

Through the Maze

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Flora Jessop: Helping the Child Brides

Flora Jessop was raised in a ten thousand member polygamous community on the Utah/Arizona border, the twin towns of Hildale, Utah and Colorado City, Arizona. When Flora was fourteen she sued her father for sexual abuse. In Southern Utah that was a big mistake and nearly cost her her life. Her father had two wives and 28 children. Her mother had 17 children.

Flora described the "trial:"

"The judge called us into an empty courtroom and my dad handed him \$4,000 to drop the charges. The judge looked at me and said, 'Well, Missy, today it looks like you are lying.'

"I was meant to see the payoff," Flora says, "because I was one of the first girls to attempt to take one of the Hildale 'fathers' to court."

Flora was given into the custody of her uncle, Fred Jessop, who constructed a tiny bedroom by building a wall across one end of a hallway.

"I spent three years in this room with them trying to beat Satan out of me for daring to stand up against God's

commandments."

Child Abuse, Rape, Incest

Child abuse in Utah has always been higher than that of the national average.¹ Rape statistics are also unusually high in Utah. Only one state—Alaska—has higher rape statistics than Utah. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 7/12/03) No wonder the state also leads the nation in the use of prescription antidepressants. (*Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 2002.²



The Gene Pool is Shallow in Colorado City

Flora: "All of the residents of Colorado City and Hildale have evolved from the families that were there during the '53 raid. There are about 12,000 people there in the First Ward and then they have the Canadian group with one to two thousand.

"The population is so ingrown it forces the trafficking of girls [to and from other polygamous communities] because they have to mix the blood up. You see a lot of Down Syndrome. Tourette

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Polygamy's Ongoing Ordeal

You could drop ten thousand well-placed atomic bombs in the Great North American Desert that stretches from Canada through Mexico without knocking over a manmade structure. My wife and I recently drove through the Great Basin Desert from Boise, Idaho to Moab, Utah. The vastness of the desert West is inconceivable even to us who live here. Yet that desert, in its canyons and mountain enclaves, hides as many as 100,000 polygamists.

Southern Utah and Northern Arizona have long been a haven for plural marriage. Polygamists fleeing federal prosecutors began inhabiting the Arizona Strip—the desert north of the Grand Canyon—more than a hundred years ago, even before the Mormon Church officially "gave up" polygamy rather than lose title to its temples and other property. Polygamy is still a tenant of Mormonism and polygamy ("Celestial Marriage") is

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End of Year Giving

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Flora and the Child Brides...

Syndrome is extremely, extremely pronounced.³ I have a sister who is married to a close relative. She had a child with no arms or legs. They are starting to have those kinds of birth defects now.”⁴

Author Kathy Tracy echoes these ideas. She researched polygamy after the Kingston incident [see sidebar] was made public. Afterward she wrote *The Secret Story of Polygamy*.⁵ because in it “incest, physical abuse and statutory rape [are] justified in the name of religion in this country and go unnoticed.” She wrote, “Polygamy fosters poverty and dependence, with most of the girls forbidden to continue their education, and birth defects are occurring at an alarming rate. Polygamy isn’t just a private religious matter; it affects society and the women involved in ways detrimental to both.”

People who are ignorant about the real nature of polygamy often say something like, “If these women want to enter polygamy voluntarily, what’s the problem?” The answer is found in the word “voluntarily.” There is no option to polygamy for 99% of the women (girls really) who enter it. First, they are raised in a closed society. They are, in fact, *bred* to become polygamous wives to old men. They are *forced* to marry who the Elders tell them to marry.

And, where would they go if they wanted to escape? In Colorado City the mayor, the Superintendent of Schools, and the entire police force *are polygamists!* As Flora says, “By the time a woman gets old enough to think there may be choices for her, she has five kids. What will she do, abandon them? And she probably has a first grade education.”

Flora’s Flight

When Flora escaped from Colorado City, she had no idea how she would make it in the outside world. “All my life I had been told that everything outside of the [Colorado City] community was hell and Satan. And that everybody on the outside were disciples from hell and wanted to

take you down with them. I got to the point where I thought ‘hell can’t be any worse than what I am living right now, so why not take my chances and see what it is like...”

I asked Flora what gave her the courage, at seventeen, to escape from the community and flee hundreds of miles through the desert to find a new life. “Actually, I was very lucky,” she said, “I had a grandmother who had married into the group from the outside. I think she was instrumental in my belief in myself. She taught me that I was worth something

God then, and for a real long time I wanted nothing to do with Him”

ON THE RUN

Flora eventually wound up in Kansas City and found work in a store. One day some men from Colorado City showed up and tried to abduct her. If a fellow employee hadn’t stepped in to help her, they would have hauled her back to the community. “I believe to this day that those men were either going to get me back to Colorado City or kill me.”

Flora actually moved in with the employee who had a husband and two little kids. Her story got out. One day Harry Reasoner from “Sixty Minutes” showed up on her doorstep and filmed an interview for his program.

Flora’s nightmare finally ended when she called their bluff. She phoned the powers at Colorado City and told them where she

was and said if they wanted her they should come for her, but they should be warned that she would be waiting for *them!* After that, she didn’t hear from them again.

Polygamy is Born in the Lust for Sex and Power in a Male-dominated Society

Mordern Mormon historians now know that Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was sexually active with women other than his wife from the earliest days of the Church. When his original wife, Emma, had finally had enough, he got a revelation on Celestial Marriage, going so far as to say that God threatened to “cut-off” Emma if she would not receive it. He then ordered his lieutenants to participate in the practice of polygamy. He even took for himself wives and daughters of his followers.

There is nothing lovely about this system. It is a nightmare. Here at “Through the Maze” we have gone to the trouble of republishing *Wife No. 19* by

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)

A leading anti-polygamy group says it won't attend Attorney General Mark Shurtleff's planned meeting on abuse victims after learning that he also invited a representative of the pro-polygamy community.

No date has been set for the gathering, which Shurtleff's spokesman billed as an attempt to find ways to link abuse victims from polygamous communities with government and social-service help, such as shelters.

The pullout by Tapestry Against Polygamy was announced in a tough-worded news release Tuesday that likened Shurtleff's invitation to asking sexual assaulters to help create a rape crisis center.

as a person—as opposed to who owned me.

So Many Contradictions

“I had so many questions...there were so many contradictions in things that I saw. For instance, we were taught the Ten Commandments and Love, and all. The expression we used all the time was, ‘Keep sweet!’

“But I remember the time an old biker was traveling through Colorado City and his motorcycle broke down right outside of town. He went to the little gas station in town. I was standing there with my dad when he walked in. I watched them put a gun in his face and tell him he had ten minutes to get out of town or he wasn’t leaving.

“Things like that make you question...I think that was the single most important event that caused me to understand that what I was a part of was ungodly. Actually I was sort of mad at

Ann-Eliza Young, who documents life in Mormon polygamy. Today, those who escape tell the same story Ann-Eliza did—a story about lust, domination, manipulation and abuse.

The New York Times “Gets It”

James Brook, writing in the August 23rd edition of the *New York Times*, quotes two modern escapees from polygamy:

“Once you threw out the religion, all of us women realized that it was made for the benefit of men,” said Vicky Prunty, who left two polygamous marriages with a total of six children. [My husband] would stay with the other women until I ran and dropped on my knees and asked forgiveness—which I did a couple of times.”

Carmen Thompson, who had five children in two polygamous marriages, agreed, saying: “He would pit the wives against each other; as long as there was turmoil, there was more control. He would come for a sexual favor, saying the other women wouldn’t do it for him.

But, the worst abuse of all is in the fact that we are not talking about *women* being abused, we are talking about *little girls* being abused. Not only are they forced to marry old men, but they often are sexually abused by their own fathers. Flora says, “Nine times out of ten the men living this lifestyle are pedophiles...It may be because they are addicted to ‘having a variety.’ And their theology doesn’t help. When you teach that God [Eloheim] is Mary’s father and that He impregnated her through sexual relations...that gives them the right to sleep with their own daughters. [See: saintsalive.com/mormonism/virginmary.htm]

Where Have All the Young Men Gone?

A very interesting phenomenon occurs in the polygamist settlements. The Elders all have numerous wives—sometimes more than a dozen. They take the young women as soon as they become pubescent. Of course, the young girls are interested in the young boys. But they are commanded to stay away from them! *The Elders do not want young men competing with them*

for the girls! So, when the young men become of age, they emigrate from the community. Many of them are unskilled and ignorant of what awaits them in the outside world. Some of them wind up with Doug Cook, a man who left Colorado City and has set up a sort of halfway house in St. George, Utah where he helps these men adapt to the real world.

Is There No Help For the Child Brides?

Flora established a nonprofit organization called “Help the Child Brides.” (helpthechildbrides.com) That grew out of an incident involving her sister, Ruby Jessop.

14 year old Ruby was married illegally and in secret to her step-brother, Havin Barlow, in Hildale, on April 23, 2001. Ruby was married against her will. Three weeks later she ran away in an attempt to avoid her fate. She went to her brother’s house, where she thought she would be safe. Her brother, Joe C. Jessop Jr., thought he could protect her. He couldn’t!

The following weekend at Quail Creek Reservoir in Utah, Ruby was taken by deception and returned to Fred Jessop’s home. When the Washington County Sheriff investigated days later, the FLDS leadership replied that the juvenile was on vacation for an undetermined length of time. We now know that during that time she was at a polygamous enclave in Idaho undergoing discipline and re-education for attempting to leave the group.

A month later Ruby was allowed to meet with a representative of the Utah Department of Family and Child Services (DCFS). Officials from the polygamous Church were with her so that she was not free to express herself. She’d been held in seclusion under their control for a month. Under these conditions, Ruby told the DCFS representative that everything was alright. Without any follow up or tests for abuse, the DCFS representative turned her back to her FLDS abusers.

Now Where is Ruby? She has been seen in Colorado city, always in the company of others. She was never given the opportunity to leave again and she now has a baby. The hope she once had to gain her freedom have faded. Neglected and

forgotten by the public agencies who were charged with helping her, Ruby’s bid for freedom has failed.

What is the hope for Colorado City?

Flora thinks that things can change for the helpless victims of polygamy—the Child Brides. But she doesn’t think it will happen soon nor easily.

“The first thing that needs to happen,” she says, “is to decertify the police force in Colorado City and bring in outside law enforcement who will *really* investigate crimes against these young women.

“Then there needs to be a place where the girls can easily escape to if they want out. And there needs to be ongoing education telling them they have choices.”

“Corruption in Utah goes to the very top. There have been payoffs for so many years that change is almost impossible. There needs to be a revamping of the entire political and social structure where polygamy is concerned.”

1. Utah continues to demonstrate child abuse rates higher than the nation as a whole. Only eleven states have higher rates. New York, New Jersey, California, and the District of Columbia have lower rates of child abuse than Utah. Source: The 2001 Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families
2. For a full look at the “darkly pessimistic” social statistics in Utah, see my web site at www.mazeministry.com.
3. Tourette Syndrome is characterized by repeated and involuntary body movements (tics). A tic is a sudden, rapid, stereotyped motor movement or vocalization. Tics can include eye blinking, repeated throat clearing or sniffing, arm thrusting, kicking movements, shoulder shrugging or jumping. Contrary to popular belief, use of socially inappropriate words or phrases (coprolalia) occurs in only a minority of patients.
4. In an article written by Greg Burton, printed in the Salt Lake Tribune April 25, 1999, Connie Rugg, one of John Ortell Kingston’s estimated 65 children, said, “All my life my family told me I had to marry a Kingston. I could choose, but it had to be a brother, uncle or cousin.” Many Kingston children are born with serious birth defects directly traceable to the sect’s breeding program.
5. Sourcebooks, Inc. Naperville, IL, 2001.

Ongoing Ordeal...

still a requirement for entrance into the highest levels of Mormon heaven.

Mormon fugitive John D. Lee, in 1857, hightailed it to the strip where he and his polygamous wives operated a ferry on the Colorado River for twenty years after he led the massacre at Mountain Meadows near Cedar City, Utah. The massacre, coincidentally occurred on September 11. It was ordered by Brigham Young, and was the largest single murder of Americans by Americans until Timothy McVeigh bombed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Under Lee, the Mormon Militia murdered 127 innocent men women and children in the Francher wagon train.

Colorado City is one-hour east of St. George, Utah, a two-lane drive taking you through desert country populated only by coyotes, antelope, and other desert critters.

It is the site of the Short Creek Raid of 1953 when 31 men were jailed while their wives and children were taken away for two-and-a-half years and put in foster care. That ill-fated attempt to control polygamy ended the political career of the Arizona governor who initiated the raid. For the next fifty years no Mormon polygamist was prosecuted in the West.

Five years ago polygamy resurfaced and has dominated newspaper headlines in Utah ever since. Several high-profile polygamists have been convicted on various crimes related to their unorthodox marriage rites. Most of the convictions come down on some aspect of sexual child abuse, stemming from the practice of marrying fourteen-year-old girls (or sometimes even younger) into plural marriages. In late August 2002, Tom Green was sentenced to five years to life for child rape—the sentence to run

concurrently with another sentence for bigamy. David Ortell Kingston is serving two 0-5-year sentences for having sex with his 16-year-old niece—who was also his 15th wife. His brother, John Daniel Kingston, the girl's father, was sentenced to 7 months in Box Elder County jail for severely beating his daughter when she attempted to flee from her uncle.

This summer Hildale police officer Rodney Holm was convicted on one count of bigamy and two counts of unlawful sex with a minor, and was sentenced to one year in jail. He has appealed the conviction. Most recently, best-selling author Jon Krakauer drew the ire of the Mormon Church when he published *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*, which documents the extreme nature and widespread practice of polygamy in the West. ■

Bada, Bada, Bing: Two Bishops, Two Churches, and a Midnight Ride.

Remember when John Wimber asked the question, “When do we do the stuff?” He was anew convert to Christ and he heard a lot of preaching about evangelism, and healing, and ministry. So he asked when did they *do* that stuff? He said someone told him, “Oh, John, we don’t *do* it, we just *talk about* doing it!” That is always a danger for a guy like me who is telling people how to evangelize the cults. I’m an expert cultbuster, but do I practice what I preach?

At any rate, I thought I should share with you just a few examples of actual encounters I have with people who are lost. So here are three quick examples.

Two days, six hundred miles, four meetings, eight commitments to Christ, and one missionary.

Friday I drive three hundred miles to Idaho Falls, preach Friday night, Saturday morning and drive back to Boise. Later a woman wrote to say that she was retiring from teaching and had planned to go into

foreign missions. After my seminar she was committed to staying in Idaho Falls and winning Mormons.

The next morning (Sunday) I preached in Meridian, Idaho. Seven people made commitments to Christ. That night in the same church another dramatic salvation, a Mormon coming to Christ.

Port Angeles, Washington Meeting

•Sunday-Wednesday, Jan 11-14, Port Angeles, WA . Lighthouse Christian Center, 304 Viewcrest Ave., 360-452-8909

(Today the pastor of that church told me he just baptized thatman.)

Two Bishops

Pray for two Mormon men who have served as bishops in the Mormon Church who, after encountering my web site, have resigned from the Church. Both of them have dedicated their lives afresh to Christ and to the biblical Gospel. Pray especially

that one of them, a young banker from North Carolina, does not lose his wife and children as a result of his decision to follow Christ.

Six hundred miles— there and back again

My wife had surgery on Tuesday. When the surgery was scheduled I cancelled a meeting that had been booked months before—three days in Richland, Washington—scheduled to begin the Sunday after her surgery. The pastor asked if I could at least come for Sunday night. I agreed.

Sunday morning of the meeting she is home, but sick. I’m in a sweat. Should I go: drive three hundred miles preach, drive back? I pray. God seems to give me the green light. I go, have a wonderful meeting, arrive home at 3:00 AM Monday. Wife is very sick. We decide to pray once more, then take her to the hospital if she doesn’t improve. She *does* improve and by noon is out of the woods and well on her way to healing. ■