

# The Commune That Didn't Come to Town: The Love Israel Family and a Small Town in Idaho

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At the base of the Idaho panhandle, Interstate 95 cuts through the Camas Prairie, 200,000 acres ringed by snowcapped mountain ridges and a Snake River canyon. The prairie takes its name from the root resembling a sweet potato that was a staple of the Nez Perce who once roamed the region. When Euro-Americans occupied this undulating plain, its fertile soil brought forth wheat, barley, peas and other crops, making Idaho County one of the nation's rich breadbaskets. Early in the 20th century, the town of Grangeville emerged as the commercial entrepot of the Prairie.<sup>1</sup>

Two hundred miles north of Boise and seventy miles south of the small urban center of Lewiston, flanked by the Nez Perce Reservation and a national forest, Grangeville remains relatively self-contained. It is a conservative town, socially and politically. Main Street turns east off I-95, dipping slightly between a medley of business buildings that range from Victorian brick to fifties utilitarian. On the outskirts, huge workshops sell and repair heavy agricultural equipment. North and south of Main Street single family homes for 3600 residents testify that this is a family oriented community. Family lineages reach back generations, but recently newcomers fleeing urban complexes have discovered Grangeville.

As Main Street continues eastward and uphill to become State Highway 13, a large L-shaped, flat-roofed building appears on the northern slope. Formerly the Nez Perce National Forest headquarters, this building was at the heart of a controversy that absorbed Grangeville late in the summer of 1983.

One Wednesday that August readers of the local weekly were confounded by the headline "Old Forest Service building is donated to religious group." A week earlier, Bert Amick, a Seattle investor who had built the twenty-year-old structure, had deeded it over to the "Beloved Israel Foundation." The organization, added the Idaho County *Free Press*, "is also called the Love Family and the official name is the Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon."<sup>2</sup>

The Love Israel Family had originated fifteen years earlier when onetime salesman named Paul Erdman received a vision calling him to bring people together in an atmosphere of brotherhood and unity. He became Love Israel. Disciples also assumed the Israel surname and new first names that reflected human qualities or Biblical characters. In 1968, the Family settled in a middle class neighborhood on Seattle's Queen Anne Hill. Marked by their communal lifestyle, colorful garb, and the sale of craft items, they quickly became conspicuous on the Hill. Several small houses and gardens were ultimately joined to create an eclectic mansion that was headquarters for the group and home to several members.

Despite an unsavory early reputation, by 1983 the Family had become reasonably well respected by close neighbors and community leaders. They operated a cluster of businesses on the Hill and maintained several small City parks. They fed and sheltered homeless folk and runaways. As a religious body, they cooperated with area churches and enjoyed "observer" status in the Church Council of Greater Seattle. Family members also served on the board of the Queen Anne Hill Community Council. With about four hundred members, including children, they had by that summer of 1983 apparently achieved a degree of stability, local acceptance and respectability.

Besides the Seattle location, the Family occupied a farm near Arlington thirty miles north of Seattle, and properties in eastern Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii.<sup>3</sup> Thus extending eastward to Idaho seemed feasible when Amick, who had grown to like Family members he met through their fishing enterprises, offered them his building. Unable to sell the building after the Forest Service moved out, Amick wanted to turn it over to a deserving group to use for community services.<sup>4</sup>

Estimating it would cost almost a million dollars to replace both land and building, a Seattle real estate firm placed a minimum valuation of the vacant building in 1983 at \$375,000. A quit claim deed effected August 15 turned it over to the Love Israel Foundation, the Family's legal entity. There were conditions: The building was to be used for activities which would further the purposes of the Love Israel Foundation, the land could not be subdivided or sold, nor the building sold, and if the Family did not use the building it would be given to the University of Idaho, the Boy Scouts, or another organization of Amick's choice.<sup>5</sup>

Somewhat surprised to receive this gift, the Family had no immediate plans for its use although Serious Israel, who headed Foundation activities, suggested it might be used for cooperative day care, for health care, as an arts and crafts center, or as a center for the elderly. "[T]he world is burning itself up with fuses at both ends," he commented. "We are trying to reverse those trends, to begin at a local level by having more direct relationships with one another. The family is the solution to the high pressures of the economic realities of today." The Love Israel Family, he explained, lives simply and provides food, education, and child-care services less expensively than conventional commercial sources. The building in Grangeville would allow them to do so.<sup>6</sup>

Many Grangeville residents were alarmed. Telephone lines and gathering spots suddenly buzzed with the fear that the arrival of a communal group, a "cult," would seriously alter the life they knew.<sup>7</sup> Some 200 miles west, another small town, Antelope, Oregon, had recently been taken over by followers of the Bagwhan Shree Rajneesh who reigned at his high desert headquarters nearby. What had happened to Antelope, residents feared, could happen also to Grangeville.<sup>8</sup> Critics suspected that an angry Amick had given the building to the communal group rather than a local beneficiary to "spite" Grangeville, possibly because he had lost the Forest Service.<sup>9</sup>

Opposition to the Family took two parallel paths that sometimes converged, one a "grass roots" effort of concerned citizens, the other through city officials. Allen and Kim Chenoweth had grown up near San Francisco in the 1960s, where she was conscious of the goings on in the Haight-Ashbury, while his home had been close by Jim Jones' early activities; acquaintances had died in the Guyana suicides. The Chenoweths had been attracted to Grangeville in the early 1980s by its small town atmosphere, by recreational attractions, and by the opportunity to open a dental practice. Somewhat representative of opponents of the Family, Dr. Chenoweth became their principal spokesperson.<sup>10</sup>

A newly formed Concerned Citizens Committee began to seek information about the Love Israel Family and cults. As they learned about networks of persons concerned about cult activities and made valuable contacts, their opposition became adamant. They heard stories of drug usage amongst Family members, of deaths in questionable circumstances, of the absence of traditional family values in a commune where sex was prevalent and parentage uncertain.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the opponents were persons much like the Chenoweths, rather recent arrivals who relished Grangeville as a wholesome place to live, conduct business, and raise children. Having found this little "Eden" on the Camas Prairie, they did not want it threatened by out-of-town cults. They generally viewed themselves as more sophisticated about the dangers

inherent in such groups than were the more naive long time residents. Yet, Kim Chenoweth later acknowledged, although the Family was not welcome, they had every legal right to come and probably would not have been harassed.<sup>12</sup>

Around the Chenoweth kitchen table plans were made for a town meeting on the evening of September 6.<sup>13</sup> As people swarmed in that night, proceedings shifted from the high school library to the gymnasium where between a thousand and twelve hundred people sat in folding chairs and lined bleachers, the largest crowd in the city's memory. Flanked by city and county officials, Dr. Chenoweth presided as speakers attacked the Love Israel Family and similar groups. Out-of-towners included two representatives of anti-cult organizations: Barb Strakel of the Cult Awareness Network and Shirley Landa of the Concerned Citizens Foundation.<sup>14</sup>

Strakel, from Couer d'Alene, Idaho, explained that destructive cults usually centered on a leader who claimed divinity or a special relationship with God; followers lost identity and self-will as they were submerged into the group. Landa lived in a Seattle suburb and had previous encounters with the Love Israel Family; indeed, founders of her group included a California couple who had spirited their daughter away from the Family amidst national media coverage. To Strakel's concerns Landa added specific charges against the Family, including drug use, lack of medical attention, poor living conditions, questionable raising of children, unconventional dress, and illicit means of acquiring funds and property.<sup>15</sup> She cited a prominent psychologist that the Family was "one of the most extreme" religious cults and she viewed their recent improved behavior as part of a "coercive plan to lure unsuspecting people into potential membership."<sup>16</sup>

Local residents discussed a possible boycott of Family activities and sympathetic businesses. A Chamber of Commerce representative reported that most members opposed the Family's coming, but the police chief admitted that Seattle officials considered the Family to be "no problem." The ministerial association contended that drug use, mind control, and defiance of laws concerned them, not religious freedom. Yet, the Reverend Bob Wood concluded, we must remember that God loves sinners. While most of the speakers opposed the Family, other townspeople sat quietly, curious or doubtful of their own positions. Dr. Chenoweth's request for funds for possible court battles brought applause; "Tonight's not when it's all over," he concluded.<sup>17</sup>

Invigorated by the meeting, Concerned Citizens leaders Kim Chenoweth and Knute Blodger, publisher of a local shopping paper, outlined approaches to employ. Citizens were urged to contact the City Council, to influence officials responsible for granting tax exempt status to

religious groups, and to battle the Family with zoning and other ordinances, including "condemning the building for even a minor infraction." A twenty-page booklet describing cults and the Love Israel Family was distributed to the local library and to schools.<sup>18</sup> Letters and editorials flooded the local weekly, the Idaho County *Free Press*, and the regional daily, the Lewiston *Morning Tribune*.

One open letter advised that the Family "would 'stick out' in Grangeville. . . . It is a sacrilege the blemish your group has created in the name of religion and religious freedom. . . . You have succeeded in only bringing our community closer together in our efforts to block you. Plus we have you to thank for the 'crash course' enlightenment we're getting on cults across the nation. You've served your purpose, stay in your own back yard."<sup>19</sup>

Another Grangeville resident did not consider the Family to be "intrinsically evil, but we, the society at large are underwriting them financially to some extent. They are playing by our rules, rules that would rather err on the side of religious freedom in gray areas." He pondered, "Who is going to pay to educate their children?"<sup>20</sup>

A minister stated "their ultimate goal is diametrically opposed to those of ours and other Bible believing Christians. Their purpose, among others, is to separate the family unit as we know it."<sup>21</sup>

One person thought Grangeville was "too wonderful a town to be ruined. And ruin it they will. And don't think they will stop there. Of all the towns and cities I have been in, Grangeville is the only one that touches my heart . . . Somebody please do something and quick."<sup>22</sup>

The specter of international communism was introduced: False church groups would lead the nation into "Russia's greedy hand, there is where! It would be so easy for them to take over a nation of zombies!"<sup>23</sup>

Father Bill Wassmuth, a Coeur d'Alene pastor aroused by the nearby Aryan nation compound and a one-time visitor to the Love Israel complex in Seattle, warned about mind-control. Speculating that cult members were often good people who joined in times of personal weakness and vulnerability, Wassmuth worried that, "What goes on in their groups is not just their business, for the controlled members have a right to the freedom guaranteed by our constitution. Also, destructive cults will constantly be recruiting new members by their manipulative [sic] techniques."<sup>24</sup>

Wassmuth urged attention to "the testimony of ex-members and on the accepted criteria of what makes up a destructive cult."<sup>25</sup> Such evidence came from several families near and distant who had lost family members to such groups including the Love Israel Family. One mother whose son had been a Family member for eleven years wrote that "the people of Grangeville have every reason to be disturbed...[T]he use of drugs, psychological coercion, sleep deprivation, etc., were applied to him and

other vulnerable young people. . . . [W]e urge you to help put an end to this destructive organization by not giving it a new base of operation. Otherwise, you will pay a dear price through your children, as we know from our own unhappy experience."<sup>26</sup>

A Madras Oregon woman outlined Rajneeshpuram's damaging effect on nearby communities. "Good Luck and hang in there," she concluded, "you have everything to lose if you don't."<sup>27</sup>

The Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, generally acknowledged as more liberal than the region it served, sent Grangeville reporter Kathy Hedberg to Seattle to investigate. She and a photographer spent three days with Family members on Queen Anne Hill, at the Arlington ranch, and at the airport where a throng of Family children greeted Love Israel. She depicted a warm and caring group who lived in beautiful if sparse conditions. Three of four Seattle neighbors praised them; the fourth objected to religious tax breaks and other community advantages.<sup>28</sup>

*Tribune* columnist Bill Hall spoofed Grangeville; "zaniness" he later mused, had settled there. The actions of newly arrived "oddballs" from California were ironic. "You let a few Californians move there and they'll all want in. And if the Californians take over Grangeville, it's just a matter of time before they overrun the rest of Idaho."<sup>29</sup> Another day he derided the "unseemly, unsorting and quite comical witch hunt . . . [with] a few souls running up and down the streets yelling, 'The weirdos are coming! the weirdos are coming!'" Hall bestowed characteristic names on Family opponents whom he labeled Hysterical Israel, Paranoid Israel, and Intolerant Israel, with leader Chenoweth as "Unconstitutional Israel."<sup>30</sup> The satire provoked more mail than any other column of Hall's long career.<sup>31</sup>

Hedberg and Hall became viable targets. She was ridiculed as a naive observer who was probably shown only what the Family wanted her to see. A former admirer suggested that Hedberg had forsaken family values.<sup>32</sup> Allen Chenoweth complained that she had devoted "230 lines to Serious Israel and only 30 lines to us," and that quotations were out of context, while his wife conceded that Hedberg was treated badly by the community.<sup>33</sup> The new reporter viewed the experience as her "ordeal of fire."<sup>34</sup> Hall was derided as a spokesman for rival, bigger Lewiston. One writer noted that Hall had not attended the mass meeting which was neither a witch-hunt nor hysterical, but composed of "intelligent, level-headed and hard-working" and deeply concerned citizens.<sup>35</sup> Others questioned whether Hall would accept the Family if it moved to Lewiston, and one reader canceled her subscription: "call me ex-subscriber Israel."<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the City Council held a special meeting. Mayor Ralph Bos said that the welcome mat was clearly not out to the Family. Councilman Richard Workman proposed a commission to investigate the Family. But Jeff Kutner criticized "a lot of hearsay," and argued that disgruntled former

cult members would obviously have negative views. He would leave any necessary investigations to the police. After a wide-ranging discussion that belied unanimity, the vote was three to three. Mayor Bos broke the tie and the commission was established.<sup>37</sup> Its five members gathered further information, but by the time they reported to the Council the issue had largely dissipated.

At the Council's request, Bos wrote the Family that they would have "to comply in all respects with all state, county and city regulations and ordinances," citing their refusal to secure drivers' licenses and to register births and deaths. The Family would have to follow the uniform building code and go through the City Council for any change in use, such as housing in a commercial building. His closing reiterated that "all existing laws will be strictly enforced."<sup>38</sup>

Serious Israel apologized "for creating such a stir in your community" and denied any "intention to disrupt, corrupt, or 'take over' Grangeville in any way." Reiterating their desire to contribute to the community in a Christ-like spirit of love and unity, he asked for ideas about the building's best use: "We hope that this act of giving by Bert Amick will ripple out into greater waves of giving, sharing and cooperation among the members of your community."<sup>39</sup>

Mayor Bos was not the only letter writer. The Family was deluged with letters, earnest, accusatory, and sarcastic.

We are a small community which has it's [sic] own people conforming to State and City laws. Any infringement [sic] is readily noticed and taken care of. "The best for all concerned would be you stay there and we stay here!"<sup>40</sup>

You are merely an ex-con conning a troupe of lost and vulnerable souls but do not think for a moment you have conned Grangeville. . . . You are not wanted here.<sup>41</sup>

You could hire some one to burn down the building, collect the insurance money and then blame it on the local townspeople - that could be the best solution to it yet.<sup>42</sup>

I am a Christian and I resent the way you use our Lord's name to cover practices which are not in keeping with His Word.<sup>43</sup>

As you & your members practice a life style I don't agree with, I prefer [sic] my child not be exposed to it. I have worked hard to bring him up to exist in the established, accepted form of living, marrying & working. . . . Please stay where you are, you seem to be accepted there.<sup>44</sup>

I will confine my remarks to the thoughts regarding those individuals that in the name of religion prey upon the American tax-payer. If every

citizen lived as you advocate by contributing little or no financial support in the form of taxes to governmental agencies . . . there could be no airports, highways, city sidewalks, parks, public schools, community buildings or social welfare programs, etc.

Groups such as yours have found a loophole in this democratic society's only method of functioning and now represent a parasitic drain upon every tax-paying citizen of this nation.<sup>45</sup>

Our community is a close knit, caring community. We have a way of life here most people strive for. We don't want that disrupted [sic] . . . Perhaps a larger place like Seattle is more adapted to a different life style. "Think it over  
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To an earnest inquirer from Grangeville disturbed by rumors, Modesty Israel expressed frustration: "I personally have opened letter after letter from your town. They all say the same things. There have been hardly any exceptions. I don't know what to say to you. I am glad you have an open mind - even a hesitant one, but I have really had enough words over this whole matter. . . Words are empty and meaningless." Adding a postscript, he thanked the somewhat sympathetic correspondent for his "drop of kindness out of a sea of anger."<sup>47</sup>

One letter would have reverberations. Hearing Serious Israel describe hate letters on the local radio station, Bob Klecha offered "a letter of love." Klecha had settled in Grangeville in 1976 after his Volkswagen bus broke down and townspeople assisted him. He got a job with the city and became interested in alternative energy sources; by 1983 he had formed a food and energy cooperative with about thirty members which he proposed moving into the building. Klecha offered work parties to help maintain grounds and the building. "Not everyone here is against you as it may seem," Klecha had written. "It's just that the others don't speak as loud, yet when they do, sound clear."<sup>48</sup> And so it seemed. Although Family opponents were vocal, other townspeople held a "let's wait and see" attitude. Concerned Citizen leaders who believed the large turnout at the mass meeting indicated unchallenged support failed to recognize that many came out of curiosity or quietly disagreed. The following quotations are representative in this regard:

We did not attend to protest the advent of the Love Israel Family but to get some facts about the group. What we saw was a frightened populace very willing to have their worst fears confirmed. The speakers who called themselves experts but had no apparent academic credentials and were both biased by the loss of a close relative to a cult group. . . [W]ith no substantial charges against them, the Love Family is suspected of everything. We need to remain citizens as well as concerned, to recognize that all people deserve the protection of their freedoms, not just those with whom we agree. Where



behavior violates civil law, it can be prosecuted. Until that may happen, we need to give others the rights that we expect for ourselves.<sup>49</sup>

Many of us attended . . . with the idea of learning more to help us understand what was going on. Many of us were neither supporting nor opposing but rather wanted to learn more to help us draw our own conclusions. I'd like to say that I too am a concerned citizen. I am concerned when I hear threats to burn the building. . . . I am concerned when rumors of business boycotts are mentioned because one merchant or another has an opposing view to that of a special interest group. I feel real concern when people are afraid to express their views for fear of misinterpretation on the part of others. As I see it, without the presence of one cultist, this town has been functioning in an atmosphere of fear and hate; that friend and neighbors are choosing sides. What ever happened to 'there is nothing to fear but fear itself'? . . . I do not want to see any destructive force come to Grangeville, but please let us not be our own destructive force.<sup>50</sup>

It is incredible that the paranoia and prejudice against this group could run so deep. . . . What is lacking in facts is made up for by allegations, half truths, insinuations, nit picking, and out and out lies. . . . We say 'they are different', 'they are not like us' so 'let's make them the object of our persecution and wrath.' And we do this shameful thing under the guise of 'keeping Grangeville a nice place to live in.' . . . We hear scare stories from parents that their children have been taken in and converted to this church. But perhaps the very reason the child joined the cult was because there was something lacking in his or her home life that the natural parent was not providing... Speaking as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus Christ: If and when the Love Israel Family arrives in Grangeville, to the extent that these people are denied rights and privileges which other citizens freely enjoy, I want to make it clear that I will personally provide material help and assistance to supplement and make up for that which is denied them, to the best of my ability. I don't subscribe to their beliefs and practices. But as a Christian, I believe I should bear the burdens of my fellow men, as Christ has borne my burdens. . . . Let there be no misunderstanding here.<sup>51</sup>

We were told . . . about mind control, but isn't that what is happening here with all the negative and hate talk being heard? Aren't we, too, being brain-washed? . . . Why must we be either 'for ' or 'against' the Love Family or anyone else who is a bit different than we are?<sup>52</sup>

It seems to me that the future of this planet does not rely on our ability to shut ourselves off from the outside but rather on our ability to open ourselves up to each other and co-exist. . . . This nation of people is very diverse and very mobile. . . . The choice is yours: open yourselves up to changes and to other people's ways or close yourselves off and live life fearing change which incidently [sic] is inevitable.<sup>53</sup>

With all the lies, threats and intimidations that are rampant here, it seems

we have as much or more to fear from within our community as from without. . . . The eyes of many people are upon us now. It is time for each of us to temper our words with reason, intelligence and wisdom.<sup>54</sup>

Some sought a middle ground. State Senator Ron Beitelspacher did not favor the Family's coming, but he distanced himself from their opponents, urged tolerance, and suggested that individuals write the Family.<sup>55</sup> The local ministerial association was aware that the Family enjoyed acceptance as a religious body within Seattle's Council of Churches and neighborhood congregations. The association issued a statement supporting religious freedom while denying that this extended to illegal drug use, defiance of laws, or mind control. Yet the Family should be greeted with love, not hate: "We believe we must follow and be guided by the law and Christian charity."<sup>56</sup>

The two area newspapers themselves assumed a conservative stance editorially even as they opened their columns to numerous, conflicting letters and opinions. The Lewiston paper was generally regarded as liberal in its attitudes, while the Grangeville *Free Press* urged a "mature approach" and feared that a continuing "emotional and hysterical reaction" might have harmful results: "This is not a legacy we wish too pass on to the next generation."<sup>57</sup> A week later the *Free Press* retreated slightly, however, suggesting that the Family lived in a "time warp" left from the 1960s and hoping they would not come to Grangeville. Nevertheless, publisher William D. Cassell urged townspeople not to "revert back to the old west and start waving shotguns to get our point across" and he reminded readers that the "Constitution protects the rights of both the majority and the minority."<sup>58</sup>

In many respects Grangeville handled the issue with intelligence and civility through discussions and newspaper debates. A Chamber of Commerce poll of members indicated that 67% of its members opposed the Love Israel Family, leaving a third who did not, and brief efforts to force conformity within the business community were not maintained.<sup>59</sup> Life continued in its customary manner even as residents disagreed. Indeed, both Dr. Chenoweth and City Councilman Jeff Kutner, who had taken opposite positions on the Love Israel Family, were elected to the Council in November.<sup>60</sup> Confrontations were largely absent or mild. Except for minor vandalism at the building, no violence occurred, and one Concerned Citizens leader felt certain the Family would have encountered none had they come.<sup>61</sup>

Even as controversy swirled in Grangeville, the Family's internal problems were making the matter moot. Indeed, they had no precise plan for the building's use. Probably only a single household would have gone to Idaho to play some role in the community; surely Grangeville would not have become a beachhead or new home base for the Family. Increasingly,

Serious was viewing the building as a "white elephant." What seemed a major concern in Grangeville was a mere sidelight at the Seattle commune.<sup>62</sup>

These considerations were the least of the Family's problems. While traveling in California, two elders and their families who resented the domineering personal role of Love Israel returned to challenge his leadership. As others joined them, dissension festered through early autumn and many members left, hurling the seemingly solid commune into confusion and disorder. Accusations and departures evolved into legal wrangling. By winter at least two thirds of the membership had left and property holdings were in jeopardy.<sup>63</sup> Early on it became obvious that expansion into a town that did not want them was unrealistic. (Conversely however, some Grangeville opponents got wind of the disruption and feared Grangeville might become the new Family headquarters; such was never a consideration.)

Meanwhile, Klecha went through administrative hurdles to gain city permission in December to operate his Rainbow Plantation Cooperative in the building, and they maintained the facility. For several more years the co-op functioned, though elsewhere in town.<sup>64</sup>

The Family tried to sell the building. In late September a purchase by unnamed Grangeville citizens fell through when Amick would not remove his conditions governing the disposition of the building and the purchasers failed to raise \$50,000 earnest money. Still praising the Family as "loving. . . quiet and peaceful people," Amick was angry with the townspeople. "I'm through with Grangeville," he huffed.<sup>65</sup>

Serious next offered the building to several non-traditional religious groups. "The building was given to us out of a belief we could put it to a good use, of benefit to the Grangeville Community," he wrote. "At this time, however, the Love Israel Family is in a period of consolidation and refocusing and we do not feel that we have the energy to devote to developing a program suitable . . . It is obvious that the community needs the catalyst [sic] of a more unified and idealistic force to assist them in benefitting from this gift." He would entertain any offers for complete or partial transfer of ownership for all or part of the property.<sup>66</sup>

Local residents alarmed by the Love Israel Family might have been even more distraught had they known that the building was offered to the Unification Church, the Church of Scientology, Elizabeth Clare Prophet of the Church Universal and Triumphant, and the dreaded Rajneeshees.<sup>67</sup> None took the offer. Almost a year later, in November 1984, the building was deeded to the Southern Idaho District Council of the Assemblies of God. The Assembly of God occupies the church today.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, Family membership dropped to less than a hundred. Losing the Seattle property and facing disastrous litigation with departing

members, the remaining faithful - including, after a short sojourn in California, Love Israel himself - moved to the Arlington ranch where they continue to this day.<sup>69</sup>

The people of Grangeville and the Love Israel Family recall the controversy of 1983 as a relatively minor incident in the history of both. Yet, students of communal groups might view these events as a microcosm of occurrences played out in many communities that rarely had the chance to debate such issues. Townspeople experienced attitudes of fear, frustration, anxiety, skepticism, tolerance, a sense of civic loss tempered with social responsibility, a willingness to investigate, "wait and see" attitudes, and concerns about people outside the mainstream who seemed to threaten a comfortable and accepted way of life. Opposing camps pursued varying approaches. This encounter experienced by many communal groups and the towns they entered had a universal aspect. Here it was all compressed into a few weeks time in a small town in Idaho.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Curt Conley, *Idaho for the Curious: A Guide* (Cambridge, ID: Backeddy Books, 1982), 609-612.

<sup>2</sup> Idaho County *Free Press* (Grangeville, ID), Aug. 24, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Newspaper and magazine articles about the Love Israel Family appeared frequently in the Seattle area during the 1970s and 1980s. There has been no definitive account although Steve Allen, *Beloved Son: A Story of the Jesus Cults* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1982) tells much about their earlier days. Family elder Serious Israel summarized their history in "Bringing the Vision Down to Earth," *In Context* (Spring 1983), 22-25, and in "Community as Crucible: The Love Israel Family," *Communities: Journal of Cooperative Learning* (#85: Winter 1994), 52-55. The present author has summarized the Family history in "The Love Israel Family: An Urban Commune Becomes a Rural Commune," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 89 (Spring 1998): 65-76.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Serious Israel, Arlington, WA, Aug. 17, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> John L. Green and Ole Carlson (Omni Properties, Inc.) to Burt [sic] Amick, Seattle, Aug. 3, 1983, in Grangeville File, Love Israel Family ranch, Arlington, WA; Serious [Israel] to author, Aug. 21, 1995;

<sup>6</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Aug. 24, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Kim Chenoweth, Grangeville, ID, May 16, 1995; interview with Elwyn and Dixie Johnson, Grangeville, ID, May 16, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> There is a growing body of literature about Rajneeshpuram, near Antelope, OR; a solid essay contemporary with the events described in this paper is in Frances Fitzgerald, *Cities on a Hill: A Journey Through Contemporary American Cultures* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 247-381. Most striking of the numerous references to Rajneeshpuram during the Grangeville discussions were letters from Barbara Hall of Madras, OR, Idaho County *Free Press*, Oct. 5, 1983, and from Charles R. Martin, *The Shopper* (Grangeville, ID), Aug. 31, 1983.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, "Knute's Korner," *The Shopper*, Aug. 31, 1983.

<sup>10</sup> Kim Chenoweth interview. Letter of Kim W. Chenoweth, *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983.

<sup>11</sup> Kim Chenoweth, interview.

<sup>12</sup> Kim Chenoweth, interview.

<sup>13</sup> Kim Chenoweth, interview.

<sup>14</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983.

<sup>15</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983; on the founders of the Concerned Citizens Foundation, see Lewiston (ID) *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 28, 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983; "coercive plan" quotation is reporter Kathy Hedberg's summary of Landa's comments, Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, ca. Sept. 7, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983; police chief comment from Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, ca. Sept. 7, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983 (quotation). The author was unable to locate a copy of this booklet that was described by several persons including Kim

Chenoweth and was noted in an unidentified newspaper clipping in her scrapbook of the events. One article from the booklet was reprinted in the *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983; it concerned a psychologist's statement on the harmful psychological effects of living in a cult.

<sup>19</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983. (Several writers sent identical letters to both the Grangeville and Lewiston papers.)

<sup>20</sup> Letter of Ron Corrado, *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 22, 1983.

<sup>21</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983.

<sup>22</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983.

<sup>23</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, ca. Oct. 2, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>25</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, ca. October 19, 1983.

<sup>27</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Oct. 5, 1983.

<sup>28</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 13, 14, 1983.

<sup>29</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1983.

<sup>30</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 8, 1983.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Bill Hall, Lewiston, ID, May 17, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, ca. Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>33</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 10, 1983; Kim Chenoweth, interview.

<sup>34</sup> Telephone interview with Kathy Hedberg, Grangeville, ID, Sept. 11, 1995.

<sup>35</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1983.

<sup>36</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, ca. Sept. 11, 1983.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes, Grangeville City Council, Sept. 12, 1983; Kutner quote in Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 14, 1983.

<sup>38</sup> Ralph Bos to Love Israel and Serious Israel, n.d., in Grangeville File; a copy of the letter appeared in the *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>39</sup> Serious Israel to Mayor Ralph Bos, Sept. 3, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>40</sup> "To Whom It May Concern," Sept. 17, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>41</sup> Letter to Mr. Erdman [Love Israel], Sept. 15, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Love Israel, Sept. 17, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>43</sup> Letter addressed to "Love Israel Foundation," n.d., in Grangeville File.

<sup>44</sup> Letter to Serious and other Family Members, Sept. 21, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>45</sup> Letter to Love Israel, et al., Sept. 21, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to Love Israel, Sept. 15, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Modesty Israel, Sept. 26, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>48</sup> Bob Klecha to Love Family, Sept. 26, 1983, in Grangeville File.

<sup>49</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 18, 1983.

<sup>50</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 11, 1983.

<sup>51</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>52</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 28, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1983.

<sup>54</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, ca. Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>55</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>56</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 14, 1983.

<sup>57</sup> Kim Chenoweth, interview; Bill Hall interview; quotation from *Free Press*, Sept. 14, 1983.

<sup>58</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1983.

<sup>59</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Sept. 7, 1983; Elwyn Johnson, interview.

<sup>60</sup> Idaho County *Free Press*, Nov. 16, 1983.

<sup>61</sup> Kim Chenoweth, interview.

<sup>62</sup> Serious Israel, interview.

<sup>63</sup> Charles LeWarne, "Love Israel Family" (1998), 69; interview with Rand Miller, Seattle, Dec. 8, 1998. Stories about the breakup appeared in the Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Oct. 8, 1983, and the Idaho County *Free Press*, Oct. 12, 1983. For a critical analysis of a major factor in the Family's breakup, see Robert W. Balch, "Charisma and Corruption in the Love Family: Toward a Theory of Corruption in Charismatic Cults," in *Religion and the Social Order*, 5 (1995): 155-179.

<sup>64</sup> Bob Klecha to Serious [Israel], n. d., in Grangeville File; telephone interview with Bob Klecha, Aug. 31, 1995; Idaho County *Free Press*, Nov. 2, Dec. 7, 1983, and others.

<sup>65</sup> Lewiston *Morning Tribune*, Oct. 1, 1983.

<sup>66</sup> A copy of this letter from Serious Israel (Dec. 5, 1983) is in Grangeville File.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. This letter includes replies from Mose Durst, The Unification Church, Dec. 11, 1983, and Swami Anand Devalaya, the Rajneesh Investment Corporation, Jan. 23, 1984.

<sup>68</sup> Serious [Israel] to author, Aug. 21, 1995.

<sup>69</sup> Charles LeWarne, "Love Israel Family" (1998).