

## Book Review

by Peggy Mandin

### The Love Israel Family: Urbane Commune, Rural Commune

by Charles P. LeWarne

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This book documents the long and complex history of the Love Israel Family. Beginning on Queen Anne Hill in Seattle in the late 1960's the Family evolved from a small nucleus to a commune with 300 plus members. Their leader was a man who early on came to call himself Love Israel and he had a vision of creating a harmonious environment where people who shared certain beliefs could live together in peace. As he read and meditated he and a few other Family members began identifying their central beliefs.

The Family believed in living austere. The New Testament of the Bible was closely read and used as a guide for daily living. They had a goal of attaining spiritual clarity and believed that people were more important than possessions. It became common for people who joined the Family to change their first names to reflect "a virtue he or she possessed or desired to attain". Later, members adopted the surname Israel, as it meant "Children of God". Although Family beliefs originated from the Bible they came to feel strongly that optimism and personal revelations were more important

than doctrine and ritual.

Various Family members lived on Queen Anne Hill from 1968-1984, overlapping with the time members also lived at what was referred to as the Arlington Ranch, 1978-2004. They opened a restaurant called the Front Door Inn in the early 1970's on Queen Anne and later ran a restaurant called the Bistro in Arlington. Many other creative business ventures were launched over the years with varying degrees of longevity. Property was also purchased and sold in Alaska and Hawaii over the years, and a converted vessel they renamed Abundance was obtained with the idea of using it to fish Puget Sound and beyond.

There was a major split in the Family in the 1980's, causing members to go in several different directions. There are/have been many Family members with many talents and stories to tell, but perhaps those most familiar to this area are the ones listed below.

Bart Alexander and his wife joined the Family in the 1970's and "brought with them an orchard and do-it-yourself cannery Bart's family had owned in the Yakima Valley".

Later, after they decided to leave the Yakima Valley they located desirable property at a place called China Bend, in the northeastern corner of Washington outside of Kettle Falls. According to the book, as Family members they were called Loyalty and Victory Israel. At one point "Loyalty began to experiment with raising grapes, a crop unknown to the region". Despite a few ups and downs he did start a winery "using his organically grown grapes along with some imported ones". Garlic and other crops were grown, and Victory began to produce salsa, condiments, jams and jellies to sell. This business has evolved into what we know as China Bend Winery.

Steadfast (or Stedfast) Israel also joined the Family on Queen Anne Hill and began a long and successful business venture: coffee roasting. Now he roasts eight blends of coffee at China Bend Winery under the name "Stedy's Coffee".

The idea of creating a utopia, "a perfect society of people seeking perfection in a perfect place", is nothing new. The author of this book wrote his doctorate dissertation on five utopian communities in western

Washington; there are/have been many others throughout the United States and the world. He presents an interesting history of communes in the United States in the book's first chapter. His interest in utopias and communal living coincided with the beginning of the Love Israel Family, although he didn't meet Family members until the early 1990's. He began writing the book in 2001, with the cooperation of Love Israel, and one of the principal elders, Serious Israel.

The goal of utopian societies is to promote a way of living that involves living peacefully with each other, developing our humanness so that we live kind and giving lives, and advises tolerance and nurturing. The Love Israel Family did seem to embody this. They also participated in some activities, such as the use of drugs, which were controversial. Although most communities they lived in had a positive regard for them, some community members took issue with some of their activities. This book includes it all, and gives a comprehensive look at the Family's growth and evolution.

## Ms. B's Haven

by Peggy Mandin

Most of you will have stopped by, or at least noticed by now, that the espresso stand next to the barber shop has been reoccupied. As of April 1 the Blankenship's began operating a family enterprise there. Husband and wife team, Mike and Yvonne Blankenship, decided that they were at the stage in their lives when they could invest in a business that would be fun to run. Five of their six children and a daughter-in-law have joined them.

This espresso stand offers customers a lot of choices. Ms. B's Haven uses local Crandall's coffee. Mike feels this is a superior coffee because of the slower roasting method, leaving no oily aftertaste. Coffee choices include white coffee, regular espresso coffee and decaffeinated coffee. They also try to carry every flavor of syrup that is available for making drinks; ever heard of carrot cake or shortbread flavoring? They have it. Mike estimates they have about 150 bottles on the shelves, including sugar-free syrups. Milk choices include whole, skim or soy. Ms. B's Haven welcomes suggestions as Mike stated that they are "always looking for new ideas".

That's not all. In addition to the popular Americano, latte and mocha drinks Ms. B's Haven offers iced drinks, blended drinks, smoothies and Jet Tea, a fruit drink made in the blender with ice. There is a low-carb smoothie available as well as sugar-free sauces. Ms. B's Haven also has an option for the kids in the back seat (besides hot chocolate); steamed milk with just a bit of flavoring, a drink that would be tasty but not promote a sugar high and the resulting emotional behavior. (Of course, adults can order these, too.) Pastries are purchased locally from Patisserie D' Genevieve.

Owning a business is nothing new for Mike Blankenship. He owned and operated a full service gas station at Barney's Junction from 1982-1984, and a tire outlet that evolved into a muffler business from 1984-2000. He subsequently served as a Ferry County Commissioner for two terms, spanning the years 2000-2008. It was during his time as County Commissioner that Mike and Yvonne began thinking a lot about coffee. They found themselves "traveling a lot" and eating out along the way. The Blankenship's discovered that they were drawn to coffee shops in particular, and began to identify what they enjoyed about



This espresso stand offers a lot of choices.

each one.

As Mike and Yvonne discussed their own vision of what a coffee shop/espresso stand should be like, the possibility of operating one became more and more real to them. The "motivating factor" behind the purchase of Ms. B's Haven was to "meet people and provide a service to the community". Besides the emphasis on being a presence in the community their focus is on providing a consistent and quality product, never running out of ingredients and maintaining a clean and pleasant atmosphere for both customers and employees.

Ms. B's Haven (which could be pronounced misbehavin') is truly a family business. Yvonne, who worked as a stay-at-home mom for 40 years, has stepped into the role of barista; she shares her shift with daughter Jamilee, who also acts as bookkeeper. Daughters Jessica and Jeanae work as baristas. Jessica made drinks in the same building when it was Lucky's Latte and later Jeanae made drinks there when it was Biggins. Jeanae, who works as a cosmetologist in Spokane, fills in as she can. Daughter Jacqueline, and daughter-in-law Jacquelyn, also help out. Jacqueline has training in graphic arts and designs promotional materials for the business; a web page will hopefully follow. The Blankenship's son, Jonathan, does maintenance and other duties as assigned along with Mike.

Ms. B's Haven is open seven days a week. Hours are 6am-6pm Monday-Friday and 7am-6pm on weekends. It is located at 320 East Third, Kettle Falls, WA 99141 and can be reached by calling 509-738-4240. Be aware that there are two drive-up windows, one on each side of the building, so whether you are entering or leaving town it is convenient to stop. The people at Ms. B's Haven are waiting to meet you.

## Remembering the Ceremony of Tears

by Susan Urhausen

The Grand Coulee Dam stopped the flow of the Columbia River. It also altered a central cultural way of life for the Native Tribes that lived throughout this region. They met annually in the area where the Kettle Falls Historical Center now exists. They came to catch the salmon as they swam upriver to spawn. The Kettle Falls, now underwater just north of the big bridges over Lake Roosevelt/Columbia River, were perfect for harvesting great amounts of salmon. The gatherings were about more than just salmon. The various Tribes shared news, stories, music, goods and more as they met yearly.

The Ceremony of Tears commemorates the loss of those ways. Yearly, the Colville Confederated Tribes host a Salmon Feed near the submerged Kettle Falls to bring some of those ways back. This year it was held on June 12, postponed from an earlier date due to the loss of several members of the Inchelium community. On hand were demonstrations of life as it was when the river ran freely; trappers, weavers, teepees and more. A large tent was erected to house any number of drum circles. Salmon was prepared along with fry bread, Native foods, and other accompanying dishes like macaroni or potato salad. This bountiful array of food, demonstrations and singing is brought together absolutely free for those who attend. T-shirts were available this year commemorating the event for a donation.

The salmon prepared for this Salmon Feed was perhaps the best salmon I have ever eaten. That sentiment was shared by everyone I spoke with. The food was wonderful, there was plenty to eat for everyone, and most went home with bags of salmon if they wished. It is a heartwarming display of generosity by the Colville Tribe.

The aspect of this gathering that means something very deep to me is the drum circles, songs and dancing. I set out to attend this ceremony partially as a representative of the Kettle Falls Focus, to document and take pictures. I wound up not taking any pictures at all. The truth is I have an aversion to taking pictures of such ceremonies. The thought of taking pictures during the dances and drum circles feels the same to me as if I walked into a church during mass to photograph priests performing rites. Instead I listen and watch, immersed in the moment, mesmerized by the beat of the drums and the pitch of the voices. I feel very privileged to be able to witness these events.

I have lived in this area for over thirty years now and I have never seen the falls that were so central to the way of life for hundreds of years. It is something that I feel is missing, something I hope one day to see before I pass along. I can only imagine how deeply the Native Tribes feel that loss. I understand the reasons behind the erection of the Grand Coulee Dam and what it represents for modern times, but I can't help but mourn the loss of the past either. How spectacular those falls must have been, and to watch salmon being caught as they attempted to scale those falls, well, I would have loved to bear witness to that.

So, to the Confederated Colville Tribes, thank you. Thank you for sharing your food, your ceremonies, your drums and songs, and a glimpse into your traditional ways. It never fails to move me deeply in ways I can't describe. To anyone reading this who has never attended the Ceremony of Tears in Kettle Falls, put a note on your calendar and plan to come spend some time in 2011. It is a wonderful experience that we are all very lucky to have in our area.

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