

Weather

Rain Likely
Tonight And Thursday;
Slightly Cooler
Details Page 2.

Santa Cruz Sentinel

STACKS

Wednesday
Afternoon

121st Year No. 45

Wednesday, February 23, 1977

Santa Cruz, Calif. 95060

40 Pages 15c

What Is Christ Circle? Opinions Differ Greatly

(First Of Four Parts)
By DALE POLLOCK
Sentinel Staff Writer

To some observers, the Christ Circle "family" is an organization akin to the well-publicized "Moonies," with claims they use mind control and demand total obedience to their leader's demands.

To others, Christ Circle offers the kind of love, affection and teaching that can reach out and

heal a sick and wounded child.

While the original 40 members of Christ Circle were adults, some of whom had children, the focus of the group soon settled on battered, abused, emotionally deprived and handicapped youngsters.

"It's always been children, because children are more open to something new," says Tom Roskowitz, who is associate director of the non-profit

religious/educational group. "It is easier to make a new child than a new adult."

There are also the economic benefits to be gained from child care, including child support payments from the state, averaging \$795 per child per month.

These are in addition to private school students, who are asked to pay \$2700 for room, board and schooling.

Roskowitz, who heads Christ

Circle in the current absence of its founder and leader Arthur J. Hempel, stresses the unique family-style care offered children who had previously failed in foster homes, juvenile halls and state institutions. "A wholesome, healthy atmosphere, that's why we're here," states Roskowitz.

Other sources, who lived at Christ Circle for up to six months, deny the atmosphere is either wholesome or healthy. Several sources confirm that the children

receive excellent care and attention at the commune. But what is considered Hempel's undue influence, and the sheep-like attitude of family members in following his dictates, prove deeply disquieting to these and other observers.

At first glance, Christ Circle, located on King's Creek Road in Boulder Creek, seems an unlikely locale for the current battles swirling around it. But these quiet 160 acres of towering trees,

meadowland and buildings are the stormy center of legal, political and ethical disputes.

Behind a welter of recent lawsuits is a fascinating and complex story of a disciplined commune forging a new lifestyle in the mountains, a philosophy that blazons new trails for some, and which others find repugnant and bizarre.

What is Christ Circle, and how did it reach its present stage of controversy? That story is

shrouded in secrecy, as "family" members dwell primarily on the present, and leader Hempel is currently in Europe.

The story of Christ Circle is inseparable from that of Hempel, both its spiritual and practical head. "I was the point of origin for its birth," Hempel said in a recent exclusive telephone interview with The Sentinel. "I gave it birth seven years ago, but it has a life of its own."

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What Is Christ Circle?

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According to Roskowitz, the original group, including single people, married couples and their children, came together in a class taught by Hempel at West Valley Junior College in Saratoga in 1970.

Hempel was teaching sociology and philosophy, expounding his unique theories of personal growth and responsibility. "You can talk about something forever," points out Roskowitz. "We finally got together to act."

Action meant acquiring the old Satori Conference Center in Boulder Creek for a price in excess of \$400,000 in 1974. The families who participated in the commune pooled their resources, donated all their material possessions, and offered themselves as workers for the goals of Christ Circle.

What were these goals? While the name Christ Circle seems to denote Christian religious significance, the group also employs the Jewish Star of David as its logo. But both Roskowitz and Hempel deny that the group is strictly religious. "We use the word Christ, or christos, in its original meaning of wisdom," explains Hempel. "It has nothing to do with Christ the person. It is a circle of intelligence and wisdom."

That explanation has been offered over and over again, even in court by Hempel. But the Lydell and Scott Greek Lexicon, the standard work in the field, defines the term christos as signifying "the anointed one," the earliest meaning of the term, which came from the Jewish designation for the Messiah.

In incorporation papers filed Sept. 13, 1974, Christ Circle labeled itself a "church of love and enlightenment," designed to "free the individual from his preconceptions and conclusions fashioned from society and the world."

In practical terms, this meant Christ Circle placed strong emphasis on re-orienting the individual to new goals through the use of disciplined work, meditation and a sense of "family."

According to informed sources, adult family members lead a strictly regimented existence, with clearly defined work patterns, and an average of four hours sleep per night. After being awakened at 4 a.m. for meditation, adults begin classes at 5 a.m., followed by work in the fields, dormitories, or domestic chores.

bers to Christ Circle. Rumors have circulated through Boulder Creek that all new converts to Christ Circle must sell their homes, and donate to the commune the proceeds, along with furniture, artifacts and cars.

Both Hempel and Roskowitz firmly deny that "somewhere

down the road someone here will take their life savings," as Roskowitz laughingly described the fears. "We share everything," says Roskowitz, and Hempel confirms that although no one is required to donate, several homes have been sold, with the proceeds going to Christ Circle.

According to one former student, however, "I have a few things up there I have difficulty getting back. When you are there, you turn over your possessions."

Thursday, The Sentinel will look at the children of Christ Circle: their care, education and problems.

work patterns, and an average of four hours sleep per night. After being awakened at 4 a.m. for meditation, adults begin classes at 5 a.m., followed by work in the fields, dormitories, or domestic chores.

After a short breakfast at 9 a.m., work continues until 1 p.m., when the main dinner meal is served. After that, work continues until 9 p.m., when a simple supper is offered. Classes begin again at 10 p.m., with meditation at 11 p.m., and all lights out at midnight.

When queried about this routine, Hempel likens it to a Catholic monastery regimen. "What are hours, really?" he questions. "We have to learn to examine everything as to its validity concerning us. Everything," he reiterated.

According to Deborah Kellaway, a former teacher at Christ Circle, Hempel believes that human beings, in order to evolve, "must give up all human reference points, which include likes, dislikes, sex, the desire to eat and sleep, and worldly possessions. Once these are given up, the individual has a new viewpoint to go on."

Hempel calls this "adopting a non-judgmental attitude," in which the individual is no longer dependent on external sources to change his experience. In the matter of sex, for example, Hempel believes that "everything external to us is feminine, philosophically speaking," since man comes from woman.

This accords with former family members' views that Hempel was strictly against sex between unmarried family members, and allegedly separated some married couples.

One eye-witness heard Hempel state to the family in their communal dining room, "I won't have it any more. You people are ----- and it's got to stop. From now on, everyone gets up at 5 a.m. for meditation." This same individual also overheard Hempel's voice on tape, saying that woman's sole role in life was to free man. Eventually man would develop his own vagina and womb, Hempel was heard to say, and have no other need for women.

Hempel denies making these statements, and points out that a baby was born to Roskowick and Joanna Ruth just seven weeks ago. According to Roskowick, sex "does not come up. It is not an issue."

It is generally acknowledged, however, that men lead most of the activities at Christ Circle, and witnesses report that men and women are separated during meditation periods.

Another bone of contention has been the donation of material goods from family mem-