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THE BRIDGE MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY: AN EVOLVING PATTERN FOR HUMAN GROWTH*

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IN the last decade we have seen the rise to prominence of a "third force" in psychology, humanistic psychology, a movement which has been instrumental in creating as well as having been created from a more general cultural movement in the direction of seeking and understanding the positive side of human nature. The purpose of this paper is to describe the principles and functioning of a particular manifestation of the movement toward human growth, the Bridge Mountain Community.

At this point the reader should be given a definition of the sort, "The Bridge Mountain Community is a . . ." We find ourselves unable to make any concise statement of this sort, however, and this inability to precisely define the Community serves as an excellent introduction to both the potential of the Community and the limitations of this paper. There is a basic limitation arising from the fact that the Community stresses *experience*, not verbalizations about experience. Of greater importance, however, is the fact that the Community is not an institution, is not a formula, is not a stabilized social system. It is an evolving community, forthrightly and self-consciously experimental with regard to its present nature and immediate future goals. Thus we will make no attempt at definition: rather, we will attempt to describe the philosophical assumptions and commitments which have remained relatively constant (albeit evolving) throughout the Community's seven-year history. We will describe the major aspects of the Community's practical functioning, and its goals for the immediate future. In so doing, we hope to give the reader a sense of the evolving pattern that constitutes the Bridge Mountain Community.

Some limitations of this paper should be noted at the outset. First, we mentioned above, many of the aspects of the Community cannot be adequately verbalized within the linguistic limitations of our culture. This is particularly frustrating for us because of our scientific training, which emphasizes precise verbal expression of subject matter. Experience, however, is nonetheless real even if it cannot be adequately verbalized, and we feel the experience of the Bridge Mountain Community is important enough to the humanistic psychology movement to attempt verbalization, despite its inadequacies. Second, we make no pretence of being impartial, critical, or objective in this paper in the sense of being "detached" observers of a "phenomenon." We are

deeply involved as individual human beings in the Bridge Mountain Community. Insofar as possible, we have tried to take this involvement into account in writing this exposition, but it is an exposition, not a "study."

While the Bridge Mountain Community is only seven years old, there have been many significant events in the evolution of the present Community. This history is complex enough to constitute a monograph in itself. We shall not attempt to deal with it here, but rather begin an immediate exposition of the philosophical basis of the Community.

ASSUMPTIONS AND PHILOSOPHY

The life of the Bridge Mountain Community is based upon a philosophy that was largely created in the process of searching for new ways of living and experiencing, rather than a system logically thought out beforehand. Because it evolved from life experience, and the experience of the Community is continually changing and evolving, the assumptions and philosophy are continually subject to confrontation with experience and the possibility of modification, so the material in this section is not presented as a finished product.

*The basic philosophical or existential assumption of the Bridge Mountain Community is that, "We do not discover our answers in life, we create them."**

A man cannot merely observe himself and find his answers in life, for even this act contains major assumptions about life which prove themselves through his act. We are unaware or unconscious of many of our most important assumptions about life, and therefore in these areas we perceive our assumption as the only true understanding, as "common sense." In so doing, we limit our alternatives in life.

Knowing that we create our answers and becoming aware of the assumptions upon which we act, we realize that the validation for our assumptions rests upon *effectiveness*, upon experiential facts such as, which assumption allows us to feel the most energy, which assumption allows us to accomplish the most. We may decide to act on the basis of an assumption of our own sufficiency and authority, or an assumption of insufficiency and dependency. In the latter instance we place our trust in the external authorities who claim they can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves; in the former, we trust in ourselves.

When this decision is seen as an equal act of faith, we opt readily for our sufficiency and authority, for acting on the assumption of sufficiency creates our sufficiency and authority, while acting on the assumption of insufficiency only confirms the insufficiency *regardless of the truth of the assumption*.

*All quotations in this article are from various pieces of literature written by members of the Community to express collective feelings.
The quotations referred to above are shown here in small type.—Ed.

It would be foolish, however, to assume that we can instantly and arbitrarily switch our assumptions about life. These assumptions are not merely intellectual opinion: rather, they are deep in our total personality, including the body as well as the mind. To become operative an assumption must become part of our total living organism.

The position that we create both our own abilities and our own limitations should not be taken to imply any sort of ultimate intellectual solipsism. We are not talking here of the nature of ultimate reality, or denying that the given structure of the physical universe and of our nervous system imposes certain limitations on man: rather, we are talking of the limitations and prescribed *alternatives arising* out of our perceptual structures (or more correctly, out of our apperceptual structures) and psychological assumptions. We are concerned with the fact that a man's image of himself and of the world is not only the result of experience but very much the creator of experience, as much or more so than the "real" world.

Another way of expressing this position is by considering the nature of authority, by which we mean:

authority of our own actions, the source of validation for our actions. The Community *affirms* that every man can realize his own authority in life. That the natural organism contains the ability to know its needs and the creativity to meet them. That each man is therefore sufficient in life. That as we return to the naturalness of the organism we discover that we alone are the authority for our lives, and we also discover within ourselves the sense of authority which allows us to operate effectively as our own authority.

We further affirm that in a group relationship based on non-judgment and acceptance we create a highly favorable condition for realizing our own authority. That is, we *affirm* that knowing exists only through experience of ourselves. That to know ourselves we must be free to experience ourselves independently of arbitrary judgment or conditioned patterns of thought by ourselves and others. That as we realize our own authority more completely through *group living* we also create the environment in which others can realize their own authority. That the relationships which will grow up in the group climate of non-judgment and mutual acceptance will be more effective forms of relationship, that these more effective forms of relationship can serve as design patterns for all who are in relationship to the group, and can form the basis for more effective living for many people.

Note that we have used the word *affirm* rather than *believe* in presenting our philosophical position. We would stress that our position is *not* a set of intellectual rules that one believes or disbelieves, but a way of life that one can choose to affirm and so help to create.

We stress the affirmation and growth of the individual through the group, but we do not wish to imply that the individual is subordinated to the group, nor, at the opposite extreme, that the group is subordinated to any individual(s). We explicitly reject the assumptions inherent

in the model of conceptualizing group-individual interactions in terms of dominance and submission, win or lose. We do not reject this model because it is not "valid," but because using this model creates it, brings about a win or lose situation, rather than one conducive to individual growth.

In summary, we affirm that *every act contains its own assumptions*, about ourselves, about the requirements of the specific situation, the nature of the world we live in, about the nature of life itself. The Bridge Mountain philosophy rests its "validity" on effectiveness: *it cannot be proven or disproven except in experience.*

Method : Implementation of the Philosophy in Living

We have stressed that the Bridge Mountain philosophy is to be lived, rather than to be argued, pleaded, rationalized, or scholasticized. We shall now describe the actual process of living it in the Community. Again, though, we stress that this description does not necessarily apply to the Community of a year ago or the Community of a year hence : the Community is still in the process of evolution, and if it is to continue *living*, must remain so.

Physical Setting

The activities of the Community center around Dar Boha, the main lodge, located in the redwood forests near Santa Cruz, California. Outlying buildings include living quarters, studios for art work, and land for outdoor recreation.

The physical settings of the buildings are unimportant. The important things about the setting are its psychological qualities, viz., its isolation from the everyday world, the beauties of the redwood forest, and the esthetic enhancement of the physical facilities by the creative art work of the residents and guests. Simply being physically present at the Community creates a psychological atmosphere of being "somewhere else" from one's usual home, work, recreation setting, and all the role supports and pressures inherent in one's everyday world.

Members of the Community

As a legal entity, the Bridge Mountain Foundation is a non-profit educational and charitable organization. The formal structure of legally responsible officers and the like necessitated by this is kept at a minimum, and is not the real basis of decision-making in the day-to-day life of the Community.

The only clear-cut distinction that can be drawn among members of the Community is that between the residents and the guests. The residents comprise a group which has varied in size from eight to fifteen persons, all living semi-permanently at Bridge Mountain. The length of time they have lived there has varied from a few months to several

years. The residents share the responsibility of physical maintenance of the Community property and coordination of the programs and craft industries of the Community. More important than those formal duties, however, is their commitment to the philosophy of the Bridge Mountain Community by *living* it as best they can. The residents receive no regular salary, only room and board. What salaries they do receive come from a shared fund earned from various extensions of the Community's programs, mainly sale of art products.

The backgrounds of the residents over the years have varied widely, ranging from persons who came to the Community as existential casualties to those who have been members of the mental health professions. Potential residents are selected by the other residents on the basis of their demonstrated and potential ability to function adequately in the Community and their commitment to its philosophy and objectives. Usually the consideration of an individual's coming as a resident does not occur until that individual has shared in the Bridge Mountain way of life and there is a considerable feeling of "comfort" on all sides.

While the continuity of the Community life and program centers around the activities of the residents, there are always various numbers of guests present during the week. On weekends, there are anywhere from five to twenty guests present, and the community activities are more heavily centered around them, although essentially the same as during the week.

Guests may be defined as persons who have a permanent residence away from the Community, and who pay a room and board fee during their stays at Bridge Mountain. Guests usually visit the Community initially through hearing about it from a friend who has been there. At present, the Foundation has expended little effort on any formal sort of publicity.

In attempting to characterize the guests, we find considerable variability. Some guests come for a day or a week or a weekend and are never heard from again. Others return time and again, and they contribute their special skills to the ongoing programs of the Community. Such contributions (which may be more profitably viewed as ways of participation in the Community) have included such things as teaching music, dance, or psychotherapeutic techniques, doing carpentry work, giving business advice, etc. Thus a large number of persons who are technically classified as guests participate in the Community as much as the residents. In this way, the Bridge Mountain Community is more than a number of people residing at a certain physical location : it is a large number of individuals committed in varying degrees to the philosophy of the Community, regardless of how frequently they are able to visit and participate.

The backgrounds of the guests are as varied as those of the residents, although there is a preponderance of professional people, including artists, philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, engineers, business executives, and writers.

Group Interaction in General

Perhaps the most important thing that can be said about the members of the Bridge Mountain Community, be they residents or guests, is that their mutual interaction is characterized by warmth, openness, and an almost total lack of social roles. First-time visitors are generally amazed at the readiness with which they are welcomed for themselves, as persons in their own right, not for what they represent or their status in society. Everyone is on a first-name basis, and often one may be acquainted with a resident or guest for months without ever knowing his last name or what his weekday role in society is. The warmth, acceptance of, and respect for others as persons in their own right is an essential aspect of living the philosophy.

The day usually begins at the Community with an informal meeting of the residents and occasional guests to split up whatever tasks need to be done during the day and introduce and discuss new ideas. The spirit of these meetings is that of seeking optimal resolution of whatever problems arise. This is not the same thing as a spirit of compromise, where everyone loses something, nor of one person winning at the expense of others, but rather a genuine attempt to understand the positions of others and the real needs they represent, as well as fully understanding one's own needs and how they determine one's position. This approach is not always ideally realized, of course. Sometimes some people feel they have lost — often there is a straight compromise. It is our experience, however, that generally everyone finds his needs met and gains in growth and self-awareness in the process.

This description of group interaction could be made more concrete by noting the way in which Board meetings are held. Legal requirements call for monthly meetings of the Board of Trustees, a group composed of both some residents and some guests. These meetings were initially held according to Robert's Rules of Order, and it was found that some friction and anxiety usually developed. Examination of these rules showed that they are based on assumptions of *inevitable* conflict between people — that some must always win by virtue of others losing, that formal rules were necessary because people were too ignorant to know when to speak and when not to speak, etc. Since these assumptions are implicit in the rules, these behaviors and experiences are created.

Board meetings are now held in a manner congruent with the general interaction pattern in the Community. The meeting is preceded by some shared activity, typically one of the physical relaxation programs described below. The meeting then begins in an atmosphere of informality, with everyone sitting in a circle on the floor. Rather than having a presiding officer, someone acts as a discussion leader. His task is to draw out opinions from all concerned about any topic brought up. Such discussion is usually followed by moments of shared silence. During this silence the participants attempt to feel into all sides of the questions, and only when they feel that they have come to a point of personal resolution do they speak.

Much of the growth and practical aspects of living in the Community, then, are

accomplished in a group process which simultaneously provides a climate in which we dare to relate at a deeper level, have the freedom to do so, and yet requires a real discipline — but a self-discipline.

These two principles, freedom and self-discipline, are in dynamic balance, more like the elements of a mobile than those of a painting. At any moment one element may seem to be the whole truth, yet quickly this shifts and the other seems to be the truth. But the whole truth can be seen only when both principles are stated *and* the process by which they balance each other is seen as well.

The result is that there must be a balance discovered in each new situation. There are no absolute rules to follow, only feelings in the "gut" of comfort or discomfort, completeness or incompleteness, with the balance at any moment.

Sometimes we have difficulty locating the feeling, usually because we aren't allowing ourselves to confront the situation at "gut level." We are abstracting ourselves from the situation, and by withholding emotional participation we are denying our organism the information necessary to arrive at an answer. Emotional participation, as used here, does not mean taking sides or triggering all our reactive patterns: rather, it means feeling into all sides of a situation without a sense that we are in danger in understanding why someone is in opposition to what we have felt. Through this kind of engagement we can become aware of our feelings, and from this awareness we must act — even though it pains us, even though we know the other person may not understand.

The person who is effective in the group is the person who has a feeling quality in life he wants to perpetuate, to create in himself and in his environment, and is willing to pay the price necessary to obtain it. He is drawn to the group because he feels that in the group this feeling can be most completely realized. If the group is his means of getting there, he is willing to put out for the group, not because the group demands, but because he must do it to reach the quality of feeling he wants in himself and around himself. The tasks done may be the same, but the different starting point produces an entirely different perception and experience of the group and the world.

When the reason for doing something emerges out of the individual's own feeling, from his own sense of identity, he risks nothing by giving to the group and the conflict between individual right and group rights becomes irrelevant. When the individual doesn't know what he wants or who he is, he creates an identity by rebelling against the group.

This, then, is the general type of interaction among people in the Community: informality, empathy, acceptance of the worth of others, shared meals, work, and recreation. Experience has shown that it is essential that, as much as possible, all the members of the Community

come together for a shared activity daily, regardless of the nature of the activity. This activity is usually the program, which will now be described in detail.

The Program

The Bridge Mountain program is both a means of focusing and creating new experiences of ourselves and creating a common base of experience which frequently allows us to by-pass the questioning of intent — which creates divisiveness — and get on with the business of real communication.

Many times when we are trying to move into new patterns of relationship we try to talk ourselves into them and almost invariably find we get snagged in misunderstandings, unable to communicate our real feelings. From experience we've found that effective verbal exchange usually follows a shared activity. It seems as though sharing an experience creates a basic emotional tie or affinity which either makes understanding easier, or makes us more willing to accept the existence of a relationship even if the words don't sound completely right. For this reason the Bridge Mountain programs are group *experiences*, and discussions grow out of what has actually happened in that group.

Most of the programs are aimed at integration of the individual into a fully operating and interacting organism. This is stressed because in our culture we tend to view ourselves in parts: body, mind, soul, spirit, ego, id, conscious, subconscious, superego, superconscious; all the divisions which keep us split up, unable to operate as a total organism. For only when we can accept all that is in us are we free to really move into that which is the most meaningful to us.

Many Bridge Mountain programs stress work on the body. Most of us are quite unaware of the feelings of tension and discomfort in the body. And until we can experience ourselves as we are, how can we create something new? When we become aware of the natural comfort which is in the body — when we allow it, we create the basis for action which is really based on our perceptions of the immediate situation rather than the present filtered through tension and discomfort of many years' standing.

The actual programs are many and varied, and are constantly adapted to meet the requirements of the situation. The following are a few of the basic programs.

Relaxation movements: The relaxation movements are movements carefully designed and yet improvised to produce physical relaxation. They are done as a group activity, and are usually followed by a "deep relaxation" — a period of silence or quiet music following the movements. Or they may lead into shared and individual art activities, music and dance, etc., as described below.

The first purpose for the movements is the actual relaxation benefits that the movements produce. Many people experience through the movements an ease and comfort in the body which they have not

experienced for many years. This experience of relaxation also has many side-benefits.

It produces a template of relaxation, so that we can know and reproduce relaxation another time. If someone tells us to "relax," he may mean many things: swimming, watching TV, going to a football game. The movements give an actual experience of relaxation, so that in the future we know what it means and increasingly are able to reproduce it.

The relaxation movements are also an act of acceptance of the body. They are a first step in healing the split between body and mind which exists in our philosophy and our customs, but as our frequent ill-health tells us, not in the reality of the organism. The movements are a beginning in giving ease and comfort which is in return experienced throughout the entire person.

The experience of relaxation frequently allows thoughts and feelings to come into consciousness which may have been submerged in our unconscious for months, sometimes years. The "letting go" in relaxation allows thoughts and feelings to emerge which may have been a constant source of pressure, or which may, on the other hand, hold the key to new growth. Particularly in the deep relaxation period many experience the sudden emergence of long-pent-up feelings or exciting new concepts.

Finally, the experience of relaxation frequently indicates to us that the "anxiety" we have been feeling has been the discomfort and tension in the body. When we realize this we discover the means by which to effectively storm the source of real anxieties — the failure to realize our own potentials.

Doodling: Doodling is working in an art medium — such as clay or chalk — without any preconception as to result and, in fact, without any concern for result. Most of us doodle during conferences or while on the phone, and this is the basic concept, for this sort of doodling allows feelings and thoughts to emerge without censorship of the conscious mind.

Doodles are, first of all, a means of self-expression, a means of getting feelings out and "on paper." But this objectification of the feelings frequently holds some surprises; many times we see thoughts and feelings in our doodles which, in retrospect, we must admit we were feeling while doing the doodle — although we may not even have been aware of it at the time.

In this sense, then, the doodles serve as "guideposts" to our own feelings and thoughts. We cannot produce anything that is not in us, and if we are producing unified wholes it is because something of us is unified, or if we are producing highly fragmented doodles, some parts of ourselves are fragmented.

This "guidepost" quality of the doodle can be most important in recognizing change within ourselves. Frequently when we have begun to change but the change is not completely real to us, we get caught in

an emotional backwash in which we tend to invalidate all that we have done. The doodles can serve as a tangible proof of change during these periods. They are a real something which stands up despite the doubts and anxieties. The doodle is a symbol which can be as powerful as the old pattern. As we emerge into new relationships and new states of consciousness the doodles are a constant testimony and documentation of our hard-won change.

Frequently we share our doodles in discussion with others in a group. In this sharing the doodles greatly enhance our communication, for they are a concrete representation of that which we wish to convey.

The doodle approach also allows many people to get past the "I can't draw" stage into a real self-expression — an expression which is meaningful for themselves even if unimpressive to others.

Clay doodles have one particular benefit — they feel so good while you're doing them. They are much like mud pies, and why not? They're fun.

Lacquer doodles deserve special mention because they have a special quality — anyone can make something beautiful by this technique. Essentially the process is to allow lacquer paint to move and merge about on a piece of cardboard. The paint does not lend itself to control, although it can be worked with, and frequently people doing lacquers comment that the experience is much like life: we must learn to move with it, rather than controlling it.

Then, too, the lacquers, perhaps more than any of the other doodle approaches, give a real sense of productivity to their makers.

Music and movement: Music and movement is spontaneous movement to music or rhythm. Usually the movement is done in a group, each person moving as he feels the music. Often individuals will move during their free time, either to get some particular feeling out, or just for the sheer joy of it.

Music and movement frequently produces an exciting feeling of integration. The body and the feelings become one in a complete form of expression. The total organism is involved in the experience. As this real integration begins to be experienced the body and the mind become freer; not only does the movement become more natural but the awful bane of self-consciousness can be passed through. Here, very strongly, is the sense of shared expression and experience from which deep relationships can grow.

The music and movement also share many of the advantages of the relaxation movements, for they cut past the tension and discomfort of the body and go into increasingly natural uses of the body in self-expression. Again one has the feeling of experiencing the body as part of the self. We experience the ease of a natural body and frequently new concepts or old feelings emerge into consciousness during or after movement.

Sensory programs: Many of the programs using a variety of stimuli — rocks, touching another person, listening to a toy instrument — are

designed to increase sensory awareness. In these activities we become aware of what our senses really do tell us when we allow them to operate in freedom. Often we gain new insights into others in the group as we become aware of the similarities, and the differences, in the ways our bodies respond.

The sensory programs have most of the focus points of the relaxation movements and music and movement, but they also serve to create an integration among the senses. Many of us have moved into the intellect so completely that our senses are not working in a natural and integrated way. By refocusing our awareness of the senses the natural integration can be restored.

Myth programs: The myths of antiquity have survived because they find an echo in each of us. Occasionally we have a discussion of some of the myths, but not usually of theories about them, rather a sharing of experiences we have had which reflect the myth in the here and now. In this way we make the wisdom of the myths relevant to ourselves by seeing the old myths reflected in modern symbols and language.

Improvised acting: Frequently we will spontaneously act out a situation or feeling which the group has experienced, or the dream of a group member.

As we play the roles we often discover reasons for the roles, and with this insight comes a new sense of shared experience. Beyond insight into the roles of others we often must recognize that we too play a role, and in the drama the role may be played out so that it can be seen in full.

Many people also discover new potentialities in themselves through improvised action. People who believed they didn't possess a spark of creativity suddenly find themselves improvising and acting beautifully, because they have moved past self-consciousness into areas of real human feeling.

The children's program: Until recently there have been no physical facilities available for young (sub-teen) children in the Community. Only one of the residents had a child of this age, and guests have left their children at home. The Community has always realized that this was a somewhat artificial state of affairs, although it was necessary in the initial evolution of the Community, as well as having the distinct advantage of allowing guests to temporarily put aside the role of parent while in the Community.

For the past two years there has been a children's program during the summer months for children of guests. In content it is similar to the adult programs. In the past the two programs have been conducted separately as the children's attention span often conflicted with adult needs, but increasingly the children are combined with the adults when the activity is one that can be shared to mutual benefit. This has produced a degree of contact and genuine communication between the adults and children seldom reached in ordinary affairs.

Plans have been made for considerable expansion of children's participation in the Community in the near future.

Relations to Society

While the Bridge Mountain Community does not share many of the values, goals, and mores of contemporary society, it does not advocate an escape from society through avoidance of contact with it, but rather maintains that as the individual begins to realize his own potentialities more completely he is able to move in the society or in the Community with equal ease. At this point in his growth the choice not to accept the values of society is not negative resistance to society but a positive affirmation of values which he chooses, having the freedom to move in many new directions.

The role of guests in bringing aspects of society into the Community has been of great value. While much of the most dramatic growth takes place in the lives of residents who are able to join in the Community way of life on a day-in day-out basis, this has necessarily been leavened by the constant requirement of coming into contact with new guests and finding the bridging point between the atmosphere of the Community and the feeling quality of the individual as he comes in. Without this constant stimulus from the outside there would be a much greater danger that the Community could become only a place to withdraw from active confrontation with life.

In the past certain residents have necessarily maintained more contact with society than others in order to provide the material and legal base for the Foundation, but increasingly other residents are moving out into society more with a sense that they can give without having to react to the negative aspects of society. Recently the Community has been producing a number of art and craft products which are distributed by residents through a distribution system of high quality galleries and gift shops in the San Francisco Bay area.

Another resident produces a local radio program on music in the area and is the personnel manager for the local symphony. Others are presently establishing a small manufacturing company for craft products, such as looms, lamps, and greeting cards. Some residents are establishing a small design studio offering every service which could be needed in building a home — initial design, construction, interior decoration including designing and producing the furniture and art products, and landscape planning. In addition, the Community is frequently asked to put on programs for schools, churches, and other community organizations.

On the other side of the picture, the response of different elements of society to the Community has been varied and uneven. The problem has been primarily to translate the activities of the Community into an understandable frame of reference. The Santa Cruz Mountains area is relatively conservative and a certain reactionary-conservative element in the society opposes any growth by the Community and feels threatened by its activities, even though the Community does not proselytize

or otherwise engage in power politics.

The existence of a small, closely-knit Community within a large community raises intriguing sociological and political problems which will probably be resolved only with time, but will be of increasing significance if large numbers of people turn to small supportive groups as an antidote to the increasing depersonalization of modern society. We shall not discuss this issue at present because we lack the necessary temporal perspective.

Some Results of the Community

In attempting to evaluate the effects of a frankly experimental and still evolving community of human growth, one is faced with the same problem as in evaluating the results of psychotherapy. Quite aside from technical problems of measuring personality change, there is no general agreement on what constitutes mental health. Similarly, there is no general agreement on what constitutes human growth, on what human potentialities it is important to meet. We feel that the existence of the Community and its functioning have assisted a great number of people to realize their own potentialities and to grow, resulting in happier, more productive lives. Yet we cannot defend this conclusion on any generally accepted grounds, nor, as we pointed out earlier, can we claim to be objective in assessing the effects of the Bridge Mountain Community.

Despite these difficulties, there are several things that can be said in a relatively objective way. For one thing, we have continually grown — albeit erratically at times — both in terms of the number of persons participating in the Community and in the physical holdings of the Foundation. We have explored many new ways of living, of relating to our fellow man, and of helping others to realize their potentialities.

We do not suffer unduly from the attacks of an active opposition group within society, yet have not sacrificed our basic convictions in order to allay opposition.

Observing the growth of other participants in the Community has been particularly rewarding. This growth is often reflected in the writings of individuals in the course of the programs which they have left behind at the Community. The variety of thoughts and feelings, insights, and problems expressed in these writings makes it almost impossible to give "typical" illustrations, but we note one general characteristic of interest. A psycholinguist, Robert Tyler, of San Francisco State College, has carried out a preliminary study of these writings as part of an ongoing study on the effect of altered states of consciousness on language. He reported differences along two dimensions: (1) those with greater participation in the Community showed a greater degree of "process" in their language, i.e., their language contained more verbs than objects, it was action oriented; and (2) the language of those with greater exposure was less dogmatic, more conditional, more aware of a large number of possible alternatives to situations. Such a change in participants in the Community is highly desirable in terms

of the philosophy and style of living we are trying to create.

There are also many cases in which a person visits the Community once or twice and does not return. These seem generally to be people with highly rigid personality structures who are threatened by the openness and lack of structure of the Community. Many of these people are always ready to *talk about* openness, freedom, and human contact, but are very threatened in a situation where these are living experiences rather than intellectual abstractions.

We make no claim that the evolving pattern of the Bridge Mountain Community is the only successful approach to cultivating human growth, nor the optimal approach. Many outside techniques are constantly being tried in the Community. Yet many guests who are involved in the psychotherapeutic professions have reported being greatly impressed with the quickness and depth of change which occurs in the Community environment, and we cannot help but be convinced that the pattern which has been and is evolving in the Community is a way of human growth for many people.

Directions of Evolution — The Immediate Future

An important part of the energy of the Community will be expended to preserve its present physical facilities and program. But preserving the *status quo* cannot be an important goal compared to the further exploration, the further *living* of ways of growth.

Plans for the immediate future call for enlargement of the Community to include a group of people who will permanently reside at the Bridge Mountain Community for weekends, while continuing to work and live in society at large during the week. Eventual expansion to include people who live permanently in the Community while working outside it is also planned. This is an experimental venture to ascertain how much commitment to society at large can be made while still maintaining the close degree of contact and warmth now existing among the residents at the Community. The present programs will continue, and this new expansion will be a supplement to the programs, rather than a change of direction.

The expansion will involve families in a way which is rare now. Children will be integrated into the total Community life in an open, accepting way not characteristic of society at large. This will initially mean supplementing the children's formal education with the program techniques described above, and the eventual possibility of completely taking over the education of the children. The plans are of too large a magnitude to go into here, but will involve the use of children's inherent motivation to learn with an employment of the entire Community as "teachers" and "evokers," and a recognition of children as *members* of the Community, rather than as the "property" of either the parents or the Community.

We also hope to participate in more formal psychological research programs over the next few years, as we feel that the Community offers

a unique environment for the study of the psychology of personality and growth.

SUMMARY

We have attempted to both describe (in an intellectual sense) and create a feeling for an evolving experiment in human growth, the Bridge Mountain Community. The Community affirms that man by and large creates both his resources and his limitations, his authority and his dependence, his freedom and his limitations. While the Community may fall short of complete creation of the environment that leads to total human growth, yet in exploring the paths toward this goal, in *living* these paths, we have created an ever evolving richness and potential which we feel is of value to the humanistic psychology movement in particular and to society at large in general.