EskDale, a religious commune and the Order of Aaron

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ESKDALE, A RELIGIOUS COMMUNE
AND THE ORDER OF AARON

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

EskDale, A Religious Commune
And the Order of Aaron

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The focus of this thesis will be a narrative overview of the religious commune at EskDale, Utah and its affiliated religious sect, the Order of Aaron. This study includes field research utilizing participant observation, informal interview and formal interview methods. Historical background information was gathered with a literature review and from newspaper clippings, letters and other documents supplied to me by the community at EskDale and the Order of Aaron.

Through this study I will review the founding of the religion and the community. I will also identify changes, previously undocumented, that have occurred during the last ten years. Descriptions of the life of the community will be based on my first impressions, gathered during a period of less than three weeks, at EskDale. Practices and beliefs of the Order of Aaron and EskDale will be compared to other religious and communal groups.
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I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the people of EskDale for their willingness to allow me to participate in their daily lives and do this narrative study. Their gracious hospitality and kindness will not be forgotten.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I first became acquainted with the religiously based commune at EskDale, Utah while attending a course designed for educators at the Great Basin National Park from June 16-20, 1997. Three male teachers from the community were in attendance. I was very impressed when one of them mentioned the nineteenth century Swedish violinist, Ole Bull. This got my full attention, because one of my earliest memories was visiting the site of Ole Bull’s failed intentional community on Kettle Creek in Potter County, Pennsylvania. This led to further conversation and the questioning on my part of the beliefs of the community on polygamy. They assured me that they were not a polygamous group and that they considered themselves to be a fundamentalist Christians. Naturally, I continued to ask questions. Finally, probably out of desperation, they invited me to come to EskDale with them for the afternoon and to share their evening meal on June 19, 1997.

The three EskDale teachers and I set out across the desert in a community owned van on Thursday afternoon. All freely and openly answered any questions that I asked, discussed their role as teachers in the community and how they had come to be at EskDale. Although I had been told on the drive over that the people of EskDale considered themselves to be the literal descendents of Levi and Aaron, I was still a bit startled to see a Menorah on the sign at the entrance to the community. Soon after that,
I was given an extensive tour by the principal and music director of the Shiloah Valley Christian Schools, preschool through grade 13. After he related the history and theological basis of the community, I was introduced to his wife, members of the community, the recently retired Chief High Priest, Dr. Robert Conrad, known as Brother Bob, and the newly ordained Chief High Priest, Dr. John Conrad. John Conrad is the son of Robert Conrad. I corresponded with a member of the community a few times after that and followed up on the visit by reading more about the community and its religious beliefs. At that point I became aware that all of my available sources were almost ten years old, most far older, and that they did not correspond with what I had observed. The differences were visible and had to have had a great impact on the community.

In July of the following year I chanced to meet a couple whose farm is just west of EskDale. They are members of the church who are relatives of the writer of three books about the community and its religious beliefs. They had information with them on the Fourth of July celebration held at EskDale for the surrounding area each year and they graciously gave me a copy. We remained in occasional contact.

On the Fourth of July, 1999, my husband and I went to EskDale for their celebration, which was also a reunion for the school. I continued to be fascinated with the community, their beliefs and the changes that I had become aware of. I could not seem to let go! Here was a community that was a successful commune, according to the criteria established by Kanter (1972), of over twenty-five years of existence. The EskDale community had a history of nearly half a century and it was not listed in most books on the subject.
Hypothesis and Proposal

I decided, after discussions with my advisors, that the best way to approach the documentation of the many recent changes and their implications, was by utilizing participant observation methods at EskDale or Shiloah Valley Communities, to provide information for a narrative style overview, based primarily on my initial impressions, of the lifestyle of the community and its religious beliefs. This narrative was not intended to provide a cohesive, contextual historical study. That would have been impractical to achieve with the level of research that I conducted. This study is significant in light of the fact that little has been published concerning the community or its religious beliefs for over ten years.

My hypothesis for this study stated that changes have occurred because there has been a relaxation of structure and ritual restrictions as the community has grown older, reflecting a more liberal attitude and increased openness. This relaxation of structure and ritual restriction implies an increased confidence in the survival of the group and lessened fear of loss of community identity.

My proposal contained questions for which I had found no answers in the available research on the religion or the community and those that would provide information about the current lifestyle and beliefs of the community.

Obtaining Permissions for the Study

Methods Employed

During the spring of 2000, I conducted library research on communal organization
and religion. I also reviewed materials specifically concerning the Order of Aaron, also known as the Aaronic Order, House of Aaron and the True Church of God, as well as the community at EskDale.

In June of 2000 I obtained permission to attend one of the major feasts of the year, Pentecost. It was during this Pentecost weekend that I presented a research proposal and asked the permission of church leadership to conduct a thesis study. After I had their permission, I wrote to the community council, supplied a copy of my proposal, and was granted permission to stay in the community and conduct research using the participant observation method. All members of the community were informed in their weekly meeting of the purpose of my stay. I then visited for a week in August after which I toured the area north of the valley known as Partoun and nearby Pleasant Valley. In September I returned for another week in order to observe the schools in operation. My husband stayed for the first three days of this visit and volunteered his labor to the community. He found out first hand that being over sixty-five does not mean a physically inactive retirement in EskDale!

Almost all the information that I gathered was “in the field” while participating in the life of the community. The exception to that was the formal interview with David Sturlin, First High Priest of the Order of Aaron, primarily concerning theology. I asked questions while helping with the cooking and dishes, during meals, loading wood, before and after meetings, while visiting in homes, or as things happened throughout the day. I took no notes during these times but did keep a journal of the day and recorded observations as soon as I could. I did take notes during the formal interview. The school principal gave me access to newspaper clippings concerning the community, as well as some in-house
flyers and letters that helped to establish dates and broaden my understanding and knowledge of the history of the community.

I have arranged this narrative in as much of a chronological order as possible. I start with a biography of the founder, Maurice L. Glendenning. Knowing something about the personal history of Dr. Glendenning, along with his relationship to his early followers is crucial to understanding the religion and the people of EskDale today. Their beliefs, social structure and ties with other religious groups would not have developed and changed as they have without the long-term influence of their founder and first leader, Dr. Maurice L. Glendenning.
CHAPTER TWO

DR. MAURICE GLENDENNING

It is important to understand that the Order of Aaron does not look upon Dr. Glendenning as a prophet. He is regarded as a servant of the Angel Elias whose calling, or duty, was to record and transcribe the words given to him by the Angel Elias. Dr. Glendenning, however, does fit the definition of a prophet put forth by Anthony Wallace. He heard a supernatural voice, had visions and formulated a new code of living. (Baer 1988:46)

Blanche W. Beeston (1957) wrote an officially sanctioned biography about Dr. Glendenning. She was a loyal member of the church and until her death on July 13, 2000, and was a member of the EskDale Community. Dr. Glendenning and his wife, Helen, supplied her with much of the information in this book. She and her family had a long association with the Glendenning, enabling her to draw on personal knowledge.

There are still a number of people who are living in EskDale who have family stories, as well as their own stories, of experiences with Dr. Glendenning. Several of those living at EskDale who knew Dr. Glendenning have described him as having been a brilliant man whose range of knowledge and curiosity, especially about the earth, was exceptional. Dr. Glendenning has been regarded as a divinely inspired leader by his followers. An elderly lady told me that she believed that the heavens wept when Dr. Glendenning was sent to earth. Their descriptions correspond to the definition of charisma by Max Weber. (Weber 1947:184) He defines charisma: "A certain quality of
an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary people and
treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least significantly exceptional
powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are
regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual
concerned is treated as a leader.” There in no doubt that Dr. Maurice Glendenning fits
into this definition and can truly be classified as a charismatic leader.

Family Background and Early Life

of Maurice L. Glendenning

Maurice Lerrie Glendenning was born February 15, 1891 at Randolph, Kansas, the
first child of Milton Worth Glendenning and Ruth Phyena Hamilton. His father was a
minister and itinerant photographer. After moving from Kansas, the family resided in
Oregon, Montana, Nebraska and then once again in Oregon. During Maurice
Glendenning’s childhood, the family was associated with several Protestant churches but
were not members of any of them. (Erickson 1969:7). Dr. Glendenning described his
unusual childhood experiences as follows:

It was at McMinnville, Oregon at the age of seven I first heard music, which
sounded very much like a stringed orchestra. The music did not sound far
away but faint. It sounded as though it was thirty or forty pieces of an
orchestra. I always heard it when I was out away from town, picking berries
or fishing. I told my father about it; after much persuasion he finally came
down to the creek with me. After waiting about an hour the music was heard
again. I called my father’s attention to it immediately, but he was unable to hear it... (Beeston 1957: 32-34)

The music continued at intervals over a period of several years, but gradually the music receded, and the singing became more prominent until:

I was finally able to hear a certain voice above the other voices in the choir. This voice seemed to have a heavier tone with a slight foreign tinge; however I have never been able to associate this dialect with any language I have heard. This voice eventually became so clear and distinct in the singing and so familiar that I would be able to recognize it anywhere.

About the age of fourteen I began receiving and writing poems. Some of these poems were presented to my school teacher, professor Hicks, by my father. He told my father that I was undoubtedly copying the poems from some books. This, however, did not satisfy my father, for he was well acquainted with all the books in the home and knew there were no such poems in these books... (Beeston 1957: 32-34)

Dr. Glendenning went on to state that he continued to hear the poetry and music until he was about sixteen when, he began to hear messages that he wrote down, but did not understand.

Throughout his childhood, his father had told Dr. Glendenning that he was an Aaronite, or descendent of Aaron, therefore different from other people. He was required to uphold standards of conduct that included refraining from the use of tobacco and alcohol and not using curse words. (Beeston 1957: 32-34)
Maurice Glendenning married Helen Ruth Meeker on March 8, 1916. (Beeston 1957:35) Soon after, he attended and graduated from Palmer College of Chiropractic. (Baer 1988:51) The couples’ only child, Myrth Lucile, was born June 4, 1920. (Erickson 1969:10) During the early years of his marriage, Dr. Glendenning continued to receive messages. He did not tell his wife of these at first, having become wary because of the comments of minister that the messages were from Satan, and because he did not understand them himself. (Beeston 1957 35; 36) He stopped recording the messages. This resulted in a curse being put upon him by the heavenly voice. The curse was to be literally fulfilled. The Book of Elias, now known as the Levitical Writings, records this with the date January 20, 1923. The curse stated that he would be a roamer of the earth for seven years, that his clothes would be rags, that he would be poor, hungry, people would say evil things about him and he would have to scratch for fuel from the earth. A portion of the curse is as follows:

Because of your disobedience and because that you have offended me and grieved me, by giving no heed unto my saying unto you, and that you have not written the things which have been given unto you to write, you have brought upon your head a curse and you shall not prosper not your household.

You shall become poor and hungry and your house shall suffer and for seven years shall poverty reign over you and your house.

You shall be a roamer on the earth, but there shall be found no place for you until I shall plant you in a place by a water to finish your work. (Beeston 1957:37-38)

The Glendennings were living in Independence, Kansa at the time of this curse. His
practice in Kansas dwindled after receiving the curse, and he moved his family to Oklahoma. From there they went on to Colorado Springs where they were still unable to make a living, despite his having resumed recording the words of the voice. Dr. Glendenning then moved to Salt Lake City area where he was able to find work and send for his family. (Beeston 1957:39-43) The family moved to Provo, Utah in 1928 where Dr. and Mrs. Glendenning were baptized as Latter Day Saints (Mormons) on April 14, 1929. (Beeston 1957:44) Dr. Glendenning began to discuss his writings with people in his church ward and found that there were those who were interested in studying his new revelations. The little clock shop that he was running became a convenient meeting place for the group.

The writings themselves had been recorded in a short hand that Dr. Glendenning called the Adamic language, or language of Adam. This language could be read by no one else and had been taught to Dr. Glendenning by the voice, which identified itself as the Angel Elias. (Baer 1988:49) By the time that the group began to study the writings, Dr. Glendenning had organized them into sections that started at number 137, as he had been commanded by the voice in 1923. This was significant because the revelation of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants Book ended with the number 136. (Beeston 1957:50)

Dr. Glendenning was called before the local bishop who turned copies of the writings over to the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS church or Mormon), Joseph Fielding Smith. Smith issued an official Church declaration in April 1931, which stated that if the Church officials had not received revelations by
that time, certainly one who did hold the proper priesthood authority could not have received revelations. (Erickson 1969:12).

Dr. Glendenning and trusted followers sealed the writings in copper boxes. One box was sealed in 1930 and another in 1931. The boxes were wrapped in cloth and buried until they were turned over to the Order of Aaron in 1946, where they remain today. (Beeston 1957:71-76)

Economic conditions had not improved for the Glendenning family. In the spring of 1932 the family, along with two families of his followers, moved to Alton, Utah. Conditions were very difficult and the families had to live in tents. When their LDS neighbors found out about the beliefs of Dr. Glendenning and his group, they reacted with hostility and refused them any kind of assistance.

A member of the EskDale community shared the following stories with me shortly after the visit to EskDale of Dr. Glendenning’s daughter. She has come to EskDale to celebrate her eightieth birthday in June of 2000. While she expressed affection for her father and respect for his work, her stories provide some insight into the humiliation that she had felt. She related that when living in Alton, while she was twelve, she needed a pair of shoes to wear to school. One of the men of the group was asked to get them for her when he went to town. He returned with a pair of heavy boys’ high top shoes that had been on sale. She had no choice but to wear them and suffered terribly from humiliation because of the teasing by her classmates at school. She also stated that earlier in her life when she was living in Provo, her mother had taken her to the park. This park had a stream with a cemented bottom where children were wading. It was a very hot day, but her mother refused to let her wade, saying only that they did not do things like that.
The family next moved to LaVerkin, Utah in 1934. Information about the new revelations followed them and they again met with hostility. Myrth Lucile Glendenning graduated from Hurricane High School in 1938. (Beeston 1957:86) She remained a member of the LDS Church, and her parents respected her decision.

The Glendennings moved to the Los Angeles area in 1938 where Dr. Glendenning resumed his chiropractic profession. (Beeston 1957:89). In Utah there remained a group who met to study the Writings.

The Formative Steps in Establishing the Order of Aaron

March 21, 1938 marked a major event in the restoration of the priesthood of Levi and Aaron. Eleven miles west of Crystal Springs, Nevada, which is north and west of Alamo, Nevada, Dr. Glendenning climbed a hill about 200 yards off the road. A man in the EskDale Community related to me that it was not unusual for Dr. Glendenning to do something like that. He would often stop on motor trips and get out to look over the area and collect rock samples.

While on this hill he again heard the voice of the Angel Elias. The Angel Elias called Dr. Glendenning by his sacred name, Aubrey, which I was told meant “Ruler of Spirits”. The Angel Elias restored to him the keys, or authority, of the Priesthood of Aaron and brushed oil through his hair, thus anointing him. This anointing by the Angel Elias gave Dr. Glendenning the authority to baptize, receive consecrations and begin the work of the restored Priesthood Levi and Aaron. (Beeston 1957:112-116). The mountain where
Dr. Glendenning was anointed by the Angel Elias, later was named Mt. Aaron. A brass plaque was erected there in 1954 to commemorate the event.

The first consecrations, or offerings of all worldly goods, were brought to the now recognized Bishop Glendenning in November of 1942. These first members of the Order of Aaron, a group of about twenty people, were given instructions by Bishop Glendenning to meet and serve the sacrament, or communion, at midnight on New Year’s Eve and every week thereafter. (Beeston 1957:96). An organizational diagram called the Aaronic Wheel was copyrighted July 24, 1943 and is in the preface of the Book of Elias, also known as the Levitical Writings. Articles of Incorporation for the Order of Aaron were filed in Utah on August 18, 1943. (Beeston 1957: 97)

The keys to the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood were transferred by Bishop Glendenning to Edwin Lee on August 21, 1943. Lee was then ordained, by Bishop Glendenning, as the Presiding Patriarch of the House of Aaron. Lee was instructed to officiate in restoring the keys of the Aaronic priesthood for others. This transfer of authority took place on what is now known as Mount Zion, in the southwest Heber Valley. This hill is also known as the Wasatch Memorial Hill. (Beeston 1957 122-124)

Two and a half years after the official Articles of Incorporation of the Order of Aaron had been filed, in January of 1945, Maurice Glendenning was excommunicated from the LDS Church for being the “Instigator of the Aaronic Order”. Later that year several of his faithful followers were also excommunicated for affiliating with the Order of Aaron. (Erickson 1969:35)

Most of the early followers of Bishop Glendenning were members of the Mormon or LDS Church. The acceptance of modern day prophecy by LDS members might have
caused them to be more ready to accept the new revelations received by Maurice Glendenning. Their former leaders, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were recognized as having received revelations that were recorded in the LDS or Mormon book called the Doctrine and Covenants. The appearance of an angel also was not a strange concept to this group of converts. They already held the belief that the Angel Moroni had appeared to Joseph Smith. The messages of the new revelations would seem to be a logical extension of the beliefs that LDS members already held.

In March of 1945 Bishop Glendenning set out to find proof of his lineage. The story of his search began in an unnamed eastern city where he happened to find a man familiar with the name of Glendenning. This man said he had waited seventy years to return something that had belonged to the Glendenning family. The returned item was a document on parchment. The man had taken it from an old trunk that he had found in the attic of a farmhouse. The parchment was determined to be of catskin on which a blessing was written in colonial style letters. It was dated 1799 and was a blessing from John Glendenning to his son, confirming that they were "The lineage of Joseph, Ephraim and Aaron." The catskin is now in the possession of the Order of Aaron. (Beeston 1957:146-148).

While in Gentry County, Missouri on July 4, 1945, as he was exploring the site of the home of his grandfather, Henry W. Glendenning, he discovered a marble slab on which was inscribed, in V shaped letters, a blessing from Henry W. Glendenning to Milton Worth Glendenning, his father. The slab was shipped to the Order of Aaron headquarters in Murray, Utah. A short time later the authenticity of the marble slab was attested to by Milton Worth Glendenning, father of Maurice Glendenning, in a notarized document.
dated August 11, 1945. (Beeston 1957:150-157). Bishop Glendenning had established his American lineage to the satisfaction of his followers. On August 3, 1945, new Articles of Incorporation were filed forming the Corporation of the President of the Aaronic Order, M.L. Glendenning, President. (Beeston 1957:126).

Forging the Character of the Order of Aaron

During the time of the incorporation of the Order and afterwards, Bishop Glendenning was often traveling. The actual daily operation of the business of the Order of Aaron appears to have been the collective endeavor of devoted disciples. Bishop Glendenning did provide the inspiration for the group and laid the theological foundations. (Baer 1988:56)

One long time resident of EskDale stated that even if Bishop Glendenning was not physically present he seemed to always know what was happening. One lady stated that some saw Bishop Glendenning as a hard task-master. Another stated that it was not his place to be present in the EskDale community. He had other work to do.

During World War II, Dr. Glendenning wore a military-type khaki uniform to denote membership in a chiropractic association dedicated to the war effort. It is a testimony to the great faith of the founding members of the Order that they stood behind Bishop Glendenning when he was imprisoned for sixty days at the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri from August 31, 1945 through October 29, 1945. He was sentenced for allegedly wearing a soldier's uniform with the insignia of a captain in the U.S. Medical Corps. He was, for a short time, removed from the Presidency of the Order. (Baer 1988:55)
In 1954, Glendenning took his genealogical search to Great Britain. He had been receiving literature on British Israelism for many years previous to this trip (Baer 1976:162) British Israelism teaches that not only was Abraham the founding father of the Jewish and Islamic faiths, he was also the ancestor of the people of Europe through Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s twelve sons. Joseph, one of the twelve sons, had sons, Ephraim and Manasseh who were adopted by Jacob whose name was changed by God to Israel. British Israel theory maintains that Judah, the founder of the Jewish people and son of Jacob, did not inherit the birthright and the name of Israel, so the descendents of Ephraim and Manasseh are therefore the covenant people. These are Anglo-Saxon people of England and now the United States and considered the “lost tribes”. (Ingram in Miller 1995:121)

The lineages of Levi, Aaron and Judah were also among those who migrated north. In her Order of Aaron sanctioned book, Blanche Beeston writes that the brother of Jesus, James the Just, who was of the line of Aaron and Zadok as well as Judah, with his son, Dan, moved north from Jerusalem and that later Christian Israelites migrated to Britain (Beeston 1966:156-162). It is also believed that the kings of Great Britain are of the blood of Judah. One reason for this belief is that the lion, the tribal symbol of Judah, is found on the Royal Arms of Britain. (Beeston 1966:109) British Israelism is not a new concept. It has been evident in America since its founding and enjoyed popular belief in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (Ingram in Miller 1995:120; Howlett 1894)

During Glendenning’s stay in England and Scotland he constructed a genealogy to show his lineage back to Adam de Glendonwyn of the tribe of Glen Dan whose lineage was of Levi, Aaron and Zadok and the gospel of Jesus Christ (Beeston 1966:171)
established him as being of the lineages of both Judah and Levi (Beeston 1966:109).

Bishop Glendenning’s influence was long lasting. He encouraged some young people to attend a Bible College operated by the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Colorado Springs starting in 1954. A couple of others attended a Quaker College. Bishop Glendenning also encouraged contacts with many other Christian groups including the Hutterites, Christian evangelists, and Pentecostal preachers. These contacts introduced new ideas into the group and helped to distance members of the Order of Aaron from their Utah neighbors.

Bishop Glendenning died in October of 1969. He was buried in Arizona, the exact location unknown. Years before he had requested that there not be a funeral and that the grave should not be marked. He feared that his enemies would desecrate his body or that his followers would memorialize him. (Baer 1988:87) Social Security records show that he died in October 1969 and list his permanent home as Springville, Utah.

After the death of Maurice Glendenning, Dr. Robert Conrad became the Chief High Priest of the Order. Glendenning had no sons to carry on his work, and his daughter remained a member of the LDS Church. Dr. Conrad, referred to by members as Brother Bob, was an Assistant Professor of Education at the University of Utah and holds an Education Doctorate degree. Before going into education he was an accountant. Dr. Robert Conrad led the Order from 1969 until August 5, 1996 when his son, Dr. John Conrad, a veterinarian, took over.

The Conrad’s have led the Order of Aaron through inspiration, while Maurice Glendenning led by revelation. Bishop Glendenning received a revelation dated February 8, 1940, that stated there would be no more leadership by revelation until the coming of Jesus Christ.
Maurice Glendenning led his followers down a theological path that diverged widely from that of their Utah neighbors.
CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION

Beliefs

The Order of Aaron, also referred to as the Aaronic Order, the House of Aaron, the True Church of God with His Levites and other titles, is part of a group of churches and sects who believe that “God is restoring lineal Israel and that this restoration will be accomplished before the return of the savior.” (Conrad 1984:3) While the Mormon or LDS Church is also a restoration theology based church, the Order of Aaron is not affiliated with it. The Order of Aaron further states that they are not derived from the LDS Church, in spite of the facts that most early members were former LDS Church members and that the Levitical Writings started with the number 137. The Order of Aaron does not use the LDS or Mormon scriptures and will not comment on the authenticity of those scriptures. Their new revelations of the Angel Elias, now the Levitical Writings are viewed as the instructions for the restored tribe of Levi and Aaron. The Levitical Writings do not replace the Bible and are subordinate to it. The Bible is the basic scripture and the final authority in all of the practices and the doctrine of the Order of Aaron. (Conrad 1984:3)

The members of the Order of Aaron believe that, as stated in the Old Testament of the Bible, the Levitical Priesthood was given to Levi and his descendents in 1736 B.C. and was to be theirs forever. (Deuteronomy 10: 8-9) The Aaronic priesthood was given to Aaron, the older brother of Moses, and a grandson of Levi. The priesthood of Aaron was
to be passed down to his male descendents. (Exodus 40:13-15) Therefore, while all those who are descendents of Aaron are also Levites, not all Levites are Aaronites. The Levites not of Aaron are to assist the Aaronites in their priestly duties. (Beeston 1957:207-208) It is further believed that the only line of Aaron to remain pure, and that was Zadok. So, only those who are descendents of both Aaron and Zadok can hold the hereditary Aaronic Priesthood today. (Baer 1976:83) There is provision for others to become the sons of Aaron through adoption. (Beeston 1957: 207-208) The priests who reside at EskDale today are holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, and believe that they are descendents of the lines of Levi, Aaron and Zadok.

The priesthood of Levi and his descendents has been known by many names including Levites, Aaronites, Zadocites, and Essenes. Many of these priests then became followers of Jesus Christ early in the New Testament times. The priesthood of Levi, Aaron and Zadok continued on, often hidden, until it was officially restored through the Angel Elias to Maurice Glendenning. (Conrad 1984:3)

A letter by Dr. Robert Conrad to Dr. J. Gordon Melton, Director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion, dated June 12, 1984 discusses the literal restoration of lineal Israel. These are important concepts to the understanding the belief in the role of the people at EskDale. Dr. Conrad explains that there are three components that must be considered in the restoration of Israel. “The first is Judah-Benjamin, also known as the Southern Kingdom in Israel, which is now in part returning to Palestine and fulfilling many of the prophesies relating to that land. Second is the Joseph-Ephraim group, known as the Northern Kingdom, now mostly in Europe and the U.S. These are known as the “lost” tribes. The LDS work is with this portion of the tribes of Israel. The third is the
Tribe of Levi and Aaron, the priests and teachers in literal Israel.” (Conrad 1984:1) It is the Order of Aaron belief that they were called out of the house of Ephraim to their true place as descendents of Levi and Aaron through the power and authority that the Angel Elias gave to Dr. Glendenning when he restored the true keys of the Priesthood of Aaron.

It is important to note that the Order of Aaron members do not believe that they are the only descendents of Levi and Aaron. They do believe that the process of sorting out the peoples and identifying them with their tribal heritage has begun. One of the things that they point out is the use of DNA testing which is helping to prove the relatedness of groups of people. A group with which the Order of Aaron has associated is the Messianic Israel Alliance. This group is comprised of Messianic believers in “the fulfillment of prophecy that the houses of Israel and Judah will be reunited.” (Pathlight 2000:2)

Members of the Order of Aaron believe in the literal gathering of the tribes of Israel in the latter days. They are, therefore, being purified and made a priesthood body today that will function in the restored total Israel. This priesthood body, as the descendents of Levi and Aaron, will officiate for all the restored tribes of Israel and will then be sent among them for that purpose. They believe purification must be done before the coming of Christ and is being accomplished during their residency in the isolated desert of western Utah. (Beeston 1966) There they have established a place of refuge like the ancient Levitical cities, where they will be able to survive the coming time of tribulation and be ready to serve as priests and teachers when the Messiah returns. They feel that this event is imminent.

While there is literal interpretation of the Bible in most instances there is a revelation in the Levitical Writings that supports evolutionary theory. (Buchanan 1972:3)
The Order of Aaron is a Sabbatarian group, meaning that they believe that the Sabbath is on Saturday. However, in contrast to the Jewish people, they start their observance on Saturday and not at sundown on Friday. They also observe the three holy feasts as directed in the Old Testament, which are Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. In contrast to the Old Testament practices, there are no animal sacrifices held during these feasts. The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, is also observed. The Book of Leviticus dietary prohibitions concerning pork, shrimp, crab, lobster, shellfish or any other creatures that crawl or creep, are also strictly observed. They do not however, "keep kosher" or observe other of what they see as Jewish legalisms.

The members of the Order of Aaron also regard themselves as fundamentalist Christians who are following practices set forth in the Old Testament while also "exercising the belief, as many Charismatic Christians do, in salvation by grace through Jesus Christ and the exercise of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit." (Buckingham 1988:29) These gifts include speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, knowledge and wisdom. During the 1960's and continuing into the mid 1970's there was a major charismatic shift in beliefs brought about mainly by the young people who were exposed to evangelists and preachers who visited the community. Among those who had an effect on the community was Jerry Owens who was known as "the walking Bible". Contacts were also established with Pentecostal groups, one of which was the Order of the Lamb, a Jesus People group from Sonoma, California. Many of the young people embraced the personal relationship with Jesus preached by these groups. The practice of speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, was introduced as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the mid- seventies. Ultimately the
charismatic movement led to questions about the validity of Levite teaching by some of
the young people. This led to tensions within the group and the expulsion of two young
leaders. (Baer 1988:171-177) About thirty young people left the Order during this time.

Charismatic influences can be observed today at the worship and praise services
where arms are raised in prayer and praise, people clap to the rhythm of hymns and
spiritual songs and prayer can become so intense and fervent that people do speak in
tongues.

During a formal interview with the First High Priest, David Sturlin, the concepts of
heaven and hell were discussed. He views heaven as a paradise, the Kingdom of God,
where those who have lived good lives will go to be with Jesus. He did mention the
biblical concept that there were many mansions in heaven. In contrast, he believes that
those who have committed great sins will be in another place that can be called hell. This
is a traditional Christian view and shows, at the very least, a decrease in emphasis, if not
an actual moving away from the concept of there being three kingdoms or degrees of
glory in Heaven as believed in by both the LDS and fundamentalist Mormon polygamous
groups. (Baer 1976:147)

The Order of Aaron believes in the Trinity, a traditional Christian view, while the
LDS and fundamentalist Mormon polygamous groups believe that there are three
separate entities. The Order of Aaron believes that men were foreordained or predestined
to come to earth and fulfill certain responsibilities and those who come to earth were the
fallen and need to be redeemed in this life. This is not the same as the Mormon view of
the preexistence where untold numbers of souls are awaiting physical bodies in order to
progress to Godhood.
Another belief that separates the Order of Aaron from its fundamentalist Mormon neighbors is that of a man becoming a God over his descendents in the next life. (Jankowiak 2000:268) The Order of Aaron believes that in the after life some may attain a religious leadership role, like Christ did here on earth. (Baer: 1976:146)

Once again I will repeat that the practice of polygamy is not a part of the religious belief or lifestyle of the Order of Aaron, or the people of EskDale. In fact, in the most recent edition of the Pathlight, a publication of the Order of Aaron, there was a response by Ken Hill of Partoun, an Order of Aaron member, to a recent article in the Salt Lake Tribune about Tom Greene, a polygamist, who is now on trial in Juab County Utah. The article associated the Order of Aaron and EskDale with polygamy. Ken Hill writes, “We do not practice polygamy and have never practiced polygamy. Polygamy is contrary to our teachings. I consider polygamy an abomination and a perverted lifestyle.” In the same issue of the Pathlight there is a special article that explains the usage of the term House of Aaron, rather than Order of Aaron or Aaronic Order, in the publication. It states that, “Many polygamist groups use “Order” in their names. Some people, as soon as they hear the word, make unfortunate connections. More significantly, however, House of Aaron is more consistent with biblical usage.” (Pathlight 2000:2) The thoughts of other members on the name issue were solicited. There seems to be the possibility of an official name change in the future.

The beliefs of the Order of Aaron are similar in many ways to those of the World Wide Church of God while under its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. Armstrong espoused British Israelite theory, and believed that the “history of the true church of God could be traced back to Jesus, and God’s “chosen people” could be genetically traced
back to Adam.” (Ingram in Miller 1995:120) These teachings in their radical form, especially during the 1970’s, led to the Christian Identity movement, “currently the dominant religious affiliation of the extreme right-wing political movement in America.” (Ingram in Miller 1995:122). I am not stating that the Order of Aaron is connected with the radical views that developed out of Armstrong’s teachings. There are, however, similarities to the beliefs of the Order of Aaron today and those of Armstrong’s original Worldwide Church of God on diet, non-violence, celebration of Levitical holy days, a Saturday Sabbath, baptism by immersion, and the imminent return of Jesus to the earth which will start a utopian millennium. Armstrong also believed that “the proper place for “God’s elect” during the “Great Tribulation” which immediately precedes the Second Coming of Jesus, was in “a place of safety” far from the mayhem” (Ingram in Miller 1995:123), as do the people of the Order of Aaron. The members of the Order of Aaron, however, believe in the concepts of the Trinity and of evolution. These concepts are not part of the beliefs of Herbert W. Armstrong or his original World Wide Church of God.

One of my proposal questions was concerning the Angel Elias and his role. It was explained to me in the interview with David Sturlin, that Elias is a messenger who came to restore the house of Levi, and do all things necessary in preparation for the arrival of Jesus. During this same interview David Sturlin explained that the work of the Order of Aaron is more a ministry than a denomination.

Ordinances, Sacraments and Rituals

Ordinances, sacraments and rituals provide continuity, promote common identity and assist in renewing commitment. The Order of Aaron and the people of EskDale realize
the importance of these aspects of life. Rituals are practiced daily, from the routines regulated by the bell to the prayers and hymns before meals. Sacrament services are held weekly and ordinances are performed at scheduled times throughout the year.

Infants, when just a week or two old, are blessed by a priest. Circumcision of boys is for cleanliness and is encouraged. Baptism is by immersion at age eight or older in the Anabaptist tradition. At EskDale baptisms are performed north of the community at Eden Spring, where the waters flow down a waterfall and into a beautiful pool. Confirmation, by the laying on of hands, to confer membership into the church used to be done directly after baptism. Now the practice is to wait until adulthood or at least the legal age of eighteen.

Communion services are held on a weekly basis. Any person who has been baptized by immersion, at the age of eight or after, is welcome to partake of communion. Communion is served by ordained priests and consists of bread and wine. These are regarded as literally the body and blood of Christ—transubstantiation. This differs from the LDS communion use of bread and water.

Once a month on the first Sunday, a testimony meeting is held where people are encouraged to speak from the heart about things they are thankful for or that are troubling them. This practice also is followed in the LDS Church. The speakers in the service I attended at EskDale did not speak using a standard format as is often heard in LDS services.

The Feast of the Pentecost in June, formerly called June Convocation, allowed me the opportunity to take part in a great many of the rituals, ordinances and sacraments practiced by the Order of Aaron. This feast is one of the three to be observed as directed
in the Old Testament of the Bible. The others are Passover and Tabernacles. These are the times when people are to gather together in celebration. While these are times of celebration, community standards are upheld. People who attended the Feast of Pentecost were reminded in the schedule flyer to dress modestly. No shorts or sleeveless shirts were allowed. Off-road vehicles and firearms were also prohibited.

Pentecost or Shavuot is a true spiritual feast. Meetings began on Friday evening after dinner. The bell sounded at 7:20 for the 7:30 service of introduction to the Feast. The musicians were seated on the left and on the right was a tall candle, an eternal flame. There were twelve marks on the base of the lamp stand, four on each side. I presumed them to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The service opened with a welcome and hymns, many with a lively beat and a joyous “Judaic” sound. People were encouraged to clap their hands with the music and raise their arms at the name of the Lord. The scriptures that were the theme of the Feast, Acts 3:19,20; Acts 1:8 and the gifts of the Holy Spirit were introduced by the priest, David Sturlin. His wife gave her personal testimony, followed by more hymns of a joyous, praising nature.

I was startled when the Chief High Priest encouraged a few of the members to come to the front and dance the hora in celebration. I had been told that even though music is emphasized, dancing is not something that they do. It was later explained to me that dancing in praise and worship of the Lord is not the same as social dancing. The same concept is applied to music. Some music is not acceptable, such as that which contains profanity or is of a Satanic nature.

The Sabbath Day began with the bell at 7:20 and breakfast at 7:30. The bell rang again at 9:20 for the Sanctuary and Communion services at 9:30. There were close to
eighty people including relatives from other areas, residents of the surrounding area and people from Partoun. There were about eleven teenagers and residents of the community absent that weekend because of their attendance at Navigators Bible Camp in Colorado Springs.

Blue curtains at the front of the chapel were slightly open with a filmy veil behind. On each side stood a patriarchal cross raised on three steps with crosses on the end of each arm. In the middle, between the crosses was a menorah on a raised stand. To the right, in front and on a lower level, was a small altar with a shield and cross, whose base was pointed like a sword. In the front middle was another altar with a bowl called a laver and to the left sat the musicians. Near them was the flat, low altar of sacrifice. A lamp stand with the large candle stood in front of this. The shofar or ram's horn was blown three times to signal the start of the service. The Chief High Priest, wearing a tallith, or prayer shawl of wool with blue stripes and tasseled ends, asked everyone to remove their shoes. Prayers, responses, and hymns to be used at the laver and at each altar were all included in a folder given to each member of the congregation. As the service proceeded the priest explained the meaning of the objects and areas of worship. The patriarchal cross, the cross on the Glendenning coat of arms from Scotland, was said to represent the tribes of Judah on the center bar, Levi on the right bar and Ephraim on the left. All who were baptized after the age of eight by immersion were invited to participate in communion. It was served to the congregation who remained seated. The bread was shaped into very small individual loaves because the Order of Aaron does not believe in breaking the sacramental bread since it is seen as the body of Christ. The wine, blood of Christ, was served in tiny glasses. People were instructed by the priest to take the plate or
server with the right hand and partake of the host with the left. He also encouraged the congregation to clap to the music and raise their arms in prayer throughout the service. The priest reminded the congregation that they were all Levites several times.

The service that followed was a celebration of ordination and appointments. A young man was seated on a chair in front of the congregation. Four priests laid their hands on his head and anointed him as a true son of Aaron and appointed him to the position of youth representative. The same process was followed for the appointment of the new First High Priest of the Order, David Sturlin. An event that was remarkable and surprising to me, occurred next. The wife of the Chief High Priest was anointed to a leadership role to represent the women of the church. She became the first woman to attain this type of leadership role in the religious organization.

During the afternoon there was a workshop type of service designed to help people to discover and identify areas where they could help with ministry. The results surveys, filled out during the workshop, were discussed in groups at the praise and worship service held in the evening. Near the conclusion of this service, people joined hands in prayer for individuals.

At 6:20 a.m. on Sunday, about twenty people met and rode on the community bus to a hill east of the community where a new, beautiful day was greeted with a sunrise prayer service.

After breakfast there was another prayer service. People came to the front of the chapel. While seated the priests and members of the community laid hands on them while praying in what can be described only as an intense manner. It was during this time that I first heard speaking in tongues. I found it an extremely emotional experience. I sat quietly
observing, while the tears rolled down my cheeks in a continuous stream. Afterward I felt completely drained of all energy, yet calm and peaceful. The people of the community, as I did, find that these fervent prayer meetings help to reduce tensions and anxieties while strengthening bonds of friendship and commitment.

Levels of Membership

After baptism and confirmation by the laying on of hands, a person is considered a tithe-paying member, giving one tenth of their income to the church. The next level is that of a full or consecrated member who gives all worldly goods and property to the church or to God, but retains individual stewardship or possession and use, during his or her life. The highest level of membership is as a common fund or United Order member. Those who reside at EskDale are of this level. They must first be a fully consecrated member, be debt free and be willing to live communally. In addition, in most cases it means sharing stewardship of major possessions, like cars. After a trial year and sometimes more, if everything works out, a person can remain in the community.

The Structure of the Order of Aaron

The Order of Aaron has a Chief High Priest who is the spiritual leader and a First High Priest who is the temporal leader. For many years Dr. Robert Conrad held both of these offices. There are Second High Priests who conduct ceremonies and rituals as well as the Priest in charge of the various communities and branches. The Supreme Council is made up of the priests, as well as the newly ordained lady who represents the women of the church. The Supreme Council acts as a legislative or law-making body of the church.
Branches of the church are located at Springville, Utah, Partoun, Utah, EskDale, Utah and Murray, Utah. The headquarters is in Murray, a suburb of Salt Lake City. There are members in most of the western states, including Nevada. I was told that there are also members as far away as Indiana. I was given the figure of about two hundred fifty active members. Active members are those who attend services at least twice a month. There may be as many as two thousand inactive members, who do not live in areas currently served by the church, and may also be affiliated with other ministries, churches or denominations.

Funerals

None of my reading on the Order of Aaron, or the community of EskDale had mentioned funerals. At the Sabbath evening prayer service during the Feast of Pentecost one of the priests was reluctant to lead a group discussion because he had attended a funeral the previous Wednesday. I found out that after a funeral, priests are considered unclean, and remain in seclusion until the evening when they bathe and clean their clothing, as in Old Testament times. They also do not actively participate in leading services for a period of seven days to assure of cleansing.

Funeral preparations for fully consecrated members of the community are made in the community. The coffin is built by a Levite, not a priest, and consists of a plain pine box. A Levite prepares the body for burial. The proper civil authorities must be notified so that the death can be investigated if necessary. Burial is done as soon as possible, usually within twenty-four hours. A simple graveside service is held for the family and community. Sometimes a memorial service is held later to accommodate families from
out of the area. The family can decide on a more elaborate funeral at a funeral home. In that case, they are responsible for the costs. The belief is that funerals are for the benefit of the family and not for the one who has died.
CHAPTER FOUR

FIRST STEPS TO LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Bishop Glendenning received a revelation in 1948 that begins, “Go Ye Out into the Lands of the Earth”. (New Revelations for The Book of Elias 1948:63-64) That revelation, and the millennial belief that there was a time of great tribulation coming, motivated the Order of Aaron members as descendents of the Levi and Aaron, to establish communities of refuge, like the Levitical cities of the Bible. Their restoration theology held that communal living, owning no individual property, was the mode of living that they were called to establish. This was the model for living of the Levitical priests and teachers who had no land inheritance, just their priestly inheritance. This tradition carried on to the communal Essenes at Qumran and then to the early Christians. (Beeston 1966:137) The involvement of the former priests in the early Christian movement can be confirmed in the Bible- New Testament, Book of Acts, Chapter 2 verses 44-46 and Chapter 4 verses 32-37. Communal ideals were kept alive by the monastic orders in medieval times. During the radical reformation the Anabaptists revitalized these concepts and property became regarded as a trust from God, and mutual aid was an expression of love, necessary for spiritual fellowship. (Klassen 1964:42-43)

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced what came to be known as a “commune belt” between the Protestant and Catholic areas of Europe and Great Britain. (Zablocki, 1980:29)

It is not surprising then that the traditions of communalism and utopian ideals were
brought to America. The Pilgrims drew up a covenant, the Mayflower Compact, which outlined the rules of their community. Many early American towns were set up so that people wanting to live there had to sign a covenant agreement. Most shared belief systems, resources and skills necessary for survival (Schehr 1997:27) Throughout nineteenth century American history, utopian and communal communities, such as the Shakers, Oneida, Amana Colonies and New Harmony, flourished.

Early members of the Order of Aaron who had been members of the LDS Church were already familiar with the concept of communal living. The Mormons (LDS) had made many attempts to found communal communities in the latter half of the nineteenth century under their United Order Plan. Examples of these attempts include the Order Enoch in Missouri, as well as Orderville, Utah, Fillmore, Utah and many others. The basis for the United Order Plan can be found in the Book of Mormon scriptures and the Law of Consecration. A passage from 4 Nephi 1:4 states, “And they had all things in common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift”. The principle behind the “Law of Consecration” given by Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 42 on February 9, 1831 was: “The Lord is the creator and owner of the earth and men are but stewards of His possessions. All the resources of the world exist for the benefit of His children and are to be shared according to need. The strong are to help the weak, but there should be no idleness among the people. Idleness is a sin in the eyes of the Lord.” (Bennion and Washburn 1960:128) Bishop Glendenning’s revelation, the model of the Levites, Essenes, early Christians, and Anabaptist groups, as well as the belief of some in
Mormon (LDS) principles all led to the founding of communal communities by the “pioneers” or first and second-generation members of the Order of Aaron.

Alpha Colony

In 1949 the Childs family, early members of the Order of Aaron, consecrated their Springville, Utah farm of 107 acres to the Church. This was where Bishop Glendenning spent much of his time during the last years of his life, especially in the summer months. The farm was the first communal settlement established by the Order. It became known as the Alpha Colony. A lady living at Eskdale today remembers going from a comfortable home in a community where her father was a respected member of a college faculty to living in a tent at Alpha Colony. As a teenager she was careful that her friends not discover where she was living, even though her mother had made their tent comfortable, and had arranged it cleverly.

The Order established a sawmill in Huntington Canyon, near Fairview, Utah and her father ran it for the Order. The sawmill continued operations for about ten years and produced much of the lumber used to build at Partoun and later at Eskdale. One can still see the lumber milled at Huntington Canyon in the laundry building at Eskdale.

Most of the families at Alpha Colony moved on to settle at Partoun, or later at Eskdale. The original owners who had consecrated the farm to the Church stayed on in a stewardship role until the death of Mr. Childs in 1975. His wife, who still living, is a delightful, vivacious, active lady of ninety-six.
Partoun

Members of the Order were actively seeking sites for colonies as far away as Mexico, when they found that there was an area of western Utah with substantial underground water resources. This area was located south of Trout Creek on the Utah-Nevada border at the base of the Deep Creek Range of Mountains that rise to about 12,000 feet. These lands could be claimed under from the government under the Desert Entry Act that enabled people to file for 160 acres per person, or 320 per couple. In order to prove up or get title to the land, it was necessary to put in irrigation wells and have at least one fourth of the land in production within five years. Former servicemen had special regulations that let them claim their homesteads after living on them for a year. (Baer 1976:49)

Families who could not meet the requirements for prove up were allowed to purchase the five acres surrounding their homes. The majority of the properties at Partoun were later deeded over, or consecrated to, the Order of Aaron. The Order also had a small ranch in Pleasant Valley just over the border in Nevada. The settlement was named Partoun after the area in Scotland where Bishop Glendenning’s ancestors had resided. Partoun was designed to be a cooperative community where labor and machinery could be shared. According to a former resident, it was unfortunate that there was some distance between the parcels, so shared equipment and manpower was not always where it was needed or when it was needed. Conditions were tough. Most initially had no running water into their very modest frame homes. There was no electricity or phone service and the soil was alkaline. To finance improvements it was often necessary for many of the men to work outside of the area and come home on weekends. There were differences of opinion, some quite serious. The women shouldered a great deal of responsibility and
work, not only raising families, and making the family clothing, but also doing carpentry, farm chores, and even working to build roads. One lady related that she had to kill rattlesnakes in her yard. Life at Partoun was certainly not a utopian dream.

A school was started in the area and is still in operation. Known as the West Desert School (K-8), it is a part of the Juab County, Utah school district with headquarters in Eureka, Utah. Students come from nearby Trout Creek, Callao and Pleasant Valley, Nevada. White Pine County, Nevada is planning to build a school in Pleasant Valley, and the two teachers being paid by Nevada, who are currently at West Desert School, will then be transferred to the new school. Both of these teachers belong to a polygamous sect that has moved into the area. Plans for the school in Nevada may not materialize, because at the time of this writing, many of the polygamists were moving out.

It is quite easy to spot the homesteads of the members of the Order of Aaron. They are uniformly neat and cared for. In contrast, those belonging to members of a fundamentalist Mormon polygamous group are generally a large group of haphazardly placed old singlewide mobile homes. Tom Green, a resident of Partoun and a polygamist, with twenty-nine living children is now awaiting trial in Juab County on a number of different counts.

A newspaper account in the Salt Lake Tribune dated June 11, 2000 about the Tom Green case, mentioned the Order of Aaron and the communities of Partoun and Eskdale as being connected with the polygamous group. This has been an upsetting matter to the members of the Order who do not seem to be able to convince the LDS Church authorities or some of their neighbors that they do not condone a polygamous life-style.
To make matters worse, more and more members of polygamous groups are buying land and settling in the area.

In Partoun today there is a dedicated core group of the Order of Aaron. They have their own chapel, that is still under construction. Services are held regularly and many of the members come to EskDale for the feast days and to visit.

The isolated setting and harsh conditions at Partoun required all the energies of the Order of Aaron pioneers. Yet the settlement did not fulfill the need many felt for a more communal way of life where all things would be held in common, work could be done in groups, equipment could be efficiently shared and homes would be more closely arranged in a planned community.
CHAPTER FIVE

ESKDALE

The settlement at Partoun had just barely gotten their land proved up, when it was decided that a new settlement should be established. Bliss Childs, Second High Priest of the Order, had found an area open to Desert Entry on the east side of the Snake Valley about fifty miles south of Partoun. This site was agreed upon by Bishop Glendenning in December of 1954, and named EskDale for a town in Scotland. At EskDale a true communal effort could be undertaken. The land could be claimed under the Desert Entry Act in contiguous parcels consisting of 320 acres per couple, and houses could be concentrated in one area. Bishop Glendenning and his advisors had significant geological knowledge and were soon able to locate an underground river flowing beneath the desert of their newly acquired land. They were to name this the River Esk.

Location and Land

The EskDale community is located in the Snake Valley about six miles east of the Nevada border, not far from Baker, Nevada. The entry point of the Great Basin National Park is at Baker. This area is one of the most arid in the western United States. Mt. Wheeler, at over 13,000 feet elevation, and its neighboring Mt. Moriah to the north, at over 12,000 feet, along with other high mountains to the north and west, provide for the recharging of the aquifer in this area. The availability of abundant underground water resources and an altitude of about 4900 feet, along with an average growing season of
150 days provide conditions suitable for the production of alfalfa, small grains, vegetables and fruits, all with irrigation. The weather conditions are often harsh and changeable in this area. When I stopped for a brief visit on May 15, 2000 there had been a hard freeze the night before and there was sleet and hail that day. A new field of alfalfa had been badly damaged as a result. It was fortunate that it remained dry and warm into September so that four cutting of alfalfa could be harvested.

One of the first jobs of the pioneer settlers of EskDale was the drilling of water wells. The community had a well drilling rig and people who could operate it. By 1966 there were already sixteen irrigation wells as well as a domestic well. (Erickson 1969:38) Today, I have been told, that there are seventeen irrigation wells producing. There is also a new deep domestic well that has now been approved by the State of Utah as a safe community source of water. A Community Block Grant helped to fund this project. When I was visiting in June of 1997 the community was still involved in all of the paper work, testing and fees imposed by the State of Utah, and it was not yet in production. One of the men who had helped with the drilling and system for this well told of actually being able to see the water rushing through the perforations of the pipe when looking down into the well. There recently has been some apprehension expressed by residents concerning the newly adopted federal standards for arsenic levels in water supplies. Although the water will probably pass the standards, the cost of the testing, that has to be done on an ongoing basis, is in the range of about $10,000.

The soil at EskDale is alkaline, as it is in Partoun and most of the western desert. One man stated that it had taken ten years of work to achieve present productivity. He told of bringing in quantities of spent sulfuric acid from mining activities and putting it on the
soil. The sulfur treatment was effective and, along with the flushing effect of abundant water, helped to counteract the alkali. The Environment Protection Agency put a stop to this practice because they could not predict long-term effects.

Today the community owns about 4,500 acres of land, upon which it grows alfalfa, barley, and corn. Most years there are three cuttings of alfalfa. Dry, hot weather enables them to get four cuttings. The alfalfa produced is of extremely high quality, with a high, about 24%, protein content. What isn’t needed to feed the community cattle is sold to other dairies for as much as $145 per ton. Some of the hay is baled in thousand pound bales that are loaded onto trucks in the field and stored for the winter, or sold. The majority of the hay is chopped up and put into large plastic bags in which it turns into ensilage. Barley and corn are also stored in these bags. The bags themselves measure about sixty feet in length and about eight feet in diameter. I was told that they cost about four to five hundred dollars apiece. They take the place of a traditional silo. One of the advantages of chopping up the hay as it is harvested, has been that the fields have become increasingly free of weeds each year. The weed seeds and plants are chopped and do not get a chance to reseed.

There is a fruit orchard east and to the south of the community. This is not as productive as some had hoped and several people remarked that it should have been located higher up on the “bench” so that it would not freeze as readily. Previously there had been beehives in this area. In the vicinity of the orchard this year there was a special field of sweet corn. It was harvested in late August. Ordinarily the community also grows potatoes. This year they decided that it was too much work when compared to the cost of potatoes that could be purchased.
There are three small gardens located between the houses. These gardens produce a variety of vegetables for seasonal use. A couple, about eighty years old, tends to these for the community. They grow no hybrid plants and harvest seeds each year to assure that the community always has a reliable seed supply. Over the years they have been able to find the varieties that do best in their climate and soil conditions. They have built up the soil with the use of compost, and of course there is always plenty of cow manure. In the past a larger portion of the food supply was produced in the community than at present.

The Village

The first buildings in the community of EskDale were wood frame buildings moved in from Partoun. (Beeston 1966:221) Today the village is an oasis in the desert with its broad walkways, beautiful flower garden borders, trees and grass. The community is arranged in roughly a D shape. The straight part of the D runs along a bluff that is about twelve feet high at its highest point. The common area buildings are located along this, except for the grade school. They include a separate laundry house, the kitchen and dining area with administrative offices, priesthood room, storage and a ceramics “factory” downstairs and the chapel just to the north. The chapel also houses a classroom, recreation room with a pool table, teachers’ workroom, and the office of the school music teacher/principal. The front of the chapel has a raised stage area where the orchestra practices. The chapel also serves as a meeting place for the community. One of the difficulties the community is facing is with this building. The sprayed on ceiling coating was applied in the 1970’s and is said to contain asbestos. The abatement process is extremely expensive and the community cannot afford to bring in the professionals
required by law to do the work. Now it means that the facility must be inspected regularly and nothing can be done to the ceiling. It's a frustrating situation for the community.

The Montessori school, one of the oldest buildings in the community, is next in line. It was getting a new roof during my last visit. This building has a basement where the sanctuary is located and where special services are held. It is distinguished by the large patriarchal cross attached to the front. At one time this building was the dormitory for the children, and the community kitchen was in the basement. It's hard to imagine since it's so small.

The high school building is the last along the bluff. It contains classrooms, the library, office area and lockers. Until about 1994, the building served as the dormitory and needed extensive repairs for leaks and asbestos removal, as did the old high school building. The old high school building was torn down. The dormitory was closed for about three years and then remodeled by members of the community into the present clean, modern high school building. The dormitory was not rebuilt, and the lack of this facility has had a big impact on the community.

A new feature in the community is the Wee Care Center. This is a day care center for children who are too young for the Montessori School. It has been set up in a small house that used to serve as a guesthouse and is run by a lady in the community. It has proven to be of great help to the younger women in the community because it provides consistent child care while they work in the center or on community projects. One of the things that struck me as I was observing the Wee Care Center and the Montessori school was that parents often stopped by during the day, on their break time, to spend a few minutes with their children. That's something that most would not be able to do in the "outside" world.
To the north of the housing area are gas and diesel pumps along with a large machine/auto/tire shop. Not far away are the buildings that housed chickens used for an egg production business. This business did not prove profitable. Farther north is a large propane tank (30,000 gallons or more). When I visited in 1997, a man had been trained and was delivering propane to ranches and farms in the area. He has since left and no one has taken over the delivery route. To the east of the shop is a metal building that has served as a quilting area, and for the fabrication of metal awnings. Metal fabrication was done here until fairly recently and there is discussion of it starting up once more.

To the east of the community are the dairy pens, milking parlor and bulk milk tank area, feed storage and a block building which housed a furniture manufacturing enterprise. There is an area near the present dairy where a new home for the parents of three members of the community has been built. There are plans to build more homes in this area in the future.

The grade school is centrally located on the east side of the community between the houses. In back of it there is a playground, a large aboveground swimming pool and changing room. In the center of the community is a large amphitheater that also serves as a basketball court.

The houses are in a staggered double line along the curve of the D. No cars are driven through the center of the village and the parking for cars is in the rear or side of each house. There are seventeen houses. One is set up as a duplex and another is a guesthouse. All of the houses are plumbed for propane gas. The gas is piped directly from the large community tank and there are meters on each building, although they are not used to keep track of individual usage.
Many of the homes have wood stoves that can provide more economical heating or be used in case of a power outage. One of the morning work projects when I was there in the summer was gathering the logs for firewood from the windbreak trees that had been taken down. There is a trip planned for October to cut more wood for the community and bring in a semi-trailer load. The community gets a permit for a nominal fee from the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service to gather dead and down wood.

Electricity was not always easily available to the community. It was produced by a large generator and used sparingly. Mt. Wheeler Power brought in lines to the community and power was turned on in July 1973, according to a Mt. Wheeler Power Co. produced flyer that has been saved by a member of the community. Radio-phones were introduced in the late 1970’s and used for a few years until lines were brought in. Today there is a modern telephone system for the entire community and its outlying areas similar to the ones found in universities and corporations.

Most people use the community laundry and, as I learned the hard way, there are times reserved on a schedule. The laundry gets lots of use. All of the towels and clothes from the kitchen as well as all of the dairy towels must be done daily. A few families now have a washer and dryer in their homes. Some of the homes do not have complete kitchens, but they do have a refrigerator and a microwave so that food can be taken home and heated when necessary. Many homes have what would be considered a luxury to some people- a piano. There are reportedly seventeen in the community.

Most of the homes have computers and the community has a Novell Network 25 server. The business of the community has been done for many years using computers, but home internet connections are fairly new and have had a profound impact on the
community. They have opened up the world to the community and encouraged outside connections and interests.

One of the greatest changes in the community took place less than one year ago. Today the people of EskDale can have a television set in their homes. This has been a great change. The community had television and VCR's in common areas previous to this time, but viewing was monitored. Video games have been permitted for almost four years. When I asked why these changes had come about most people agreed that if someone wanted to watch a particular program all they had to do was visit a friend living in the area. Most felt it was time to trust that people could make decisions on what to watch for themselves and their families.

The homes I visited were clean, comfortable, and nicely furnished. They reflected the good stewardship ideals that the community strives to foster.

Economics

The EskDale community is officially known today as Shiloah Communities, Inc. in business dealings. Originally the community was a special project of the Supreme Council of the Order of Aaron. It was partially supported by the donations of members through their tithes and special gifts. There have been other private benefactors as well. Supreme Council support was phased out and about ten years ago the community became independent. Now Shiloah Communities is a 501 (D) for profit common fund community and operates according to the rules of the IRS for these types of organizations. It is separate from the church, much in the same way that an apostolic order in other religions
functions. EskDale has a stewardship, like a division of the Church. That means that it must find ways to be self-supporting.

Permanent membership in the community at EskDale and the common fund is only open to those who are debt free and have fully consecrated, or given, all of their worldly possessions, monies and lands to the Order, and have passed a one-year probationary period in the community. Consecration of all funds includes pensions, inheritances, annuities, insurance settlements and any other income or future income. The members at EskDale are an elite group. Few people possess the commitment and financial stability to qualify for membership in this common fund community.

There are some members of the community who work outside of the community. At this time, there is a teacher in the community who works as an interpreter at the Great Basin National Park during the summer and weekends. Her entire salary is donated to the community. The Chief High Priest of the Order lives in EskDale and is a veterinarian. He regularly holds clinics as far away as Panaca, Nevada. All of his earnings go to the community also. In another case, a couple had lived outside of the community when they were younger, and lacked just a couple of quarters each to qualify for Social Security. They both took jobs on weekends and during the summer to assure that they would qualify for benefits which would ultimately assist the community.

The rules for the common fund have led to some changes in the status of membership of children in the church. It was the common practice for children to be confirmed as full members of the church at age eight, right after baptism, as is customary in the LDS or Mormon religion. Now youngsters are considered junior members after baptism, at age eight or older, and are not confirmed until they are adults and can understand and accept
the concept of consecration. This is similar to the Hutterite pattern where the young do not join the church until they are adults. (Hostetler 1967)

Members who are in the common fund do not have individual bank accounts, and while they may have a joint or corporate type credit card, the bills are paid out of their account with common funds. The use of a credit card enables people to purchase items for personal use over the internet or by mail order. Income tax forms are made out for all members to report any earnings. In good times I have been told that there is profit sharing. With the needs of the community for the replacement of equipment, repairs and building projects, I would suspect that this amount is minimal. I was also told that people were given funds to replace and upgrade household decorating and furnishings. All residents of the community from birth get a small monthly amount of money for personal items such as toothpaste and clothing. It is fortunate that friends and relatives occasionally send boxes of clothing. The amount of money increases a little when youngsters are about thirteen. This is called “needs money”. No one was willing to tell me the amount of needs money but I was able to find out that in the 1980’s it was about twenty-five dollars a month for an adult. It probably is not too much more now.

Children, because they are not members of the common fund, can have bank accounts and most of them do, in order to save money for college or some type continuing education. Some of the young people work outside of the community. One was working at the Great Basin Park and another worked at a motel in Baker this last summer. Starting at age fifteen, some young people are employed by the community on a paid basis. One girl ran a swather in the hay fields and a couple of boys were feeding cows this summer. One young man who had just graduated from college worked at the dairy farm, while his
wife helped out, for pay, in the kitchen. They will probably be staying in the area and will be renting a house in Petra from the community.

A small source of income for the community is the rental of housing in their outlying communities. Petra, about three miles north, is noted for its round concrete houses which were designed in the early 1970's by an architecture classes from the University of Utah. (National Observer 1971:22) Bethel, about two miles southwest has more traditional buildings and apartments. The rent is low and I would suspect that most of it goes for maintenance of the properties. A majority of residents in Petra and Bethel are members of the church, but not common fund participants. In some cases the residents are fully consecrated and for personal reasons do not live in the central community of EskDale. Personal reasons may range from those who have jobs outside the community who wish to live on their own, to wanting to keep dogs. Dogs are not allowed in EskDale but are allowed in the outlying communities. There is a couple, not members of the church, who work for the community and receive housing at Petra as part of their salary. A few people who live in the outlying communities have made special arrangements to eat at EskDale. They pay for meals and participate in the some of the center duties such as dishes and cleaning. Most of those living in the outlying areas attend meetings and community events regularly. Residents of Shiloah Communities, Inc. housing sign a contract that they will not drink alcohol or smoke in the homes.

Utilities, taxes, insurances, health care, car expenses, gasoline, food and even paper products are paid for by the common fund. The bills are taken care of in the community office. When people take a trip away from the community the car that they have previously made arrangements to check out is filled with gas, they have the use of a
credit card, are usually given cash to take along and may even take one of the cellular phones that the community has, even though there is no cellular service in the Snake Valley.

The number of trips away from the community has increased in the last few years with the increased outreach of the community. Also as the population has aged, there have been more trips to doctors, hospitals and nursing homes. There is presently concern because the fleet of cars and trucks is aging and the mileage is high. Replacement of them is currently not possible.

The community health care is self-funded and at this time has the greatest percentage of people over sixty-five of any in Utah, according to a person who deals with this aspect. People remain in the community and accommodations are made before nursing home care is considered. There is one lady who is in a nursing home in Delta, Utah at this time. This is certainly an economic consideration for the community. During the 1980's there were trained midwives in the community. Today women go to Delta, the nearest hospital, to give birth unless they have a place to stay in the Cedar City or Salt Lake Areas. The community pays for these costs also.

The dairy operation is the primary income generator at the present time. There are about two hundred fifty cows being milked each day. The cows are milked in a milking parlor with automatic milking machines. The milk is piped directly into a bulk tank that quickly cools the milk. Every other day a tanker load is taken to Delta, Utah, about 90 miles east, where the tanker is picked up by another tractor for transport to a cheese factory near Salt Lake City. The community owns its own tractor and a milk tanker. The driver is a member of the community who works at the dairy when not making his
delivery. Until last year the community sold all of its milk to a cheese factory in Delta, Utah. It suddenly went out of business and did not pay suppliers. The community suffered a major loss, in the range of $75,000 or more. Recently the price of milk has declined and transportation costs have risen. While the business is still profitable, it is not as lucrative as it was. The community also owns about two hundred additional head of cattle including dry cows, replacement heifers, all of which are kept, and bull calves that are all sold, most as herd sire prospects.

The feed for all of the stock is produced on the farmland owned by the community. The alfalfa is either baled or chopped and put in large plastic tubular bags. The corn and barley are also put in the large storage tubes that lie on the ground. When it's time to feed, a loader is used to put feed in a truck with a hopper that can distribute it along a trough. The milking cows get special treatment. A nutritionist regularly conducts tests on the feed for its content of various elements and makes recommendations on the best ratios to feed and if any supplements are required.

In the summer of 1986 the community sold off nearly their entire herd of 350 cows. This was a time when milk prices were low and transportation prices were high. The government was buying out dairies with the provision that they could not resume business or even keep a milk cow for five years. The community could not agree to that even though it would have netted them close to a million dollars. Instead, they had the largest one time registered dairy herd sale ever in the state of Utah that brought in over $320,000. (Millard Chronicle Progress 1986:1) They then started an artificial breeding and embryo transplant program using super purebred cows that continues to this day. This means that a genetically superior cow whose eggs are fertilized, then flushed and
implanted in other cows can produce several off-spring each year, insuring high quality and production. Milk production, bacterial count and fat content are checked regularly and records are kept on a computer for each cow. In the dining hall is a 1999 Distinguished Breeders Award from the Utah Holstein Breeders Association.

The dairy hires three ladies to do the milking. Two of them live at Petra. One is a member of the Order, and two are not. One of these ladies drives in from Pleasant Valley, Nevada to work. The farm manager, husband of the lady who is in charge of the milking, is also hired and is not a member of the Order. Recently the son of the Chief High Priest graduated from college in animal science and has returned to work in the dairy operation. His wife is not a member of the church and I am told that they have student loans to repay. They had been living in the guesthouse but were moving to Petra when I was visiting in September.

At this point the milking facilities are outdated and cannot accommodate much increase in herd size. A new facility has been planned in a location north of the community about a mile, toward Petra, on a well-drained bench area. Moving the dairy and corrals would certainly help with the fly problem and allow for the logical expansion of the housing area, as well as providing a location for the proposed Sanctuary that the community would like to construct. At this time there are negotiations in progress to get low interest loans through Mt. Wheeler Power and possibly the telephone company.

Throughout the years of the community there have been small business ventures. One was the egg business that later proved unprofitable. There was a furniture making business that shut down when the main person running it left the community. The same thing happened with the propane delivery business. A lady still in the community started
a ceramics business called Shiloah Arts. She has had some health concerns and is not producing as much as in previous times. She did, however, have a shipment go out when I was visiting.

The machine/auto/tire shop continues to be a source of income. The community presently has a contract with Mt. Wheeler Power to supply tires and do tire repair. Most repairs to the community vehicles and equipment are done in their shop.

Recently there was an aluminum fabrication business that sublet manufacturing to EskDale. The business suffered from mismanagement and the community was meeting while I was there to discuss the purchasing it. Members expressed the hope that through the efforts of the community a larger economic base could be established in the valley so that their children would be able to make a living in the area.

Another aspect that is being explored is the building of a new Sanctuary and dormitory area with the prospect of holding religious retreats and conferences. A site for the sanctuary has been selected east of the community and a model of the building has been constructed.

Economic survival is a major concern to many in the community. One person believes that the members should cost-out all of their benefits and figure out their hours of work so they could realize how blessed they are. Another person thinks that the people need to know and care about where their dollars go and work together to build a stronger economic base. This is especially pressing as the community becomes more involved in the outside world and its economy. An isolated existence in the desert is no longer possible. The area is growing and so are ties to the outside world.
Daily Life

The village priest rings the bell at 6:20 in the morning. The woman in charge of making breakfast has been up and working for at least an hour. Breakfast is served at 6:30 a.m. In the summer, breakfast would not be until 8:00 on Monday and Friday because of group work sessions. Not everyone is able to come for breakfast. Some prefer to sleep a little longer while others are already at work in the fields or at the dairy. In that case someone in the family will take something home or they can come in later and take what they want from the special cooler section that has leftovers.

Each meal starts out with a scripture reading, hymn and prayer. In the past all the verses of a hymn were sung. Today there are usually one or two. In the past all meals were eaten in silence. This was later modified so the supper meal, the evening meal, was more informal and families sat together and could talk. Today no meals are eaten in silence and people are free to sit where they desire. There is a tendency for people to sit at the same table each meal and some have even provided their own tablecloths and decorations. Previously meals were served family style. This used many serving dishes and there was a lot of food that went to waste. Meals are now served cafeteria style and it is proving much more economical. It is easy to overlook the specially set place with its special chair at each meal. It is always there, set and ready for the coming of the Lord.

On Sunday, the first day of the week, breakfast is an hour later, at 7:30. After clean up there is a Sacrifice Service in the Sanctuary. It appears that it is attended regularly by a core group of the priests and usually three or four women. This service is held in the cave-like basement of the Montessori School. Shoes are removed before entering the Sanctuary. There are prayers and songs at each station or altar as the service proceeds.
The rest of Sunday is an ordinary working day for many. Some of the priests go to Baker, Nevada and hold services for that community on Sunday. Teachers are off on Sunday and the women clean house, do laundry and prepare for the coming week. Some are on the Center schedule for that day for cooking, or on the dish and clean up crews.

On the first Sunday of each month the Shiloah Valley Council meets. The Council considers matters brought to it by the community and acts as an intermediary between the community and the Supreme Council. When I was visiting in 1997, I was told that there was one woman on the Council. Today I was informed that there are four women. In the past the Council would have been exclusively male, so this is certainly an area that reflects the shift in attitude of the community. (Rhein 1979:4)

While I was doing this research the Council and the Chief High Priest had sent a proposal to the Supreme Council that women be allowed to wear earrings. It was passed that women could wear earrings that are in good taste and not gaudy or dangly. Students while in the school are not allowed to wear earrings and other times if the girl is over thirteen, the parents can make the decision. Under no circumstances are men or boys allowed to wear them.

Teachers are not on the Center schedule during the week, when school is in session, except for working on the dish crew and cleaning crew. This tends to cause some hard feelings among the women who also hold down other full time community jobs. Most of the women will be cooking a meal for the entire community at least three times a week and will be baking bread at least once every other week. The cooking is heavy, hot work. The kitchen is a full heavy duty commercial one. The menu is posted in advance and the recipes are kept in a loose-leaf binder. All kitchen procedures and schedules are posted.
The Center supervisor is very well organized and oversees all aspects of the operation. She orders the food, and sees that it is received and stored properly. She also trains people in correct cleaning methods and oversees all aspects of the kitchen. There are two dish crews and two cleaning crews of women and girls, as well as a few boys. Children are put on the work schedule from the age of about ten or when their parents feel they are ready.

Most of the food, as well as paper products and cleaning materials are purchased through a wholesale company and delivered to the kitchen area. There is also a wholesale produce company that delivers. Wheat to be ground for bread is bought in the Salt Lake Area. Bread is baked about every other day. Beef for the community comes from cows that are no longer productive. They are sent out for processing. Milk is brought over from the dairy daily and is not processed. That makes it necessary to buy milk in half pint containers for the school lunch program, since they cannot legally serve raw milk with the lunches that the students are purchasing. Yogurt and ice cream are regularly made and sometimes butter. During the summer there is a variety of fresh produce from the three gardens. This year there was corn grown and processed. Often potatoes are grown as well. Fruits from the orchard are made into preserves, depending on the crop.

The dinner meal, the main meal of the day, is served at 12:00. Again, the bell is rung ten minutes before the meal and scriptures, a hymn and prayers are offered. During the school year students, many of whom do not live in the community, are able to buy dinner and eat with the people of the community. There are even provisions for students who cannot afford the meal to work off the cost by setting up for the meal, serving and helping with the clean up. Students can also buy breakfast and supper if they care to.

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The evening meal is served at 6:00. The ten-minute bell, scriptures, hymn and prayer are the same procedure. Supper, the evening meal consists mainly of leftovers if there are enough.

The meals are all well balanced and lean well-cooked meat is served in moderate amounts. Of course, there is never any pork or any other food mentioned as unclean in Leviticus. During the summer there was a salad bar set up daily and homemade ice cream was a regular treat. I was a bit surprised to find that coffee is served in the morning and tea is available. Many do not use these, but there is nothing that prohibits them. The community has rules about alcohol and tobacco use on the properties.

On Monday mornings, the men meet in the priesthood room to discuss the work assignments, and what is needed for various projects. Monday afternoons the ladies meet for the same purpose and to discuss any work related concerns. Monday evening the community meets to discuss and review any matters of concern or interest. This was a closed meeting and I was not invited to attend.

Tuesday was garbage collection day. A girl and boy of about ten collected it all and drove it to the dump. The roads are private and children learn to drive and do community jobs early. Older children often tend the younger ones. I was impressed by the kindness and patience that they display with one another. Tuesday evening at 7:30 the community gathers in the chapel for singing. People can give the page numbers of their favorites for the group to sing. All ages participate and the majority of the people attended the two evenings that I was there.

Wednesday is Center-cleaning time. Adults and teenage girls are on the two cleaning crews. The day I was present all of the vent filters in the hoods were removed.
and washed, shelves, coolers, floors and counters were sanitized. The restrooms and all other common areas also were thoroughly cleaned.

Saturday, the Sabbath, has a unique schedule. There is no breakfast served in the dining area and there is no supper. Most people take what they want from the coolers on Friday evening, so that they will have food to prepare at home. Some prefer to fast for those two meals. The bell does not ring until ten minutes before church time at 9:30.

The first service is the sacrament or communion service. Wine and leavened bread are used in the weekly service followed by an instructional session and then a praise and worship service. There is another service in the evening. The day is a quiet one of rest and reflection.

Uniforms

One of the most noticeable changes in the community in recent times is the discontinuance of the requirement of wearing uniforms. The former Supervisor of Dressmaking was kind enough to supply most of the information on uniforms, in writing, to me for this section. Uniforms were developed and adopted by the Order by 1951. The uniforms for men consisted of blue shirts with the name of either Levi or Aaron on the pocket, depending on the status of the man. Some of the older men at EskDale continue to wear the shirts. The dresses for women were of a blue material and had buttons down the front. There was also a ribbon with fringe worn on the chest to remind the wearer to keep the commandments. This uniform was to be worn for all church occasions. A school uniform, a dress, was developed in 1959. Later this was changed to a jumper and a blouse. A letter written in 1963 by the EskDale Council Chairman indicates that this was
the accepted wearing apparel for all women living in the community and those associated with the schools. Anyone who desired to be identified with the ministry of Levi and Aaron without the commitment and pledge associated with the cap and dress was allowed to wear this uniform. In 1974 pantsuits were approved for work projects and other activities for which dresses were not suitable. The style was modified again in 1977.

The cap of honor was a white cap with a turned up small brim on which the word Levi was embroidered. It was similar to the one that is worn on the back of the head by Mennonite women. Women who chose to wear the cap pledged that they would not take them off, except for washing the hair, and that they would not cut their hair. The cap was a symbol of commitment.

There was a special uniform for widows consisting of a white dress that has the ribbon fringe of light blue and gold over the heart. Widows who adopted this dress pledged not to marry again. There are still three or four widows who wear this uniform and the cap. One of these ladies told me that she had entered into a covenant when agreeing to wear the dress and cap. She believed that the uniform was a wonderful missionary tool since people would stop her to ask about the dress and she could give them a spiritual message. Another older lady who still wears the regular uniform enjoys talking to people who recognize that she is from EskDale and ask about people and the community. Several people commented that with the loss of the uniform came a loss of identity for the community.

Thirteen ladies from the community met and drafted a letter dated May 21, 1990 concerning the school uniform and proposed changes. There were several changes that were approved by the Council and the Department of Education between 1990 and 1996.
School uniforms now consist of navy or tan slacks and either a dark blue or gray polo shirt or a sweatshirt with the logo and Shiloah Valley Christian Schools on the left pocket area. On September 8, 1996, the current dress standards were approved. These outlined standards of modesty and appropriate dress for various activities. There were no color restrictions. The goal was that clothing could express the identity of the wearer and cease being an issue in the community.

A lady shared a letter with me that expressed that the uniform was not simply a means of identification. It was a means of discipline that brought them out of their old cultures into one of knowing who they were in Christ. One lady stated that she was tired of wearing only blue and white and wanted some color in her life. Another lady stated that there were many, especially the young people, who would change out of their uniforms after leaving the community and before going into town. Most felt that it is the internal conviction that is the most important and that there is room for diversity in the community.

Special Events and Celebrations

Birthdays are celebrated by the members of EskDale, unlike the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the World Wide Church of God under Herbert W. Armstrong. (Ingram in Miller 1995:120) When I was there in early August the retired Chief High Priest celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday. The community sang Happy Birthday to him and wished him well. There is also a calendar with Birthdays for the month posted in the kitchen. I was told that in the “old days” there was little recognition of birthdays.

I was fortunate to be in the community when the grandson of a member was married.
The entire community was invited to attend the wedding and reception that followed. One of the women made a quilt for the couple as a gift from the community. The wedding was held at the Hidden Canyon Ranch, owned by an Order member and the father of the groom. The community members, young and old, who were not in the wedding party or providing the music, rode in the bus to the wedding that was held in the evening, outdoors in a beautiful canyon setting. It was ironic that the wedding was officiated by a minister who was not a member of the Order of Aaron. It seems that no members or priests are licensed by the State of Nevada to perform weddings because the Order of Aaron does not have a church in Nevada. The groom’s father did say a special blessing prayer. The wedding was followed by an outdoor, informal picnic supper.

The feast days of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles are the cause of much anticipation in the community. These are often times when family and friends come to visit. They are times of spiritual renewal and a time when the members are reminded of their mission and commitments. During the Feast of the Pentecost the Chief High Priest reinforced the group bond of identity by stating and restating that all present were Levites and that it was their mission to prepare and be ready to serve the Lord upon his return.

Since 1994, Esk Dale has hosted a Fourth of July celebration for the surrounding area. There are fireworks, musical entertainment and food. While this is a fundraising effort for the community and they work very hard at putting it on, it is enjoyable and allows neighbors who normally wouldn’t visit, a chance to view the community. Often friends and family from out of the area gather for this event also.

Another special event that is enjoyed by the people of the area is the formal holiday dinner that is held in December. The proceeds from this event benefit the school choir.
The students decorate the dining hall, help with the meal preparation, help serve and clean up.

Interpersonal Relationships

As in any small community there are bound to be tensions and difficulties from time to time. In one case related to me, two women did not speak to each other for seven years. They are now on good terms with each other. Most agreed that they have set a priority on relationships and that it has become more important than just getting the work of the community accomplished. Time and again people told me that they had made a commitment to live in community. Others pointed out that many disagreements could be avoided if everyone was more responsible and accountable for the jobs that they have to do.

There have been a few incidents, really very few, in the life of the community which have left scars. One person realized that he was gay and left the community. There was an incident of sexual abuse, and that person is currently serving jail time. There have also been a couple of cases of adultery. The community stresses forgiveness in these cases, not excommunication or shunning, as is done by some religious groups, like the Amish. (Nolt 1992:190)

People leave the group for a variety of reasons. In 1975 about 30 of the young people left the group after questioning religious doctrine and beliefs. (Anderson 1978) The person who served as the village priest and his wife left several years ago. They have been living in the outlying community of Bethel, working outside of the community, and
are now moving to their own home in Garrison. The community helps all they can to reestablish those who decide to leave.

It seems that many of those who are discontented and want to leave are the women. Some seem to find little job satisfaction in the routine of kitchen work that can be boring and difficult, even when done on a rotating basis. The men are usually placed in jobs which are more suited to their interests and which can vary with the season. This "woman's problem" was encountered by Spiro in his studies on the Kibbutz system in Israel. (Spiro 1970:226-230) There seems to be less discontent among the women who are teaching or those doing jobs that they truly are committed to. Two people told me that it was best if women had held a job and had some experience in the world, before becoming a member of the community. Then they were more able to make the commitment and personal sacrifice that it takes to live in community. They would also not be as apt to take the security offered by the community for granted. It was believed that those who had not lived away did not know the realities of working, paying rent, budgeting, childcare, cooking all meals and housekeeping. It has been found that women leave a community most often during its consolidation and decline stages. (Klee-Hartzell in Chnielewski 1993:9) This seems to hold true for EskDale as well.

The role of women has been very traditional up until recently. In fact, the wife of the former Chief High Priest was quoted in a newspaper article as saying, "Woman was put under man and that's just the way it is."(Anderson 1978). Another newspaper article states, "Levites believe a wife is under the supervision of her husband in a God-ruled world, so the wives are taught to respect and obey their husbands." (Rhein 1979:4) The number of women on the Community Council has increased in recent years and since
June 2000 having a woman’s voice on the Supreme Council of the Order of Aaron is a big step for the community. Previously women had served on the Board of Education and the kitchen supervisor had always been a woman. Today, as in years past, women are free to work at the dairy and in the fields, while others teach. The work mornings in the summer have men and women working side by side. Emergency situations require all who are able-bodied. In spite of all the apparent opportunities for equality, this generation of women is not content to live as the last generation and does not share the same attitudes. They want more power and control over their daily lives. One woman stated that the community is realizing that women are half the population and that they hold everything together. Most of the changes that have been enacted concerning daily life seem to have been primarily initiated by the women. These include the wearing of jewelry, cutting of the hair along with abandoning the cap of honor, abolition of mandatory uniforms, and even computers and television in the home.

When one compares the lives of women at EskDale to that of the polygamous women whose lives have been chronicled by Bennion (1998), the EskDale women lead a far more secure life with a higher standard of living, less crowded circumstances, often with better medical care and with many advantages for their children, especially in the area of education.

One thing specifically that I noticed was that the adults did not seem to do much visiting in other homes in the community. The children come and go freely and visit back and forth all the time, even in the homes that do not have children. Adults seem to get all of the social contact that they need though meals, church functions and work. They enjoy the privacy of their homes.
The treatment of the elderly and those with handicaps was an area that I specifically observed. The elderly at EskDale would probably be considered to be those over eighty. Up to that age and beyond if they are able, women are on the work schedule. One of the older women also does many other jobs like the dairy and kitchen laundry, gardening and quilting. Everyone is needed, unlike the Hutterite communities where people retire as young as fifty. (Hostetler 1967:87-88) People generally do not look their ages and are involved in all aspects of community life. Without the age group that the larger society considers senior, the community could not function. They certainly know that they are needed and loneliness is not a problem. Everything possible is done to assist those who have physical or mental problems. A couple recently got a golf cart to help them get around the community. The broad new, even sidewalks are also a help. Of course, meals are provided, there is emotional support, and help with housework is available.

There is one young man who appears to have some mental challenges in the community. He helps with the dairy and the farm work, appears to be happy and has friends.

During the evening in the summer the young people often gather at the basketball court, volleyball area or swimming pool. I made it a point to observe these gatherings and was very impressed by the respectful, yet playful manner in which the young people treated one another. I never heard one curse word or angry comment from any of them, even when the play was intense. A couple of times play was interrupted by toddlers wandering onto the court. They were treated kindly and taken to their mother. The recreational opportunities in the community today did not exist in the early days. Dr.
Glendenning looked upon swimming and sports as “wreakreation” and these activities were not allowed. (Baer 1988:158)

My contact with the young people was limited. I did ask several girls how they felt about living in the community when they were adults. One was quick to tell me that if she were married, it would be fine, but that there was nobody there that she would think of marrying, and if she stayed she would meet no one. Another response was, if the community had not turned into an old folks home by that time, it would be okay. All were planning on college, although none wanted to be teachers.

The population of EskDale during the summer of 2000, including those living in the community with special and short-term arrangements was broken down into approximate age grades. Those ages 75 and up equaled 10, ages 60-75, 6, ages 35-60, 15, ages 18-35, 3. That made a total of thirty-four adults living within the boundaries of the EskDale common fund community. There were also about twenty-five children.
CHAPTER SIX

THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Crime

The outside world keeps intruding on EskDale. In 1992, someone entered the common area buildings and stole $6,000 worth of musical instruments, computers, a television and VCR. No one was ever caught. It was a shock to the community and now they are forced to lock things up at night.

Another incident that has made them wary of strangers happened less than a year ago when a transient who had been working in the area kidnapped the community business manager at gun-point and forced him to drive to the Salt Lake City area. The business manager was later able to get the gun from the kidnapper and turn him over to the police. The business manager is still dealing with post-traumatic stress from this incident.

Politics

Some religious groups, among them the Old Order Amish, (Nolt 1992:116) discourage political involvement. The community at EskDale takes an active role by voting in every election. The community bus even transports residents to the polls. The First High Priest, David Sturlin, is a Republican delegate for the State of Utah.

An American flag flies in the middle of the village and the bedroom of a son of the Chief High Priest is decorated with American flags. Although the members of the Order...
have had conscientious objector status for many years, there is currently a son of a
member serving in the Navy. One older man served in the armed forces as a medic but
carried no weapon.

Local political involvement has paid off to some degree for the community. The
swimming pool was acquired through funds from the Millard County Parks and
Recreation Department and the domestic well was partially funded by a Community
Block Grant.

Relationships with Other Groups

A well-known communal religious group, with whom the Order of Aaron has had a
long-standing relationship, is the Hutterites. Some reports have stated that the Order of
Aaron community at Esk Dale modeled itself after this group. They deny this and cite the
long history of communal living of the Levites. Nevertheless, before he moved to Utah,
Dr. Glendenning did live at Yankton, South Dakota, near a Hutterite colony and provided
chiropractic treatment to some of their members. The Hutterites and other Anabaptist
groups are considered “Northern Levites” by Order of Aaron members, and the Hutterites
refer to the people of Esk Dale as the “Glendenning Leut” (Baer 1988:126) Several of the
members at Esk Dale have visited various Hutterite groups in both the United States and
Canada. At one time the Order of Aaron traded loads of fruits and vegetables to the
Hutterites in return for wheat. Dr. Glendenning is also said to have helped a Hutterite
man who was ill and stranded in Salt Lake City. (Beeston 1966:205-208)

There has been a great deal of out-reach in the past ten years or so. The wife of the
Chief High Priest, now the Women’s Spiritual Coordinator, travels to the Salt Lake area a
couple of times a month for meetings of Women Aglow, a Christian ecumenical group for women. She serves on the Utah State Board of this organization.

The First High Priest has recently returned from receiving training in Christian counseling at John and Paula Sanford's Elijah House Ministries in Oregon. There are also visits to and from the Living Waters Ministry in Arizona. It was a surprise to me to hear of a relationship with the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). They were a part of the original LDS or Mormon Church that did not follow Brigham Young, but instead followed Joseph Smith's son and remained in the Missouri area. An RLDS couple were baptized into the Order of Aaron and lived at EskDale for a year. Their daughter is married to a young man who grew up in the community. Another group who has ties with the community and with whom visits are exchanged is the Community of Jesus. They are an ecumenical Christian group who live in a communal, or shared housing community near Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Two of their members will visit EskDale in November.

One of the newer associations that the community has become affiliated with is the Messianic Israel Alliance. This organization is bringing together the Houses of Judah and Ephraim, as well as the other tribes. It is founded on the teachings of Batya Wootten. The Second Annual Conference was held in Orlando, Florida in early September. One of the highlights of the conference for many was a grand parade with the symbols of all the tribes of Israel on flags that were carried by representatives of the different tribes. The House of Aaron and others represented the Tribe of Levi.

An advisor to the community and one who is accepted as a true son of Aaron is Shmuel ben Aahron Wahli, the owner of Wahli Document Imaging Printing and Media of
New Haven, Indiana. His business is also known as Bet HaShem Midrash Publications. He has also published a book for the community.

Over the years the community and the school have put on musical programs for many groups and communities in Utah and surrounding areas. A nationwide tour was undertaken in 1999 and one is planned to British Columbia, Canada in the spring.

In August of 2000 there was a 4-H arts and crafts group for the children of the community. They worked on a variety of projects for much of a day and the advisors ate dinner with the community. The Millard County Cooperative Extension put on the program. The children were very excited because some of their work was to be displayed at the Utah State Fair held in September.

After the wedding that I attended in August, many of the young people went to Baker, Nevada for a street party. There seems to be a lot of visiting back and forth by the teenagers in particular.

The Bookmobile comes to EskDale at least monthly. It seems to be used extensively by the community. A member of the community generally supervises students as they check out books.

A school nurse for Millard County holds immunization clinics at EskDale. The children of EskDale are immunized as recommended. There are some others in the area who refuse to have their children get the shots. There is also a mobile dental clinic that comes to the area and sets up in Garrison, Utah. This provides care for acute problems as well as fillings.

The community at EskDale appears to be highly respected by neighbors in the area. One man who has done business with the community commented on their politeness and
honesty. Residents of Baker area were defensive and protective when I asked about the community. I was informed that they held church services at Baker and put on concerts for the Baker community. Several said that their children had attended or were attending high school at Shiloah Valley Christian School and felt that they received an excellent education. One woman did comment that she felt that the people didn’t get along with each other as well as they should. There still is also the persistent misconception that EskDale is a polygamous community. That could be because a number of those advocating polygamy have moved into the area in the last few years.
CHAPTER SEVEN

SHILOAH VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Philosophy and Early History

Education has always been a priority for the members of the Order of Aaron. Starting in Dr. Glendenning’s time “Education Unlimited” has been their motto. The Levites believe that learning is derived from God and that education provides for a rational approach to religion. (Baer 1988:149) The Levites were the priests and teachers in Old Testament times. They taught the people what was clean and unclean, holy or profane. Today’s Levites or Order of Aaron members are carrying on the traditions of their ancestors by establishing schools and a way of life that prepares them to continue in their traditional roles as priests, musicians and teachers in restored Israel. Since the Levites were the musicians in the temple, music is emphasized in the school curriculum as well as being central to the life of the entire community.

The elementary school was established at EskDale immediately after the founding of the community. Until the end of the school year in 1975 it was part of the Millard County Schools. The teachers were members of the community and were paid by Millard County. The School District also paid for books and supplies. When the School District wanted EskDale to consolidate with the school at Garrison, the members decided to operate their own school. The high school has always been operated as a private religious school.
The first Montessori pre-school, and the first Montessori certified teacher in the State of Utah were at EskDale. The school continues to operate.

Shiloah Valley Christian Schools Today

The Montessori School is in a building by itself with its own fenced play yard that includes a tree platform with a sliding pole, things which public schools could not think of having. The school serves children from ages three to five. At the present time there are eleven students, some of whom are from the surrounding area. The students learn science, social studies, language and math skills. The Montessori method stresses the use of hands-on techniques and real-life experiences.

There is a kitchen area where children can cook and areas set up for specific activities. For example there is a math area and a science area. The science area houses a wonderful collection of seashells, some of which are rare. The materials, not all of them the latest, are tested and effective media for use in early childhood programs. Music and song are integrated with other subject areas as part of the instructional method. There are computers utilized in the program as well as other electronic materials. The children are encouraged to be responsible and are required to pick up after themselves. Most of the children learn basic math and reading skills before starting first grade at the elementary school.

The elementary school is housed in a separate building directly east of the dining hall. At the time of this writing there were eight students in grades 1-6. The teacher is not a member of the community, but is a certified teacher who lives in the area. Previously she was educating her ten children at home. The older ones wanted to attend school at
EskDale, so she now teaches there, her children get free tuition and she and her children have dinner with the community.

The students work in small flexible groups and at activity center areas. Students are challenged to proceed through the curriculum at their optimum pace. There are internet connected computers and a printer for student use, as well as good sized library. Student behavior was consistently excellent. An advantage of a close community is timely parent communication. Another is the amount of freedom a child can enjoy in this setting. At recess one day the elementary students put on their roller blades and used the wide walkways as a playground.

Formal music instruction, on the piano is begun at the third grade level. When the fundamentals have been mastered another instrument is generally introduced.

The Junior-Senior High School has grades 7-13. The community allows an optional extra year to assure that students are ready to go out in the world to school or work. At the time of this writing there were thirty-one students. The curriculum is geared toward academics. The only elective subject is chorus, which is required of all! A full time teacher does the seventh and eighth grades, except for the music program. At the high school level there are two full time teachers. One does English and Spanish. The other is in charge of the library and handles social studies and sciences, except biology, which is taught by the veterinarian. Math is taught by a part time paid teacher who lives in the area. The instrumental music teacher is also the principal and teaches driver education. He is certainly a man of great patience! The choral and strings teacher also handles the Montessori School. A lady from the community teaches the entire art program and Bible study classes are manned by the priests at high school level and the wife of the Chief
High Priest for the elementary students. A few students take special interest classes by correspondence for Brigham Young University.

The Shiloah Valley Schools are members of an association of Christian schools but they are not accredited by any national organizations. This causes some difficulty when it comes to applying for grants. To qualify for this status would require a great deal of paper work as well as a certified administrator and a full time certified librarian. This lack has certainly not hampered the success of its students. Most go on to college or some type of vocational training program. They are readily accepted especially at the University of Utah and Southern Utah State University at Cedar City. The community has produced college professors, concert musicians, doctors, lawyers, teachers and a veterinarian among others.

The Order of Aaron has always assisted financially in the operation of the schools. Even though the community is now supposed to be self-supporting, the school is not. A Board of Education oversees the operation of the schools. The Supreme Council of the Order provides some funding and holds the final authority. The tuition has been maintained at $1500. per student for many years now. This price includes books, school computers and the use of the library, as well as instrumental and vocal music training. Of course this is minimal! The parents realize this and support special fundraising efforts as much as they possibly can. Since this is the only high school in the entire Snake or Shiloah Valley area about half of the students pay tuition and come from the surrounding area. The alternative is having a student boarded out with another family in either Ely, if they live on the Nevada side or Delta, on the Utah side of the border. Some sort of home school program or the internet high school in White Pine County for those who live in
Nevada, can also be done, but most of the youngsters prefer the school with its social life. It is not uncommon to see students of fourteen and fifteen driving to and from school on the gravel and dirt roads of the area. The majority of the families of these students are not members of the Order of Aaron. There are so many of the current thirty-one students who are LDS that a seminary class is held for them at 6:30 each morning. It is the usual practice for the LDS Church to conduct seminary classes in a building called an Institute near most public high schools. This is quite an accommodation on the part of the Shiloah Valley Schools. In return for allowing seminary classes the LDS students attend the daily, required Bible classes conducted by the school.

As mentioned previously, the students are required to wear uniforms at school and for most school events. These are fairly inexpensive shirts and sweat shirts that are purchased through the school, and dark blue or tan slacks. The uniform is the same for both boys and girls. The cold winter weather in the area is one reason for the girls now wearing slacks.

Dormitories

One of the big changes in the community in the last ten years is the abolition of the dormitories. It had been usual for member of the Order living in other areas to send their children to EskDale to school and have them live in the dormitories. The community took other students who were having difficulties in their homes or schools, as well as state foster children from time to time.

The dormitory was leaking and had asbestos problems. There was also a need for a new high school building. It was decided that the dormitory building would be gutted and
rebuilt as the new high school. There has not been enough money to build another
dormitory but this is being planned.

The dormitory system helped in a number of areas. The homes could be smaller
because most of the children could live in the dormitory if they wanted to. The system
also allowed parents more freedom from childcare. One other major thing that it did do
was to bring in many young people to the community. There are many who have stayed
and some even met their mates while they were in high school. While there was no
formal dating, life-long close relationships were fostered.

On the negative side, members of the community rotated as dorm parents and there
was often inconsistency in the enforcement of rules and regulations because of this.
Another thing that was found was that it was better not to have children under the age of
about six in the dormitory situation. Students from the “outside” did have a tendency to
cause disruptions from time to time. A person who lives in Delta said that it was not
unusual to see a young person from EskDale trying to run away and “hitch a ride” out on
highway 6 and 50. Most didn’t get very far.

One of the difficulties faced by parents after the closing of the dormitories was taking
full-time responsibility for their children. While the community is much more involved
than in most places, this change would have been a shock to the children as well as the
parents. Another problem has been the lack of adequate space in the houses for growing
young families.

For the school it has meant a loss of enrollment and funding. It must be a huge loss to
the members of the Order outside of the area who have counted on the community at
EskDale to provide an excellent education for their children.
Riding on a Miracle

A visitor to the dining area of the community will no doubt see a plaque there that reads, Superior Choir Award 2000, from the Utah Music Educator Association. Throughout the years the Shiloah Valley Christian Schools have been noted for award winning orchestras and choirs. What is truly amazing about this is that it can be accomplished with so few students and in such a remote area. It truly exemplifies commitment.

The schools have traditionally put on performances for groups in the area and as far away as Salt Lake City and Las Vegas. The community owned some vans for transportation. A few years ago these started to wear out and there were no replacements, so the school students went to work doing fundraising. They did everything from house cleaning to candy sales and were able to raise a significant amount of money.

A member of the community was passing a bus yard in Salt Lake City area when he saw an old scenic cruiser sitting out away from the other busses. He stopped and was told that it was just old and shabby, but mechanically not too bad. The company donated painting and repairs inside and out while only charging $9500 for the bus. It was within the budget and the school now owned a bus.

The students soon suggested that they go on tour. More funds were raised and the entire group of about thirty three students along with the community bus driver and adults, set off to tour clear across the United States! They performed as they went. They ate and slept in church halls, in private homes and even cooked along the road. They went to Colorado, on to Independence, Missouri, and then to Lexington, Kentucky. Washington, D.C. became the next stop where they sang on the steps of the Lincoln
memorial and toured the area. From there they went to Philadelphia, and on to New York to see a Broadway Show and tour the Statue of Liberty. Boston and Cape Cod, where they performed at the Community of Jesus, came next. It was the first time many had experienced the ocean, let alone the Atlantic Ocean. After that they got to see Niagara Falls. They even performed in a Mennonite church in Ohio. The trip took nearly a month and was an opportunity that could not have been easily duplicated. The motto on the bus and for the tour was “Riding on a Miracle.”

There is another tour planned for this spring. The choir has been invited to sing with the Vancouver, B.C. symphony. Fundraising is in high gear and the students are working hard to prepare. It will cost a minimum of $650 each student, even with having a bus.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis of this paper stated that as the community has grows older there will be shown to be relaxation of structure and ritual restrictions reflecting a more liberal attitude and increased openness. This relaxation of structure and ritual restrictions implies an increased confidence in the survival of the group and lessened fear of loss of community identity.

The changes that have occurred in the community over the last ten years do certainly show a relaxation of structure and ritual restrictions. No longer eating meals in silence, allowing families to sit together at all meals and even no longer requiring that all verses of hymns be sung at meals reflect this. No longer requiring the cap of honor for women with its commitment to not cutting the hair along with no longer requiring that a uniform be worn by women or men, or even requiring the wearing of certain colors, all show major changes in attitude consistent with a more liberal individualistic stance. The recent decision allowing women wear earrings shows the continuation of this trend.

The changing role of women is certainly reflective of a relaxation of ritual restriction and a more liberal attitude. Women are now on Shiloah Valley Council and a woman was recently ordained to a role within the religious leadership. These are changes of great magnitude.

There is certainly more openness than before due to fairly recent changes. The internet and use of computers, fax machines and even a complete telephone system have
opened the doors to and from the outside world. Video games, VCR's and television in homes, even satellite television in some, bring the world, both good and bad, into the homes of the community.

There is more contact with the outside world as members have become affiliated with other ecumenical religious groups and organizations, like Women Aglow, the Messianic Israel Alliance, Elijah House Ministries, Community of Jesus, and Living Waters Ministries to name a few. More members are working outside of the community and more non-members seem to be working inside the community. There also are more ties to the people of the surrounding area as time has gone on. More members live outside the boundaries of the common fund community and more affiliations by marriage have occurred over the years. The area, while still not heavily populated, is certainly not the isolated one it was, especially since the creation of the Great Basin National Park just across the valley.

The community outreach and good will efforts that are providing religious services, concerts, formal dinners, Fourth of July celebrations and educational opportunities to the neighboring areas have increased over the years and have strengthened ties and openness. Even allowing young people to visit homes and participate in activities outside of the community such as the Baker celebration, Navigators’ Bible Camp, 4-H activities and the tours and trips demonstrate openness. The fact that I was allowed into the community to do this study is positive proof.

While I believe there is ample proof that there has been a relaxation of structure and ritual restrictions as the community has grown older, and there has been a more liberal
attitude and openness, I can not say that this implies an increased confidence in the survival of the community or lessened fears of loss of community identity.

A loss of community identity is certainly felt by many in the community. There are those who look on the abolition of uniforms, in particular, as being one of the greatest loses of identity that could have occurred. The elderly members in particular expressed this fear, although there were two in the late middle-aged range who also expressed the feeling that the community was losing its uniqueness. Two widows and a married lady do continue to wear the uniform daily and it is not uncommon to see the older men in their blue shirts with Aaron on the front. Younger and middle-aged members expressed that they enjoy wearing other colors and styles of clothing. They also insist that outward appearance is not the main consideration as long as dress is modest, clean and in good repair. Those I spoke with did not feel that the manner of dress took away from the commitment of the members. In fact, it probably made it easier for others to relate to them. They felt it also eased the pressures on the many people who are going out into the world from the community today, especially the young people. Although high school students still wear a uniform, it is not like the old style and fits in with what is worn elsewhere. Abolition of the uniforms also settled some disputes between members, for instance those women who chose to wear the cap and those who didn’t.

During the Pentecost Feast in June, one person in the community stated that the pendulum would swing back. This seems to be the attitude of some of the more conservative and older members of the community. The younger generation is looking forward to even more changes in the structure. There is discussion now of a different method of assigning vehicles. It was expressed to me that it was felt that they could live a
communal life style and still do things in new or different ways to accommodate member needs.

A generational difference of opinion is a common element in society and it appears to be the same at EskDale. The second generation is now in charge and they are making changes which they feel are in accordance with the times and desires of the community. One person candidly told me that the younger, well-educated people who returned were unwilling to live with the former restrictions and rigidity. This person also stated that many returned for family reasons and not primarily because of a commitment to the religion. The reasons were stated as the need to be closer to aging parents, schooling for children in a safer environment and even that they could live out away from cities and have their needs met without having to worry about shopping! The last statement was said in a joking manner. Commitment to the religion was the reason another person gave for returning to EskDale.

The issues of commitment and change due to generational aspects have been addressed in the literature on communal societies. There is agreement that the second and third generations who were raised in the community, and did not participate in building it or were not converted to it, had a different type of commitment. In short they have had a different life and different experiences than their parents and they often take their lifestyle for granted or rebel against it. (Kanter 1972:146, Kanter 1973:494, Spiro 1970:292) The aging of communities, and attempts to retain or recruit the young, have required communal groups that continue more than one generation to change the terms under which they operate. (Kanter 1972: 146-147) Keeping or encouraging the return of younger people, especially when they are educated and able to make excellent livings in
the outside world is difficult. The EskDale community has tried a variety of incentives and arrangements like paying off debts and college tuitions in return for service to the community. This has met with limited success. The accommodations and arrangements that EskDale has made, in an attempt to bridge the generational gap, reflect the experiences of other communal groups that are multigenerational.

Survival is a major factor in any communal group and few have survived more than about a generation. (Miller 1991:79) The people of EskDale have varied opinions on the survival of the community. One person stated frankly that the community would not make it more than a few more years. Another stated that there needed to be consensus building on the mission of the group and that all in the community needed to be accountable for, and do a good job with their work assignments. There also needed to be consequences for not meeting community standards and expectations as far as attendance at church services and community activities. Fewer things should be considered voluntary. Another stated that there needed to be a stronger economic base to assure that the standard of living could be maintained and to encourage younger people to come to the community, or at least to the area. These aspects are being addressed, especially those which will insure economic survival. Most people are at least cautiously optimistic about the future and the plans proposed for the community.

Research has shown that there are threats to communal groups that include the intrusion of modern life, changes in the status of women, divisions within the group and even prosperity that undermines hard work and self-denial. (Miller 1991:90) These threats do not mean that a group will not survive. Religious groups, like EskDale, survive because of the commitment of their members. I heard people say over and over that they
had made a choice to live in community. This choice was often difficult and required sacrifice, financially and in personal independence. Most feel that the rewards of living in community far outweigh any sacrifices.

The changes that have been made do not imply an increased confidence in the survival of the community. They were enacted to assist survival. There is not a lessened fear of loss of community identity for many people. Yes, there have been changes that show a relaxation of structure and ritual restrictions that have reflected more liberal attitudes and openness. These appear to be accommodations for generational differences and a response to the educated, informed life of those who have come back to the community. Most recognize that when some of the practices that have been recently changed were enacted, they were necessary to build the group commitment and assist with survival in a harsh land. Times and conditions change; so do communities.

“Every solution to every problem is likely to generate problems of its own. For this reason life in a community is never static. It is a process, an unending series of readjustments and hopeful balancing acts aimed at achieving the private and collective ends of a group of individuals” (Andelson in Pitzer 1997:193)
APPENDIX: GRADUATE COLLEGE PERMISSIONS

Informed Consent

I, Katherine J. Peek, am engaging in and request your assistance in researching my thesis topic, from which I plan to achieve a Masters Degree in Anthropology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

My research is for a narrative overview of the EskDale community, now known as Shiloah Communities, Inc. and the Order of Aaron. I am especially looking at the changes in the community over time, the reasons for these and the impact of these changes. EskDale is known as a successful communal community and as such can serve as a model for others interested in this form of community. Religious beliefs and rituals, which form the basis for much of daily life will also be documented and will hopefully end some of the misconceptions, which have recently been published concerning the community. It is my hope that your participation in this project will assure an accurate overview narrative of EskDale and the Order of Aaron.

My method is known as participant observation, in anthropological terms. I will primarily be using informal interviews, which means that in the course of daily living and working, I will be asking questions and gathering information. I will also be observing and later writing down what I have seen and heard. I will not be using any mechanical recording devices. Some interviews will be conducted in a more formal way and I will be taking notes by hand if you feel comfortable with me doing so. The interviews should last about 30 minutes. I regret that I cannot offer you money for your time, only gratitude.

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The community is being compensated for board and utilities as per agreement. I have also agreed to share the results of this research with the community. I assure you that I will do my best to convey your experiences and opinions in an accurate manner.

Your participation is voluntary and I promise to protect your anonymity unless you agree otherwise. Permission to use names will be sought from community leaders when necessary for the historical record. Copies of this informed consent will be retained in locked files, separated from recorded answers, at 100 Greasewood Ln., Moapa, NV 89025 (P.O. Box 602) for a period of three years after the completion of this project.

To confirm that I am whom I claim, to inquire about the methods or procedures appropriate for this ethnographic research, or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, (702) 895-1357. You may also contact my advisors, Dr. Tony Miranda or Dr. George Urioste at the university, (702) 895-3590. You may also contact me at my home (702) 865-2745.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to be a participant in the life of the community. Please let me know if I ask a question or bring up a topic you would rather not discuss. I will honor your feelings and your privacy.

Sincerely,
Katherine J. Peek
Informed Consent, Part 2

To be read out loud at the beginning of a formal interview or interview where notes are taken.

I, (name or pseudonym), have read the Informed Consent page given to me by Katherine J. Peek. I hereby give permission to Mrs. Peek to publish the information obtained in this interview as she finds appropriate. I am aware that she will share her work with the community. I am aware that I may not be paid or otherwise compensated for my participation in this study.

Signature  Date

Informed Consent, Part 3

Permission to use real (legal) name in this research.

I, ___________________________ hereby give permission for Katherine J. Peek to identify myself by my legal name, as written above. I have read and agreed to the conditions in the Informed Consent page, and have been given a copy.

Signature  Date
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