

# Coast Group Spearheads a Movement Seeking Clue to Human Feelings

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SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 7 —The rapid growth of a new California phenomenon, a "human capacity movement," has been underlined by expansion of one of its catalysts, the Esalen Institute, to San Francisco's Grace Episcopal Cathedral.

Some 100,000 Californians are estimated to have participated in at least one of the movement's activities, which are devoted to the cultivation of feelings.

These activities, bizarre to many, include encounter groups, body awareness classes, sensitivity training, group improvisational dance, Gestalt therapy workshops. The various approaches have been the subject for some time of experiments by psychologists and cults, but now, over a period of three years, they have caught on among the general population and occur in schools and churches.

## 'Turned On' Without Drugs

"What everybody wants to do is to be turned on," says the Rev. James J. Baar, who was chaplain to the former Episcopal Bishop of California, the Right Rev. James A. Pike and holds the same position with his successor, the Right Rev. C. Kilmer Myers.

Adherents of the human capacity movement, like hippies, seek "to turn on," but usually without drugs. For both groups self-awareness is a major goal. The human capacity participants are sometimes called "white collar hippies."

"People feel boxed up, they don't know why," says Mr. Baar, who is 30 years old. "They feel frightened by challenges instead of lusting for them."

Mr. Baar, who sees the human capacity movement as an effort of people to find ways "of feeling comfortable every day," plans to give up his present job and work full time for Esalen as a coordinating director.

## Institute 5 Years Old

"Right now, you can get more done outside the church than in it," he said.

The Esalen Institute, founded in 1962 on California's Big Sur coast, became a spearhead of the new movement quickly. Other impetus came from some college campuses, notably San Francisco State and the University of California, Los Angeles, and from the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute at La Jolla.

Until last month, Esalen had staged its seminars in resort facilities at Big Sur Hot Springs with a capacity of 100. During the year, people would spend \$70 a weekend to sample and study the movement's off-beat activities.

They also were attracted by such seminar leaders as Bishop Pike, Prof. Arnold Toynbee, the historian; S. I. Hayakawa, the semanticist; Frederick Perls, Gestalt therapist; Alan Watts, philosopher, and Carl Rogers and B. F. Skinner, psychologists.

Growing demand and some evangelism led to the organization of fall and winter seminars at Grace Cathedral and at other San Francisco locations such as the First Unitarian Church.

## Visualizes Institute's Potential

As its opening speaker at its seminar last month, Esalen presented Abraham Maslow of Brandeis University, president of the American Psychological Association. Dr. Maslow has called Esalen "in potential, the most important educational institution in the world."

But what has made the human capacity movement catch on has not been so much the prestige of the speakers as the participation of conventional Californians in the unorthodox.

In one "happening," a hefty mayor leaped around the room like a ballet dancer. In others, a nun told of her struggles with sexual desires and an overly considerate woman, taunted in an encounter group as "super mama," erupted for the first time in a rage against her husband.

The principles are similar in most of the movement's activities. In sensitivity training, people stare at white squares until they see visions and act or dance out their reactions.

In body awareness, people may get down on the floor and

roll over each other, pretending they are animals at play. In role-playing, a man may act out before a group some unpleasant behavior of his wife. In encounter groups, participants agree to concentrate on expressing their true emotions in "the here and now," a Gestalt slogan.

"The surprise is the sky doesn't fall in," is a commonly echoed reaction. "If I can do these things, more must be possible."

The encounter group approach has been employed in a gentler and more limited extent by corporations and recently was adopted by the United States State Department.

But more and more in California, the groups are led by

nonspecialists and the going is becoming more varied and rougher.

There is Symbo, in which participants imagine they are all parts of a whole, and the Synanon games, in which participants engage in "rat packing" and their motto is "attack."

The Synanon version, sponsored by a group primarily concerned with curing drug addiction, attracted 500 week-long participants in San Francisco in a year's time.

Michael H. Murphy is the president and founder of the Esalen Institute. Mr. Murphy, who is 36, organized Esalen after three years of studying meditation, including 18 months in India. He is a graduate of Stanford University.

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The institute was set up "to explore those trends in the behavioral sciences, religion and philosophy which emphasize the potentialities of human existence."

## 10,000 Admissions Expected

For the balance of the year, Esalen anticipates 10,000 paid admissions. Speakers will include Buckminster Fuller, the architect; Dr. Stanislaus Grof, a Czech expert on psychedelic drugs; Sister Mary Corily, a poet; Lancelot Law Whyte, a philosopher; Ali Akbar Khan, a master of the sarod, a musical instrument, and Alexander Lowen, an exponent of psychological analysis through involuntary body movements.

The interests range from altered states of consciousness to learning through theater

games, joint family therapy, meaningful coincidence, breathing and awareness, extrasensory perception, Kundalini Yoga, bioenergetic analysis and sensory awakening for couples.

A continuing thread is a concern with education, an effort to free the child as well as the adult. Esalen has a \$21,000 Ford Foundation grant for experiments in elementary education. Residents are seeking new kinds of "human capacity oriented" colleges.

## Calls It 'Anti-Intellectual'

All the subjects involve "the affective domain," the area of feelings. They represent a turning from the world of symbols.

"It seems to me the whole movement is anti-intellectual," said Jennie Hunter, a San Francisco dancer who belongs to

it. "People feel the intellect has got us into a lot of trouble."

A different view is offered by an Esalen vice president, George B. Leonard, a senior editor of Look magazine. He believes science is finding "new ways for ordinary people to achieve what appear to be miracles of feeling and doing." He once told an Esalen meeting:

"We envisage no mass movement, for we do not see people in the mass; we look instead to revolution through constant interplay between individual and group, each changing the other."

"The revolution has begun. Human life will be transformed. How it will be transformed is up to us."