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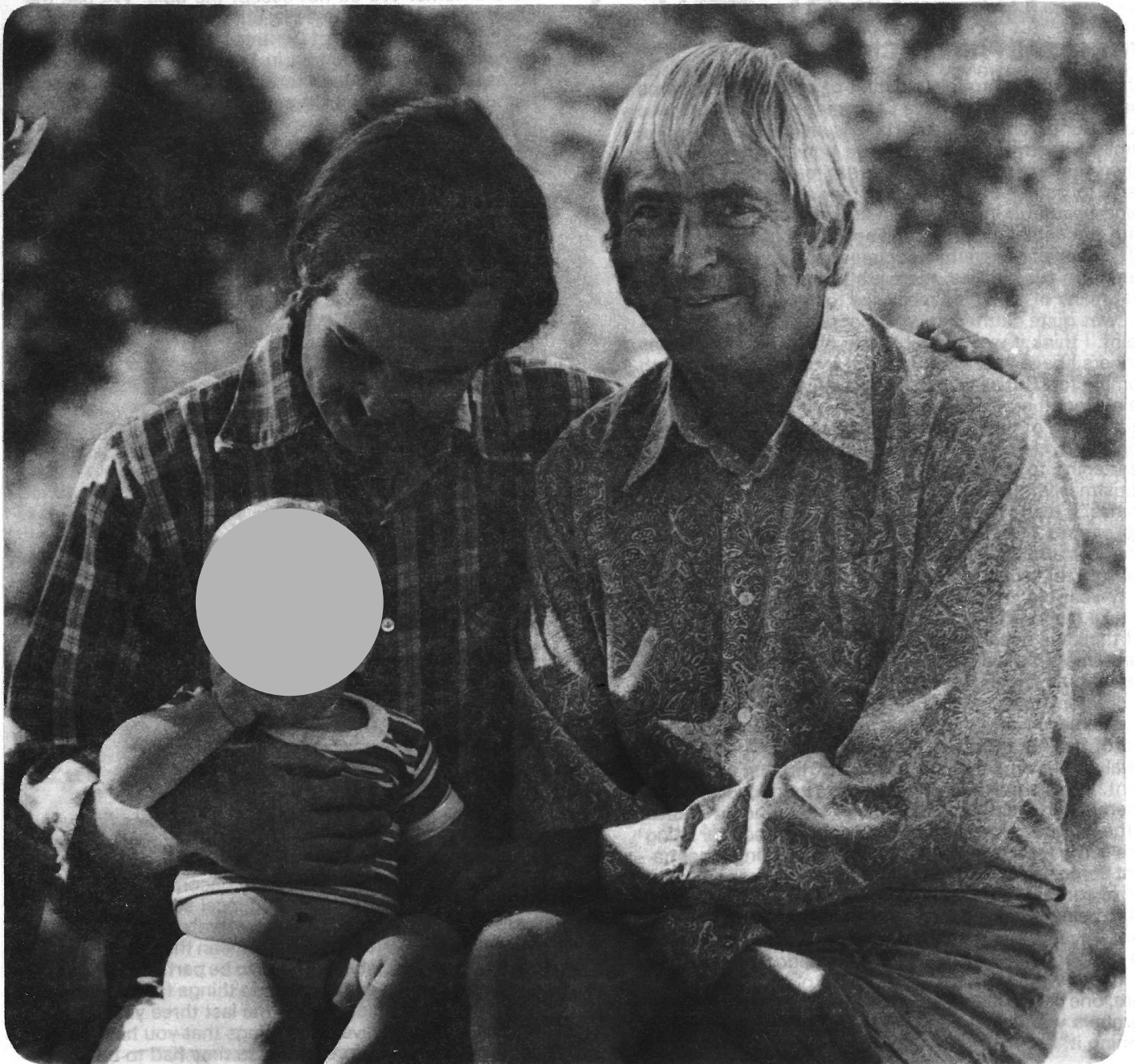
# Centrepoint

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## Our Parents/Ourselves

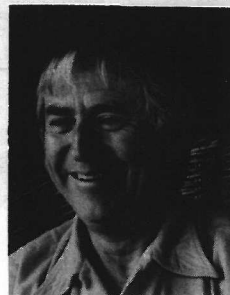


Magazine

v/f North Shore - Albany - Centrepoint -



# BERT'S TALK



## Our Parents/Ourselves



### THE IDEAL FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Christmas 1980 brought up a lot of confusion for some members. Should we have Christmas here or should we go to our parents' places? There is an idealised idea of a family Christmas. It may be the only time in the year when they meet but there is a desire on most people's parts to gather the family together and to have everything beautiful. In fact the ideal very rarely matches up with the actual experience. The same old tensions and difficulties of communication are there, so that while we can go to our families, there is still not the togetherness that many of us would really like to have.

I was quite chuffed at what happened here at Centrepoint. I think it was probably one of the best Christmas dinners I have ever had. Just the food alone was worth coming for. But as well there was a feeling of everybody being together — of everybody playing their part. And this feeling of being together is something that is really important. I felt we were together as a family. It was also heartening to see some of the parents arriving to have Christmas with us here instead of having it in their own homes. It made me aware of the difficulties that some of the parents still have with the community, wondering what it is all about, wondering if their children are doing the right thing or not, being very reluctant to let thirty and forty-year-old children stand on their own feet, wanting to take responsibility for them.

I think we need to stop every now and again and ask ourselves what we are doing here and what Centrepoint is all about. That is not easy because there are a number of different reasons for being here. There is the one I have already mentioned: the feeling of being together and of having a place. The feeling of everybody being equal and having an equal say in the running of Centrepoint. While some people might have louder voices than others, each member has only one vote when it comes to the final decision. Another important reason for being here is the feeling of security. We are building a permanent home. It is one of the reasons that I've dropped right out of running the place because I don't want Centrepoint being totally dependent on where I am, what I want, my ideas and my organisation. Now if something did happen to me in the next short period of time, the members would be able to run this place themselves. Sure, one or two people might drop out, but basically the members would just carry on because they are already running it.

We have our temporary financial crises but the reality is that each adult has a debt of about a thousand dollars which is far less than almost any adult in the larger society and that wouldn't take long to pay off if we really needed to. Financially Centrepoint is a very sound proposition. Also we have a number of people offering a range of skills. The place will keep on going. But many parents outside still fear that it may be one of those hippy dropout communities where nobody does anything and everything falls apart. Centrepoint is a place where things actually happen. There is a lot of energy going into it.

We are building a permanent home for ourselves. Whether we are sick or well or whatever happens, we have a home. We do not accept the dole. We use the hospital system if we need it, but any long-term nursing will be done right here at Centrepoint. We are not going to have people vegetating in hospitals or old people's homes. I personally look forward to working here for a number of years, then sitting out on the verandah in my deck chair and eventually dying here. This is my life. This is where I want to be. I know I have earned a place here by what I have put into it. And everybody else here is the same.



"...SITTING OUT THERE ON THE VERANDAH ..."

Now this is something that New Zealanders find very hard to understand because they have become so reliant on the government. While we are not being fanatical about it I like to think that we are becoming more independent of the government and local services. I would like to see us continue with our own water supply and our own sewerage system. It doesn't mean that we are going to cut off from society. We have to be part of the country as a whole but we can learn to do things for ourselves. I have been quite amazed over the last three years at the way many of you have done things that you have never tried in your lives before, because they had to be done.

There is always someone who has enough knowledge of how it ought to be done and so it gets done. I think it is important that we learn to rely on our own ability to make things and do things. It is far too easy to sit back and call people in to do everything for you. We are trying to keep clear of government as much as they will let us. We still get into the controversy of how many people we can have here.

I think that we have to be careful that we don't upset people outside our particular community. I think for instance the sewerage scheme we have coming up is important because that could affect other people's lives. We need to have a very good drainage and sewerage scheme. We don't want to pollute the local water supplies. But when it comes to telling us how many people we can have living here then I am prepared to say we have a right to say who we want here and how many, providing it is not directly affecting the neighbours and detracting from their amenities. Similarly with our own way of life. Those of us who have moved into long houses did so with some trepidation for a start. We are



finding now that it is working satisfactorily. It has pushed us through a lot of our emotional barriers and we have decided that we want to live that way. We have a right to do that. The councillors and the mayor may not like it but they have no right to tell us that we should live in any particular way. We are creating our own lifestyle and creating a security for ourselves that is going to go on for a hundred years or more because we are not doing it just for ourselves. We are doing it for our children too.

### SECURITY FOR OUR CHILDREN

There is a growing feeling that we want to share with our children. Not just the children we brought in with us but the children that are born here: six in the last year and a potential eight or nine this year. We are realising that we can give our children a support system that other people just can't provide. First there is the basic bond between the mother and the child, then to the father and to the greater community of which we are a part. This seems to be working very well. It is amazing how our children accept just about anyone who picks them up. They have a tremendous range of people to relate to. Centrepoint will provide them with their education as far as they want to go. It will provide them with a place that they can always come back to. They have a right to be here because they are children of the community. They

don't have to make an actual commitment to it as adults do although they may want to do so later on. We are providing for them from our own resources. Many of the grandparents can't see that the children here have far more security than in any normal nuclear home. If any of the parents here were killed in an accident and they had no other close relatives we would look after the children. They would be brought up as part of the community.

There is another thing that upsets parents and that is the monetary aspect because anyone coming in here as a full member has to make a total financial commitment: all assets and all income. There is no compromise with this. If you want the community you put everything in to it. Now this wasn't a big deal for me and it isn't a big deal for most people coming in. You have to look at it a bit carefully but once it is done it is not important. But the parents find this very hard and I can see their point of view. I was brought up during the Depression when people lost everything they had. My mother had to take me to soup kitchens to get free meals and free boots. This really hurt her but she had no option because that is what almost everybody was doing at that time. A number of our parents were brought up through that era. They are very conscious of the difficulties of poverty.

### FINANCIAL INHERITANCE

They are still very concerned about the money they have, and who they are going to leave it to. 'We can't leave it to that dreadful community. What would happen to it?' In fact what would happen if any member inherited money is that it would come into the community the same as any other income would. Their children would get the benefit of it the same as they would if they were living in their own private homes because this is their home just as much as any house in the suburbs. So parents need to look at whether they can give money to their children without any strings attached. If they want to cut their children off and be melodramatic about it we are not going to feel badly about it. They are still quite free to come and visit whenever they want to. We don't need their money. We can certainly use it. We have a big development programme. We can use it very well. But we don't need it. Possibly we might have to slow down our building programme but that is not even on the cards yet. My attitude to all the parents is that whatever money they have is theirs. If they want to give it to the community we will be very grateful for it. If they want to do something else with it they are totally free to do so. We make no claim on a legacy unless it actually comes to a member. And so a lot of the parents' fears about the money are things that we don't share because the money to us is not very important. We know we are going to live well.

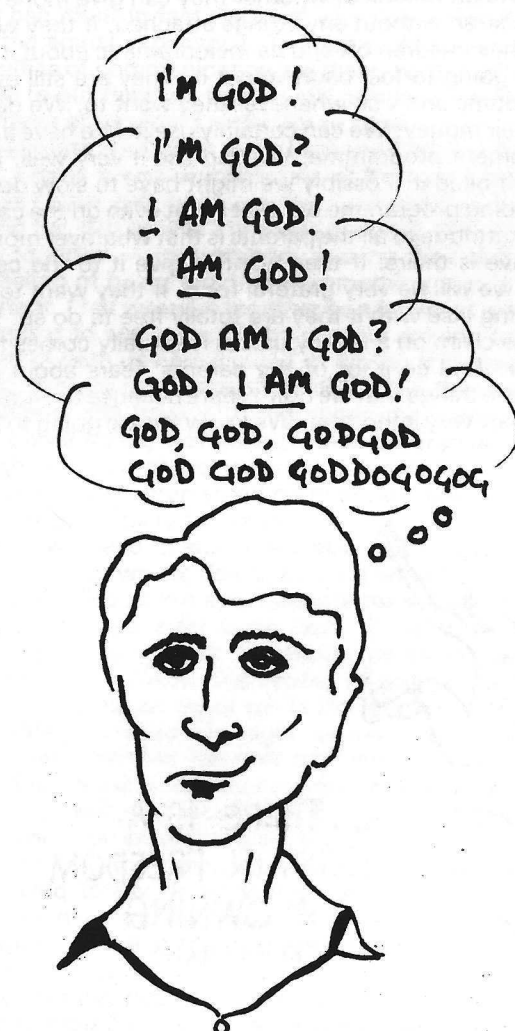




Some of the grandchildren here could become rather wealthy eventually and, again, grandparents are worried. 'Are we going to take all their money away from them?' The answer is, 'No, we won't'. Any children here can have their own bank accounts, and if they get several thousand dollars from grandparents or anybody else, it is up to them to decide what they do with it. Most of the children will leave Centrepont at some time. They'll go and find out what is happening in the rest of the world. It is part of their education. And if they want to take twenty or thirty thousand dollars with them, that is totally up to them. We make no claim. And when they have spent the lot they are free to come back again. What they earn while they are actually living here becomes part of the community property but if they want to leave and get a job outside and work through what is going on out there, that is entirely their thing.

## CHOICE WITHOUT COMPULSION

After the recent television programme there was a lot of misunderstanding about our open sexuality. The sexual aspects of what we do here are very frightening to people from outside because they look in and they say, 'Oh dear, I don't know how to handle my own sexuality. If I was exposed to that it would be terrible.' So they back off from it. In fact we are becoming very much a coupling group. Couples are going deeper into their relationships. We don't have wild Roman orgies. There is a very caring relationship between people. We do have the freedom to be open if we want to. Some people take it and others don't use it very much at all. I think it is important that we have the freedom to relate to other people outside the marriage, but there is no compulsion. Many of the present members did feel a compulsion to prove something for a while and then gradually that compulsion disappeared. I'd like the parents to see that too. I'd like them to see that there is no rule that people have to follow.



## THAT DREADFUL BERT POTTER

Another thing which the parents worry about is my place in the community. This dreadful Bert Potter who says he is god. When I say that I'm god it just means we each find our own god. I've found mine. I am god for me. I take responsibility for what I do, think and feel. Each person has to find their own concept of god. If you want to put your god out there somewhere, I am not going to argue with you. You can put god wherever you like and you can change god whenever you want. Most people change their concept of god markedly from childhood to adulthood. In other words god is not constant. He is whatever you are at the time: whatever you are thinking, feeling or conceptualising. So you control god. When I say that I am god it doesn't mean that I have any power over you. But parents worry about this. They think that I am trying to brainwash you into something. All I am saying is 'Find your own way'. All I will do is point out when I see that things are not working out for you. The whole idea is to give people more choice. Not to take choice away. If something is not working for you then we try to find something that will and then you have a choice.

## DON'T BLAME THE WORLD

The world is a very rich place. It is a place that can provide you with every need fulfilment there is. **There is nothing wrong with the world. The only thing wrong is your ability to reach out for what is there.** If you are only using one part of yourself you are not seeing a lot of the things that are available. We are trying to get to the point where we have so many choices that we can sit back and decide which one we really want. Human beings want fairly simple things. The major thing is a lot of loving — both the giving and receiving of love. It can be sexual it can be non-sexual. It can move from one to the other. We need to learn that life is very incongruent. You can't possibly have everything you want at the same time. But there is nothing to stop you having a sequential incongruency where you want one thing at one time and you have that and then you want something quite the opposite. If you can learn to separate them and get them into sequence then your life begins to flow.

In our relationship with our parents this incongruency is important because all parents frustrate their children. At times it would be justifiable for children to be angry with their parents but there are very few parents who will allow this. You picked up the message very early that if you showed your anger you were the one who was going to get a smacked bottom and be told not to talk to your parents like that. No way were you able to put that message over to them. So while you might have been very angry inside you had to adopt some other way like being sullen and withdrawn, or sweet and kind and then accidentally breaking something. You found some other way of getting that anger through. But these two aspects of your being weren't connected so we are learning to go back and say it is OK to be angry at times. Being angry doesn't mean to say you have to beat somebody up. That comes when you hold your anger back. We have to learn that at times anger is very appropriate. When parents arrive at Centrepont and look us over and find that we are not sweet, kind and loving all the time, some of them say, 'Oh, it's not working'. I will challenge you to find a human being who is always loving. We have to accept that we have some times when we are feeling down, angry and resentful. That is part of life. But we don't have to stay that way. We can move through that.

**We tend to think that every situation we get into is fixed and absolute when really all the situations we are in are processes.** They are all changing. Yet if you look at the majority of people in society they are trying to fix their lives so that tomorrow is going to be exactly the same as today, and exactly the same as yesterday. They try and fix their lives so absolutely that



**....WHILE YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN ANGRY INSIDE..... LOOK SWEET AND KIND, THEN BREAK SOMETHING!**

nothing happens. They take all the choice way from themselves. If you are not getting what you want from your environment, don't blame the world . . . change yourself. Do something different. At least you are giving yourself another choice. If you make that sort of choice then something different will happen. But it always comes back to taking responsibility for ourselves. This again is something that many of our parents find very hard to realise. They think that I am sitting up here telling you what to think, what to do and what sort of person you have to be. It is a most frustrating exercise to ask me what you should do. I promptly throw it back to you. 'Find out for yourself where you are. Discover for yourself what you want out of life.' If you make some mistakes you are not going to be tossed out. You don't have to conform.

## JUDGEMENT OR ACCEPTANCE

So we have all of these different factors going on within the community and at each point when the parent from outside looks in and says this is what is happening they are nearly always wrong. If they would only stay and see what is happening, if they would come and get close to their children and see that they are functioning well, see that they are looking fit and healthy with a reasonable degree of happiness, they would perhaps begin to understand better what is happening. It is difficult to understand from outside because they have no frame of reference for us. I know there are areas that you don't discuss with your parents unless they bring them up. **I would like you to stop shielding your parents. You don't have to throw things at them but at least you can allow them to see.** I think when they meet you as human beings they will learn that there is nothing to be afraid of.

Some parents visit here regularly and they don't see anything offensive. They might see a few nude bodies around and I wonder what they think of that. I take it quite for granted these days but twelve to fifteen years ago I wouldn't have known which way to look. I would have been embarrassed about being seen to be looking. Now I just sit and look . . . and I enjoy it. I like seeing naked bodies around. But we have to accept that in a society this is a very rare thing. The Bible speaks of God

making man in his own image and man was so disgusted with the result that he had to cover himself up and creep out of sight. I don't know whether God made a mistake or whether man did. I don't see it as a mistake. I see the human body as being a very beautiful thing. I think that parents can accept that quite easily, particularly when they realise that no one is going to make them take their clothes off.

The Book of Matthew in the Bible goes into detail about not judging your neighbour. 'Judge not, that you be not judged.' Yet God-fearing Christian people are judging us. When Christ was asked to stone the prostitute, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone,' was his reply, and they all slunk away because nobody was guilt free. We are getting a lot of verbal stones thrown at us and this again is a difference between our outlook here and the outlook of a lot of people in society. We are not trying to make people believe what we believe. But when I stop and look at the society that has been created out there: at the amount of hostility and anger and resentment that no-one is really doing anything about, I prefer to live the way we do. I prefer to have the freedom to yell and scream, or be loving if I want to. I would like our parents to accept that we have the right to live our own life, that we have the right to explore where we are, to find out what works for us, to try things out and if they don't work to try something different; that we don't have to follow one set line of thinking and live one particular way because somebody has said that is the way it ought to be. Most of our parents claim to be Christian. I would like them to study the early books of the New Testament and take to heart the non-judgemental part of it, and the things that Christ actually said before Paul came on the scene. To appreciate that loving is something which is total, which is there for us if we can reach out for it. Here at Centrepont you can reach out and get most of your needs met quite comfortably without having to go very far. This is a difficult thing for people from outside to understand because almost everyone of them has grown up in a nuclear situation where you have your own little house and your own little section in your own little suburb and nobody really gets close to one another unless some tremendous local catastrophe happens. They are not used to having one partner and beyond that another two, three, four, five, six people they can rely on totally. They are used to hiding any intimacy away and keeping it secret.

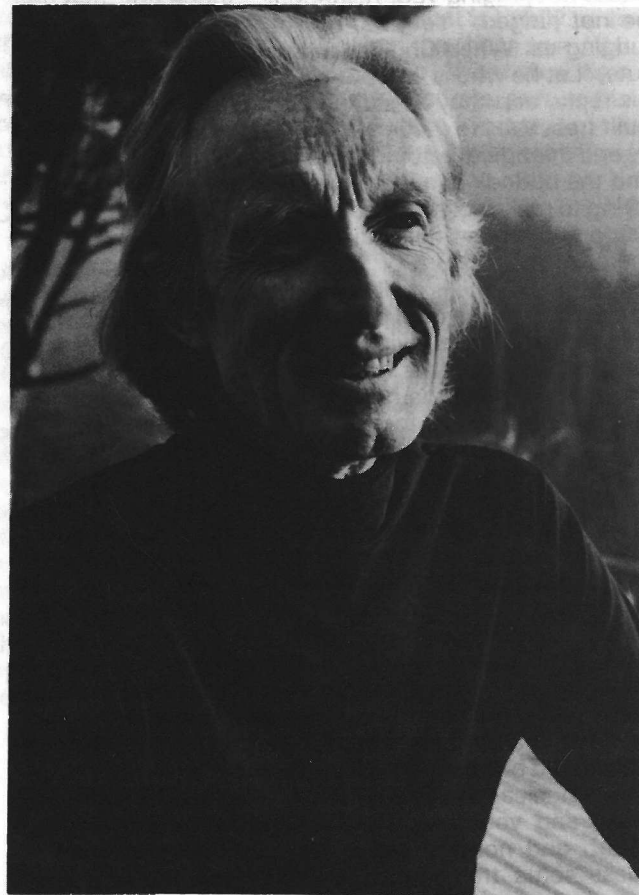
## CLOSING THE PARENT/CHILD GAP

One of my aims in being spiritual leader of the community is to help you to get closer to people and that means your parents too. So I am really on their side. I would like to see you get closer to your parents, not cut off from them. When I hear some of the things they say to you and some of the things they are doing, I get the feeling that they are trying to cut out any chance of getting close to you. Some are doing things which are totally stupid and if it wasn't for the fact that all human beings are stupid anyway, I would probably give up. But I recognize that through their stupidity there is some light getting through. While they might become more antagonistic for a while, after that they may get to the point where they have another look and say 'Well, it is not really so bad after all.' I know that many of you are beginning to see your parents quite differently. A lot of the antagonism and resentment that you had is flowing away. You are beginning to accept that they have their place out there and that you can reach out for them. This is something you are never going to lose. **You are always going to want to be close to your parents and to share your life with them.** Some of you have to accept that your parents won't let you in at an intimate level because it is too upsetting for them. But you don't have to cut your loving off. That is always going to be there.

— Taken from Bert's talk given on Saturday 27 December 1980



# PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THERAPY



Dr D. W. Rowntree, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.M., M.R.A.N.Z.C.P.,  
Director of Therapy and Training.

When I meet the parents of patients, clients or friends I am often surprised to find how nice they are. The father I have been told is cruel and cold, appears warmly loving and concerned; the mother described as critical and dull seems gay and full of praise for her child.

What the children have been presenting to me are part images of their parents — enlarged and distorted so as to make the real parent unrecognisable. This universal phenomenon is not surprising. The good smooth kind parts of parents have been easy to cope with — enjoyed for the moment and passed by, leaving a warm residue. The tough bits haven't been so easy. The problems haven't been solved. They remain as flies in the ointment. There is however in us all, a persistent drive to find resolution — to reach that place we have known where love flows freely — a yearning expressed in music, poetry and art.

This causes the unresolved bits to be enlarged, their unlikeable features distorted into caricatures, demons needing somehow to be cast out. The real parents have usually not been 'bad' so much as anxious, unsure of themselves and consequently inconsistent and over-controlling. They have mostly been unwittingly unkind through their strenuous efforts to be good. They are bewildered at the accusations levelled at them.

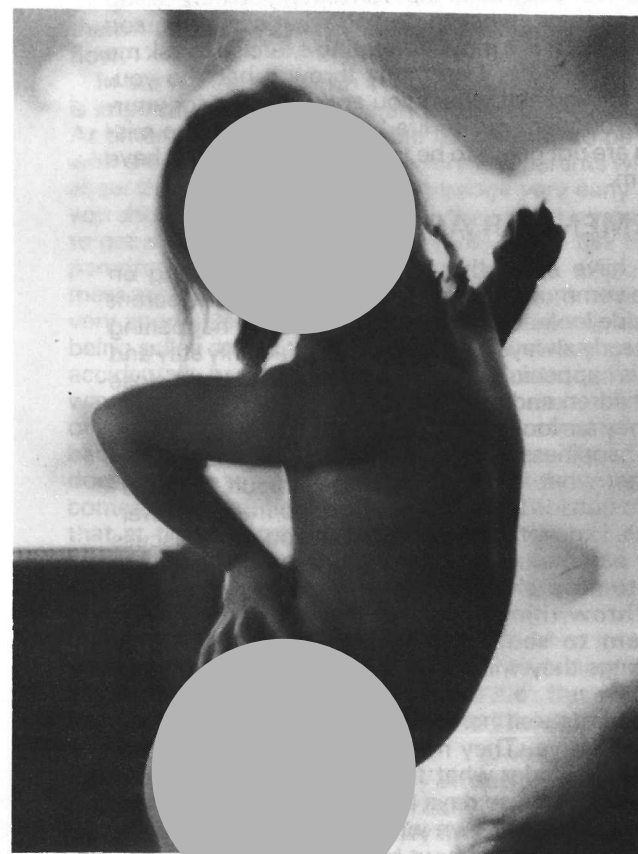
Unknowing of what to suppress in the growing child our confused parents have often subtly destroyed in their children energies which they have feared themselves, hardly knowing why. The children have come to doubt their own natural loving. Our bewildered parents and

their alienated children enter therapy with a basic sense of meaninglessness, a product of rapid and alarming social change.

Therapy too is a product of social change. Both its form and its limitations have been dictated by social expectations and taboos. Thus the transition of the treatment-getting, from the private confessional through the analytic couch, to group participation, has been paralleled by a progressive increase in the therapist's participation as a person. These forms have set the boundaries of personal discovery further and further out. Previously satisfied with the pronouncement of the nature of sins and the appropriate penances, then with behaviour interpretation in terms of incestual wishes, the searching soul now looks for meaning in the nature of the life impulse itself and goes beyond the limits of any prescribed behaviour for its personal answers.

The task of the therapist is to hear behind the enlarged and distorted images, the longing for resolution. He needs to know that these images are assembled and presented like ninepins in a bowling alley so that he can find a way to knock them down. It ill behoves the therapist who has not faced the meaninglessness in his own life to attempt treatment of people who are facing with courage the apparent meaninglessness of a life without clear roles. He will know that behind all the antagonism and pain he will find the lost loving of an innocent child trying to find its way back home.

— Bill Rowntree



... listened to Mr. Heywood & people like Mrs. Waller say this community, they is O.K. & that your Mum are old fashioned, until I'm sick to the eye-balls, it may be alright for drop-outs & people who are insecure, but for a "loving, warm & supportive family" your words again, not mine, it's OUT. I wonder what would say if she knew her grandchild in which her grandchild - in

**"... behind all the antagonism and pain he will find the lost loving of an innocent child trying to find it's way back home."**



Carolyn

## WE WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN

For many years I have been aware of not quite measuring up to my parents' 'perfect daughter yardstick'. Not being bright at maths (for my father) and not wishing to become a nurse (for my mother) are early examples of this. Having more than the average 2.5 children and leaving Europe for New Zealand are more recent ones. After a few months of hostility they usually came around to accepting what was happening — even though they made it quite clear that they did not like it.

But a broken marriage, my giving up a house and its contents and moving their grandchildren to Centrepoint has proven to be the final breaking point. I am accused of being an irresponsible parent and a non-caring daughter to the extent that I am supposed to be responsible for my mother's ill health. They obviously do not believe that the children are happy here and are not even interested in coming to see for themselves.

I am certain that there are sides to our way of life here that my parents would have difficulty in comprehending. I still have difficulty sometimes, myself, for much is contrary to what is culturally acceptable. Privacy, material possessions, being self-contained and financially independent — all go out the window. In their place we have an abundance of love and acceptance to share, and a sense of family that very many conventional families are sadly lacking in.

But my parents have four beautiful grandchildren here who would delight in seeing their grandparents again. And I should like to be able to share my joy and sadness with them. I am impatient for acceptance from them, and am at a loss as to how to communicate with them at all. They say they want me to write often, but they don't want to hear about my life. I don't know what to say when I have to censor so much out, except that I love them.

— Carolyn Becroft

## TURN ABOUT

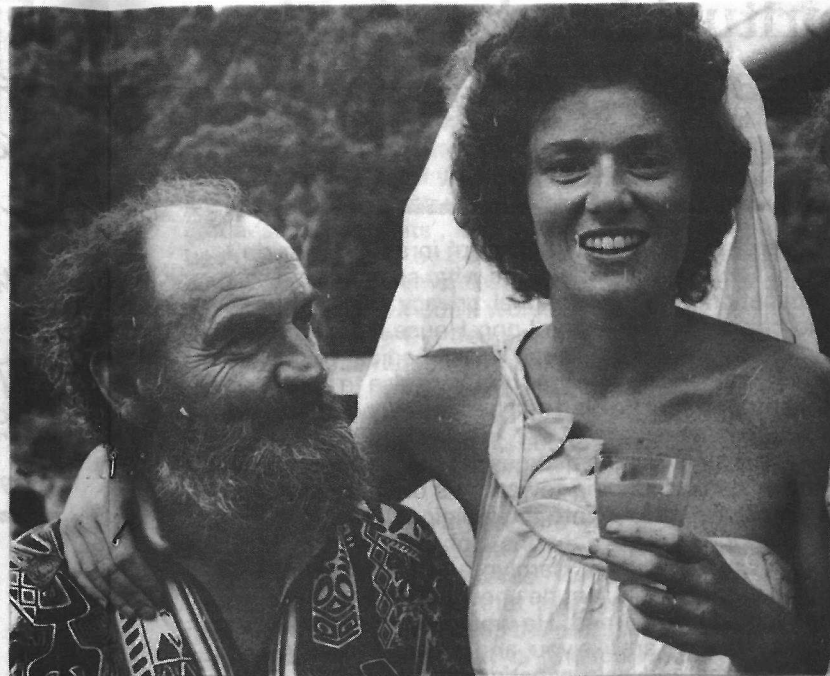
In my two years of living at Centrepoint two major changes have happened between myself, my father and stepmother. My father now only acknowledges me with the once every six months letter and refuses to accept that Ueli is Pippa's dad. I feel sad when writing this as we had a very close father-daughter relationship, and now it barely exists. On the positive side, my stepmum whom I did not like nor accept as part of the family — we were like two wild cats hissing at one another! — has become one of my closest friends outside Centrepoint. She has supported me through my marriage break-up and supports me with love and understanding of the lifestyle I have chosen here at Centrepoint.

Casey

— Casey Thode







## SONG TO PARENTS

Today you came to visit me in my own home  
And it touched me to my heart  
To see you here.  
The old ways are all fading  
And the hurt soon be gone  
Love is stirring simple, strong and clear.

And though you do not like my ways  
And fail to understand  
Why I chose to value simple life  
And simple man,  
Over all the opportunities  
And wealth you offered me  
Your acceptance is the greatest gift  
I ever can receive.

And now that you are finally  
Off my back  
I've got time to see where I'm really at,  
And we can still be friends  
In a simple way  
Taking life as it comes from day to day.

— Kathryn Tait

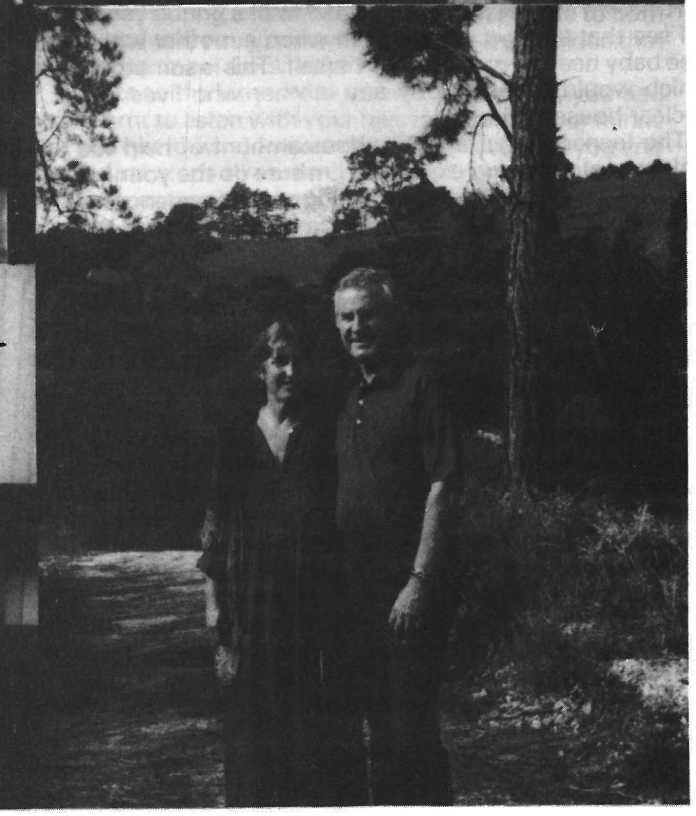
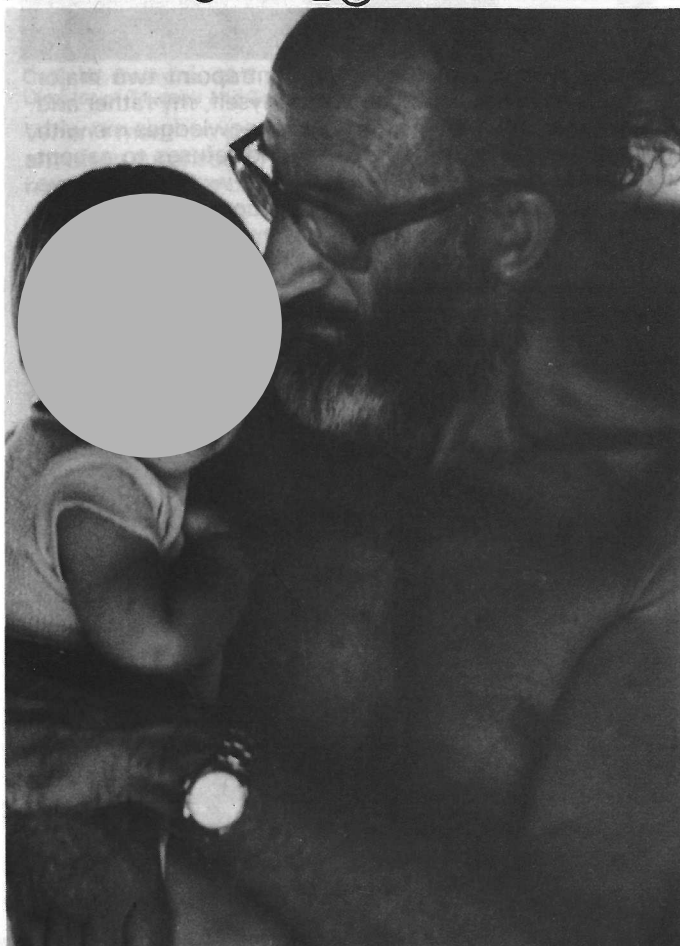


## Memories

When I was little  
you used to sing  
to me 'When a body  
meets a body comin'  
thro' the rye'

I felt so warm  
and cocooned  
safe in your arms  
You looked down at me  
Tenderly  
The words of the song  
meant nothing  
Only the look in your eyes  
Told me you loved me

(From 'Memories, for Dad' by Waveney Potter)





# 'One of my aims in being Spiritual Leader of this Community is to help you to get closer to people, and that means your parents too.'

## CHANGING IMPRESSIONS

What were my first impressions of Centrepont? A bit hard to remember now, but they were gained from listening to my son John talk. People living in damp tents and car cases, being given 'tasks' by a person called Bert. We didn't like the sound of Bert! We got the impression from John that there was a great emphasis placed on sexual freedom. Also people who committed themselves to Centrepont as members had no further claim on any money or property they brought with them. All wages and profits were to go into Centrepont coffers and each person would be given two or three dollars spending money each week.

Can you honestly expect any self-respecting parent to like the set-up? Murray and I were no exception — we thought John was mad! As time went by it became obvious that John was not going to come to his senses and leave; rather he seemed to find a niche for himself and work that he enjoyed.

Since that beginning I have worked my way through many experiences (funny, confusing, disturbing) and got to know many people. I'll try to explain where I am now.

John being with Carolyn makes a tremendous difference to how I feel about the Community. I'm sure I don't need to tell you how we feel about Carolyn, and I must say that if there were any signs of a break-up in the relationship, my attitude to Centrepont might change rapidly. Flitting from flower to flower is fine for some, but not for my son! I realised just recently, that it is somehow very important to my sense of security that those of you who I see as committed partners, should stay together.

I like the sharing and loving feeling that is present in your home, and will always remember, and be grateful for, the caring which came over to me when my mother died. I think that was a point where I realised that Centrepont was a place I could go to for help if I needed support.

I see that support gladly given when a mother with a wee baby needs a quiet time to herself. This is something which would be envied by any mother who lives in a nuclear household.

The teenagers get a tremendous amount of help too with school work and exams, as I'm sure do the younger children. There is so much knowledge and experience for them to call on. If one's own parent doesn't have the answer or the time, someone else will.

Open emotion, touching, cuddling, kissing, yelling, crying, are all parts of Centrepont life. I haven't seen any physical violence and, if I did, I wouldn't like it. I have never seen anyone drunk, nor in fact much drink around. As a non-smoker, I very much appreciate the 'no smoking' rule indoors.

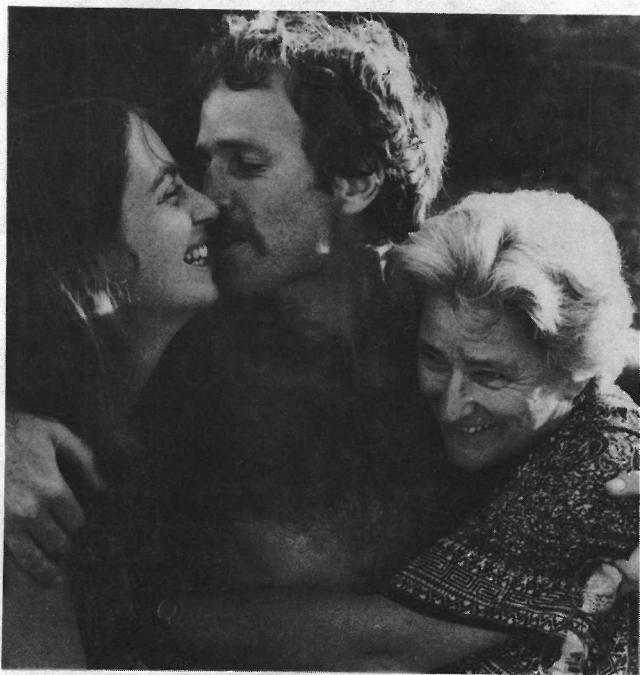
I accept the fact that Bert, to the people who live there, is the hub around which Centrepont revolves. When I hear people speak of him as another 'Jim Jones' I know how wrong they are. It seems to me that Bert is what you all want him to be. He has as much control over your lives as you want him to have — and he doesn't hold the purse strings. I think I can understand why some parents would feel threatened by him. I am aware of a barrier between myself and Bert — mine, not his, but I don't feel any threat to my relationship with John.

I haven't seen a dull moment lurking around anywhere. It wouldn't stand a chance. There is too much activity and interesting work being done for boredom to be a problem.

I haven't seen or heard a 'Group' in action, nor do I want to. I don't really understand what seems to me as a determination to shun personal privacy. Why anyone would choose to live in the Long House is beyond my comprehension. John tells me I would adjust to it in no time and, perhaps if there was nowhere else to stay in an emergency, I might be glad of a bed, but I certainly hope that situation never arises.

Listening to you all I sometimes get the feeling that you are rather condescending towards us ordinary mortals. You almost seem to fall into the (religious) trap of thinking that your way is the right one. John told Murray and I that if it wasn't for him, Carolyn and Centrepont, we would stagnate. I told him he should have been around when we first got married. He wouldn't recognise us.

I believe that we are like you, and you are like us. We all make mistakes and gain experience through life. Only our paths may differ. My relationship with my husband (with its ups and downs) is a happy one for me. After listening to Bert's talk one Saturday I decided that I must have found someone who will play my games really well . . . I am aware that there will probably come a time when either one of us is left to carry on alone. It is comforting to me that, as well as the love we share with our children, there is love for us at Centrepont. We were both very moved to know that we are so much accepted as part of your family that Annie asked us to share in the birth of her baby. We thank you for that Annie.



Carolyn, John and Margaret

From my own experience I'm sure there is much parents could gain from overcoming their fear or hate of Centrepont. The most important thing surely being a closer, more fulfilling relationship with their children. And perhaps this is a two-way thing — as children we need to overcome our fears of disapproval from parents when we don't conform to their ideas. And we need to appreciate their feelings when they, in turn, don't conform to our way. 'Be reasonable — Do it my way' is a futile exercise. I should know — I'm constantly trying to make it work, with dismal results!

— Margaret Becroft

## CALIFORNIAN ACCEPTANCE

My parents came out from California last year to visit me at Centrepont. Although I knew that they accepted most things I have done in my life and called them 'interesting', I was quite anxious about their response to Centrepont. Mainly, I was afraid they would equate our life here with Jonestown, or with other less known religious 'sects' or 'cults', and they might even think I had been 'brainwashed' by Bert Potter. The fact that they are American and much more exposed to strange and unusual social phenomena made it worse because they had more things to compare Centrepont with.

I found myself steering them around Bert in my fear that they might not understand what he meant to me or to the community. Bert, of course, noticed this and teased me quite a lot about it, but he also accepted where I was and didn't do anything to force himself on my parents.

Several days before my parents' arrival, Bert had given Margie a task of building and carrying around on her back a huge, six-foot wooden cross. The purpose of the task was to help her to see that she repeatedly martyred herself, and she was to keep the cross with her wherever she went. In the context of the community, we all thought it was rather hilarious to see Margie struggling with this huge weight, but I was secretly hoping she'd put it away while my parents were here, for I was sure they'd think we were all mad!

When they saw Margie and the cross, they laughed uproariously and my mother even said jokingly that she would like to build one just like it for my father! They took lots of photographs of Margie, and I think it might have been one of the highlights of their visit to Centrepont!



Margie and task

There are other paradoxical aspects of living at Centrepont which I was worried my parents wouldn't accept, such as no doors on the toilets, close living quarters, all the touching, and the occasional strong outbursts of feeling, and our obvious middle class lifestyle, new cars, beautiful buildings, etc. They didn't seem to have much difficulty with any of these things, and in fact were very impressed with the physical appearance of the community, and they also became quite close to quite a few of my friends. They saw the love and the caring amongst us and I think they related particularly strongly to my own sense of excitement about living in this community.

Their acceptance of how we live here was the most important thing for me to experience during their visit, and although I know they wouldn't live here themselves, they didn't judge us like I thought they would. They saw that I was happy, loved and healthy, and that counted for more than anything else they saw while they were here. I surprised myself by feeling the need for their approval still, after all these years, and they surprised me by the depth of their love and acceptance.

— Debbie Knapp

## 'THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING'

Dear Asta and Linley,

I am glad you both became part of the Centrepont project. It wasn't always like this. I can remember the utter disbelief I felt when you Linley, first became involved with Bert and with Keith and the others at Shoreline . . . It was with absolute horror that I saw you giving away all your beautiful, smart clothes and saw the haste with which you packed the few things remaining, and then you were gone, taking my beloved eldest grandson with you. There was no way I could understand what you were doing.

And you Asta, already estranged because of that incomprehensible man to whom you were married. In your determination to handle the situation alone, you had no conception of the ache in my heart at what I could only see as your utter disregard of the feelings of your parents.



Linley, Ngaere and Asta.

One day during a fit of deep depression I wrote to both of you and told you just how I felt. What a great idea that turned out to be! Look at us now!

Thanks to the way of life that is Centrepont, you had both learnt to listen with your hearts and with your minds and you heard what I was saying in my letters to you and so the first steps towards understanding were taken.

My acceptance of this new way of life was not some magical thing which happened overnight. I took it a visit at a time, gradually extending the length of each visit, learning about the people who live at Centrepont, seeing the work that is being done there, basking in the kindness and attention that was given to me not only by my family but by other members of the community.

I have always been proud of you, my beautiful daughters, but never so much as I am today. You have developed into the kind of people that I always hoped you would become . . . loving, caring, and above all, compassionate and with an understanding that would be second to none. Thanks to Centrepont my relationship with you is closer now than it ever was and I know that it will stay that way. Sure, there are things that happen at Centrepont which I don't care too much about, but that is a purely personal thing, and as every good cook knows, 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating', and as far as I'm concerned the ingredients supplied by Centrepont's way of life make for yummy results.

Love from your Mum.

— Ngaere Wistrand



## YOUR DOUBTS, MY DOUBTS

It took me quite a few months after joining Centrepont to front up to my parents and admit to them my decision to commit to the Trust my entire financial autonomy. They had been very supportive of me since my recent separation and I feared they'd experience this new decision as a totally irresponsible slap in the face.

While I had a persistent though sometimes panic-stricken feeling in my gut that it was a right and somehow destined step for me to take, it made no rational sense in my head. And I was far from sure that blatant honesty and sexual openness would be what I wanted for my children. I didn't know how to begin to convey to my parents my hazy, intuitive faith in what I was doing and I was afraid that their sane, middle-class caution could easily tip my own wobbly scales.

And then there was the even more embarrassing part to explain — my commitment to Bert as my 'spiritual leader'. I mean Bert . . . well . . . how do you explain a guy like that? So I'd gloss over that part and emphasise Bill's role in the Community. (After all, he was a proper hospital doctor once.) I glossed over this so well, I almost managed to convince myself that I could sidestep the Bert part and just enjoy living in the Community. I didn't fool Bert though. He just observed my antics, continued to have faith in himself and what he had to offer me and all of us and waited for me to catch up.

I remember sitting sweating through some of our early spiritual meetings when it became clear that from a cosy little group of 40 it looked like we might end up with 200. And I'd be thinking: 'My God. What have I got myself into. I've really given this guy power over my life. I've never given that to anyone before. And he sounds really crazy . . .' The fact that my life wasn't working well for me conveniently slipped my mind at such moments.

While I think most people who have joined Centrepont have had a measure of doubt at times about their commitment here, I have probably been as wary and suspicious about surrendering to this as anyone. I've carefully hedged my bets and kept a safe foot outside Centrepont just in case I'd made the wrong decision. So I wasn't in either place and I certainly wasn't in the here and now. For two years I subtly avoided selling a property I'd owned at Waiheke. I planned to form a trust for the children which would seem honourable enough in terms of my commitment, but in the back of my mind I planned some clause that could make it available to me in a crisis. I used up a lot of energy plotting and planning this and thinking up vague responses to Bert's pertinent questions about it.

Indignantly I used to think that Bert was just after my children's rightful inheritance for his community. I refused to let in the knowledge that holding back this final physical commitment was also holding back my commitment to my own movement, my loving for myself, for Bert and the people around me. It was a huge relief to let the property go and put the proceeds into Centrepont. It was a waste of time and energy but for some reason my process stubbornly resisted letting Bert's loving of me in, and mine out.

This whole idea of spiritual surrender to a teacher or master is a concept foreign to us in the West. If you belong to a conventional religious group as I once did, you may attend a church and listen to the minister on Sundays. If you find him boring, you can move on to another church. He may be disappointed in himself or you, but there is no commitment between you.

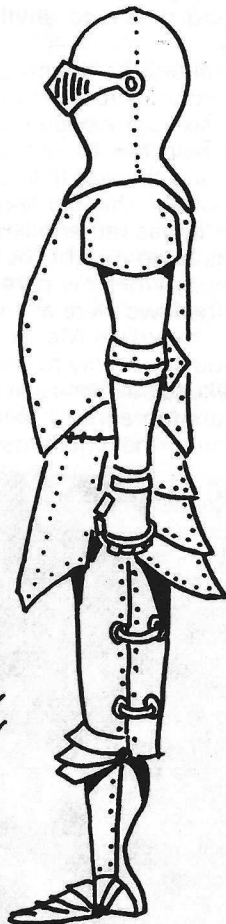
The fact that we commit all our personal possessions and capital to the Trust which has chosen Bert as its spiritual leader isn't just a convenient practical and financial condition of joining. It actually symbolises surrender. The part that is hardest to explain is the nature of the surrender. For it is really a surrender of my outward trappings and ego needs to the needs and direction of my own inner voice. I commit these things to Bert through his community because I find I can use his guidance to

reach my own essence.

It is not that I'm giving power to Bert to tell me how to live my life in a way that will suit him. Rather it is that I'm using Bert and the people around him to show me myself. He is the key right now to the knowledge and beauty I have inside me. He is as committed to me and my spiritual growth as I am to him, and the measure of my commitment to him, is a symbol of my commitment to my own growth. When I trust Bert as a guide I find he leads me through and underneath the maze of cultural confusion and self-doubt that hides me from myself. If I hold back my trust in any way at all, I find myself back in the maze and without the key.

In my early days of doubt, I used to watch Bert like a hawk, waiting for him to stumble from the pedestal of perfection I expected any guru worth his salt to maintain. And of course he isn't perfect, he is a very human

... I TRUST HIM TO  
ACCEPT EVERY SECRET  
MURKY PART... AS WELL  
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LOVING AND  
FLOWING SELF



human-being. Like many of us he can be dogmatic, arrogant and vulgar. He is also warm, humorous, earthy, loving and enormously accepting. He is practical and pragmatic and has the ability to penetrate the most elusive bullshit with his perception of where people really are in themselves.

So what is so special about that you ask. Why choose this man for your guru? I suppose the answer could be: 'Because (like Everest), he is there.' He is there for me in every aspect of his reality. He doesn't hide or apologise for his arrogance, his friendly pot-belly or his dirty shirt. And because he alone of any man I've so far met can totally accept himself, I trust him to accept every secret murky part I may find lurking in me — as well as to open me to my own natural, loving and flowing self.

Despite my deviousness, my parents have been able to accept the much clearer picture they now have of Centrepont through the media and this magazine and at last through my own acceptance of myself and my home. They enjoy I think, my softer and more loving relationship with them and cannot help but see how my children thrive and flower. They are probably still puzzled as to how and why Centrepont works for us all, but I think that they accept with relief that it does.

— Jenny Elworthy

## EDITORIAL CATHARSIS

This issue of the magazine has been a long time in coming out. When I first told Bert and the Community that I would like to start a magazine based on Bert's taped talks, I was given a free hand. This time Bert said he'd like me to use this talk to our parents.

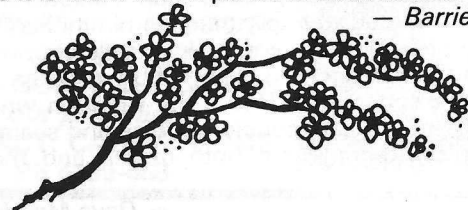
Night after night went by and I was much too tired to edit the talk. Cup of tea after cup of Milo went down with very little result. At last I shared with Bert that I didn't really want to use that tape and especially I wanted to leave out the part about inheritance. 'Why? What's under that?' When I went into the feelings it was all about my Mum cutting me out of her will because she didn't want to leave anything to Centrepont. 'That's OK. I don't need it and it's your money to do what you want with,' I had said very rationally. But there was still a lot of hurt deep down. My parents were married during the Depression. All my childhood I remember my Dad working hard to make money so that he would have something to leave, so that we children would never have such an experience.

Well my dead Dad, when you died a year before your retirement, I couldn't stop crying and the words that kept coming were 'She'll never know him'. (My first daughter was a month old.) No she won't but neither did I Dad. And I won't have your money either. So what was it all for? I wasn't protected from the hard times either. When my marriage had broken up and the girls were small, I remember desperately writing the last \$5 cheque in my bank account to attend a drop-in therapy group that got me started on building my life again. Your money wasn't available then and I'm glad. I had to look for my own inner strength and creativity. I have no desire to leave my children money. They can have me while I live.

Then Linley and Asta's mother's letter arrived and my tears splattered all over it. I hadn't risked asking my mother to write down her feelings about Centrepont. I had not even told her that I edit the magazine or shown her any of the past issues. I realised that I am still playing a version of an old childhood game in which I wrote my school essays secretly to avoid her criticism while dreaming of writing a 'great novel' some day so that she would be proud of me. At 39 I am still scared she won't approve of me. Bert's 'stop shielding your parents' hit home too. Although she's 70, I am still protecting her and taking responsibility for her reactions.

So here it is Mum with a parcel of back issues.

— Barrie Reid



## CENTREPOINT THERAPY

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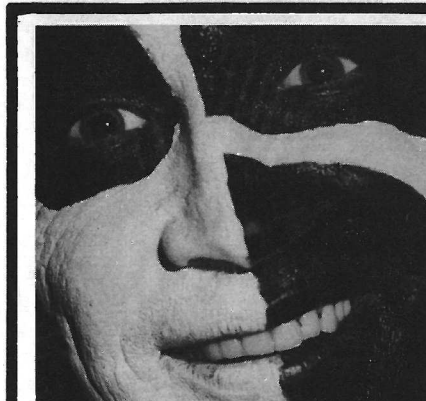
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NORMAN KOZELUH has been involved in Clown, Dance, Mime and Movement Workshops over the past two years. He has worked with Bridget Brandon, Francis Batten (Theatre Action), Jonathon Fox (Playback Theatre), and has been leading his own Dynamic Theatre Workshops at Centrepont Community, the Little Maidment Theatre (Auckland), at Nambassa Festival, and the WEA Summer School in Whangarei. He has also run workshops in schools and at community organisations such as Boystown and Carington. Norman is available to run workshops anywhere in New Zealand and can be contacted at Auckland 4159-468, or P.O. Box 35, Albany.

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# The Trust and its business

Centrepont is a Charitable Trust incorporated under the Charitable Trust Act, 1957. It is also registered as a Charitable Trust by the Department of Inland Revenue.

The objectives of the Trust are stated in the Trust Deed and include the establishment and advancement of spiritual education and humanitarian teachings. Centrepont Community Growth Trust is a non-profit making spiritual trust established: 'To organise and conduct seminars and workshops to enable participants to increase their awareness of themselves and enhance their relationships with others. To provide a counselling service for people with psychological, emotional, or social conflicts.'

Although all decisions concerning the running of the Trust are made on a consensus basis by its members, there are 10 appointed trustees who are legally responsible for the administration of the Trust. These 10 trustees are also members of the Trust and their functions are twofold:

(1) The appointment of a spiritual leader to direct the growth and spiritual development of members of the community. The spiritual leader is neither a member of the Trust nor has he any control over its administration although according to the trust deed he retains 'the sacred right of final decision in all matters touching and concerning the spiritual life of members of the faith'.

(2) The financial administration of the Trust. This is done through a weekly business meeting by all members of the Trust. All decisions are made unanimously and discussion continues until this point is reached. Members have also appointed a financial controller who has authority over all spending and who is responsible to the weekly community business meeting.

## FUNDING THE TRUST

It is a requirement of membership that each member gifts all his assets (or liabilities) and income to the Trust. Therefore on admission all members must transfer their assets or liabilities to the Trust and any income earned is surrendered in full. This has given the Trust a sound financial basis from its conception and has continued throughout its operation.

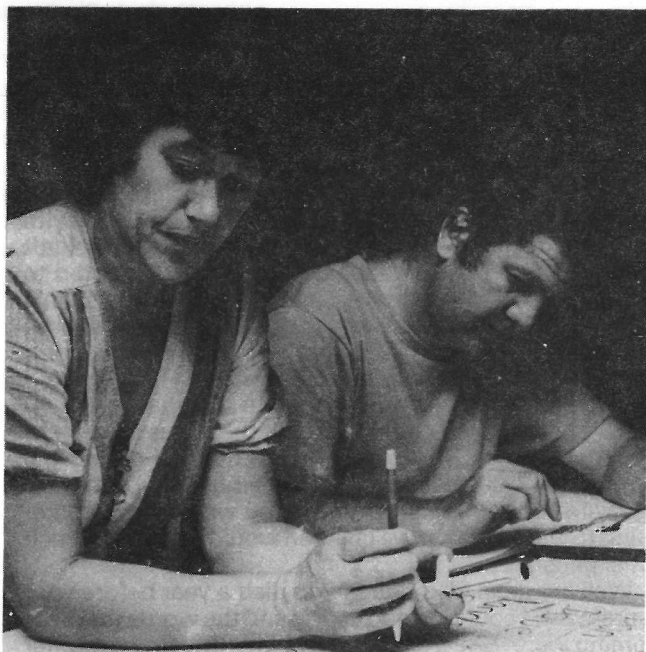
At present the Trust obtains its income from: (a) the realisation of incoming members' assets; (b) the salary of members who work off the property; (c) income from the businesses that are run on the property.

## MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT

At the end of each month all the money that is spent and earned by Centrepont is categorised by a computer. This means that Dave, Gerry and I code all the cheques that go out and come in, and the sums of cash that come in for various businesses are coded also. The computer then sorts these out so that we know where the money goes, where it came from, and how much was spent on food, medical and dental bills, etc.

This means we can keep track of spending trends and see whether businesses are profitable or not. We can also budget more reliably. It is my job each month to present all this information to the community business meeting. I know that it is Dave's business experience that has enabled him to set up this system and it is a good one, but early on I felt the need to translate the figures from the computer sheet to a form that all members of the community could understand. It is always a pleasure for me to draw up large charts to show the business meeting the monthly figures. I always did love teaching. This job keeps me in touch with the community's finance as well as giving me a chance to show my love for this place and the people in it by helping them to understand where our money goes and comes from.

— Sue Brighouse



Sue and Dave; Monthly Balance Sheets

## FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

The community was four months old when I decided to join. With my interest and experience in business I soon involved myself in the finances of Centrepont. At this stage everybody wanted to do their own thing, even those who had previously minimal experience of business and money handling.

There was a procedural requirement on all matters raised at the weekly business meetings which meant that if there was one objection a motion could be defeated, and the *status quo* held. I found this very difficult but bumbled on for a year using mostly bull-headedness to guide things in a satisfactory manner.

Eventually I was appointed financial controller on a monthly basis with the inference that if I got too far out of hand I could be removed promptly. I was pushed around by this time limit and eventually asked to be appointed financial controller for an indefinite period. With this change accepted, I felt acknowledgement of my skills. The change in the community attitude made it easier for me to take responsibility rather than manipulate for the decision I wanted. By now the community had realised that the one objection could block a decision that the majority wanted and had changed the decision-making process to consensus. This is the situation which has operated for the past couple of years and seems to be working satisfactorily for both myself and the community.

— Dave Mendelssohn

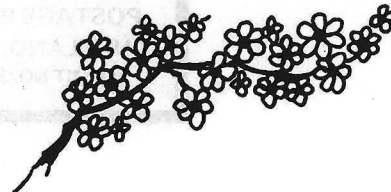


## Visitors

We have a meeting every Saturday afternoon particularly for visitors, but apart from this, the flow of visitors over the bridge is part of daily life at Centrepont. In the office I meet most of them and handle their enquiries. Many are business or professional people reflecting the wide range of activities we are involved in. Then there are those drawn to Centrepont as a way of life. People are welcome to drop in to see what the community is all about. A visitor's application to stay comes before the weekly business meeting, but usually only as a formality. We don't turn anyone away, believing that if they fit in they will stay and if not they will leave. It is called 'trusting the process' and it works.

If a visitor wishes to become a member of the community s/he must put this in writing and hand the letter to Bert. In due course, which is anything from two weeks to two years, Bert will hand the letter back signed 'OK love Bert' signifying a new member. The new member now accepts a total commitment to Bert as spiritual leader, hands over to the community 'all possessions of whatever kind presently owned or future acquired' i.e. wages, salary, inheritance as well as any liabilities, and takes an active part in contributing to every aspect of the community's life and development.

— Gerry Henley



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There is a public meeting every Saturday afternoon at 1.30 p.m. at Centrepont. Most Saturdays Bert is available to give a talk and lead us through contact exercises and meditation. This meeting provides an opportunity for ex-group members to maintain their link with Bert and Centrepont, and for new and interested people to make contact with the Community.

All Bert's talks over the last few years have been taped. We see these tapes as Bert's gift to the Community. This magazine is an attempt to share this gift with interested people. As well as Bert's talk there is a section on the Community which will attempt to convey to you honestly the agonies and ecstasies of being a member of this changing and growing Community, plus photos, news items and poems.

"Centrepont News" is a quarterly magazine available on subscription of \$2.00 in New Zealand and \$NZ5.00 overseas.

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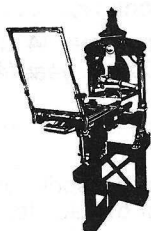


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