LIVING OUR OWN LIVES
by Edward R. Clark

It is tough to handle the criticism by others and easier to adopt behavior that will bring their approval. Doing so is wasting present moments in efforts to win the approval of others, or in being concerned with some disapproval that we have encountered. In order to escape the bear trap of approval-seeking, which gives others' opinions control over us, lets examine the factors that foster the approval-seeking need:

The need for approval is based on a single assumption, "Don't trust yourself - check it out with someone else first." Our culture is one that reinforces approval-seeking behavior as a standard of life. Independent thinking is not only unconventional, it is the enemy of the very institutions that constitute our society. Make someone else's opinion more important than our own, then if we don't get their approval, we have every reason to feel depressed, unworthy, or guilty, since we view them more important. In essence our worth is lodged in others and if they refuse to dole out their approval, we've got nothing. We are without worth, and the more flattery we need, the more we can be manipulated by others.

Our steps in the direction of <u>self-approval and independence</u> of the opinion of others are movements away from their control and being labeled as selfish, uncaring, inconsiderate and the like in an effort to keep us dependent.

Approval-seeking is only distasteful when it becomes a need, which of course, is tantamount to giving up the self, and placing resposibility for how we feel in the hands of others. The people who seem to get the most

approval in life are those who never seek it out, who have no desire for it, and who are not preoccupied with achieving it.

So, if you want all that approval, it is ironic that the most effective way to get it is to not want it and to avoid chasing after it and to not demand it from others. By being in touch with ourselves and using our positive self-image as a consultant, much more approval will come.