

The Gentle Wind Project: Insiders' Stories

This information has been compiled, edited, and written by Judy Garvey and Jim Bergin – both former members of the Gentle Wind Project – based on their personal experiences with the group and its leaders from 1983-2004. For additional information, please visit www.windofchanges.org, a website by former members of GWP.

This file has also had a small amount of editing by the Editor of Cults.co.nz.

Alternate names of the group: Gentle Wind Project, Gentle Wind, Gentle Wind Retreat, Gentle Wind/Turning Point, The Gentle Wind School.

Group founder: John D. Miller.

Group leaders: John D. Miller and Mary E. Miller.

Other names of primary leader: John D. Miller: “Tubby”.

Other name of second group leader: Mary E. Miller: “Moe” or “Mo” Miller, Olivia Miller, Mary Elizabeth Carreiro, Claudia Panuthos.

Co-leaders: Shelly (Mugsie/Shelbourne/Diane) Miller (Boyce), Carol (Mapes/Max) Miller, Joan (Juan/Jean) Carreiro, Pam (Colleen) Ranheim.

Description: A “psychotherapeutic / new age / spiritual” group. Some original members were reportedly therapy clients of the group's founders, Mary Miller and John Miller. People are recruited through seminars, newsletters, and offers of free “healings” by members of the group. “Healings” are said to come from the “spirit world” through the use of “healing instruments” that repair “damages to the aura” and “break the cycle of reincarnation,” causing evolution to take place. Then, according to group belief, the designs are “channeled” through “telepathic impressions” to the leader of the group, John D. Miller (“Tubby”). These “healing instruments” are produced by group members in several homes owned by the group leaders, and are made available to purchasers for “contributions” ranging from approximately US\$400 to upwards of US\$20,000.

After someone buys an instrument, he or she is known as an “instrument keeper” (IK) and is continuously encouraged to “upgrade” to more elaborate “healing” instruments. They are invited to special “advanced seminars,” “conferences,” and to assist with the “work of the project,” all the while acquiring more instruments. In addition, they begin to receive more “information” about their lives and personalities via telephone or other personal communications with the leaders and their main spokespeople (long-time members). It is even possible to purchase “personality cards,” wherein the purchaser can learn exactly what “GWP-given personality traits” have been assigned to him or her by the “spirit world” / aka “Tubby” or “Moe.” (For more about the designations of “personality cards,” please read “A Husband's Account,” by visiting the web site above. Through each of these methods, more and more internal pressure builds in the IKs – subtle, or perhaps not-so-subtle – as they strive to bring in additional recruits in the form of new IKs.

Individuals who are IKs are encouraged to share their instruments with as many people as possible; at one time there were high quotas demanded of IKs. (*Although*

the quotas may not be set guidelines at the present time, IKs report that they are told to “bring in more people,” and GWP staffers sit at their desks with a flow chart in front of them showing how much money has been taken in and how much is expected.) The more costly the instrument, the more problems (“human conditions”) it purportedly can solve, with descriptions of alleviating everything from pain to trauma to addiction. Former members report that they believed these claims while they were in the group, but saw the futility of these products after they left the group.

Over twenty years, there have been over 200 variations of “healing instruments” developed, many with the same purported outcomes that are now being touted as “new”. Hoped for outcomes of curing cancer, curing the common cold, ending drug addiction and alcoholism, have all been made, then usually forgotten as another instrument is designed with new claims. Even though the desired results are only achieved by chance, members continue to believe that they must acquire the latest model. Followers report wanting nothing more in life than the most advanced healing instruments, and have a great desire to spread these among friends, relatives, and strangers in order to “change the course of their very existence,” to “break the cycle of reincarnation.” *(For more on this phenomenon among high-control group members, read “Prophetic Charisma,” by Len Oakes.)*

The GWP leaders tell their followers, seminar attendees, and anyone who reads the articles written by Mary Miller, that these instruments are only available through GWP, the exclusive group on the planet that is aligned with the “most advanced spirits.” Nothing else works, at least so quickly and perfectly – not psychotherapy, not religion, not education, not any form of alternative healing; in short, nothing except the healing instruments ensures “salvation.” GWP is, according to the leaders and followers, the only group in the world that is actually “saving the planet” with the help of the “spirit world.” These “advanced spirits” have been assigned various names by GWP group leaders since they started forming the group in the late 1970s, including the Brothers and Sisters, the Brotherhood, the White Brotherhood, the Inner World, the Company, and the Spirit World. *(For more information on the history and beliefs of GWP, visit www.windofchanges.org/Husbandsperspective.html.)*

John “Tubby” Miller is purportedly the chief “guru” but never appears at meetings or in interviews. Mary Miller (not a relative or legal wife), aka Moe, Mo, Mary Olivia, Claudia Panuthos, Mary Elizabeth Carreiro, chairs the seminars, gives interviews, and exclusively conducts the flow of information. She also authors the groups’ newsletters, articles, and books.

A former member reports that, at last count, five other women, including Mary Miller, lived with John Miller, as part of his “group family” at the GWP house in Durham, NH (though the legal address for GWP remains in Kittery, ME, and another home in Kittery is used as the main office and home for some of the staff).

According to former members, all decisions for the group come from John Miller through the women living with him. Former members of the group report believing that John Miller was the highest evolved human being on the planet, and that the women around him should be used energetically to preserve his environment so that he could be protected and, through him, the instruments could be produced. Even though the members of the group have reportedly “given up all of their possessions”

(information announced at every seminar for the past 20 years) to devote themselves to GWP, the group leaders have – in the way of other high-control group leaders – amassed vast properties and money. The group, through their board of directors (the members living with John Miller in Durham, NH, or nearby in Portsmouth, NH, Kittery, ME, or other surrounding towns) own several valuable homes, and many cars, including BMW's and Corvettes. GWP is a “nonprofit group” whose tax returns are available to the public on www.windofchanges.org, through www.guidestar.org, or directly from the IRS. The main leaders of the group spend the winter months in Melbourne Beach, Florida and the remainder of the year in Kittery, Maine and Durham, New Hampshire. They have also lived in Blue Hill, Yarmouth, and other towns in Maine.

In addition to having all living expenses, transportation, housing, travel, food, automobiles, boats and other recreational equipment supplied by the non-profit corporation, each of the top ring of hierarchy living together in one house receives a salary of US\$52,839 (as of fiscal year 2001-02) and up, as reported on the GWP taxes, for a combined, apparently expense-free, total of US\$317,034.

According to former members, the second level of Gentle Wind's hierarchy is made up of less than ten people who live in several other houses in Kittery and surrounding towns, and Florida. These workers generally put in long hours communicating with IKs, doing secretarial work, answering telephones, sending out press releases, selling instruments via telephone, arranging for seminars, and taking care of every detail requested by the top leaders. The former members giving this description were at this level for many years and report that the people, mostly women, in this group, take all commands from John Miller (or through Mary Miller and the other four women living with John Miller), responding to any request without question. If anything is questioned, the member doing this would be chastised, receiving information that they are causing chaos, that the “energy is negative,” that their very presence is disruptive. At any point in this process, or without any previous warning, members can be “kicked out” and shunned by group members. This is also referred to as “taking a break.”

Former members report being influenced by “telepathic readings” that were believed to be “channeled from the spirit world” by the group leaders, John and Mary Miller, individually, for each member of the group, and for the entire group together. Although these “readings” manipulate members in subtle ways, members report that they have become very influenced over the years and that they believe everything that is told to them by the leaders, whether it is a “reading” or simply normal conversation or opinions. Members become so dependent on “readings” or advice that they turn to the leaders for decisions about the simplest of daily activities. In similar fashion, they all follow the leader's preferences, i.e. everyone became Celtics basketball fans, bought super gasoline rather than regular, cut their hair short, fed their pets the same way, earned a ham radio license, made bowls on a lathe, bought trucks, and so on. Even without being told to follow certain norms, former members report that everyone began acting the same while taking their cues from the top hierarchy's behavior and preferences. At other times, members were directly advised to follow certain procedures, such as wearing white clothing, beige clothing, or other particular colors and styles, and all complied. These were not “uniforms;” simply implied or overt follow-the-leader choices by all members.

In the experience of former GWP members, the members are influenced by all of the usual high-control group tactics: fear of rejection, fear of loss of spiritual evolution, watching what happens to other members in the way of rewards and punishments, selection of friends, influencing of relationships outside of the group, easing people away from friends and family, spending time almost exclusively with other members, and so on. Group members use the same language and slang, copied from the leaders. The group leaders have written books and newsletters to describe “types” of people and members now often report that they are a certain “type” of person, who may sometimes have difficulty managing to live with another “type” as defined by the group. In the way of complete reliance on astrological readings, only much more rigid and detailed, IKs and members begin to “be” their “personality cards” after they buy these from the GWP leaders.

From what observers have learned, Gentle Wind began in the late 70s with the core group and then expanded to another level of followers by the early 80s. It is still a small group, but is growing at an international level. Seminars have now been held in Eastern Europe, India, England, New Zealand, and Ireland, as well as throughout the U.S. The top two tiers of leadership include about 15 people. Instrument keepers who are reportedly very serious about the group possibly number 60 more. All instrument keepers could number as many as 300-600 people, or more, though these numbers may now be lower. Thousands of people have attended seminars over the past ten years with many “healing instruments” sold for “contributions” at these gatherings, after charismatic presentations by Mary “Moe” Miller. In addition to selling healing instruments for a suggested contribution, members and prospective members are encouraged, or asked directly, to donate money to the group. The group, through Mary Miller, claims that millions and millions of people have used the instruments, though former members scoff at these grandiose statements. Generally, the majority of IKs leave the group after an initial enthusiastic presence. However, those IKs who receive more direct contact with the leaders and staff spokespeople remain longer. Among the original followers from the mid-to-late 1980s, there are approximately fifteen who have been completely committed, to the exclusion of most other relationships, working full time for the GW leaders over a period of twenty years.

According to ex-followers, the GWP members are largely made up of professionals who have had careers and responsible positions in the world. They are people who are highly motivated to help with the problems of the world – former social workers, new age healers, teachers, book publishers, health care workers, nurses, beauticians, store clerks, and musicians. In other words, they were attracted to GWP because of the stated aims to “save the planet” and “alleviate suffering.” Most members in the top tiers of the hierarchy are women – now more middle-aged than young. Men are not aware of many of the secrets of the group, such as the sexual rituals practiced (group sexual activities between the leader and women, described in more detail below and at www.windofchanges.org/Husbandsperspective.html). The few men involved in the project seem to be skilled carpenters and have helped with many group building projects for little or no pay, although they are sometimes given small salaries and living expenses, or paid with “healing instruments.” Along with the long-term members, newer recruits who are health-care professionals, have their credentials used on GWP website testimonials, even in cases where these people no longer

practice their professions and haven't for many years, and where the licenses and certifications might have lapsed.

Former members report that the testimonials on the Gentle Wind website are almost all from "true believer" members and original founding members or current serious instrument users who are very involved in the group, attend seminars, and receive phone calls and "free instruments" from the GWP staff. One of the lead testimonials is by Dr A. Chu Fong, who died several years ago. He used the "healing instruments" in his own practice for a while, although he was not a member of the group. Until recently, a former member reports that a testimonial was on the group's website that she had asked to be removed four years ago. The testimonial stated that Gentle Wind had saved her family thousands of dollars in psychiatric bills. However, after that statement was made, this family actually had to spend thousands of dollars in psychiatric and legal bills to assist their sons and themselves in their recovery after being raised by parents who were GWP members. This same family is currently receiving many warnings and insults regarding their mental health stability and much more because of telling their personal stories about their seventeen-year membership in the Gentle Wind Project. In addition, several website hosts in the U.S., England, and New Zealand, have been threatened legally because of their willingness to post these former members' stories on their websites.

Behavior Control: 1) Members have gone through many conforming hair styles (all very short), choices of food (changing over the years to sugar and junk food to Atkins diet, to juices – whatever John Miller was currently eating), choices of clothing (all wearing white, or all wearing blues, beiges and whites, and so on). Most members originally lived together in group homes, but now members also live in distant situations from each other while continuing to follow group norms and assisting with seminar arrangements and publicity, even in isolation from the main group. There are small groups of members throughout the country, and people that set up seminars internationally.

Members are often asked to give money to the group, and some former members report contributing large amounts of money. However, even those that aren't asked for money seem to end up without money. Either they are working for the group at the expense of their own jobs, or they decide to contribute their income to the group's goals, at least according to former members. Some members have given up most or all of their personal money and then have been discarded by the group and have had to rebuild their lives. Status in the group was linked to the contribution of money or continuous labor. Former members report that two elderly members with inherited wealth were taken care of into old age while their funds were used to support the group. The GWP leaders and top hierarchy report to the public, at seminars and in articles, that they have given up everything to assist with the work of GWP – their careers, houses, insurance policies, cars. However, former members report that the GWP founders/leaders have replaced anything they might have given up with several houses, late-model and luxury cars, and sizable incomes, as reported on their taxes.

2) Many lower-tier members have given up careers, family, children, and other activities to work for the goals of the group. Former members report that couple who originally entered the group together were influenced to separate by the leaders; parents were often separated from their children, not always by direct suggestion, but

by a “channeled reading,” i.e.: “You have done parenting in past lifetimes and your child doesn’t need you now. He will be better off with your ex-.” More examples of the group ending relationships and careers are similar: “Working in publishing is making you old and useless.” “Working as a lawyer is something your soul doesn’t want to do anymore.” “Your engagement to _____ is selfish and doing great harm to him.” “The two of you together have ruined your children.” “Your parents have driven stakes through your brains.” “No one would come to hear you sing except a bunch of drunks.” “_____ is dragging this project down and needs to leave us alone.” “You don’t need to see that friend anymore.” “He is a ‘live-alone’ and isn’t suited to being in the family.” And so on.

3) According to former members, there are many other rituals practiced by the group, including sexual rituals (group sexual activity) – called “energy work.” GWP former members report that they believed the “energy” for the “healing instruments” came from the sexual “energy” from these activities. New instruments were often produced after group sex between the leader and the women surrounding him. When new inductees to these sexual activities/rituals/“energy work” were first invited to participate, they were advised never to tell anyone, since “people in the world wouldn’t understand.” They were also advised to avoid sexual relationships with outsiders so that everyone in the group would be “safe.” Members report that other relationships ended, or would have been impossible, as they were “on call” from the leader to be part of the “energy work” and would have felt disloyal to the group by continuing a relationship with a partner from before the group.

Members were told that other men “wouldn’t comprehend” the “energy work,” but that John Miller was so enlightened he could participate, and, in fact, orchestrate, the often daily group sex. One former member left the group after sixteen years, but couldn’t bring herself to talk about the so-called “energy work” for two years after leaving, even though her participation had been minimal compared to many others. For another it took over five years to talk about this. After counseling from therapists who work with former cult members, as well as with victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence, these members were able to tell their partners about what had happened in the GWP group, and then they began to understand the exploitation that had been perpetrated by the leaders. (For more on the process of sexual activities and exploitation that often takes place in high-control groups and cults, please refer to the resources listed at www.windofchanges.org/Resources.html)

(Since this article was first written, GWP leaders have loudly denied that “sexual rituals” took/takes place, but have never denied that “group sex between the leader and the women surrounding him, for the [purported] purpose of producing healing instruments” took place regularly over a period of many years. Technically, this was actually called “energy work” by the group leaders, rather than “sexual rituals.”

It is also interesting to note that after ex-followers of GWP wrote that therapists who counsel former high-control group members are sometimes also specialists in domestic violence and sexual abuse, the GWP leaders accused this website of saying they (GWP) were guilty of domestic and sexual abuse. This is an example of a “straw man argument.”

GWP leaders used their positions of authority as group “gurus” to influence GWP members to take part in group sexual activities. Even though members were “invited” to join this “energy work” – as “research subjects” or [channelers] of the “correct energy for a new instrument” – they were, according to ex-members, very much under the control of the leaders' charismatic influence and “mystical manipulation.”

Allegedly, by the time members are invited to participate in these group sexual activities / “energy work” / “orgiastic rituals,” they are already true believers in the goals of the group and believe completely in the participation of the “spirit world” in the group’s work. Even though there have been a few top-placed members that have left the group, there has been no information shared with the public about these group sexual activities until now. The cautionary voices still seem to be in the heads of the former members who participated in these activities, and the main participants are still in the group. However, a few former members, including the above-mentioned people, now feel that these sexual activities / rituals / “energy work” are seen as sexual manipulation and abuse; that someone in a position of power exploited them sexually while they were under a form of mind control. In legal terms, this might be considered an extreme form of sexual harassment by a person in a position of authority over others.

According to former members, the sexual rituals, called “energy work” involve(d) the group leader, John Miller, Moe/Mo/Mary Miller, and the women living with them. At times in the development of the group, there were many women participating in these rituals, as determined by John and Mo/Moe Miller, including up to a dozen or more women living outside of the leaders' main home in houses scattered around the Kittery, Maine and Portsmouth, New Hampshire area. These former members report that participating in these group sexual activities meant that a higher level of “initiation” – guaranteed evolution – could be earned by the members participating (besides ensuring healing for the entire earth.) Being invited to participate was also an indication of a better position in the group’s hierarchy; thus a privilege and an honor.

As in many such high-control groups or cults, the sexual rituals / group sex / “energy work” were primarily used to enforce the power and control of the leader over the participants. By having members perform sexual acts that they normally wouldn’t do, and were contrary to their sense of self, the group leader assumed the ultimate control of the women’s minds and bodies. Power and control were the intent behind these rituals, not affection, love, or spiritual evolution, as they were represented. In this light, former members of the group now can see that the leader perverted the sexual energy of the participants to his own purposes. The women involved in the group were completely submissive and followed directions exactly as to what position, what partner, what to wear or not wear during the rituals / “energy work” / group sexual activities, and, in some cases, were told to watch the activity rather than participate. Participation, or lack of it, was also used as a punishment, with one member reporting being told, “No one wants to have sex with you because you’re just too weird.” Other times, people who were long-time participants on a daily basis would suddenly be told to “take a break for a while” from the group. The combination of leaving their perceived “lovers” plus their source of “spiritual” salvation, could become too much to bear, sometimes causing severe emotional problems. Then, if and when a discarded participant was invited back, with no apologies or explanations, she became more committed than ever, and more subservient.

As a consequence of the extreme intensity generated by the control and manipulation of human emotions – combining a range of emotions from aversion to transcendence – the resulting confusion in the “energy work” participants was interpreted as enlightenment and spiritual evolution. For in this “ritual,” orchestrated by John “Tubby” Miller, there was a powerful combination of group intimacy and secrecy, the use of spiritual “energy” to create “healing instruments,” so-called love, perceived community, connection to a “higher level spiritual being” in the form of “Tubby,” fulfillment of hidden fantasies, and the empowerment of women. What lurked behind all these emotions was an indoctrination into being manipulated and controlled, for most of the women, for the next twenty years.

4) Purportedly, members share minute details of daily behavior to the leaders about themselves and about their co-members. Eventually, it seemed that there were no true friendships among members; that all relationships were defined by the group leaders. The leaders could break up living situations, requiring members to live elsewhere. And, members began turning to their leaders with the most trivial thoughts and concerns. Making independent decisions became something to be avoided. If a secret or a confidence was told to one member, it would quickly reach the top hierarchy and there would be a reaction. The member who had told the confidence would then say something like, “I thought that Mary could help” or “John could help.” And so on. Normally no one from the lower tiers of the hierarchy spoke directly to John or even to the women surrounding him in his so-called “group family.” Almost all communication with John Miller was through one of the women living with him through a tightly controlled step-down system of commands.

5) In typical high-control group fashion, it seems that members were kicked out of the group, then were shunned after being rejected by the group leaders, then invited back in, and so on, in a continuous cycle. Thus, people became increasingly fearful about going against the norms. But, also typical, is the fact that the norms were/are always changing. Rewards were given, for example, by material gifts (although they had almost always already been paid for by donations from the member receiving the gift), and also by being told that one had evolved to a higher level of initiation. Another reward was being included in the group sexual rituals / group sex activities / “energy work.” Another incidental, but very strange, example of a reward is that the top tier of leadership each has animals, rather than children, and when these animals die they are “reincarnated” into the replacement pet, according to John Miller. Important members of the group supposedly had reincarnated pets.

6) Often, members were given new names. Three of the five women living with John Miller have changed their last name to Miller; one of them is his legal wife who preceded the formation of the group. A former member was told that “they are all married to each other” in regards to the core group. Several other female members outside of the top hierarchy have also changed their name to Miller, showing their complete devotion to John Miller. There are also many first-name changes; some leaders and members have had several new names given to them by “Tubby” over the course of their involvement in the group.

Former members say that they would often find great ways to rationalize that they were not in a mind-control group, mostly using the group’s belief that to be truly

evolved, one must let go of power and the need to control and to turn oneself over to an evolved being for the good of spiritual evolution of self and the planet. While this is a very Zen-like belief, it loses meaning in a high-control group, as members are turning their control over to the leader rather than to a higher power. Members of GWP are fearful of expressing an opinion that differs from the leaders. If they are too independent, they can be kicked out of the group or receive insulting and emotionally debilitating “soul information.” This kind of pressure to conform put great stress on the (mostly) women in the group. Many of them had led very independent lives before gradually becoming immersed in the group.

Information Control: According to former members, reports about the effectiveness of “healing instruments” are based on anecdotal results of “healing instrument” use by the founding members and the top two tiers of leadership. Reported benefits of the healing instruments are from personal observations and self-analysis, with consistently positive results supplied willingly and often by members, and results also judged behaviorally by the group leaders. Purportedly, this “research” is often then compiled and written by Mary Miller, co-leader and founder of the group, who includes an MSW degree after her name though, according to former members, she hasn’t practiced social work in over twenty years, and in a different state. In addition, Ms. Miller sometimes refers to herself during interviews as a “clinical social worker,” though she is unlicensed, and has also stated that the GWP group includes “engineers,” though these engineers have not been named by the group leaders.

Articles written by Mary Miller have appeared in newspapers and in a few alternative health magazines such as the *Townsend Letter*. Following publication of such an article, it might then be used by GWP as an endorsement of the healing instruments in other media, or at seminars, or during interviews, using the magazine as the source of the quote without mentioning that it was originally written by the group’s co-leader. In one such example, the GWP group claimed on their February 2004 website that a present member, a retired RN, had a research article published in *Nursing Spectrum* magazine about a medical study conducted in a hospital that proved the effectiveness of the GWP “healing instruments.” In reality, this group member wrote a very short guest column for the magazine, expressing her personal opinions and observations about the “healing instruments.” The guest column was not a research study, nor did the magazine solicit a research study about the “healing instruments” from GWP. A third example of “research” claims is the statement made by the GWP co-founder in a recent interview on TV One in New Zealand that the Hackensack Medical Center in New Jersey has been conducting a research study on the positive results of the “healing instruments.” Rather than a serious, ongoing Medical Center study, it seems that a Gentle Wind “instrument keeper,” who is/was employed by the Medical Center, as of several years ago, has been independently passing her “instrument” around to people that come into the Center. It seems that the Hackensack Medical Center has not authorized a research study, as claimed by GWP.

Although pages and pages of personal descriptions about improvements due to “healing instruments” have been written by IKs and GWP leaders, nothing has ever been proven objectively in a scientific peer-reviewed paper.

GWP former members report that the co-founder states that research studies exist proving “positive results obtained by using the healing instruments” using “blind and

double-blind studies” and other “scientific” research methods. Yet, independent research findings published in professional journals (other than anecdotal accounts published in magazines by the leaders of GWP, their followers, and “instrument keepers”) cannot be found.

Independent research giving exact statistics, locations of the studies, and directors of the studies (who are not members of GWP or “instrument keepers”) have not been requested or accepted for publication in academic or professional journals, or presented at scientific conferences. Nevertheless, there has been a “call for papers” put out to “instrument keepers” from GWP leaders, for the second “summer conference,” attended exclusively by other GWP followers.

Thought Control: Rather than chanting or meditating, members practiced “telepathic readings” or “channeling” for people. At the beginning of the group’s growth, most members were taught to do “readings” which former members say felt mind-numbing. Group leaders taught new members these methods through hours of practice, and supervised the content of the “readings.”

The group leaders claim to be in constant contact with the “spirit world,” and believe that they, therefore, can give new “readings” or “information” to members, ranging from comments on world affairs to what kind of car to purchase to how members should raise their children. When these “readings” are happening, people’s minds feel blank and they gratefully take in the information. The information received by former members was often devastating and very critical of members’ behavior. Many times former members were given audio tapes of the “channeled readings” and told to listen over and over to the tapes. It became a hypnotic sound that relaxed the member while the contents slid into the subconscious mind. This information was not subject to critical thinking by the members, and constructive criticism was simply not practiced or allowed. Members did not listen to opinions of family or friends from outside of the group, and dismissed any form of outside criticism of the group as coming from “less evolved” people.

Members use the various “healing instruments” on a constant basis. Because of their years of conditioning in the group, they report that the use of these instruments also caused their mind to relax, go blank, to numb out. Several ex-members report that they were so conditioned to the need to use these instruments that it was the last thing they were able to give up after leaving the group. Some members believe that the “instruments” are responsible for everything positive that happens to them in their lives, from weight loss to interest in a new hobby to finding a new boyfriend. Often, members are unable to take credit for self-change or personal growth apart from the use of the instruments. This increases the level of dependency on the use of these products, and the commitment to purchase each new model as it is “developed.”

Emotional Control: Far from being relieved of mental and emotional distress, a claimed benefit in Gentle Wind’s advertising, former second-tier members report that they were depressed much of the time after years of spending thousands of dollars on the group leaders’ needs and on hundreds of “healing instruments,” and giving up so-called “unhealthy” careers, homes, and families. Living with the uncertainty of their status within the group, being subtly and sometimes not-so-subtly cut off from

relationships and family, and also repressing their natural selves and opinions meant that stress and anxiety were internalized.

Members believed that the “healing” instruments should be “alleviating” all of their mental distress and that, if these difficulties continued, there must be a new condition or shortcoming that only needed to wait until the proper instrument was supplied by the “spirit world” to fix the problem. There was also a convenient loophole added to GWP’s belief system and literature that a very small percentage of people couldn’t be helped by the instruments because of “certain genetic difficulties,” a person’s “borderline personality,” “schizophrenic conditions,” “resistance of the human will,” and other vague excuses that varied from time to time. Naturally, members would want to be helped by the “healing instruments” to avoid the self-diagnosis and group-diagnosis of such personally destabilizing assumptions.

Another common explanation for anxiety or depression among group members was that “the group is going through a difficult time ‘energetically’” or that “the spirit world must really be experimenting with me lately,” and so on. Personalities gradually became suppressed as group members lost their individuality in order to conform to the norms of the group that were subtly put forth by the leaders and reinforced by each member.

As is often seen in many such groups, and cults, the GWP members generally affected a blank facial expression while communicating, or, when needed, an inappropriate blissful grin. Conversations about real or personal issues, even death in a member’s biological family, were avoided or ended quickly, since individual reality was supplanted by group-approved reality. For example, when a serious issue was brought up in conversation, the response from another member would often be a bland, “Wow,” followed by a vacuous stare, which was a way of avoiding the potential discussion, and with the effect of belittling the speaker. Over time, this lack of validation inevitably resulted in depression, low self-esteem, and, in some cases, mental breakdown, particularly when a group member was “kicked out” and shunned by the group, or avoided by the group leaders.

Occasionally, when members became desperate under these circumstances, they were taken in by their biological families or acquaintances outside of GWP for caretaking or nurturing, or they received help from counselors, psychiatrists, or treatment centers usually without the knowledge of the group leaders. However, active members would not divulge the fact to these health care providers that they were part of the GWP group, as they did not want the professionals to conclude that the underlying cause of their condition might be due to domination of their natural instincts by the group leaders. This would have conflicted with the belief system that the “healing” instruments were mystical and curative.

As a result, even though the GWP group was not a “closed group” that lived under minute-by-minute scrutiny, the leaders’ early establishment of control resulted in the members’ inability to develop close or meaningful relationships with non-group members, or even with each other, as each relationship was primarily between an individual member and the group leaders, John (“Tubby”) and Mary (“Moe”). Members would quickly step over other members to move closer to the presumed benefits of proximity to the leaders. Gentle Wind members often attended school,

worked, joined civic groups, health food co-ops, and other community groups, but their primary allegiance in all things was still to the GWP group leaders, and their underlying goal in outside relationships was to share the “healing instruments” with people, sell the healing instruments, and recruit new members for the group.

Some children raised by parents in the group reportedly suffered greatly in their development, after enduring a form of neglect while their parents were involved in the group’s work. *(Please note that this is not saying that GWP abused children, but, rather, that involvement in the GWP group caused a form of parental neglect of children to take place.)* Children of members have often undergone a rocky transition into young adulthood, leaving home early by choice or being turned out, and experimenting with drugs and alcohol. One mother lived in great fear that she would receive “spiritual information” from the group leaders requiring her to give up her children, as others had already been advised to do this with their own children. Former members report that adult children of members and former members have not taken up the cause of Gentle Wind and are often very concerned about parents that are still in the group.

Websites of the Group:

www.eyeofthesky.org

www.gentlewindproject.org

Websites Critical of the Group:

www.windofchanges.org

www.equilibra.uk.com/gentlewindupdate.shtml

www.truthcampaign.ukf.net/mainpages/gentlewindpart4.shtml

www.freedomofmind.com/resourcecenter/groups/g/gentle/

www.equilibra.uk.com/gentlewindpart3.shtml

www.cults.co.nz/fl.html#gentlewindproject

www.rickross.com/links.html#Gentle_Wind_Project

www.rickross.com/flamingwebsites.html

Gentle Wind Project: Insiders' Stories

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Credit for the format of this report, which is based on the BITE model (*Behavior, Information, Thought, and Emotional Control*) is given to Steven Alan Hassan, author of *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves and Combatting Cult Mind Control*