They’re out there, the Utah polygamists, in stores and libraries, in offices and at garage sales. While some “plygs” are as visible as a print-dressed pioneer in a roomful of power suits, others blend in anonymously—undercover because of their illegal lifestyle—and Utah men and women live and work beside polygamists without knowing it.

“And in that day
SEVEN WOMEN SHALL TAKE HOLD OF ONE MAN,
saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own
apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away
our reproach.” — ISAIAH 4:1

Opposite: Tom Green and his seven wives pose inside one of their four Sandy trailer homes. Above: Tom’s wives’ names, ages and the order of their marriage to him. Among Tom’s wives are two sets of sisters (Cari and Hanna; Shirley and LeeAnn) and two mother-daughter combinations (Beth and daughter Linda, June and daughters LeeAnn and Shirley).
A polygamist’s life is sometimes like a family reunion—30 people squeezed in for Sunday dinner in a house designed for eight. It’s like an illicit love affair when a woman who lives in secret as a plural wife tells neighbors she is divorced, and her husband visits only after dark. It’s like a traveling salesman’s marriage—the man and one of his wives hope to spend a night together soon—but commitments to his other families leave the exact date indefinite. It’s like living in a boarding house, when it’s actually just a man, his wives and their children; or being able to afford only $2 restaurant dinner specials, yet still spending $30 for an evening out. One of Ogden Kraut’s wives kept her marriage secret for years. If they were walking in the grocery store and someone called one of their names, the other walked on as if they weren’t together. If relatives came to visit overnight, she “put his bathroom things out of sight” and he stayed at one of his other houses.

A story about polygamy is one of unique relationships—distinctive ties formed by the larger and more complicated family structure and the inclination to keep this lifestyle secret from the community. While a first impression of polygamy might be that of a man seeking as many sex partners as possible, in actuality plural marriage is a complex issue that extends far beyond the bedroom. The relationships that constitute polygamous families include not only husbands, “sister-wives” and children, but also unusual associations with society and law, government and God.

When the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints officially gave up polygamy in 1890, there were 10,000 Utah polygamists. Today, an estimated 30,000 people live in polygamous families in Utah; thousands more live in other areas of the United States, Canada and Mexico. While the 8.4 million-member Mormon Church excommunicates polygamists, nearly all U.S. polygamous families are motivated by the historic doctrinal beliefs of the early Mormon faith. Numerous participants descend from pioneer polygamous families, many from unbroken polygamous lines reaching back to the mid-19th century. Others are new converts.

Making the change is usually traumatic. “A strong faith commitment is important,” says one plural wife, “because almost everyone is against them—the law, society, their church and their extended family. Often they lose their immediate family, too.”

Tom Green remembers the day he invited his brother over and “came out of the closet,” saying he now believed polygamy was a necessary doctrine for salvation. Panicking, the brother lifted Tom’s arm, saw he wore the wrist-length religious undergarments favored by fundamentalists and responded, “They’ve gotten you.”

Says Tom, “It seemed like something out of The Invasion
of the Body Snatchers: the next day he had me signing quit claim deeds on my inheritance, saying that if I consecrated my share of family properties to a religious group, they could force their sale. Weeks later, he said, ‘You know if Dad were alive he would disinherit you—this is what we’ve done.’ My mother offered to give me everything she owned if I would come back to the Church. I told her my beliefs weren’t for sale, though I was touched that I meant that much. Later people would pat her on the back and say, ‘It’s too bad about your son,’ as though I had died.”

Dennis Matthews describes his divorce from his first wife over plural marriage as “surgery without anesthesia. I was 36 years old and didn’t think anyone would want to marry me again.” Obviously underestimating his appeal, he is now the husband of six. Today, Matthews’ father recognizes only the 11 children of his ex-wife and his first plural wife, Sandy—although there are 14 children from his five other wives, Christine, Valerie, Kathleen, Connie and Mary.

The agony Jack Brosig (not his real name) experienced in becoming a Fundamentalist isn’t reflected in the restful, powder blue Riverton living room where he and his first wife, Sheila, agreed to be interviewed. Ruth, Jack’s third wife, her baby and some married Brosig children who are saving to buy homes also live in this house. Because of crowded conditions, Jack’s second wife, Rachel, lives in another home, although the family formerly all lived together and still prefers communal living. Jack and Sheila were “financially secure and about ready to buy our Winnebago. Then we lost it all and went totally broke” when he felt compelled to quit a prestigious job and pursue beliefs that included plural marriage. He and Sheila had been married 20 years and were active in the mainstream LDS church: Jack had served in an elders’ quorum presidency and as stake mission president, their teen-aged sons were preparing for missions, and Sheila was a ward Relief Society president when they made the transition.

Sheila’s father, about to leave on an LDS mission, was heartbroken. Last fall, Sheila spoke to her brother “in real sentences” for the first time in five years. Although Jack and Sheila insist “this is the lifestyle of the gods, and we would never live any other way,” Jack adds, “I’ve never worked harder at anything.”

Once a man decides to become a polygamist, how does he obtain a plural wife? “Courtships are a double-edged sword.

“THIS IS THE LIFESTYLE OF THE GODS, AND WE WOULD NEVER LIVE ANY OTHER WAY.”

POLYGAMIST JACK BROSG & WIFE SHEILA

I’m torn because I know what my wives are experiencing giving up a third of me, yet I’m also gaining through the strength of another wife,” says Jack. With Ruth, Jack didn’t want to rush the courtship because she is 30 years younger (he is 50), and “I didn’t want a young wife to come into my
THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT

Legally, polygamy is a third-degree felony. So why isn’t it prosecuted?

As Dick Forbes, chief investigator of the Salt Lake County attorney’s office, explains, “Polygamists usually marry one wife legally, and the other marriages are not civilly recognized but are performed and recognized within [the polygamist] church. Prosecuting polygamy requires proving cohabitation and using the adultery statutes, which in view of today’s social standards, would put many people under the jurisdiction of common laws, which is totally impractical. Legally, polygamists are different from other people living together without marriage.” He adds that polygamists likely would claim First Amendment rights to religious practice as the basis for their lifestyle, which could nullify prosecution if the Supreme Court overturned a precedent-setting decision and ruled that polygamy is a protected religious right under the First Amendment.

But beyond multiple marriages, polygamy has been linked to crimes that include murder. “Occasionally, a Fundamentalist who has had all of his earlier social structures—church and family—striped away, will crack under the pressure and go over the edge to commit crimes,” says Tom Green. In recent years, criminal polygamists have resorted to gangland-style executions, bombings, murder and other violence. Some claim divine right—even duty—for their actions, such as those who commit murders in the name of “blood atonement” to avenge the “sin” of another. The Church of the First Born of the Lamb of God, a radical sect organized by the late Ervil LeBaron, who died in the Utah State Prison in 1981, targets for death those who have left the church.

Forbes believes that crimes committed by polygamists—such as the LeBaron murders, the Singer-Swapp siege resulting in the death of a Utah corrections official, and the Lafferty murders, in which two brothers killed a sister-in-law and her small daughter—are committed by “a scant minority of fanatical criminals that are a small segment of the total polygamist population. The vast majority, although their outward appearance is different from the societal norm, tend to support all of the laws of society—with the exception of polygamy laws.”

schedule sometimes put a wife with me on nights that weren’t good for her. Now we consider issues such as whether or not a wife is having her period or trying to get pregnant.”

“We reached a compromise,” says June, who is in her early 40’s. “If more than one wants to try to get pregnant on the same days, one tries one month and one tries the next. Or, if there’s a conflict, the older wife gets priority because she doesn’t have as many years to have children.” Polygamists believe their duty is to raise a large and righteous posterity to the Lord. “The only way to do that is through plural marriage,” says Tom, citing Jacob 2:30 of the Book of Mormon. He believes that wives should not only propose marriage, but should initiate subsequent sexual encounters. “For the marriage to work, each wife should be in it because she chooses to be, and the gestures of physical affection should be her choice. Though I do everything I can to make them feel loved, my wives make the advances and know they will be left alone otherwise.” Some of his wives disagree. “The women are always available. He’s the one who should initiate,” says Beth. “Some women in society find themselves uncomfortably submitting or fending off their husbands. That doesn’t need to happen in polygamy because he’s too scarce.”

But are they uncomfortable thinking what’s going on in the master bedroom? “We don’t wonder. We know. After all this time, we just go back to sleep,” says Beth. “It doesn’t bother me. I want the others to enjoy being with him because I love them.” Tom and his wives debate good-naturedly about whether he prefers older or younger wives. “There’s something wrong with each of our physiques—not much competition there,” exclaims June. Beth is equally

“A MAN WHO LIVES POLYGAMY SHOULD BE ON A HIGHER SPIRITUAL PLANE THAN A MONOGAMIST WHEN IT COMES TO SEX. HE SHOULD LOVE ALL HIS WIVES EQUALLY.”

PLURAL WIFE BETH GREEN

emphatic. “Some older women’s bodies are as beautiful as young ones, and if a man has been a polygamist a long time, his body isn’t so young anyway. Besides that, a man who lives polygamy should be on a higher spiritual plane than a monogamist when it comes to sex. He should love all his wives equally.”

Tom, Jack and Dennis all agree that they never discuss with one wife any sexual experience with another. One plural wife recalls hiding in the bedroom closet when her husband and another wife were in bed. “They knew I was in there and played it to the hilt. I heard him say, ‘No one has ever done that before.’ When I thought I might really be invading their privacy and decided to escape, I opened the closet door a
crack and they had a squirt gun aimed right at me. They drenched me and convulsed with laughter.”

One anonymous plural wife describes her husband’s ability to make all of his wives feel loved by relating an incident from one of his wedding days. She was babysitting the new wife’s children (from a previous marriage) while the newly-weds spent their wedding night at a hotel. “Somehow he slipped away from his new wife—not long enough for her to wonder what he was doing, but just long enough to give me a quick call to tell me he loved me. It was very reassuring.”

Some say plural marriage is harder emotionally on the man. Says one plural wife, “He has to be all things to all wives,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO ARE THE UTAH PLYGS?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Fundamentalists still consider the Mormon faith as the only church recognized by God but feel that it has become “out of order,” through changes leaders have made in original doctrines. Most Fundamentalists wait for the “one mighty and strong,” promised in Section 85 of the Doctrine and Covenants to “set the house of God in order.” Until then, they fall into several distinct associations.**

**The Short Creekers of Colorado City**

The estimated 12,000-member “Johnson Group” is headquartered in Colorado City, (est. pop. 4,000), the largest polygamist town in America. The town is currently split into several factions by a vicious lawsuit. Two of the groups have satellite colonies in the western U.S. and western Canada. The women in this group dress in a manner resembling a mixture of pioneers, Mennonites and Fundamentalist Christians. They wear calf-length print dresses, oxfords or running shoes with support hose, rimless glasses and hair neatly wound in a bun. Colorado City girls are masters of the art of hair braiding.

**More Mormon than the Mormons**

The Allred Group, headquartered in Salt Lake City, is the largest polygamous group, with possibly as many as 20,000 members. The group is very much like the early Mormon Church—with polygamy and united order (economic communitarianism) added. It is also said to be “more Mormon than the Mormons” because its similarities include organizations such as Relief Society and Primary. While most of the members covertly in normal communities, they have also established numerous isolated colonies throughout the West. The Allred women dress in a clean-cut ‘50s style. Their long locks are usually pony-tailed, tied back at the nape of the neck or worn long and loose. Sister-wives commonly wear slacks or jeans with long-sleeved blouses.

**The Bloody LeBarons**

While headquarters for these factions are in Mexico, they have extensive activities in the U.S., where they draw most of their converts. One of these sects, the followers of Ervil LeBaron, follow a course of violent bloodshed in the struggle to dominate other polygamists, particularly followers of the other LeBaron brothers, who are considered peace-loving people. Several of Ervil’s followers were convicted in January on counts relating to the 1988 murders of four siblings.

**Economic Polygamists**

The Kingston group began to live the United Order when polygamist Charles Kingston formed a co-op during the Depression. Refusing money the government was pouring into other co-ops, this group has outlasted all other subsidized co-ops and now controls farms, coal mines, manufacturing and businesses. This group is unpopular with the Utah government, which has prosecuted them for welfare fraud and recently appropriated the group’s banking operations.

**The Fanatic Fringe**

Many small polygamous groups are offshoots of splinter groups of one of the major factions. So far removed from original Mormonism, their theology ranges from radical to bizarre. The Tolman group in Cane Beds, Ariz., bask nude in “the Angel of the Sun,” while another group in the same area extends plural marriage to include sexual relationships with all its members—of either sex. Joseph Smith declared Missouri the Mormons’ promised land, so several groups have beaten the millennial rush there. One such group is headed by former BYU energy whiz kid, Roger Billings, who perceives himself as the reincarnated Jesus Christ. This group has fashioned an underground survival city in an abandoned limestone mine.

**The Independents**

Families that espouse Fundamentalist doctrines, but don’t feel that any other man has a right to direct them, maintain a loose-knit circle of acquaintances among other independent polygamists. They often function in traditional society while hiding their polygamous identities.
while I can just stay home and be myself. Plural marriage should attract independent women. You’re free to spend time on personal interests—whether it’s a career, hobby or caring for a sick relative.” Although they currently work on several home businesses, Tom’s wives see a career as an option after the children are older. Midwifery is their unanimous career choice. Says one plural wife: “Careers in polygamy are facilitated because you’re not tied to fixing dinner for your husband every night, and when you’re gone, kids can stay in their own surroundings with another mother.”

Sibling Rivalry With a Twist

Beyond husband-wife relationships are ties among sister-wives. Dennis and his wives were happily anticipating Sandy’s baby when the infant suddenly died two days before his due date. “We had an ultrasound, so we knew he was dead. The hospital wanted to induce labor, but we wanted to deliver at home as always. I think we still hoped that God would somehow revive him,” remembers Dennis. “When I delivered him, and it was obvious he was dead, the wives all instantly fell on the bed around Sandy, hugging and comforting her. They felt the loss both because of their love for her, and because we are all one family. This was the loss of their child, too.”

In one instance, the close relationship between sister-wives made the husband jealous—to the point where he left the relationship. One woman, however, found that acquiring a sister-wife nearly did her in. “The first night he went across the hall to sleep with her, I freaked out. I screamed, pounding and kicking the bedroom door. When they didn’t answer, I went back to my room and sobbed.” It wasn’t just the nights that enraged her. “The new wife rearranged all my cupboards, although I had been there first. She was very bossy and domineering, and I found myself leaving the house for hours just to get away from her.”

Janet Cannon, a University of Utah anthropologist who lived in a polygamist town for several months, says her findings indicate a subtle hierarchy wherein the first wife has certain rights and privileges—the house she and the husband have been working for, money she has helped earn, a longer period of intimacy and accumulation of goods. The younger wives have the advantage of being younger—possibly making them more attractive—and the ability to produce more offspring. She also finds a significant incidence of “sororal polygyny,” where as many as four biological sisters take the same man as a husband. Two young sisters who are married to the same man say, “We are supposed to be mature sister-wives, but we still argue like plain old sisters over household chores.”

Domestic Tranquillity?

Plural wives say household chores are a common cause of contention. In their words, it’s easier to share a man than a kitchen. “One wife will think dishes are clean; another will say they’re not,” says Jack. Dennis and his family live in a 6,500-square-foot, 12-bedroom house in Mapleton that used to be a home for boys. The Greens live in four Sandy mobile homes surrounded by a fenced common yard. In Riverton, Jack presides over three refrigerators, six bathrooms, a dozen bedrooms, five cars, two leaking faucets and two yards that always need mowing. Dinner for all the Brosigs requires a 16-foot table and five high chairs. “I never knew how picky I was before I was a plural wife and discovered I was a perfectionist who wanted everything in its place and nothing left on the counters,” says Sheila. Dennis’ wives divide their house into sections with responsibilities rotating every six days. The “kitchen” wife is responsible for all meals and maintenance that day. Another wife cleans bathrooms, and another has “grounds” (she goes out and picks up all the forks, knives and other stray items that are left outside). The family stocks up on spoons at garage sales once a year. The Matthews family estimates they ate five tons of potatoes last year.

How do they keep up with sheer logistics? Says Sheila, “Most families can’t keep up. They either have older sons help or the wife has to learn to do repairs. I know of one wife who has literally built homes. One advantage to living all under one roof is that home maintenance is easier.”

Kraut comments that “it is hard to live completely apart or completely together.” Polygamists agree the ideal arrangement would be a house with a common area surrounded by separate apartments for each wife and her children.

Ezra Young (not his real name) lives in such a house in central Utah. Four living rooms reflect the tastes of his four wives. One fashioned a rock fireplace from stones outside their southern Utah house and crocheted a wall-hanging of the Last Supper. Another favors teddy bears, bookshelves and her own dried desert flower arrangements. Ezra lives in what you could call a one-man town. All the residents are his descendants or their spouses. At age 74, he has 15 sons, 15 daughters and 158 grandchildren.

The Youngs live in a cluster of homes and make their living working at an on-site, family-owned factory. A cement pad is used for volleyball games and Saturday night dances.
THAILAND CONTINUED FROM PAGE 68

than I had ever imagined, it was great fun, until the wind picked up. I soon realized that despite paddling my hardest, I wasn't moving an inch, and the possibility of overturning or crashing into the limestone cliffs seemed inevitable. We eventually made our way back into the protected bay and settled on a closer beach.

The next day we opted for an all-day boat tour of the two islands. Our first stop was the Viking Cave, located on the smaller island Phi Phi Le. It is home to hundreds of sea swallows who build their nests high in the caves by secreting saliva that hardens when exposed to air. Two or three times a year, collectors scale precarious bamboo scaffolding to harvest the nests, which are used to prepare birds nest soup, a Chinese delicacy.

The tour also included several stops for snorkeling in water teeming with colorful fish, fascinating coral formations and an occasional stinging jellyfish. The temperature in the Andaman Sea was much cooler and more refreshing than the tepid South China Sea.

After spending full days in the powerful tropical sun, we would catch the sunsets and then wander into town to pick our dinner from one of the fantastic spreads of fresh seafood displayed before each restaurant.

CHIANG MAI & NORTHERN HILL

The toughest part of traveling in Thailand is pulling yourself away from where you are to move on to the next enticing locale. After almost two weeks of being beach gluttons, we regrouped and headed north and inland to Chiang Mai, Thailand's third largest city.

Considering it took us 24 hours to go to Ko Samui from Bangkok, and Chiang Mai was another 700 kilometers northwest of Bangkok, we opted to take the ferry to Phuket, where we caught a two-hour flight to Chiang Mai.

With some 350 trekking companies in this mountain city of 150,000 people, finding a group that left the following morning was not an problem. On the other hand, we knew we were not alone.

We signed up for a three-day trek and met our guide, Sert. Feeling pleased with how quickly we organized the trek, we spent the rest of the evening exploring Chiang Mai's many shops, temples and the popular Night Market.

Almost all treks out of Chiang Mai have four central components—trekking, elephant riding, river rafting and visiting hill-tribe villages. The Thai government officially recognizes six groups of hill tribes or "Chao Khao" (literally translated to "mountain people"). The Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Akha, Lisu and Mien tribes have been migrating into northern Thailand since the beginning of the 20th century and each group has its own language, dress, religion and historical background.

After four hours of trekking we arrived at a Lisu village. One of our guides, Pu, insisted that the villagers found westerners intriguing and didn't mind our passing through their living quarters, although it appeared to me our visit had lost its novelty for them.

Many of the hill tribes that live in the Golden Triangle (the Northern area of Thailand bordering Laos and Burma) depend on opium—which they trade for food—and the drug has become the fifth unofficial element of a typical trek. So after dinner, the owner of the bamboo hut where we were staying informed Sert that opium and marijuana were available. Sert passed the information on to us as casually as a waiter relates the daily specials. Everyone declined except for one of the trekkers. The rest of the evening, Sert and Pu entertained us with stories of voodoo and comical trekker mishaps.

Sleeping accommodations were elevated bamboo beds, which we shared with an apparently harmless spider the size of a small rodent.

The next morning, after breakfast, we trekked four hours in sweltering heat before arriving at the Karen village, where we plunged into a cool river. Lunch was steaming hot ramen seasoned with, yes, a smidgen of ants; bananas and lukewarm Coca-Colas—not our idea of a refreshing summer meal.

After two hours of immobility for fear we would overturn, the elephants appeared on the elevated back patio of the bamboo hut, waving their trunks. They waited patiently as we stepped on their heads and necks and settled into tenuous wooden saddles. Then they obediently marched single file toward the river, prodded by the young village boys.

We crossed the river's steep banks several times, gripping the saddles tightly. As I considered the consequences of the saddles slipping, I turned around to see two trekkers dangling sideways on their elephant, which soon stopped. The Karen boys ran to help. The novelty of riding these massive animals wears off quickly as you recognize your extreme discomfort. After about three hours, we arrived at the rafting camp, where we stayed the second night, just before it began to rain.

The third day was devoted to rafting. Although the excitement level depends on the water level, there was no comic end to trying to keep afloat on a bamboo raft that appeared to have been hastily assembled during lunch. Helmets, life jackets and liability are foreign concepts to these guides equipped with a bamboo shoot, a cigarette and faith in Buddha.

True thrill-seekers should go during the rainy season, when you are guaranteed the ride of your life. (Most rafts barely make the trip in one piece.) We went during the dry season when the water is much lower. Although it isn't nearly as adventurous, it is still scenic, definitely more relaxing, and safer.

While floating the river I asked Sert about his plans for the future. He said he likely would continue guiding treks for the next few years. And then, after the bamboo is gone, he will just take hiking treks. It was a sad reality. Although bamboo grows rapidly, no one had accounted for replanting. Within a few years it will be completely depleted.

It was a sobering thought, and as we floated down the river on our ramshackle raft, I realized that what seemed to us harmless adventure-seeking was also an example of how industry often entails exploitation of land and people. The entire trek was so vastly different from my expectations. Full of interesting stories and people, laughter, camaraderie and, in the end, a little sadness.
and a church resembling an LDS ward advertises a genealogy class. Ezra's oldest child is 52, his youngest 16.

Children who grow up in plural families often consider their father's plural wives as their "other mothers." One man was eight years old before he knew which was his biological mother. "I always had another mother to talk to—but on the flip side, sometimes I had four mothers telling me where I was wrong," says a young woman from the Allred group, the largest polygamous clan, based in Salt Lake City.

While some children call their fathers' plural wives "aunt," Tom's children call their mothers "Mother," followed by their first names—such as Mother Beth, Mother Linda and Mother Shirley. Tom, who is a magazine salesman, is gone 80 percent of the year and usually takes some wives with him, while assigning others to care for his 14 children. He jokingly adds, "About once a month, I return to 'swap wives.'"

On the Dole

One question people often ask is, "How do you support that big family?" While some polygamists proclaim that self-sufficiency is a benefit of belonging to a polygamous family, others acknowledge that attaining economic solvency is one of polygamy's greatest challenges.

A Utah State Department of Social Services employee, who spoke on condition of anonymity, says polygamists often supplement their incomes with the help of tax dollars in the form of food stamps, WIC, Medicaid and the H.E.A.T. program. She estimates that in the office where she works, 300 polygamous families receive from between $500 and $1,600 worth of food stamps each month for families with an average of 15 members. She says, "The attitude of some polygamists is 'the government is untrustworthy and corrupt, and I'm above it—but give me those food stamps and free medical care.'"

She explains that while the state of Utah doesn't discriminate or make moral judgments against non-traditional lifestyles, to receive regular welfare grants, a woman must declare the name of the father who is absent from her household. (Applications for food stamps and Medicaid do not require that disclosure.) She adds that "many polygamists are self-employed. After deducting expenses, they are usually eligible." She feels that polygamists are often secretive when applying—on issues ranging from the number of people in their families to their bank accounts and property holdings. In one case, a 55-year-old man declared his 55-year-old wife and children and "a 35-year-old friend" and her children as his dependents. "I jokingly said that he could get a free medical card if he had more children. Hearing that, he admitted that the 'friend' was actually a plural wife and her children were also his." She concludes, "While most monogamous families may stop having children when they feel they can't afford more, the purpose here seems to be to keep taking more younger wives and having more children. One man that I know has taken two wives since he turned 50. He has one that is 33, one that is 21 and one that is 16. Twice they have all been pregnant at the same time. There's nothing to indicate that he will stop adding people to his household or to his food stamps. It's like it's owed to them because God is on their side."

When pressed to comment, Clyde Terry, program manager of the Office of Family Support, grudgingly counters that there are other large families, such as Indochinese extended families or large conventional families, who receive grants equal to those of some polygamous families. Parroting a procedure manual, he adds, "I wouldn't single them out. Polygamists don't make the rules—the government does. What they get is based on what they're eligible for." Terry repeatedly refused to respond to the assertion that it is through illegal activity that polygamists increase their dependents and thus receive greater subsidies. Says one Fundamentalist, "Polygamists are like other people: some apply for aid in time of need, and others depend on it chronically. If a man in his 50's chooses to continue having children, what business is that of a social worker, any more than if a young, unwed mother continues to have children?"

Joining the Fold?

In Utah, polygamists are part of the community. Some say their numbers are growing. In her research, anthropologist Cannon found that five families are baptized into the Allred group each month. She attributes this growth to a current worldwide interest in fundamental religions and disagreement with modern changes in LDS doctrine (see sidebar).

"When someone disagrees with current doctrine, they often separate the church from 'the gospel' and view Fundamentalism as the surest route to the gospel. Too, there are those who believe that when they reach a certain plateau of knowledge in the church and feel a duty to keep seeking, the obvious next place to search is the mysteries spoken of by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young—and the next step is Fundamentalism."

She adds that with the conversions comes a corresponding exodus. "People who initially find Fundamentalism attractive quickly discover there are limits to what is allowed, that like the church, the Fundamentalist groups are, in the words of one who left, just another institution." The disenchanted may become Independent polygamists—another challenging choice. "It's very difficult to go from being a Mormon, with all the props—family, Sunday School teacher, bishop—to that pioneer type of environment where you are on your own." One Colorado City Fundamentalist asked if he could come back to the LDS Church—along with his two wives. (He's still a Fundamentalist.)

All who have been involved or studied polygamy describe it as a difficult, challenging life. Marvin Ryting, a psychiatry professor who has studied polygamy, says: "What you have in polygamy is basically an intensification of what you see in all sorts of families. You need more energy, more effort. It is not an easy life, not the sort of thing you do for a lark."