

“I never want to have to see or hear of another child having to grow up with the same kind of Family shit that I did. It’s cruel and ungodly to put an innocent child through that kind of fucking evil weirdness!”

--Rick Rodriguez in an email to Family Member Johnny. May 2002

Introduction

Ricky Rodriguez (aka Pete, Davidito in The Family) was the son of Katherine R. Smith (aka Maria, Mama, Karen Zerby in The Family), leader of The Family. In early 2001, Ricky left The Family and settled with his wife in the Seattle area. He kept in touch with both members and ex-members via email and Internet bulletin boards, such as www.movingon.org.

In May 2002, Ricky had an email exchange with Johnny, an older Family Member whom he had known many years earlier. Johnny had written Ricky in an attempt to discredit another ex-member, James Penn, who had written two highly critical articles of Maria and The Family (available online at www.geocities.com/magicgreenshirt). Ricky replied with the following email. Ricky’s comments are in upper case type.

JOHNNY,

I PUT MY REPLIES IN CAPS THROUGHOUT YOUR LETTER.

Ricky, I appreciate your writing back and explaining more and I also appreciate your giving me more insight into how you feel about what you've been through. And I know in my last e-mail I said that I won't write to you again, so I guess I want to apologize right here, for writing again and the reason I am is because you have asked me several questions in your e-mail that I thought you might like to hear the answers to.

I also appreciate your listening to what I have to say and for not automatically putting me in the same category as those who have cause you pain in the past.

THANKS FOR WRITING ME BACK AND EXPLAINING HOW YOU FEEL IN AS OBJECTIVE A MANNER AS YOU COULD. I DON'T SEE THAT FROM FAM[ILY] PEOPLE THESE DAYS.

Yes, I have read what James Penn wrote in his long discourse and I must tell you that it's one thing for me to listen to what he says and it's another thing for me to listen to what you have to say.

WELL, I THINK THAT'S NATURAL FOR ALL FAM[ILY] PEOPLE TO THINK THAT WAY BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN DEMONIZED BY THE CULT YET AS DEAR JAMES

PENN HAS. THEY HAVEN'T HAD TO READ BULLSHIT PROPEHCIES ABOUT ME LIKE THEY DID ABOUT JAMES, ALL BUT CALLING HIM THE DEVIL HIMSELF. WHAT A CROCK!

The difference being, you were a child and growing up during the times where you got hurt most and he is an adult, about my age, and could have stopped what he considered evil or bad at anytime, but still let it go on & on and on, really, for years before deciding to leave.

WELL, YOU'VE DONE THE SAME THING. LET ME TELL YOU, I'VE KNOWN JAMES FOR A VERY LONG TIME AND HAVE MANY GOOD MEMORIES OF LIVING WITH HIM OFF AND ON DURING MY CHILDHOOD. HE CERTAINLY BELIEVED THAT HE WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING AND EXACTLY WHERE HE SHOULD BE, IN THE CENTER OF GOD'S WILL. HE DID THE BEST HE COULD AND HAD GOOD INTENTIONS. PROBABLY MUCH LIKE YOU DO. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY, JOHNNY, THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS. JUST BECAUSE YOU BELIEVE SOMETHING IS RIGHT AND GOOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART DOES NOT MAKE IT SO.

Actually, Ricky, I only read his discourse after your mention of it in your previous email to me. I wrote him after reading through his piece and maybe he just chuckled at what I wrote...

YOU KNOW WHAT? JAMES HAS A VERY GOOD AND KIND HEART AND I'M SURE IT HURTS HIM LIKE IT WOULD ANYONE ELSE TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD, DEMONIZED AND EVEN HATED BY THE VERY PEOPLE THAT HE'S TRYING TO HELP. HE DOESN'T JUST LAUGH IT OFF, BUT WHAT CAN HE DO? HE GAVE HIS LIFE TO SOMETHING THAT WAS WRONG, AND HE'S DOING THE BEST HE CAN TO HELP OTHERS TO STOP GOING DOWN THAT DESTRUCTIVE PATH AS WELL.

You see, I respect more, the folks who left the Family at the time when FFing [Flirty Fishing. Women in The Family used sexual favors to win converts and supporters.] came into the Family, because they thought it was wrong, rather than those people who revelled in it, only to say years later that they were duped or mind controlled into doing all that.

HEY, IF YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT REVELLING, LET'S TALK ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE GRANT [Grant Cameron Montgomery, Family Member and President of Family Care Foundation in Dulzura, California] AND QUEEN PETER [*aka* Chris Smith, husband of Maria and co-leader of The Family]. PEOPLE WHO ARE OPPORTUNISTS. EVER SINCE I'VE KNOWN QUEEN PETER HE'S ALWAYS BEEN TRYING TO GET INTO MAMA'S PANTS AND MORE THAN THAT, SECURE HIS PLACE SO WHEN THE TIME CAME, HE WOULD BE ALL READY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE. BUT I THINK IT WORKED OUT FAR BETTER FOR HIM THEN HE EVEN COULD HAVE HOPED.

THEN OF COURSE, THERE'S DEAR GRANT WHO PROBABLY TOPS THE CHARTS AS FAR AS ONLY CARING ABOUT HIMSELF AND GETTING WHAT HE WANTS, BUT YET BEING VERY GOOD AT MAKING HIMSELF SEEM LIKE THE GREATEST THING SINCE SLICED BREAD. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THEY'RE NOT 1ST IN MY BOOK OF ROLE MODELS.

I'm not going to name any names, but believe me, even I was pretty shocked to see how fleshly (and extreme) some of those ex-members were, and now how they cannot share in what they call the blame. Anyway, that's not really what happened to you, but I at least wanted to tell you what I think about people who partook of something for a long, long time, only to now put the blame on everybody else.

JESUS CHRIST, YOU SHOULD SEE THOSE FLESH OUT PARTIES THEY HAVE AT MY MOM'S PLACE, AND ALL IN THE NAME OF "UNITY". IF SOME OF THOSE MINDLESS YOUNG PEOPLE EVER WAKE THE FUCK UP, IT WILL BE THE SAME STORY WITH THEM. OF COURSE, SOME OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GENUINELY SINCERE AT WANTING TO DO THEIR BEST FOR GOD AND BELIEVE THEY ARE DOING JUST THAT--LIKE YOU PROBABLY DO, AND LIKE JAMES CERTAINLY DID. OTHERS ARE REALLY JUST SOCIAL CLIMBERS AND FEEL THAT ALL THEIR HARD ASS-KISSING PAID OFF AND NOW THEY'VE FINALLY MADE IT TO MAMA'S HOME WHERE THEY HAVE IT MADE.

Ricky, I am a free thinker.

DON'T STOP THERE, JOHNNY! I SUGGEST YOU KEEP GOING AND GET EVEN FREER!

I am not duped into doing anything that I don't believe is right.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT WE THINK, JOHNNY. THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS THE TRUTH. REMEMBER THE VERSE WHERE JESUS SAID THE TIME WILL COME WHEN HE WHO KILLS YOU WILL THINK THAT HE DOES GOD A SERVICE? HMMM! I BET THOSE MANIACS WOULD HAVE SAID IN THEIR OWN WAY WITH VERY STRONG CONVICTION THAT THEY WERE NOT DUPED EITHER.

I am a pretty simple guy when it comes to what I want to accomplish in life. I also feel that I have the right, both legally and God-given, to follow the faith that He's given to me.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT, JOHNNY. AS AN ADULT YOU HAVE THE LEGAL RIGHT TO THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY IF YOU WANT TO. THE PROBLEM IS THAT YOU OR ANY OTHER CULTIST DOES NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PASS ON THAT SAME FUCKED UP LIFE TO THEIR CHILDREN AND SCREW UP THEIR LIVES AS WELL WHICH HAS HAPPENED TO COUNTLESS OTHER FAM[ILY] CULT CHILDREN.

OK, this is where I'm going to get a little psychological with you, if you want to call it that (and you might not like me for this): You are who you are. You were born the the parents (or parent) that you were born to. Your parents/or parent raised you a certain way which made you what you are today, good or bad and whether you like it or not. Many of the things that happen to us in childhood are really beyond our control. That's just the way it is. Faithy [Faith Berg, daughter of David Berg, founder of The Children of God/Family, and his first wife, Jane. Faithy was a

prominent Family leader in its early years.] is who she is first, because she was born to her parents and secondly, because, after a certain age, she made her own decisions.

Mene [granddaughter of David Berg. Berg sexually abused her as a child.] was born to her parents and she didn't have a lot of control of those early years of her life. You have to take the good and keep it and get rid of the bad. I think that's what each of us has to do in our lives. Do you not think that I was hurt in my childhood? One time I could have killed my brother, when I was 13 and he was 14 and consider how that would have changed my life. I saw things that my parents did that were not good and their negative affect on me is something that I have had to fight against to this very day. But I also realize that with the bad, there came a lot of good, from those same parents.

WELL, JOHNNY, THERE'S A FEW PROBLEMS WITH THE POINTS YOU TRIED TO MAKE IN THIS LAST LONG PARAGRAPH. THE MAIN ONE THAT COMES TO MIND IS THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO ASSOCIATE MANY VERY DIFFERENT LIVES AND SCENARIOS THAT REALLY HAVE VERY LITTLE IN COMMON.

FOR EXAMPLE, TAKE MENE. NOW, JOHNNY, YOU HAVE ME AT A DISADVANTAGE HERE BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR PARENTS DID TO YOU. BUT LET ME POINT OUT A FEW THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO MENE THAT PROBABLY DIDN'T HAPPEN TO YOU.

MENE GREW UP IN A VERY STRANGE ENVIRONMENT. HER FATHER COMITTED SUICIDE WHEN HE REALIZED THAT HIS FATHER WAS A PERVERT AND HE WAS NOT PART OF SOME KIND OF ELITE ENDTIME ARMY IN THE CENTER OF GOD'S WILL RACKING UP BROWINE POINTS WITH GOD RIGHT AND LEFT. HER MOTHER SEEMS LIKE SHE WAS CRAZY, EVEN FROM A FAM[ILY] STAND POINT (WHICH HAS TO BE AN UNREAL DEGREE OF INSANITY) WHICH PROBABLY CAME FROM A COMBO OF TOO MANY HALLUCENOGENIC DRUGS AND MARRYING INTO SUCH A WEIRD LIFESTYLE AND FAMILY.

FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, MENE WAS WITNESS TO MANY KINDS OF SEXUAL ACTS, WAS HERSELF ABUSED SEXUALLY, AND PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, MENTALLY AND SPIRITUALLY. IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, HER OWN GRANDFATHER, UNDER THE GUISE OF BRINGING HER INTO HIS HOME TO BE A "SAFE HAVEN", REALLY JUST WANTED TO GET INTO HER PANTS, BECAUSE AFTER ALL, HE LIKED DOING HIS DAUGHTERS SO MUCH, THE GRANDAUGHTER MUST BE ALL THAT MUCH MORE EXCITING.

OK! PLEASE STOP ME WHENEVER YOU'RE CONVINCED THAT SOMEONE WHO COMITTED SUCH HORRENDOUS ACTS COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN GOD'S ENDTIME PROPHET, AND CERTAINLY WOULD NOT GET THE SPECIALIZED TASK IN THE AFTERLIFE OF LOOKING FOR SKIPPY PEANUT BUTTER IN PEOPLE'S PANTRIES.

NOT YET? OK, I'LL KEEP GOING...

ANYWAY, NOT ONLY DID PERVERT GRANDPA USE AND ABUSE MENE, BUT HE ALSO PLAYED WITH HER HEAD (FIGURATIVELY, WITH ALL THAT ABUSE AND HEAVEN'S GIRL BS [A highly sexualised Family publication for children and teens], AND LITERALLY WHEN HE ALMOST BEAT HER TO A PULP FINALLY). FINALLY WHEN HE TIRED OF HER HE WAS READY TO DITCH HER WHEN THEY REALIZED HOW MESSED UP THEY HAD MADE HER. SO THEY PROCEEDED TO BEAT HER REPEATEDLY, PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY; TIED HER TO HER BED SPREAD EAGLE AT NIGHT, HUMILIATE HER CONSTANTLY AND THEN FINALLY SHIP HER OFF TO NUTTER HOSEA [Adult son of Berg] TO TORTURE HER SOME MORE.

THEN TO JUSTIFY THEMSELVES, THEY HAD TO DEMONIZE HER FOR YEARS TO COME BY MAKING HER A FAMILY BYWORD AND MAKING HER OUT TO BE SOME KIND OF DEMON POSSESSION CASE.

YEP, IF THAT AIN'T THE TRUE LOVE OF CHRIST JESUS, THEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS!

After I turned a certain age, I was determined not to blame my childhood for the problems I have today. I am not talking about the Family here, I am talking about personnel things that affect us. You see, you were raised by Maria and David Berg and/or whoever else. I was raised by Burton and Erna.

THERE'S A LITTLE BITTY DETAIL THAT YOU'RE FORGETTING HERE. BURTON AND ERNA MOST LIKELY DIDN'T TRY TO BRAINWASH YOU WITH THE FACT THAT THEY WERE GOD'S ANOINTED PROPHETS AND TO GO AGAINST THEM MEANT YOU WERE GOING AGAINST GOD. IT TAKES A LOT MORE JUICE TO "MOVE ON WITH YOUR LIFE" WHEN THAT WHOLE FUCKED UP SHIT GET MIXED IN THERE.

I'm not going to tell you the horror stories that I could tell you of my childhood experiences. That's really between me and them.

YES, JOHNNY, THAT IS BETWEEN YOU AND THEM. DO YOU KNOW WHY? I'LL TELL YOU. IT'S BECAUSE DEAR BURTON AND ERNA DIDN'T WRITE VOLUMES AND VOLUMES TEACHING THOUSANDS OF OTHER PEOPLE HOW TO FUCK UP THEIR OWN LIVES AND THE LIVES OF THEIR KIDS LIKE BERG AND MARIA DID. YOU SEE, THAT CHANGES THINGS JUST A LITTLE.

I'm not that impressed about James Penn's story, and who he puts the blame on for whatever, UNTIL he shares equally in taking the blame. If anyone is guilty, he is JUST as guilty.

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JOHNNY, I REALLY HAVE TO QUESTION THAT YOU ACTUALLY READ JAMES PENN'S LETTERS, BECAUSE IF YOU HAD, YOU WOULD HAVE SEEN VERY CLEARLY THAT JAMES FREELY ADMITS THAT HE WAS VERY GUILTY, JUST AS YOU AND EVERY OTHER FAM[ILY] CULTIST OVER THE AGE OF 18 IS. THAT'S WHY HE WROTE THOSE LETTERS, BECAUSE IN SOME WAY HE WANTS TO MAKE AMENDS FOR HIS PART IN ALL THAT, AT LEAST BY WARNING THE YOUNG

PEOPLE WHO STILL HAVE THEIR LIVES AHEAD OF THEM, AND, OF COURSE, SOME OPEN MINDED OLDER CULTISTS LIKE YOU AS WELL.

When I make a big mistake in life, I do my best to repent and ask the Lord's forgiveness (which sometimes I don't do a very good job at), but I do not give up on trying to get where I'm going. And you ask me if I care about the things that your caretakers have done to you through your life. Of course I care. But to tell you the truth, Ricky, I do not worship your mother, or Peter, and neither did I ever worship David Berg.

WELL, A DEFFINITION OF THE WORD "WORSHIP" IS "ARDENT DEVOTION". WITH EVERY SINGLE OTHER FAM MEMBER I MET AND HEARD ABOUT, THOSE WORDS WOULD DESCRIBE VERY WELL THE WAY THEY FELT AND STILL FEEL ABOUT THE MAN WHO GAVE THEM ALL THIS WONDERFUL SHIT. SO I THINK EITHER THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU, OR YOU'RE NOT QUITE BEING HONEST WITH YOURSELF.

I worship Jesus and my relationship is with Him, not the people who raised you. The tree is not corrupt, because the Tree is Jesus, not your mother and not Peter. That's who the grass roots of the Famliy are following.

WRONG AGAIN, JOHNNY. IF THE FAM[ILY] CULTISTS WERE FOLLOWING THE TRUTH OF JESUS' LOVE FOUND IN THE BIBLE, THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE PUT UP WITH AND PARTICIPATED IN ALL THE RITUALISTIC SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN THE PAST, AND ALL THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE THAT IS STILL PRACTICED AND ADVOCATED TODAY.

Did you ever think that I thought your mother, or David or Peter were infallible? Of course not. Maybe you thought that when you were growing up, and I can understand that... I thought my parents were pretty good too, when I was a little kid.

JOHNNY, DON'T TRY AND PATRONIZE ME. I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE RIGHT OFF THE BAT BETWEEN SOMEONE WHO IS REALLY TRYING TO HELP OTHERS BUT WHO, OF COURSE, MAKES MISTAKES LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN, AND THE ONES LIKE PERVERT BERG, MINDLESS MARIA, AND QUEEN PETER WHO WILL STOP AT NOTHING JUST TO SATISFY THEIR OWN SICK PLEASURES, TWISTED INTERPRETATION OF SPIRITUALITY, AND SMALL LITTLE EGOS.

Ricky, I understand that you are hurt and angry.

JOHNNY, THAT DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE THE WAY I FEEL. IF YOU REALLY GOT TO KNOW ME, YOU WOULD SEE THAT I MAKE JAMES PENN LOOK LIKE YOUR BEST FRIEND. I SAY THAT IN JEST, BUT JAMES REALLY DOES CARE ABOUT PEOPLE STILL IN THE FAMILY AND TRIES TO HELP THEM AS BEST AS HE CAN.

ME, WELL, I'VE GIVEN UP ON PEOPLE LIKE YOU FOR THE MOST PART, AND SIMPLY WANT TO DESTROY THE FAMILY. I'D LIKE TO SEE ALL FAMILY CULTISTS THROWN IN JAIL, AND ALL THEIR KIDS TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM.

REVENGE?--HELL YES! BUT YOU KNOW, THAT'S ONLY HALF OF IT. I NEVER WANT TO HAVE TO SEE OR HEAR OF ANOTHER CHILD HAVING TO GROW UP WITH THE SAME KIND OF FAMILY SHIT THAT I DID. IT'S CRUEL AND UNGODLY TO PUT AN INNOCENT CHILD THROUGH THAT KIND OF FUCKING EVIL WEIRDNESS! I WILL NOT STAND FOR IT ANYMORE AND CONSIDER ANYONE WHO SUPPORTS OR SYMPATHISES WITH THE FAMILY IN ANY WAY AN ENEMY OR POTENTIAL ONE.

And I honor your decision for leaving the Family. Your right, it's your life and you need to get on with it. And I am certain that lots of mistakes were made,

THAT'S BULLSHIT! THEY WERE NEVER "MISTAKES"! IT WAS ALWAYS, AS SARA [Sara Davidito, Family Member and former nanny of Ricky] USED TO SAY, "ACCIDENTLY ON PURPOSE", AND THEY ARE ONLY SORRY THEY GOT CAUGHT. BUT THAT'S NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO GET SOMEDAY!

but you see, I have to work on the relationship that I have with my own four children, some of which is good and some not so good. They were my children, the ones that God gave me and I have to reconcile my differences with them... that is my priority.

OK, BREAK TIME.... Hey, I am so sorry that I am rambling on here...

I do like you as a person... or at least the teenage I met 12 years ago. I think our personalities clicked in some way. Ricky, I have so many of my own personal problems right now, that sometimes I'm just keeping my head above water.... Conclusion to what I'm trying to say here: Everybody's got to work out their own personal scene, Godwilling, with His help. This is the heart and soul of what I believe:

John 3:16; Rev. 3:20; Luke 14:33; Acts 2:44 & 45 and Mark 16:15.

JOHNNY, GOD KNOWS I AGONIZED OVER THESE VERSES AND OTHERS LIKE THEM FOR MANY MANY YEARS, SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH. BUT YOU'RE REALLY MESSED UP, BECAUSE LIKE THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU'RE MISSING THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF THE LOVE OF GOD, AND HOW SERIOUSLY GOD SEES THOSE WHO HINDER, HARM OR IN ANY WAY SHAPE OR FORM, ABUSE EVEN ONE OF HIS LITTLE ONES.

Again, I'd like to tell you that I love you and am grateful for your communication and taking the time to "talk" to me. Hope your move went ok and that you like your new place. Here is one common point that I think we CAN agree on: We both believe in prayer and I think we're both praying to the same God, (and Jesus). I'll pray for you and I'd appreciate your prayers for me.

>Bye for now. I still like to hear from you. By the way, I'm not trying to say anything to try to sway your thinking in anyway, so just take it for what it's worth. But.... from some of the things you wrote to me in your last e-mail, I don't think you know me very well. Please don't think I'm beyond hope, though, okay?

Love, Johnny

IN CLOSING, I'D LIKE TO SAY THAT I HAD HOPED WE DIDN'T HAVE TO GET INTO ALL THIS, AND TRIED TO POLITELY EXPLAIN THAT IT PROBABLY WOULDN'T WORK FOR US TO BE FRIENDS AND WRITE EACH OTHER. STILL, IT'S BEEN INTERESTING TALKING WITH YOU, AND LIKE I SAID BEFORE, IN JAPAN, I DID FEEL THAT YOU REALLY DID CARE ABOUT ME AS A PERSON AND THAT MEANT A LOT TO ME.

BUT THE LINES HAVE BEEN DRAWN, AND I CONSIDER WHAT YOU ARE DOING IN HELPING THE FAM[ILY] TO CONTINUE TO BE EVIL AND HURTFUL TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SPECIFICALLY, AND MANKIND IN GENERAL.

BUT I WILL PRAY FOR YOU, JOHNNY. AND REMEMBER, IT'S NOT WRONG TO QUESTION, AND IT'S NOT WRONG TO DOUBT. GOD IS NOT AFRAID OF EITHER. THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO ARE HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE.

TAKE CARE,

RICKY