

the free university today



INTERVIEW WITH THREE COORDINATORS

In early July the Free You recorded a conversation among three Midpeninsula Free University coordinators, past and present. Victor R. Lovell, a certified psychologist and Free University founder, served as coordinator, the MFU's highest elective office, for a six-month term early in 1968. He was succeeded by Kim Woodard, a Stanford graduate student in Chinese affairs, who is leaving later this month to continue his studies in Formosa. Robert Cullenbine, Stanford economics graduate and Palo Alto candle-maker, was elected Coordinator in January and, shortly after this conversation was recorded, was reelected for a second term. The tape was made with no interviewer present, and the three were asked only to talk about the MFU, where it's been and where it's going.

Vic Lovell: ...impotent, paralyzed, confused...

Bob Cullenbine: What are the ideas...? How do we go about talking about the Free University?

VL: I'm gonna get a drink now. Why take so many chances? Why not just settle down, live the comfortable life, decent income; not fight the world...I'm really tired...

BC: I applied at Ampex today - for a job as a printer.

VL: Are you putting me on?

BC: No.

VL: How much does Ampex pay printers?

BC: Well, they were talking about \$500, but I told them that I was an extremely good printer, and that I had to have at least \$600 to live, and that I'd bring samples of my work and that if that wouldn't convince them, if they would just lead me to a 360 and give me some work to do, I would demonstrate my proficiency, speed, accuracy, etc., on their machine, cold, right off the street - that I could operate it as well as anyone that worked there. Given a week I could work it 40% better than anybody that worked there.

VL: What about the candle business?

BC: I still may do that. I just don't know what I'm going to do. I'm just tired of hassling

with bounced checks and bills I can't pay, and in fact, having to go up to San Francisco to get my dental work done (if they'll see me). (I still haven't gotten that cleared up.)

VL: If the Free U could pay you \$600 a month, will you continue as Coordinator?

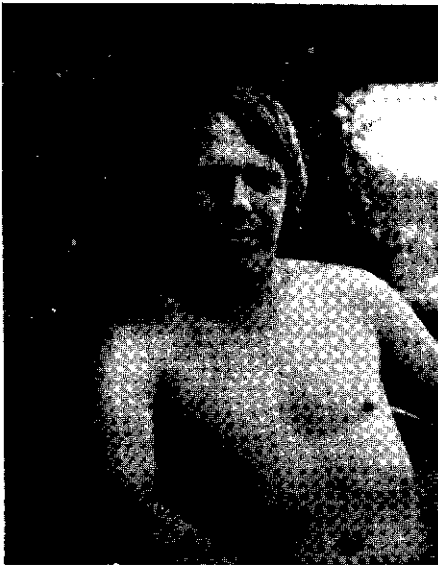
BC: Sure.

VL: Or Executive Director, or...

BC: Sure. But I don't think it will. I don't think that, right at the moment, that people are that interested in the Free U, as a community or as that kind of a vehicle in their lives. I think that right now people are interested in the Free University as a course on Tuesday night and a course on Thursday night, and certain weekend seminars. They enjoy it, they go to courses, they get out of the courses whatever they want, and that this is the extent of it. They don't see it as their community or as being important beyond sort of a recreational or leisure time activity. And as a leisure activity the Free U is in just great condition. We provide that beautifully. And people like it and they pay their ten bucks a quarter and they get what they want, and will continue to do so. But right now there aren't that many people in the Free University that see it as a

vehicle for community or for their close friends or for anything else. And I think that's reflected in the number of people who come to meetings and the number of people who volunteer when we need help.

Kim Woodard: That seems to me exactly what has happened. The Free U has sort of filled to the limits of its basic function as an organization, which is communication. In other words, we have the capacity to communicate with anybody in this geographic area - anybody who can get here by car in a reasonable length of time. We have the capacity to communicate with all of those people, if we so desire - anybody who is interested. And so we have expanded until we have reached the limits of that communications network. ...capability, and of the need. And so that's what's happened; we've hit the ceiling there, and I just don't see any growth at all in prospect. But I think it's not a bad idea at all, because my own feeling is that our organizational front may be our most vulnerable one, and that what we may have to do is maintain a kind of guerrilla mentality about our organizations, if you like. That we have to be able to see them expand and contract, and shrink and change over time, and so on. We can't get into the place where the March of Dimes, for example, got, where they got hung up on getting rid of polio, or whatever it was. That was their main function. And then they got rid of polio, and that was their main thing,



Bob Cullenbine

you know, they got it done. They sort of wandered around looking for some new kind of function to stick the organization on. The organization had a life of its own, instead of being for the people who were in it. And if the Free U really is for the people (and I think it is) we have to expect a tremendous amount of flexibility, change and flux over time, as it goes along; and also as it is pressed against by forces from outside.

BC: Well, I don't see it then being what it's been in my life before - least from what's happening now. When I came into the Free U, there were maybe 200 members, & at a typical coordinating committee, there would be at least 35 or 40 people there, and everyone would be pretty interested in the questions we were discussing. And the answers weren't too obvious to us as we discussed them. They would be really lively debates. And when we took a decision, at that meeting, it was pretty obvious that a lot of the people there would do something about implementing that decision. And though there were the normal hassles about "okay, we've got to do it, now who will do it?" there, in fact, always were. And like you could expect at least half of the people at that meeting to take part in the decision that we made to make it become a reality - when the total membership was only 200. And that was the thing that excited me-- Well, it wasn't that; what excited me was that the Free U seemed to be doing something that was really significant in terms of the lives of the people that were involved - particularly the people who came to meetings to make it happen. And as we grew, it continued to be just about the same people, with a few additions, as we got hundreds and hundreds more, that continued to take the decisions, help in making those decisions, and then take them and implement them. And now, what has happened is that we have lost quite a few of those people and they haven't been replaced by people who will take those decisions and do something with them.

KW: But I'll bet that every one of those people is still in very close contact with the Free U, and that they have got the communications network right there at their fingertips whenever they need it. What's happened is that we mechanized the communications network. We used to sit around in a room and put those catalogs together by hand, you know, but now we've got a collater that just does it much much faster, and that machine has eliminated the necessity to get together as a group and do that kind of task. The same thing with the telephone network that we have: it works very well in the store, and so on. The machines have taken over a lot of the work that was involved in communicating before. And so we don't have to have a kind of "quilting bee mentality", where we all sit down and do something together, because what happens now is that we're "freed up", like I'm "freed up". I'm a much freer agent and I have much more time to spend over at Stanford, or down at the Human Institute or in some other kinds of activities: meeting new people and sort of spreading the word, than I would be if I were sitting there putting catalogs together by hand, you know, just one...

BC: Maybe you do, but I don't. I work my ass off. Like, you know, every single day, with almost no time to run around and do the things that you're doing, just to keep the Free U running - to get the newsletters printed, to get the catalogs printed, to solve the problems of people who are freaking out and can't come to work, to answer inquiries from all over the nation and from the community, and going to meetings and just keeping the Free U functioning. I don't have any time for those things that you're do-

ing. And I don't have the feeling of community. Like, to me, it's a big hassle to be running the Free U, and I think it's that way with a lot of people that actually work at the Free U. And the only thing that's kept us going - one is kind of the ego trip of working for the Free U - but the other is sort of the dream that "well we are really doing something that's going to have important kind of ramifications. And that's the only kind of reward that there is, but there's no longer any of that personal reward of working with people - where your energies are - like the quilting bee. Like the energies are meshed together and it feels good and you're all working hard and you get something done. That doesn't come around; now it's this constant "problem solving" on an interpersonal level and on an administrative level that seems to be coming down all the time - and trying to get volunteers while you're going down to the Human Institute and doing this and that and studying at Stanford, we're scratching our butts trying to figure out where we're going to get someone to run the collater. So it may, in fact, be a better deal for most of the members now in that they're getting a lot more out of it, but for the people that are actually doing the work, I don't think it is at all.

WHY DO WE GENERATE CONFLICT?

KW: But isn't a lot of our problem that we generate a lot of these artificial decision problems? Like the coordinating committee, for example, last Thursday night (or maybe two weeks ago) spent a whole meeting talking about the be-in issue (that be-in that somebody else had put on for the Free U), and what was happening there was that we were generating-(I mean the decisions had already been made, except for the kind of minor decision about what we were going to say to that guy and whether we say, "Please don't do this again in the future" or not.) and so there was a very minor decision and we spent a lot of time hassling and fighting over that decision. The question is, "Why are we doing that? Why are we wasting our time? Why do we generate things - generate a lot of conflict over things that really are not that important? Well, I don't know either. It's really a mystery to me.

BC: It's very frustrating. I guess it's frustrating to everybody who goes to those meetings to find ourselves doing that.

KW: Maybe it's because we've eliminated the encounter as a part of the community exercise.

VL: I don't know why that decision isn't important. Why isn't that decision important?

KW: That decision just doesn't have the same kind of magnitude as the decision as to what is going to be our attitude with regard to, oh, the war in Vietnam, or something like that. It's a minor decision. It is one where there is really not that much difference - or shouldn't be - that much difference of opinion. Actually, when you take the vote on something like that - the way to tell is when you take the vote, does it come out a pretty consensual issue or is there a real split down the middle of the group. Now I wasn't there for the vote on that, but my guess is that there was a pretty heavy consensus in the group about what the decision should be

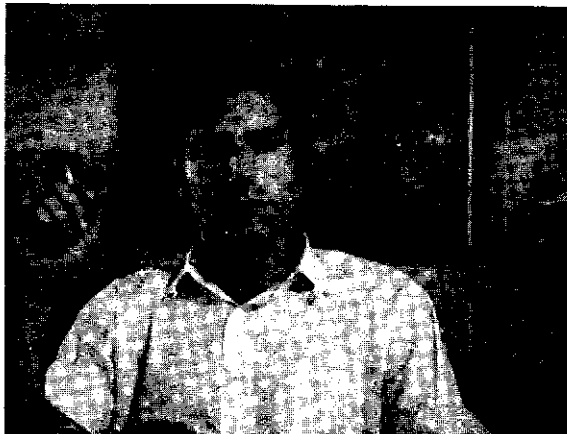
in that case.
 VL: Yeah, that was split; it was like one vote.
 BC: One vote split.
 KW: One vote split?
 BC: One vote short of supporting the be-in at Stanford.
 VL: See, that involved us in the possibility of breaking the Stanford injunction and being connected with disruptive activities during graduation...
 KW: Oh, I see.
 VL: ...and during Pitzer's inauguration, and also it involved the question of someone acting on behalf of the group, and bypassing its democratic decision-making processes, so, it was pretty important. It really was...
 KW: Well, I take it that there were several motions. I don't want to stick on that example in particular, but what I'm saying is that we may be spending more time in discussion of small issues than we need to.



Kim Woodard

VL: What disturbed me more, and what I think Cully is talking about, is that there wasn't much behind the decision in terms of there being a lot of people as there once were, very much wanting to work very very hard and have a be-in. Before when we had a be-in we would have dozens of people working together hard to put it on. Here, where we had a question of a potentially much more important be-in, and where everybody was willing to debate the issues. There were very few people other than Cully - other than the coordinator himself, and Jim Sayre, who were really going to the work of putting on the be-in.
 BC: Which is, in fact, what happened. When we decided to go ahead and support the thing Friday night (1) we couldn't support it with money (everyone agreed on that when we found out we didn't have any money), but beyond that, as far as the actual work - making sure that all the bands were confirmed and that we were actually going to have a show. None of us knew at that

point what Sayre actually had or hadn't done. It turned out that he had done almost nothing. And we inherited just an incredible mess to be worked out during the day Friday. And when it came to working on it Friday, there was just me - and Sayre, to work on it. Gail helped in the office in the morning, but beyond that, it was just me. The same thing happened two weeks before when we voted to sponsor a Monday night rally during the Days of Solidarity for the Berkeley people, and we decided to make it a



Vic Lovell

real fair kind of a hearing where we didn't just invite radicals, but we wanted to make it an educational project and have people from the radical and from the establishment community, and we would slant our advertising in such a way as not to alienate the establishment people - to get them out. And that we were going to do it on Lytton Plaza. Now, in that case we had a little money to rent the equipment with, but it again turned out that it was, in fact, Lew Hailey and me and a street kid named Tim, who lives next door to the Print Shop, that did all the work.

VL: And the thing about that is, that both times, there was a very big, very enthusiastic turn out, in Lytton Plaza, of local people: street kids and straight citizens and what-have-you. Both of those things were really a big success, but the people no longer emerge to do the organizational work and deal with the equipment, and so forth, as they once did. We used to have lots and lots of people working last year on those liberation festivals. There'd be a whole bunch of people making bread. There'd be somebody else getting bands and somebody else getting equipment, somebody else making signs, and we'd have a large number of people working together and discussing the political implications and the goals that were involved, in the way that we did, which was very very intense. It involved a lot of conflict and it was difficult to reach consensus.

BC: And it was accompanied by really great debates.

VL: All that makes sense, because what we were talking about, arguing about, making decisions about, was something that not only drew a crowd, but had a large number of people working together to do it and to be there and to make it mean something or make it happen.

KW: Well, now, have the classes been as full as normal and operating on a full basis and so on?

BC: Yeah. I checked that out, and as a matter of fact I checked it out Tuesday following the Lytton Plaza thing after I had done all that work and it was just a--it was a fucking drag. I got home after the whole thing was over, and we had taken that thing down to the City Council, and after it was all over I just got home and I thought, "Man, you know, I'm absolutely exhausted, and I don't even feel good about what we did, because it wasn't a community thing." So I went and I checked the Black Book with the class registrations - who'd signed up for what class - and the Red Book showing the changes in locations, and found that this quarter, as opposed to when I looked at it before, we had the highest consistent attendance in classes, and the most classes that survived to the end of the quarter, in the history of the Free U. So that, in fact, part of the Free U is more successful than it's ever been - that is a very important part: the classes. But they're remaining just "classes". They don't seem to be encouraging people into forming any sort of visible community anyway, or a community that I can tap into and touch, but they're tremendously successful.

VL: This is a kind of perennial problem, because a year ago, when I was coordinator, we were still talking about these same kinds of things. We were still lamenting that there was no community and that everyone was doing their own thing, and now we've reached the point of being very efficient. The staff works very hard and everybody's gotten very competent at doing the things that they're doing, and the courses have gotten much more exciting and they're many more of them and there are many more people going to them. The membership remains high, even as much community as we had before...

BC: No, we have less.

WE DIDN'T HAVE COMMUNITY...

VL: When we lamented the fact that we didn't have community, there were plenty of us to lament and plenty of us to work together. There were a bunch of us talking together and we were going to make a whole life for ourselves. We were going to have a politics and we were going to have an economy. We were going to create income for this kind of basic cadre that lived in the Free U community, as well as taking advantage of the services. We were going to have our own religion, and our own miniature society. We haven't done it, or we've done it to an extent...

BC: In two years, right?

VL: ...we've gotten so far and no farther. So far and no farther. The thing that really bothers me is the lack of new blood. Always up to this point, especially when things started to deteriorate, new people would move in and take over leadership and organizational work and staff and new volunteers. There was always new blood, always new faces who really dug the scene and became committed and worked very hard and eventually became the future coordinators and staff members, and so forth, and I don't see the next generation coming on, and that really bothers me.

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BC: And they were different too. Each new person would arrive, and they would come in with sort of their own style of life and style of getting work done that was really exciting, and they'd stir it up a lot. I remember when Gail Tecl arrived. She really pushed people around, and people reacted, and now she's an institution.

VL: There may be another thing that has happened, and that is that a lot of the heavyweights that were involved in the early work of the organization have gone on into their own directions. I miss Robb, particularly...

KW: Right, I was thinking of Robb--

VL: ...and I always said if Robb were--when Robb leaves--that it, you know, that it will hurt the organization, and nobody would believe me. Nobody would accept that. Robb wouldn't accept that. But I really think it's true. He was one of the very best people at pulling in new people, involving people who hadn't been involved before. Keeping up the turnover was one of his things, and now he's gone and we don't have a turnover.

BC: That's really true. It was Robb who turned us on to our first psychodrama a year ago. Came in and said, "Hey, there's this crazy Chinaman doing a new thing. You've got to come to it." Got us all turned on to doing it.

KW: Part of the problem may be also that we discovered that not everything is groovy, you know; that we generate a lot of very strong negative feelings toward each other. And the psychodrama, as a matter of fact, last year, is what showed us that. It showed us that this kind of super love trip that everybody had been on was really a phony kind of front and that there's another side of each person as a personality as he worked in the organization, and as he related and made love to and, in general, was close to, all the other people... So when we found out about that, maybe there has been a sort of stepping back reaction for all of us, like we all came in and we were all very groovy and loving and everything - turning with dope - and then this thing came down and showed that there was another layer to our personalities and it kind of blew us apart. Now I don't know if we'll eventually sift back down together or not.

VL: Except that for at least four months - maybe six months - it didn't blow us apart; it drew us all much closer together. The initial effect of that whole psychodrama scene coming into the Free U was much more solidarity; much more new people coming in; people being much closer to each other. And then, after about four, five, six months, something happened and everybody became an encounter group leader instead of a Free U member - most of all, me. Now, I would like to kind of get back to that kind of human solidarity, that kind of community feeling that we used to have.

KW: But people aren't likely to do that if there's all work and no play. It's like, if it's all just relating to those machines down there, then people just aren't going to come back and do the Free U thing over and over again. There's got to be some kind of attraction to bring people in. That means human relationships as far as I'm concerned. That's what got the thing rolling in the first place and now it's continued to generate what energy it has

at the center.

VL: But look, the encounter group scene is flourishing. As I recall, this quarter we listed, in the catalog and in the newsletter, about 100 encounter groups, and I'm told that about half of those actually met, which is an awful lot of human relationship - an awful lot of encountering, and yet...

THE GURUS NEVER MEET

KW: But the gurus never meet; you know, they never bring themselves together. They're really afraid of each other, and that's a lot of the problem - like that one marathon we had with the encounter group leaders - and that included also a lot of staff people and a lot of, you know, heads of the Free U. That thing was really very very heavy. It took a long time to get off the ground; it was kind of frustrating but it was very heavy when it finally came down. But that was the last time we ever did it. It sort of blew the shit out of all of us, and then there's nothing left. But it can't just be on an organizational basis; it's really got to be an individual effort, and I don't see why --why it doesn't happen.

BC: For me - one of the reasons I'm dropping out of being the coordinator, and not running it again, is that I'm just doing all this work, with very little personal thing going on, and I would - if there was a personal thing - like a real feeling that this was the whole life - for me and a whole lot of other people working together to create something and that it was important that we weren't creating something, then I could probably continue as coordinator. And I need so many bucks to live on. I could probably get them. If I were really convinced that it was working, and that we were, in fact, creating a community, creating a politics, creating a society. If I could find other people within that group who would have the money to pay me what I need, maybe not through tuition, but just outright. Okay, 100 bucks from you, 100 bucks from you. And there's people that are Free U members who could well afford that. It wouldn't





do a thing to them. It would...

VL: How come we got so many people in the membership who are very well off, and yet the Free U is really zapping them. They're really getting to them at some level, but it's not important enough that they should, say, donate some money to it. To me the ideal solution would be to keep people like Cully and Robb on a more or less permanent staff. They would retire you from coordinator to executive director and give you a salary that you could support your family on; and keep somebody like Robb on more or less permanently, as education director and give him a higher salary. So you have a semi-professional staff, and then continually have new people come in and be elected to the elective offices: coordinator and secretary and treasurer (all the positions that have power).

KW: But the point is that--I have have an entirely different perspective toward the creation of positions and this thing has come up time and again between us; but my own feeling is closer to Robb's, and that is that you should wait until someone is interested in doing something and starts to do something and then you create the position which will enable him to continue and expand his activities. Now, if we have one person who is interested in drawing together the staff people, trying to get new blood flowing through the organization, and spend a lot of his time just focussing on that one kind of thing - with part of his life - then it would be time to create that kind of position so he could expand into that activity all of the time.

VL: Okay, what I want to know is at this point (we've had people doing this in past times)--at this point--where's that interest going to come from? See, we're always into the perils of success in this organization. Now we are doing all the things that we set out to do in the beginning - very effectively. And that's how we're into this bind: that we're running a very efficient operation (at last!) in terms of courses, in terms of Store, in terms of Print Shop. We have a large membership. We have some kind of a politics; we've gotten meaningfully involved in political action in a way that's made a difference around here. We've achieved all those goals and in the midst of all this success there is a kind of stagnation.

KW: You don't get people interested this year by doing what you did last year. Where are the new people going to come from and what are they

going to do next? The question is what do we want to do next? We're talking about the group of people who has been involved in this thing for a long time and who is at the center. The question is what do we want to do with each other next? Do we want to try to go any further on our own trip, or do we want to stop? And it's when we stop that the thing starts to lose its life, you know, and there's really no attraction for people coming in, because they can just do their trip as well in a peripheral encounter group as they can by coming to the coordinating committee meetings and getting involved with the central group. The question is what do we want to do next? For me the next kind of experiment is some kind of living thing where I can set up a kind of arrangement where I can share a lot of the work of day-to-day living with other people; the house - that kind of arrangement. We've tried to get people in the Free U interested in that before and it just hasn't worked.

VL: I started to talk about this kind of thing... Incidentally, there are communes springing up and trying this (and not doing too well), but more and more people are at least trying to do this; and I've been talking to the people in the psychodrama workshop about having a commune and live together - all people who do encounter group work with me - you know, together. And whatever money we make from marathons would then pay for the house and the room and the board and the equipment. So there you have this thing where you work together, do your organization together, live together and support yourself in common. But now suppose we set that up - suppose we pull this off - there's no telling where that whole thing is going at this point, because it's not clear to me that this whole psychodrama/encounter scene is something that can go on and on. Maybe it's like the acid scene. There's a lot of parallels with the acid scene in terms of everyone saying, "Now we've really got it. Now we really know where it's at." And "never mind the risks" and "we know what we're doing" and "we're going to make it" and "we're going to be happy ever after and turn everybody else on too". And then we find ourselves wandering around kind of spaced out and wondering if we're really doing the right thing and freaking out and... So I don't know if that can go on. But let's say that now we've really got the methodology down pat and now we really know how to turn people on and now we really know how to work out our own consciousness. And we really do know - and furthermore, we can make a living doing it for other people.

KW: That's the crucial question: Can we make a living doing it for other people?

VL: Let's just assume this. So we've got a commune and we've got a group of people. Now, how do we relate that to the Free University? That gets you into things like course fees. That gets you into things like, are we going to have the community center or what kind of place are we going to do this in? It gets you into the whole economic thing and also: here's a power center - a smaller group - and how do you relate that to a larger community? Because

everybody isn't going to be a professional encounter grouper. I don't find people interested in talking about these problems. I finally gave up. I've got a lot of ideas about the next set of solutions, but I've learned through experience that it's pointless to start pushing those things until people are ready. I think we need a whole bunch of policies about fees and economics of the Store and things like that that we haven't got, but until the problems arise and they're felt by people, then no one's really interested in discussing what to do about it. I don't see the interest and I'm wondering why this is not so. It must be not so because as things stand, no one has that much stake in raising these questions and trying to work out answers.

BC: I think it may be because there are certain things that we are able to do fairly easily if we know how - going to encounter groups and doing psychodrama, and clearing up some of these kinds of problems that we have, and also getting to all kinds of information that we want. We now do that in the Free U; we can get to any kind of information that a person wants - any kind of study that a person wants to do - we can do that. It was difficult to make that happen, but we made it happen. Now it's a relatively easy thing to do. The next step, I think, in doing something, is either - what Kim says: living together (what you're talking about is actually living together in a commune), which immediately makes two kinds of demands on you. Either (1) you're willing to live with very very little money, immediately, because that's the only way people can live together in a commune now is to get a big house; or to go out into the hills and, again, with very little money, live in a very primitive way. Or you just can't live in a commune. Or you've got to have sufficient money to buy a bunch of land and build yourself a place. Again, money; you run into a money problem. The other kinds of things that we can do, as a Free University, we need money for - and sometimes a lot of it - to get done. And again, we're up against getting money and we don't show the kind of return to people, with these plans, that people just get for joining the Free U and going to classes. They can join the Free U and go to classes, and they get a big return for what they put into it.

VL: The trouble is that they think of this as a service, a low-cost service provided them by some kind of staff which they're not in contact with. They don't realize that this whole thing requires a central organization with a democratic, decision-making structure, a lot of volunteers, a staff that works for slave wages. If they understood that, and they had this beautiful experience in their living room on Wednesday night, and they understood what was behind that experience (the organizational work and the personal commitment and the communitarian ideals), maybe they would kick in some bread. I don't quite understand why we're so successful and people don't give us money.

KW: One of the very simple reasons for the problem is that a lot of the people that are involved in the core of the Free University are single, they're drop-outs from regular occupations; they are often drop-outs from education, and what

happens when this core of people gets together and has this very kind of intensive experience together, and starts to form their own family, their own close-knit relationships, is that they lose sight of people who are living a different style of life - people whose lives are more divided. Now I take myself as a good example. I'm married; I'm in school; I go to work, and yet I'm still interested in turning on and doing all these things. Now, the question is, how can the Free University reach people like me? Does it really respect people



like me? Now that's a really crucial question. Like, often times, Judy and I felt that we were really isolated in a group, just because we were married, there was a kind of institutional bias against us, or something. Or just because I was still working, often times people encouraged me to quit. In fact, in a few years, I will be one of the people who can provide the organization with money, which is one of the essential things that it needs, and one of the reasons why I live a divided life is in order to be able to provide that money for my family and for the things that I really love and really want to do. But there's very little respect, in the organization, and very little encouragement, for that kind of contribution. Much more, it is the more intense kind of contribution you can give, the more time you can give - regardless of what the costs are - the better it is.

VL: Have you felt that way--having a family and a...

BC: Yeah...I have felt that way. I don't feel that any more, because I just sort of had my family as an "up front" thing for so long now that people accept the fact that I'm married and have kids, and I'm not going to be balling a lot of the chicks in the Free U because that isn't where I'm at, and sort of accept that and respect me for that, knowing that I'm not putting anybody else down for what they're doing. But it took a long time. I think there is that thing Kim talked about - that there's sort of this young, single, bunch of free people that can do their things, and that you can't do them too.

VL: Yeah, but you gotta admit that this here monogamy and traditional family is kind of "in".

BC: (Laughing) That't right.
 KW: Like people meet me in the Free University and they say, "You're married?" "You what??" "You're a student?" And my reaction to that is, "Well, okay, if you can show me--you know I'll keep trying to turn on and trying to do what I think is right until my wife leaves me or I'm fired - one or the other - and I'm not going to leave either of those things before that point, because I feel that I can take money, from the straight world, and I can act as a kind of funnel into the new world."
 VL: But are you going to be involved in the community when you're a funnel? That's the question you're asking. See, I ask myself...
 KW: To some extent, yes.

IT HAS A LOT TO DO WITH MONEY

VL: ...if I wanted to have a wife and kids and a decent income, how could I pull that off without giving all this up - which is my scene? And I don't know the answer; and that has a lot to do, first and foremost, with money. But it has to do with a whole lot of other things too.
 KW: Well, you can solve part of the money problem, and also your problem of participation, but working on getting your family relationships integrated on a larger scale, so that you're sharing housing facilities, sharing as much as possible of the everyday experience that you've got to go through any how. The doing the dishes, and the cleaning the car and the doing the mechanical work and making a garden, and all that stuff that everybody does by themselves. There's no reason at all (there's no law that says we can't integrate that activity), and there's no reason at all why we shouldn't attempt to do it - especially the people who have already experienced a kind of integrated life in a family unit - like married people, people with children, and so on.
 VL: There's no reason at all, except that nobody but you and me and Cully and a handful of other people seem to experience this problem the way we're now talking about it. Where's the interest? Like, you lead an encounter group this quarter, right?
 KW: Yeah.
 VL: And I have one, and Cully has one. Now, we go and here are all these people. And there are a lot of very straight people and people who are - like I have plenty of people in their 40's and their 50's and they're married and they have kids, and a lot of young people that are married. They're those kind of people, and they're living a decent life; they have good incomes, they're making straight scenes. And there they are, and I would like to ask you guys, what does the Free U mean to them? Here we have - one night a week we have this exotic experience that we produce with these people under the auspices of the Free U. But what's the Free U to them? And I would say, as far as my encounter group goes, they don't know it exists. It never comes up. What's the trouble? What do you do about...
 KW: ...what I was saying about getting together again, just with regard to the encounter groups. It is another perfect example of how, when we sort of achieve some kind of feeling of confidence about what we're doing as individuals,



then many of us split up and we start doing our own thing and we're not doing it together. Like there are plenty of people who can lead an encounter group at the level of intensity that your group or my group or Cully's group is being led. We find that, as a matter of fact, as individuals, that if we raise the intensity level of the encounter group, that people go away. They don't come back again. Because there really is no protection for a person who comes to an encounter group who faces some encounter group leader who has been through all kinds of hairy experiences and drugs and God knows what else, you know. And he's faced with this monster...
 BC & VL: (snickering - becoming robust laughter)
 KW: ...and it's no wonder he freaks out, because it's not like there are many monsters around, you know, and he can see that he will be protected and there's a chance that he can become a monster, and so on.
 VL: But that's not the problem I'm raising. The problem I'm raising now is that a lot of these people - they are really able to dig this monster, and they will freak out with us while we do these very very heavy freaky encounter groups. But what's the Free U to them, which produced the experience? Which created the organization and all the karma and the experiences which led to this being able to happen to them. But do they know that? Do they know what's behind this? Do they...
 KW: They don't see how people who go through all these experiences begin to relate to each other, and they...
 VL: Right...
 KW: And that's what's missing, along with the coordinating committee confrontation, which used to be the battle ground for the monsters, where we would come and we would relate to each other (the people who had been with it for a long time), would get together and do our thing as heavy as we wanted to, and there were always other people with similar experiences who would come up against us and hold the line. Like

last night when we were working on that guy in your group, just the fact that there were two of us and he was kind of in the middle, and when he started to feel like this, then another person came in and there was a little bit of support behind him, and he felt that he really wasn't alone.

VL: And he had to deal with one kind of position from you and another from me.

KW: That's right.

VL: Instead of just one big leader.

BC: That's right. I remember the coordinating committee confrontations were so heavy, and like a new person would come in and our big fear then was that we wouldn't freak out some new cat so bad that he'd never come back again, because the whole thing--everybody was so much involved, that they just opened up and everybody stayed at a pretty heavy level the whole time, and that's the way we got things worked out. We don't do that any more anywhere. There is no place for it.

KW: But in a way, even if we did this, we would have to be willing to sacrifice a certain amount with regard to our own relationship to try to gather new people in. We used to recognize this all the time in the confrontation: that you can't just work on the people who've always been there, but you have to try to draw new people in as fast as possible. I mean, in a way we used to be always down on Robb, because you'd ask him, "How the hell do you feel, Robb?" and he would just sit there, like a bump-on-a-log, and he wouldn't say anything, and there's a kind of truth in that because what he was saying was, "Don't worry about me", you know, "I've been around and I'm not about to die. Let's hear what you have to do" and "Can we help you with our experience" and so on. "Is there anything that worries you?" and to try to draw the new person into the group as best as possible. He really did have a skill with that that I think very few people possess.



(Editor's note: this dialogue will be concluded in the August issue of the Free You. In that portion, the three Coordinators will cover in more detail their hopes for the evolution of the Free University, and the directions these changes might take.

Wheat straw

By Emerson Harris May 1969

Sons and daughters of Summer's desire,
Crush me not beneath blunt heel bare,
Or strip me raw twixt anvil jaw,
Steel studded, tumescent ivory maw.

Sons and daughters of Mother Moon,
Let me be your nest,
Where undulant thigh, mouthed breast,
Hair tossed in calorous frenzy,
Can rest, once passion's succulence is spent,
In langorous afterglow.

Now, my children,
I lay a castaway,
My spider bones blanched from verdure
To nut tan and twilight yellow,
I beckon, but do not bargain easily.

Blossoms of lust's ultimate intent,
Tread gently,
Lest I, now ripped from root and torn
(Albeit willingly at first),
Turn from bosom warm
To searing fire friction formed,
And in a minute thee consume.

I still command the Armys of Soul's Dark Night,
Though now I lay,
By cruel miller cast.
My ribs, supine yet flexed,
Are venomed still.
This scattered mat, once proferring sweet bread
That thee sustained;
Now my fresh crimson stained,
Can sting thee still
And you subdue to passive somnolence,
Where you will become as I,
To let Id's Armada rape and burn
At Wisdom's stake.

Sons and daughters, I love thee still,
So hear me well.
I would, instead, by kiss and wild wooed,
And then, mixed with thy mellow excrement,
Sun baked,
Became tomorrow's womb,
From which tendrils green,
Fresh sprigs of wheat can spring,
All glistening and clean, then
In dawn's dew bathed, deflorate
And, ripened by high noon, part and
Bring forth another son and daughter
To nourish and caress and, by twilight's pace,
Let lie on wheat straw in joyful embrace.

