, in my frustration, that maybe it would take poetry, which is the nearest thing I know of to a bridge between mental and non-mental experiences. (And I'm no poet.) I have nothing but words at my disposal. I struggle on . . .

After most of a lifetime of agnosticism and dedication to empirical evidence, I'm still a little embarrassed at my new-found recognition of "Something More" in the universe. It entered, through my head, as I read

Wilber's Eye to Eye--the only opening I had. It seems so obvious now.

Something happened

On the other hand, I was introduced to "community" at a heart level - I discovered that I could be in a group and feel as though I belonged without having to prove my worth. That was stunning, and ever since,

I've been trying to figure out "what happened." My greatest frustration has been in trying to articulate something that seems (now) to be in a class of experience I wasn't able or willing to admit to.

I guess we learn something when we're ready for it, and not before. I can't help but wish, though, that I had discovered all this fifty years ago. Even thirty years ago, when Abe Maslow was one of my heroes, "Self Actualization" meant to me something like "self-satisfaction." A "peak experience" was a feeling one got from solving a puzzle.

The "magic" of a group suddenly coming together.. is an awareness in the group of a higher level of consciousness, beyond feeling, beyond thinking - there seems no other word for it but "spirit."

Open

If there are levels of consciousness beyond my present logical-mental state, I'm now open to the possibility. I'm beginning to practice Vipassana meditation to see if that will show me something. At the same time, as I listen to people in different community building efforts, what I am sensing is that the same kind of process might be at work. Maybe "emptying" is really glimpsing another level of consciousness, in a group situation. If that's true, a lot of possibilities open up for those who see community building as something the world needs.

Challenges

Western civilisation has made such a god of rationality that anything irrational--whether

from the lower levels of consciousness or the higher--is immediately suspect (I speak from experience!). Worse, these other ways of knowing are lumped together, as though they are all "preverbal." At least, as I write now, I can try to avoid the same mistake. Ken Wilber is a wild and exhilarating ride. I think I'll never be the same.

I don't mind challenges here. There aren't many people I can talk to about this. (Eyes glaze, thumbs twiddle--or (worse), I get lectures on "the spirit world" or ESP or The Celestine Prophecy.) To me this is real-world stuff, and if I have something to learn it still has to enter through the left side of my head. I don't yet trust my heart. I can give it away easily, but it's never been big on wisdom.

Don

The Learning Opportunities group

The Learning Opportunities group will meet on the weekend of 7-8 February. As of today (4/1) I haven't yet heard from anybody to confirm they will be/won't be coming. Could you all please contact me on 01926 337409 so we can find out how many people are planning on being there and send out maps, directions, agendas etc.

Thanks

Armando Magnino

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01926 337409

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Yesterday Is History
Tomorrow is a Mystery
Today is a Gift from God,
Maybe that's why it's called
The Present.

Maya Angelou

Crusader for community spirit

Yvonne Poulson sent me this interview from the 18th April 1993 Observer, and reminded me that Scott Peck put 'learning' high on his list of priorities. I thought you might find it interesting - does it strike any chords for those of you around at the time?

'LIFE is difficult,' M. Scott Peck famously begins his best-selling book *The Road Less Travelled*. Once we understand and accept this, he adds, then life is no longer difficult.'

M. Scott Peck doesn't look like a guru. He appears as a poker-faced man in a grey pinstriped suit who smokes and doesn't like having his photograph taken. But *The Road Less Travelled* has made him a hero of the New Age.

In it Dr Peck writes about human love, psychology and growth, and his discernment of the grace of God in these things. In the 15 years and six million worldwide sales since its publication in 1978, it has brought him money and fame and a reverence bordering on idolatry.

No Messiah

This makes his own life more difficult. I spend a good deal of energy saying to people, I do not want to be your damn Messiah. I want to teach you to be your own Messiah. Plus we don't need any new Messiah, as we've hardly learnt to come to terms with the first,' he says, dry and impatient like the patrician East Coast WASP he was born.

Peck's father was an eminent New York lawyer. Peck (now 56) graduated from Harvard *magna cum laude* and became a top psychiatrist and neurologist in the US army with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. These things show. But *The Road Less Travelled* changed his life, as it has changed many others.

'Politeness isn't going to get you anywhere except to very dull dinner parties', says M Scott Peck. Janet Watts meets the psychiatrist who has become a subversive evangelist.

Its fans' demands on his time led him to leave his psychiatric practice to write, lecture and give workshops. *The Road Less Travelled* touched so many people so deeply that they still speak to him about it as 'The Book'. But Peck has written six more successful books since then.

We meet in the conservatory of the Green Park Hotel. His schedule is tight. He is in London for one day to publicise his latest book, *A World Waiting to be Born*, subtitled *The Search for Civility*. (Rider Books)

Civility

Dr Peck has been searching for civility for the last 10 years. This isn't what you think. 'Politeness isn't going to get you anywhere, except to very dull dinner parties, he growls behind the Green Park Hotel's potted plants. 'Cocktail parties bore the shit out of me. Lily and I haven't been to one for 20 years.' (Lily is his Chinese wife.)

This is what Peck's civility seeks to subvert. 'For a long time we have been politely manipulating each other and stabbing each other in the back,' he says. 'All manner of sin and evil can be politely committed in our organisations. There are people in business and government who kill each other politely every day.'

Politeness

So we have politeness without civility, and organisations with no spirit of community. Particularly not where we might hope to find

it: in our homes, families, schools, neighbourhoods, offices, churches, professions.

Nothing is more important

Yet, 'In and through community lies the salvation of the world,' Peck wrote in his book, *The Different Drum*. 'Nothing is more important.'

He helped to found the Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) in Connecticut in 1984, and has for a decade worked to help people build real communities out of the 'pseudo-communities' which are their polite substitute. And which are what we have.

The first workshop

It began with the first workshop he agreed to hold at George Washington University in 1981: on spiritual growth. The 60 attendees were clergymen, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists and nurses from Washington DC. I was terribly nervous. I didn't know how to run a workshop.'

But he did. He was not a Christian at this time¹ but he had attended a Quaker school. So he sat his people in a circle. He gave each one a copy of an anthropologist's article about the education of healers among the Fijians and the Kung of the Kalahari desert. He allowed them 30 minutes to read it, and 15 minutes to think about it in silence. Then he promised to lead a discussion.

He didn't. What happened was 'they talked'. Not about the spiritual journey, but of their envy of the integration of these primitive healers into their society. 'What emerged was the loneliness. Somehow I had the grace to shut up. As they talked they went deeper and got some surcease from the loneliness. At the end of the day everybody was hugging and saying "God, this is the best hundred dollars I ever spent!'

A miracle

This may sound alarming. 'Community-building started as a miracle that day.'

Scott Peck shocked and impressed readers of *The Road Less Travelled* with the way he

connected psychiatry with spirituality. 'I've been accused of courage over that.' He denies it.

'All I did was write what other people were thinking, but felt they shouldn't be thinking: and maybe they were crazy to be thinking. What I found as a psychiatrist and psychotherapist was that people had real spiritual questions for their lives. To address them was necessary for their healing.'

Spiritual lives

In the same way, religion comes into his community-building work: 'And what we find is not discomfort, but that people are relieved that they can talk about their spiritual lives.' Any resistance 'is not resistance to God, but to the painful hard work of changing an organisation. It's not an easy fix to do things differently.'

But it works. The biggest take-up of FCE's services has come not from churches, as they expected, but from big business, which they didn't.

Dr Peck offered his services to his local church free, on condition that 10 people showed up. 'I got the minister and his wife and one parishioner.' That community had no overwhelming imperative to transform itself. A business organisation in trouble does. Community-building improves cost-effectiveness. But who'd choose to get into something where people might cry, or talk about God?

'To make money'

Later in his April day in London, I watch Dr Peck talk at St. James's Church, Piccadilly. A colourful audience of almost 1,000 people has squeezed even into the organ gallery. Peck stands before a sea of beads, beards, caps, scarves, nuns' habits and hopeful faces: the only man present in a short-back-and-sides and a suit and tie. His fans listen in eager silence nonetheless.

It isn't a sermon. 'When I lecture, my purpose is almost always to make money. It's not to convert people, because I don't know how to. If I had a couple of million more

dollars, I'd stop speaking entirely,' he tells me. 'And play golf.'

The money is not all for himself, of course. In nine years he has donated a million dollars to FCE and 'got used to' fundraising. 'It's an interesting discipline. As soon as I became relatively wealthy, I became a beggar. You wouldn't like to make a donation, would you?'

Bad news, Good news

He is not an easy man. He does not bring an easy message. 'All my life, I wondered what I was going to do when I grew up,' he tells the people in St James's. A few years ago, I realised I was never going to grow up.' Happy laughter in the aisles. Then he adds: 'An evangelist is the last thing on God's Earth I ever thought I would become.' We can hear the annoyance in his voice. For this is what he is.

'I bring you good news,' he says. But I'm the kind of evangelist who gives you the bad news first.' He quotes 'a typical New Age question. "Dr Peck, where is it at?"' Then his

answer. 'Where it's at, I say, is through a lifetime of heartbreaking service. And that really turns them on.'

Learning

The St James's audience laughs, but shifts uneasily. Is their hero a cynic at heart? Peck continues. 'The message of the media and, I am sad to say, also the Church is that the point of life is to be happy. Fulfilled. Comfortable. If we're not, we feel there must be something wrong with us.' A pause: 'One of the things I am here to tell you,' says Scott Peck to his rapt attenders, 'is that this is a dreadful lie.'

Now for the truth. 'Do you want to know what the meaning of life is? We are here to learn. I defy you to construct an environment more ideal for learning than this life. And we cannot lose, once we realise that everything that happens to us has been designed to teach us holiness. Now what better news could there be than that?' His congregation breathes again.

*with thanks to the Observer
for permission to reprint*

NACCAN (the National Association of Christian Communities and Networks) have a new address - Community House, Eton Road, Newport, Gwent NP4 0BL, tel 01633 265486

They say that their three-fold purpose is linking, informing and affirming all members in their various commitments to the value of community.

If you would like to refer to their "**Directory of Christian Groups, Communities and Networks**" then contact the editor on 01438 813765. It is held with other reference books in our library.

Other reference books in the library include several editions of "**Diggers and Dreamers**" (a guide to communal living, plus directory of communities in the UK), and "**Places to Be**" (a compendium of retreats, course and conference centres, transformational holidays and places to "just be").

A Living Together in Community

Are you committed to personal and planetary healing?

Would you like to experiment in communal living?

My idea is to rent a large house within 1 hour of Central London (e.g. Victoria) and attempt such an experiment using the community building model. If at all interested please ring me.

Margaret 0171 794 9158

I recently received greetings from Alrisha Gillies (29 Hughes Avenue, Lawson, New South Wales 2783, Australia), who many of you will remember. From her card I can see that her environment is stunning, and that she is enjoying living and working amongst all that beauty.

She writes

"I am grateful for my experiences in CBiB and often hold you in my thoughts. Any travellers are welcome to contact me."

He drew a circle
that shut me out.
Heretic, rebel,
a thing to float!
But love & I had
the wit to win;
we drew a circle
that took him in.

Edwin Markham

Resources Available

All via Peter Cooper (see back page), cheques payable to CBiB
Most can also be borrowed

Book: "The Power of Acceptance" by Doug Shadel & Bill Thatcher (£11 inc. p&p)

Book: "Ongoing Community" by Jerry Hampton (£5 inc. p&p)

Past copies of the CBiB newsletter, with binder and index (1-32 £10, 33-49 £10 inc. p&p)

Binder and index for newsletters (£2 inc. p&p)

World-wide web page (<http://members.aol.com/petercbib>)

"mv2spk" on-line community

"NGCB" on-line discussion on Next Generation Community Building

"ukcb" mailing list for discussion by UK Community Builders

FCE and ACE newsletters

Paper: "Adventure Education: Two Approaches" by Armando Magnino

Copies of Past Newsletters are now available

Issues 1-32 £10 including binder, index, p&p

Issues 33-49 £10 including binder, index, p&p

"They make fascinating reading!"

"They help put the present into context"

Why not find out what has been done and said in the past?

Single binder and index for the current issues of the newsletter just £2 inc.

p&p

Book for Sale

"The Power of Acceptance"

By Doug Shadel and Bill Thatcher

published 1997 price £11 inc. p&p

Forward and Epilogue by M.Scott Peck, M.D.

Using in-depth interviews and scientific research this book addresses the questions: -

What happens at a community building workshop?

How does it happen?

Will it result in lasting changes?

It also places the community building model within the context of the encounter group movement of the last 50 years.

Now available from Peter Cooper (see back page)

Doug and Bill have been involved with Community Building in the USA, and FCE, for many years.

Thoughts from the Publicity Group Meeting 11/1/98

Present: - Richard Benzie, Fanny Calder, Ruth Goffe, Peter Cooper

There has not been time to do any proper notes from the meeting (which only happened just before I put the final touches to the newsletter), but I thought you might like to hear a little bit about what we considered. This is only the second meeting we have had, so we are only just beginning to feel our way.

What is it?

We recognised that before we do much in terms of preparation of new literature we need to get a better understanding, for ourselves as individuals and together, of what it is that community building means to us. What are our experiences of it? How have we benefited from it? How can we explain it to our friends?

We wondered if there are some phrases or words that we might use alongside the existing phrases to help get across what we mean.

Personal experiences

One or two of you have felt able to respond to the request in a recent newsletter to share something of your experiences or your story. We found these contributions very moving, and recognised the power of real stories to move hearts.

Would you be willing to share your story, or give your experience of community, or community building? It need only be a sentence or two, or it could be a few a pages if you feel moved. Send them to me at the

address on the back page. I will ask your permission before we use it in any published material, or perhaps you would rather just share it anonymously.

Grown your own event

We also decided that we need to review, and update, the 'pack' supplied to potential event sponsors; and also the pack that new contacts receive and the way they are introduced to the CBiB network.

Most of you will have been on the receiving end of one or other of these - what do you think? Any suggestions? Any useful examples of something similar from other contexts? All ideas welcome, and I suggest you send them to me in the first instance.

Periodicals

One action I have taken on personally is to make sure that we provide up to date information to all relevant magazines that will take diary listings of our events for free. I am starting with the Permaculture magazine. Which other publications are suitable and free?

There will be more news from the publicity group in the next edition.

Peter Cooper

(details on the back page)

We believe that one of the most powerful ways of getting a message across is to use real personal testimonies.

We would love to have personal statements from you that we could use as quotations in leaflets and advertisements.

Something like "what Community Building does for me", or "what I gained through a CB event"?

Can you help?

Local Ongoing Community Building Groups

Some groups are open to anyone interested in experiencing Community Building, some are open to you only if you have already attended a CB event, some are open all the time to new members, some may not be open to newcomers just now; some build community as in the CB events, some are support groups based on The Road Less Travelled... Check with the local contact person.

Leamington Spa: First Monday in the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409.

Malvern Hills: Meets fortnightly on Thursday evenings. Contact Susie on 01684 540138

Central & North London: Meets on the third Sunday of the month 2-6pm. New members very welcome. Please call Fanny Calder on 01986 873422 if you are interested in coming along.

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 263 0177 (note the new number).

Other groups exist but are not currently publicised. If you are interested in joining, or forming, a group please feel free to contact Peter Cooper (address below) for information and help.



General Enquiries

... about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:

Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377

Newsletter

Subscription rate [UK]: (Apr-Mar) £8; (Jul-Mar) £6; (Oct-Mar) £4; (Jan-Mar) £2.

Please make cheques payable to "Community Building in Britain" and send to the newsletter editor:-

Peter Cooper, 1 Evergreen Close, Woolmer Green, Herts SG3 6JN Tel: 01438 813765; Fax (telephone first): 01438 814986; e-mail: PeterCBIB@aol.com; Web page: <http://members.aol.com/petercbib>.

*Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by **14th February 1998**.*

For convenience of personal contact, the address and telephone number of letter-writers will normally be published, unless other instructions are given. Contributions of any sort (articles, pictures, poems, letters etc.), and of any length, are welcome from all involved in any way with the CBiB network. While every effort will be made to reproduce items in full, please realise that the editor may have to shorten or alter them for publication