

## BOOKS

### *The Human Experiment: Two Years and Twenty Minutes Inside Biosphere 2*

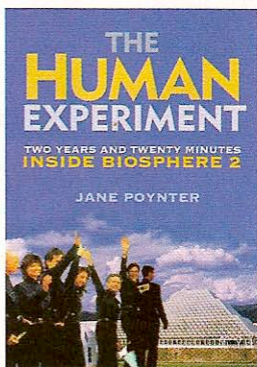
By Jane Poynter  
(Thunder's Mouth Press)

It's trying enough to be confined for hours at a holiday dinner table with squabbling relatives. Imagine being locked in a 3-acre bubble for two years with a "family" of unconventional idealists and scientists, as the world watched through reinforced glass walls.

Such was life inside the Biosphere 2—ecological and psychological study meets ultimate sport. In *The Human Experiment: Two Years and Twenty Minutes Inside Biosphere 2*, author Jane Poynter tells the tale of life inside the giant, hermetically-sealed Petri dish in the Arizona desert. Biosphere 2, a simulated, self-supporting ecosystem of seven biomes based on and named after Biosphere 1, aka planet Earth, was considered to be a first step to space colonization, as well as an experiment in close-quarters human interaction. However, optimism turned to apprehension for the eight biospherians when oxygen levels tanked within the structure, and prolonged sensory deprivation—as well as good, old-fashioned politics—ultimately led to the group's split into warring factions, *Lord of the Flies* style.

Poynter's fascinating book explores the relationship people have with their environment as well as to each other. While the success of the overall mission is debatable, there's no denying that it was an engrossing adventure in both physical science and human nature.

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—Jessica Ridenour