

Three's no crowd here

For most relationships, Valentine's Day and the heart symbolize romantic ties, but for the Alternative Relationships Center, a better symbol might be a contract. The Center, 1242 Polk St., stresses group marriage, a living arrangement made up of three or more "committed" adults.

"It's based on a rational approach," says Barry, a center volunteer. "You can understand things through the intellect."

"People usually couple up," adds Owen, another center member. "We want to be larger than that. You can have a couple-type relationship with multiple adults."

The center, founded last fall, keeps a low profile. Members answer the phone with a cautious hello and are reluctant to give last names.

According to Owen, the center strives to be "a meeting point, support group and outreach center for people who want committed multiple adult living relationships."

Group marriage adds to one's individuality, Barry says. "Committed adults" include everyone, no matter sexual or religious preference.

"Group marriage is a way to explore who you are through other people. It makes you a stronger individual," Barry says.

Anyone can begin a group marriage, says another member, Allen.

"First, an individual has to

figure out what he or she wants and then make a values list," Allen says. "Then he should go out and be exposed to new ideas, to see if he wants to add or drop any values."

Once personal values are established, the individual begins looking for others who share similar beliefs. A "social contract" is merged from group values. Traditional marriages incorporate similar contracts — mostly unspoken expectations, Allen says.

Group marriage differs from '60s communal living primarily in its family-type orientation. Traditional family values and a close relationship with children are emphasized.

"We're the next step in social evolution," says Owen.

"Families are so segmented now, there are many lonely people. But we can come back into groups."

Why do they form group marriages?

"Any problem you may have in a couple relationship you'll have in a group marriage relationship," says Allen, who cites emotional upset as the biggest problem. "But in a group marriage you have more people to help you solve it."

"Because you're not living a model that's normal, communication can sometimes break down," he says.

A center-taught SEARCH class, which meets in Room 137, Gilbert Hall, every other Wednesday, teaches members how to cope in a group marriage. The March 10 topic is

"Supportive Freedom Within the Family."

In addition, the center offers support and discussion groups, which try to present marriage responsibilities in an educational manner.

Although group marriage sometimes is stressful, members would not live any other way.

"Take all of the good feelings you can have in a two-person relationship and multiply those by two or three," Barry says. "That's what you can have in a group marriage."

By Adam Worcester



Shack-ups out of luck

The number of unmarried couples living together tripled between 1970 and 1980, according to the U.S. Department of the Census. This increasing trend has brought with it another increasing trend — living together agreements — an agreement between unmarried parties that defines and protects their expectations and properties.

Without marriage, the parties sit unprotected outside courtroom statutes for the wedded, explains Eugene attorney Richard Houghton. This introduces what Houghton labels a "fashionable area of the law right now." Statutes need precedents, and so far the courts have little experience in unlicensed cohabitation.

"The courts are still sorting out what it means to live together," says Houghton. "When you consider that not many years ago it was illegal to live together without marriage, or even have intercourse with someone you weren't married to, you see how the courts have not had to deal with it."

Sue Miller, a Eugene attorney who specializes in family law, says a living-together agreement can give protection unprovided by the courts now.

Certain benefits such as social security benefits are not obtainable under living-together status, yet widows and divorced spouses are eligible. The agreements can cover these areas, in addition to the individual rights between the parties

themselves, Miller says.

"What is sad is that, particularly with the people that have acquired property, the women just get screwed over," Miller points out. Because the man is usually making a higher income, things bought jointly are put in his name. Then, Miller says, "at the end of the relationship he can say 'well I had no intention at all of sharing with her and this property should be mine.'"

Although the courts would look for the intentions of the two parties, such as joint checking accounts and pooling their resources, Miller strongly recommends drawing an agreement for protection, and for defining expectations.

"Putting across in a contract that one person will be working their way to the top and the other will be home canning and wiping little runny noses, just having to think that through often gives you a much more realistic picture of what is going to happen," Miller says, adding that sometimes a couple will decide while writing their agreement that the relationship won't work.

"Better than later," she says.

Houghton recommends drawing up an agreement for two reasons, to clarify issues and to make whatever the couple has agreed upon legally binding. He especially stresses that couples should draft a pact when acquiring property jointly, such as a house.

A sample living-together

agreement to be used as a guide has been distributed to attorneys by the Oregon State Bar Committee on Continuing Legal Education. Each couple would adjust an agreement to their particular needs.

Houghton suggests the agreement include how the couple will handle the property and debts each party has at the start, property and debts acquired during the time together, custody and visitation of existing or possible children, and partner support (if one party is working and supporting the other during school, for example).

Although the number of agreements being drawn up is increasing, many couples hesitate discussing such things as money in the relationship's initial stage. Miller stresses the importance to overcome this feeling.

"It is immaterial whether it is romantic or not... it's going to be substantially less romantic two years down the road when you're fighting over who's going to pay Montgomery Wards and who's going to pay Sears," she says.

Although an attorney is not crucial to the drawing of an agreement, both Miller and Houghton recommend consulting one if property is involved. Legal Services at the University does deal in the agreements with students at no charge.

By Julie Kurilo
Graphic by Max Derungs


RENNIE'S LANDING

THIS FRIDAY
RENNIE'S LANDING'S
ONE YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

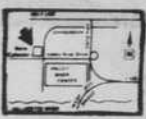
Pitcher Sale 4-7pm
All Pitchers \$1.75
...and other surprise tokens of
our appreciation

Rennie's Landing • 1214 Kincaid • 687-6668

VALENTINE'S DAY
AT
MARIE CALLENDER'S
February 14th

 BRUNCH 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
DINNER 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.

1300 Valley River Drive
484-7111



Give to the college student of your choice.

Round Trip to
Los Angeles

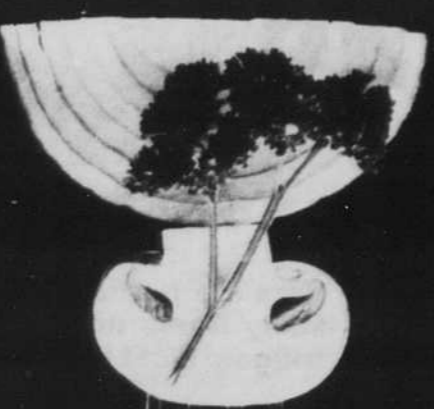
Departs Friday, March 19 at 4 pm — McArthur Court, Arrives in Los Angeles 8 am Saturday, March 20

Departs Los Angeles Saturday, March 27—at 8 pm—Arrives Eugene 12 noon, Sunday March 28.

Via luxury motor coaches equipped with restrooms, stereo, card tables and beverages on board. Reservations required.

\$ 157.50

Darren Berg Tours, Inc.
4451 Williams Highway * Grants Pass, Oregon
*in Eugene Phone 485-9071 (1 pm to 4 pm)



HEART THROBS

Very Special
Valentine Dinners
Sunday,
February 14th.

EXCELSIOR GARDENS
754 East 13th
Reservations—342-6963

A Lovely Treat for Your Valentine...

Offer good while supplies last.



Spring Faceworks
A bouquet of products for the freshest looks this season!

A \$27.00 value for only \$9.50 with a purchase of \$8.50 or more from our all new Persian Garden Collection for Spring


The prettiest bouquet this season—our Spring Faceworks, filled with Sun Finish Liquid Makeup, 3 Creamy Powder Shadows, Lip Makeup, Body Moisturizer, Luxiva Eye Creme, Florentine Face and Body Shimmer, MN Aerosol Fragrance Purser, and more! Ask your Beauty Advisor to show you how to use these products with the new Persian Garden colors... call today for a free Makeover and get a fresh new look for Spring.

MERLE NORMAN 20 Oakway Mall
The Place for the Custom Face® 342-4483

Harmon restaurant

Dine in a pleasant, romantic atmosphere.
Enjoy the delicious, freshly prepared food from our exciting new menu.

Great lounge offering Free hors d'oeuvres
Live entertainment Tuesday through Saturday evenings.
Happy hour Tuesday through Friday 2-7 pm



Dinner 5:00-10:00 pm Daily • Lunch 11:00-2:30 pm
Monday thru Friday
Sunday Brunch 10:00-2:30 pm

2200 Centennial Blvd.
Reservations
342-5231