

Dysfunctional Consensus, and What You Can Do About It

COMMUNITIES

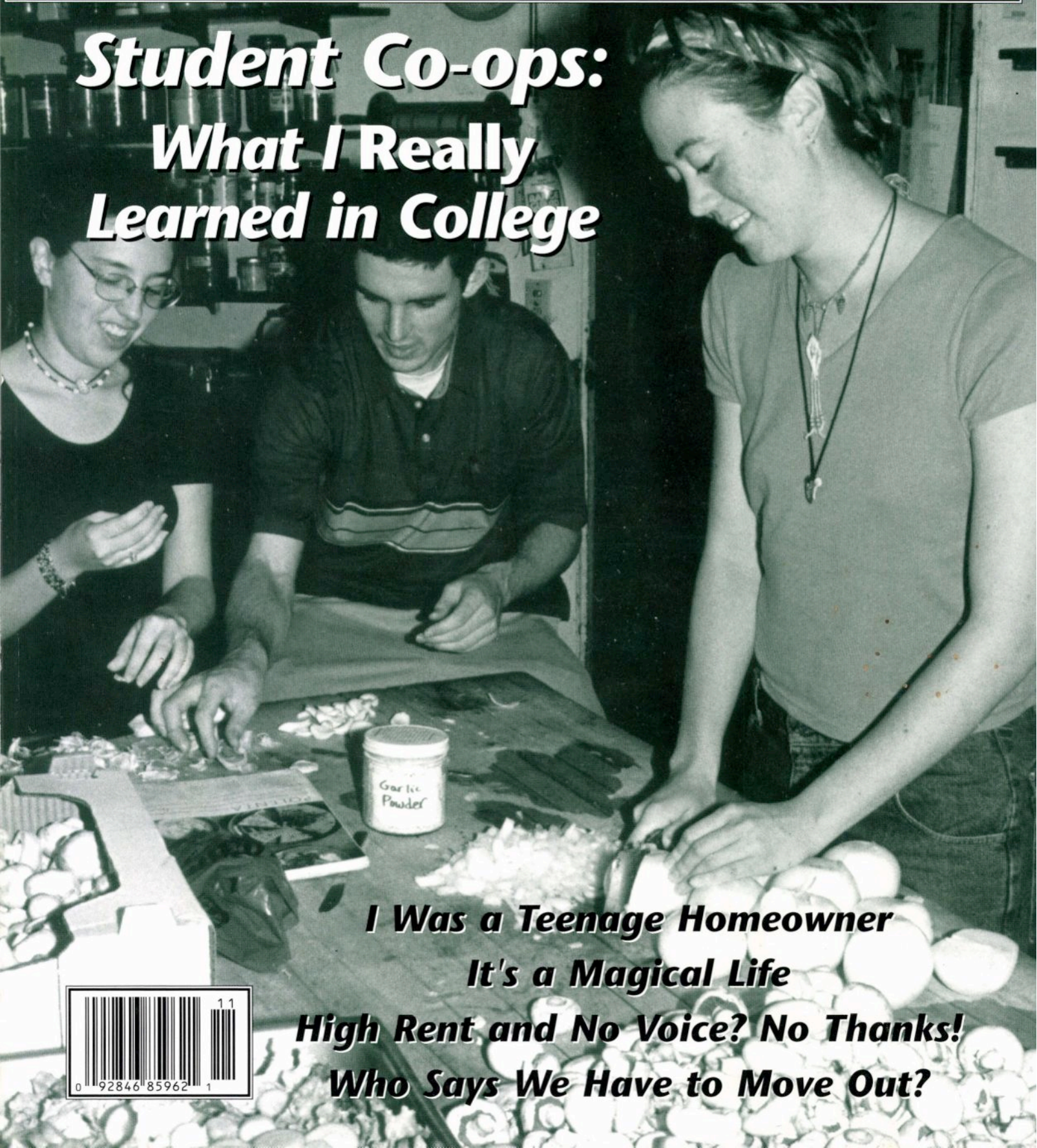
Journal of Cooperative Living

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Spring 2001 (Issue #110)

Student Co-ops: What I Really Learned in College



I Was a Teenage Homeowner

It's a Magical Life

High Rent and No Voice? No Thanks!

Who Says We Have to Move Out?



THE COMPLETELY UPDATED, ALL NEW COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

COMMUNITY DESCRIPTIONS

Over 600 North American and 100 international communities describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future, and provide contact information.

33 NEW ARTICLES

Topics include: how to visit communities; why live in community and what it means to do so; financing and setting up the legal structures of communities; opportunities for older people in community; communities and “cults”; consensus process; raising children in community; dealing with conflict; an overview of Christian community; and more.

MAPS

Complete maps of North American communities. See at a glance what's happening in your area.

CHARTS

These charts allow you to quickly scan for the communities that fulfill your criteria. The charts will show you in a flash which communities match your needs and desires.

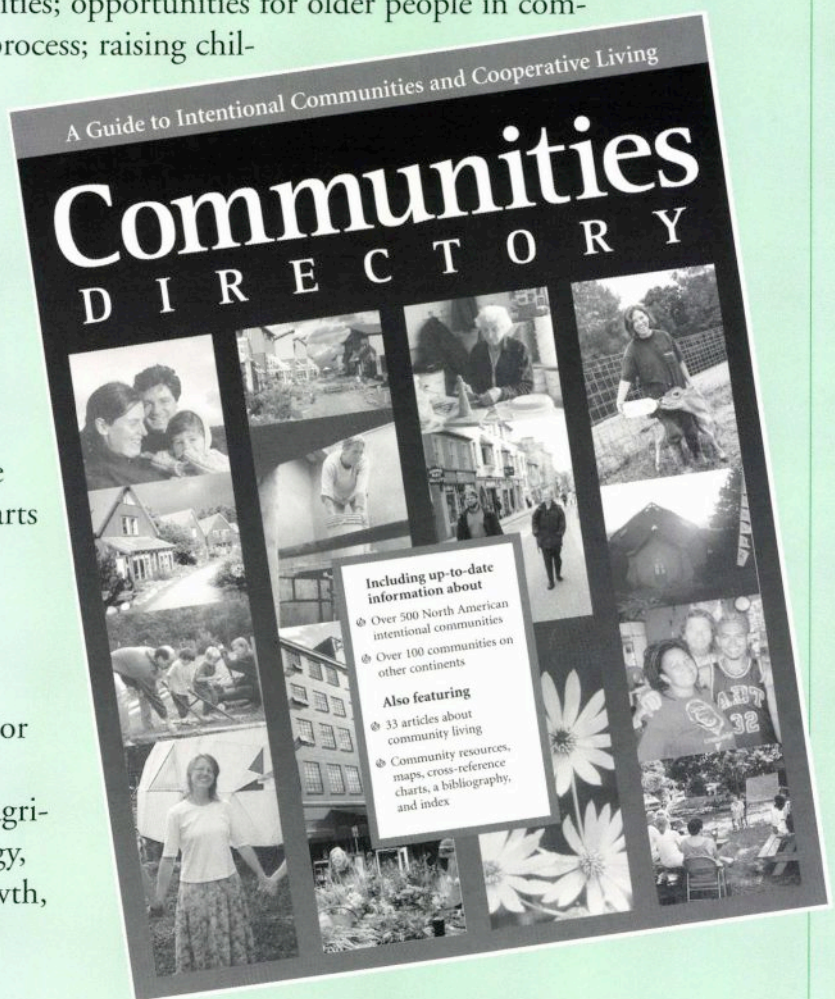
RESOURCES

Descriptions and contact information for major organizations within specific interest areas. Categories include: community networking, agriculture, ecology, energy, economics, technology, spirituality, education, sexuality, personal growth, and more.

NEW SECTION—

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

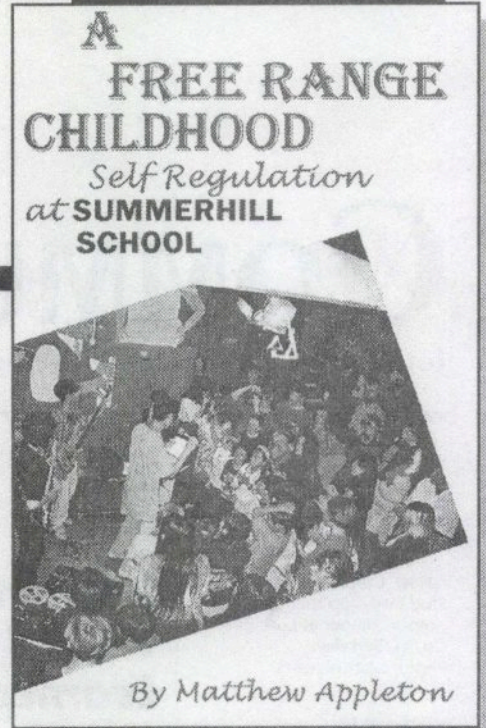
An annotated collection of over 300 texts of interest to community-minded people.



SEE ORDER FORM ON PAGE 78.

Summerhill Revisited

Matthew Appleton's **A Free Range Childhood** provides an updated, insightful account of everyday life at Summerhill. This is the first major book to appear on the school since A.S. Neill's 1960 bestseller inspired an international movement for alternative education. Through graceful and reflective writing, Appleton expands on Neill's stirring call for educational freedom.



Matthew was a popular member of staff, allowing Summerhill to work its magic on him. ...This is a candid view of his time with us—it is a very enjoyable read, and it raises some important, if uncomfortable, questions about modern methods of childrearing."

Zoe Readhead, Principal of Summerhill School and daughter of founder A.S. Neill

"The reappearance of Summerhill on the world stage couldn't be more timely. Matthew Appleton is an able guide, thanks to a prose filled with immediacy and passion. Old Neill would be proud."

Chris Mercogliano, Co-director of the Albany Free School, and author of *Making It Up As We Go Along: The Story of the Albany Free School*.

"In a time of crisis and confusion, *A Free Range Childhood* connects us with the ethical heart of education at its best..."

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Journal of Cooperative Living

FRONT COVER

Student co-op members prepare dinner at Lothlorien Co-op, Berkeley. Photo, Matt Blowers.

BACK COVER

Serving pizza hors d'oeuvres at Lothlorien Co-op's 25th Anniversary Celebration, Berkeley. Photo, Matt Blowers.

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Student Co-ops: What I Really Learned in College

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I Learned More in the Co-op Than in My College Classes

Deniz Tuncer

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- NASCO: Building the Cooperative Movement



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Amanda Werhane shows how the privileges and responsibilities of co-op living helped her enter adulthood with confidence.

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From Hog Farm to Stanford Co-op

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- You Can Take It With You—
Tony Sirna



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COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

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Send letters to *Communities magazine*, 688 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782; communities@ic.org. Your letter may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

Not speaking for the Rainbow Family

Dear *Communities*:

At the end of my article on the Rainbow Diaspora (*Fall '00 issue*), your editing process omitted one important statement: "The Rainbow Family speaks only through the consensus of a council that meets from July 1-7 every year. Stephen Wing is an individual who speaks for no one but himself." Also, I was identified as "editor of the Katuah regional Rainbow newsletter." In the fiercely non-hierarchical world of Rainbow, there are no positions of authority such as "editor." Under the editorial policy of the regional newsletter *Ho!*, anything sent for publication is published as written. As the former production volunteer, I had few editorial prerogatives, beyond correcting spelling and punctuation or adding an occasional note of explanation.

Given the Forest Service's (not the Park Service's) ongoing prosecutions of Rainbow gatherers, this is more than a semantic quibble. Even my being identified as a "longtime Rainbow Family member" in your Table of Contents could be misconstrued. It makes us sound so organized! Everyone is a member of the rainbow-colored human family. At a Rainbow gathering, like anywhere else, all of us are individuals who represent no one but ourselves. Even a consensus of the above-mentioned council has no authority of any kind unless the people individually agree.

Since I wrote about the Pennsylvania court case, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld the conviction and sentencing of three 1999 gatherers to six

months in jail and a \$500 fine. The defense of our constitutional right to peaceable assembly now moves to Montana, where the 2000 gathering defendants await a court date. Meanwhile, the 2001 Rainbow Family Gathering is headed for Washington state, somewhere in a national forest, June 23-July 10. For more information about the Rainbow Family: www.WelcomeHome.com. Thanks for your support. I'll keep *Communities magazine* informed.

Stephen Wing
Atlanta, Georgia

What about Crystal Waters?

Dear Editor:

We were surprised and disappointed that our permaculture-based community, Crystal Waters, in Queensland, Australia, wasn't listed in "Communities Where You Can Learn," in the Fall '00 issue. We are a fairly prominent centre for learning, and have won a number of prestigious awards over the years, including the World Habitat Award. We were started in 1985, have about 200 permanent residents, and have often been cited as a model for later communities. We have been providing courses here since 1988, and were the first community to offer Advanced Permaculture Courses, the first to offer Ecovillage Design and Sustainable Settlements courses, and the first village in the world designed according to permaculture principles. Crystal Waters is also the Global Ecovillage Network's Secretariat for Oceania and Asia.

Each year we teach to a wider audience. We have been running a course for Pacific Lutheran University (in your Washington state) for four years now. We also run a longer course for Japanese university students each year, and regularly conduct workshops for town planners and councilors around the world. We also run numerous other courses related to sustainable living: permaculture design courses, hands-on courses, natural vision improvement courses, spiritual workshops, self improvement/awareness courses, healing retreats, and so on. Below (*next page*) is how our listing in your Fall education issue would have read. Many thanks.

Max Lindegger
Crystal Waters
Maleny, Qld, Australia

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Email: lindegger@gen-oceania.org or crystalwaters@hotmail.com

Web: www.gaia.org/secretariats/genoecania, or www.ecovillages.org/australia/crystalwaters

Internships: Organic gardening, permaculture, orcharding, animal husbandry, forestry, community design, community living, waste water treatment/re-use, water management, design for community interaction, ecological building/design.

Workshops and classes: Ecological design, permaculture, ecovillage design, harmonics, spiritual practices, complementary medicines, water divining, baking, university credit courses, health retreats, watsu, drumming and dance, energy, community decision processes, bush food, biodynamic dairying, ecological building methods (incl. straw bale, rammed earth, pole frame, geodesic, compressed earth blocks, domes, poured earth, stone, grass roofed, terracotta tiles, shingles, iron, composting toilet, energy efficiency, PV arrays, solar hot water, recycled materials, locally harvested timbers, natural paints/finishes, passive solar design, passive and active insulation, clerestories, rainwater collection, and much more).

Other: Tours, open houses, speakers available, rental facilities.

Thank you—we're sorry we missed you!

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Communities Editorial Policy

Communities is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion we offer fresh ideas about how to live cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues.

We do not intend to promote one kind of community over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related to the theme of community living, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interferes with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request Writer's Guidelines: 290 McEntire Road, Tryon, NC 28782; 828-863-4425; communities@ic.org.

Advertising Policy

We accept paid advertising in *Communities* because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We hand pick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to people interested in community living, cooperation, and sustainability. We hope you find this service useful, and we encourage your feedback.

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What is an "Intentional Community"?

An "intentional community" is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based, and others are both. For all their variety though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Rotating the Wheel of Fortune

And Navigating Safely Between Process and Product

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE LIVING IN A GROUP HOUSE WAS RIGHT OUT of college. I'd moved to Washington, D.C. and tried the role of a junior bureaucrat. Sharing a house kept expenses down and guaranteed a few familiar faces in a sea of strangers. We split food costs and established a chore rotation. Pretty straightforward stuff. Then one day, somebody got a bright idea about how we could improve on the notion of automatically rotating jobs once a week. What if we chose whatever chore we wanted each week, with the order of selection rotated instead of the work?

With a mandatory rotation, you are assured of getting the job you like most and the job you like least exactly once per rotation. Under the new scheme you would be assured of getting the job you liked best *at least* once (when you picked first), and stood a decent chance of never doing the job you most wanted to avoid (it would only fall to you if it were the one remaining job on the week when you picked last).

Why am I telling this story? As good as it sounds, it was quite a chore getting it approved at a house meeting. Members of that house wanted to share rent and share chores, but they weren't necessarily keen on attending meetings to discuss the intricacies of enhanced decision making. After all, it only took a minute to rotate a chore wheel once a week; with this new idea we'd have to maintain a selection wheel *and* get everyone in the room once a week to draft chores. Who had the time? How much better would it be anyway? Some suspected the extra aggravation of tracking this more complicated system would erode any increased joy in avoiding one's most dreaded task. This was my first experience with the dichotomy I now know as something very familiar to any veteran of group dynamics: "product people" versus "process people."

The Scylla and Charybdis of Group Dynamics

Forward 30 years. At this point I've lived two-thirds of my life in group houses—half with the same group—and we're still tinkering with the best arrangements for dividing chores. Over that time, we've learned precious lessons about how to engage with each other so that everyone feels part of the consideration *and* decisions get made in a timely manner. Today, one of the most common requests I get as a group consultant is for advice about piloting a safe passage between the rock of product and the whirlpool of process.

Based on years of group living, I can now chart a course where groups identify and work with strong undercurrents—allowing them to surface and harnessing the

surge of released energy for moving forward on the issue with everyone on board—instead of getting sucked down in the undertow.

A few months ago I worked with a group that had been living together for seven years and was still feeling its way through working with different perspectives. After watching the tentativeness of their facilitators in keeping the group's attention on the various currents in the room, I modeled firmness at the helm when it was my time to demonstrate. In the evaluation I got applause from the product people, who wanted action, and frustration from the process folks, who felt cut off and left out. Well, fools (read consultants) rush in where guardian angels (or protective facilitators) fear to tread. In short, I had discovered why their facilitators had learned to be cautious.

Having opened up a key issue, I was glad I had a second day with that group and a chance to get the worms back in the can. The next day, I offered mixed modes of engagement which expressly included naming the undercurrents. This time the group experienced much greater inclusion and still got movement on their issues. I was able to show them a course between the rocks and the swirls.

It Started in a Group House

In three decades I've come a long way from that group house in Washington, D.C., where I didn't have an answer for the uncertainty that exists in most groups about whether to take the time to work things through before making decisions. Since most of us haven't been raised to listen well or seek cooperative solutions, we are dubious of the effort. Expecting poor results, we get what we are looking for. And skepticism is reinforced.

Having ridden those rapids to the end however, I am an optimist. I know it can be done. Observing the growing strength of the student co-op movement today I am heartened by the prospect of untold numbers of young adults getting the chance at a cooperative boat ride. Many will undoubtedly bump up against the rocks, and some may sink. Yet others will make it through and be forever changed by the exhilaration of solid product buoyed by sound process. Then they too will know it can be done.

And who knows, if we keep trying maybe someday we'll figure out a chore rotation where the dishes do themselves.

Laird Schaub

COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

"Appropriate Technology in Community." Summer '01. Our love-hate relationship with technology; appropriate technology options for sustainable technology in communities and learning to live with it; micro-hydro-electric, solar electric, wind generation; living with home-power systems; how future appropriate technologies will change our lives. *Guest Editor, Jeff Clearwater.*

"Growing Older in Community." Fall '01. What communitarians and elders can learn about growing older in the good company of friends. Communities' stories, elders' tales, what works in terms of labor, contribution, and health. *Communities magazine, communities@ic.org; 828-863-4425.*

"Communication and Group Process." Winter '01. Building communication skills, check-ins, threshing meetings, open heart circles, talking sticks, clearness process, giving feedback, processes for building connection and bonding. *Communities magazine, communities@ic.org; 828-863-4425.*



Art of Community Audiotapes

**Multigenerational Living in
Communities:
Meeting Everyone's Needs**
Caroline Estes

**Finding Your Community:
An Art or a Science?**
Geoph Kozeny

**Manifesting Our Dreams:
Visioning, Strategic Planning,
& Fundraising**
Jeff Grossberg

**Raising & Educating Children
in Community**
*Diana Christian, Elke Lerman,
Martin Klaf, Judy Morris*

**Conflict: Fight, Flight, or
Opportunity?**
Laird Sandhill

**Consensus: Decisions That
Bring People Together**
Caroline Estes

**Six "Ingredients" for Forming
Communities (That Help Reduce
Conflict Down the Road)**
Diana Christian

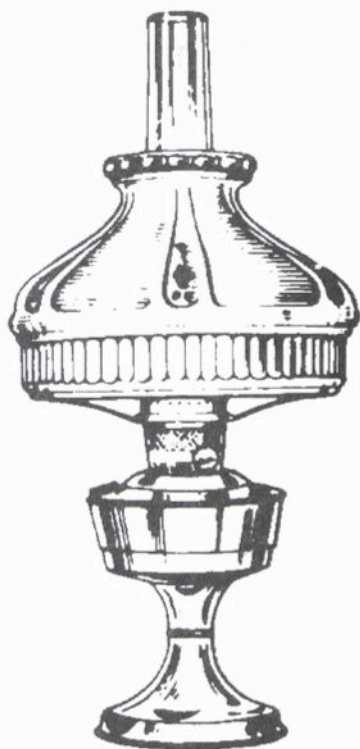
**Building a Business While
Building Community**
*Carol Carlson, Lois Arkin, Harvey
Baker, Bill Becker, Judy Morris, Ira
Wallace*

Legal Options for Communities
*Allen Butcher, Aiy'm Fellman,
Stephen Johnson, Tony Sirna*

**We Tried Consensus and Got
Stuck. Now What?**
Caroline Estes & Laird Sandhill

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“Mainstream” Style or “Diversity” Style, Part II

How Do We Build a Movement?

Over the last several years controversy has surfaced in the Fellowship for Intentional Community (publishers of this magazine, the Communities Directory, and the IC Web site www.ic.org) over how we should communicate with the diverse range of intentional communities and people potentially interested in them. In the Winter '00 issue we began our series of articles with FIC people on all sides of the issue. Our first author was longtime board member and administrator Betty Didcoct. Our second in the series is written by Tree Bressen, who has been involved with the Fellowship since 1995 and has served on the board since 1997.

HOW DO WE want to build a movement? To me that's the key question facing the FIC right now around issues of diversity and inclusivity.

Do we build a movement by asking FIC staff and volunteers to talk and write and dress within a narrow range, in the most mild, least offensive style possible, in order to minimize the risk of offending anyone? Or do we welcome volunteers in their infinite variety, loud voices and soft voices; tie-dyes and business suits; Christians, cohousers, and radical faeries all?

My vision of the FIC as a whole is a glorious patchwork quilt, filled with brilliant colors, some shapes odd and others square, coming together in the creation

of a beautiful message about the power of community. In order to achieve that vision, i* believe we have to hold tolerance as an essential value. To me that's in keeping with our long tradition of welcoming any community that comes to us as long as two key guidelines are followed: nonviolence and lack of coercion in retaining members. To me it makes sense that

our internal values would reflect the external values we are promoting.

Sometimes our diversity issues in FIC center on big organizational questions, such as whether or not to have a more hierarchical structure, with an executive director who takes a strong managerial role to ensure that our programs run properly. Or what our salary structure will be, as we slowly move

from being an all-volunteer organization to relying on some paid staff—is it all right to pay a development director \$30/hour if our office staff still makes \$8?

More commonly, our diversity issues play out around seemingly small, everyday



*The author consciously uses a lower-case “i” as a political choice, based on the belief that capitalizing the self unconsciously reinforces a damaging individualism in English-speaking cultures. Similarly, she uses the spellings “womyn” and “wimmin” as a reflection of her belief that non-sexist language is one important route to transforming our thinking and culture.

Tree Bressen is a regular contributor to Communities. A group facilitator and consensus teacher, she lives in a cooperative household in Eugene, Oregon. Tree can be reached at 1680 Walnut St., Eugene, OR 97403; 541-484-1156; tree@ic.org.

choices, yet those choices point to larger strategic questions. Is it acceptable for a member of Twin Oaks community to write an article for *Communities* that uses the gender-neutral pronoun "co" (which they use at Twin Oaks) instead of "she-or-he"? Does our conference staff need to adopt a dress code dress in order for our less alternative attendees to feel comfortable? How will it affect newcomers who identify as monogamous to hear references to polyamorous relationships during personal check-ins at the start of a board meeting? What about friendly group hugs at the end of a session?

The fear in the FIC is that if we bring our full selves to the table without censorship, we risk alienating some of the people we most want to contact: "mainstream" people. People who might be freaked out by overt politicization, or turned off by the spelling "womyn."* People who would never consider joining a commune or even cohousing, but who nevertheless yearn for more community in their lives. People who need what FIC can offer.

Some in our organization want to reach mainstream people because they think those souls are the most in need of waking up to the benefits of community, ranging from a sense of companionship to ecological sustainability. If the mainstream changed its tune, the world would soon be singing a different song. Looking more deeply, there's also a fear that without more mainstream folks on board, we won't have enough money and power to get our message out.

Others of us, myself included, are concerned about potentially replicating within our organization the same oppressions that already exist in the wider culture. When i hear that a womyn who lives on lesbian land says most of the people she associates with won't consider getting involved with FIC as long as the "F" in our name stands for Fellowship (because they feel that excludes them as wimmin), i think it's important to pay attention. Partly because i don't want to lose a group i see as part of our constituency, but also because it's important to me that with regard to sexism we be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Although gender issues are not the main focus of our organization, in order to be truly inclusive i think those concerns need to be

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interested in community?
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Saturday, June 2, 2001

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**For interested participants, the conference will be
preceded by the Fellowship board meeting, May 28-31,
and followed on Sunday, June 3rd, by a day-long
Earthaven Intensive — an introduction to Earthaven as
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integrated into how we do our work.

The other important point illustrated by this womyn's statement is that while the mainstream status quo can appear neutral to those who are empowered by it, those who aren't empowered by it don't perceive it as neutral. Since every culture tends to attract some elements and repel others (see "Hidden Selectors," *Communities* #90), i think it's important to be conscious and intentional about what kinds of filters we put in place.

When it comes to filters, i'm much more worried about the fact that our reliance on email was one of the main factors that led a key person to pull back from us than i am that someone will decide not to subscribe to this magazine because an occasional author uses a lower-case "i" to refer to herself. We knew this longtime dedicated person felt that email was not an accessible medium for her, but we chose to use it as our primary form of communication anyway.

If we're going to welcome some and unintentionally exclude others, i'd rather make an extra effort to include those who have been historically disenfranchised than reproduce existing power structures based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, and wealth. Betty Didcoct in the last issue of *Communities* asserted that if we use the voice of any one group we become that group, but i'm not advocating that we change the editorial policy of the whole magazine to adopt the tone of any particular group. Rather, i think we should allow people to authentically represent themselves and their community cultures in our pages.

As someone who's been involved in various social change movements in the past decade, my experience has been that people who are more "radical" tend to work with unusual passion—and to achieve some outstanding results. For example, as the gay liberation movement became progressively more "in your face" over several decades, its accomplishments accelerated, until nowadays legalizing same-sex marriage is actually considered a valid topic of debate. Even though the movement hasn't yet gotten everything it wants, it has thoroughly and irrevocably changed the landscape.

While i think there's a place for many modes of social change and groups at all points on the spectrum make important contributions, people who live in community are already making a culturally unusual choice. One of the main reasons intentional communities are valuable to the wider society is that they experiment! Some of those innovations, like the soy products pioneered by The Farm in Tennessee, are later picked up by others and widely distributed, their alternative community origins all but forgotten.

Other innovations, like Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage's car cooperative, may or may not ever be incorporated into the wider culture, but nonetheless deserve respect and support. I think the FIC is strongest when we harness that excitement and innovation. People come to us precisely because

there's something they're *not* getting from mainstream culture.

FIC executive secretary Laird Schaub is fond of saying that one of the most important lessons of community is how to work constructively with differences. I think the Fellowship is well positioned to create opportunities for engagement between our varied constituencies. Instead of trying rather futilely to get everyone in our circle to tone down enough to avoid pissing anyone off, i'd rather we recognize that we may all have moments of discomfort when confronted with people who are markedly different from ourselves, but that these moments present opportunities to learn about ourselves and each other.

I've witnessed this in action over the years at the annual Twin Oaks Communities Conference in Virginia. While Twin Oaks strongly values the secularity of its culture, that hasn't stopped them from enthusiastically welcoming representatives to the conference from the Twelve Tribes Community, a strongly religious group. These attendees play music, lead circle dances, and are upfront about their beliefs during workshop discussions. In any given year, representatives might also attend from Shannon Farm land trust, Little Flower Catholic Worker, The Gathering (an eclectic spiritual community), and other quite varied groups.

The FIC is officially a co-sponsor of

My vision of the FIC as a whole is a glorious patchwork quilt.

Twin Oaks's conference. I think we can do our best work when we have all different kinds of people involved, so that many different sorts of people approaching us can see someone like themselves already in our circle, thus forming natural connections.

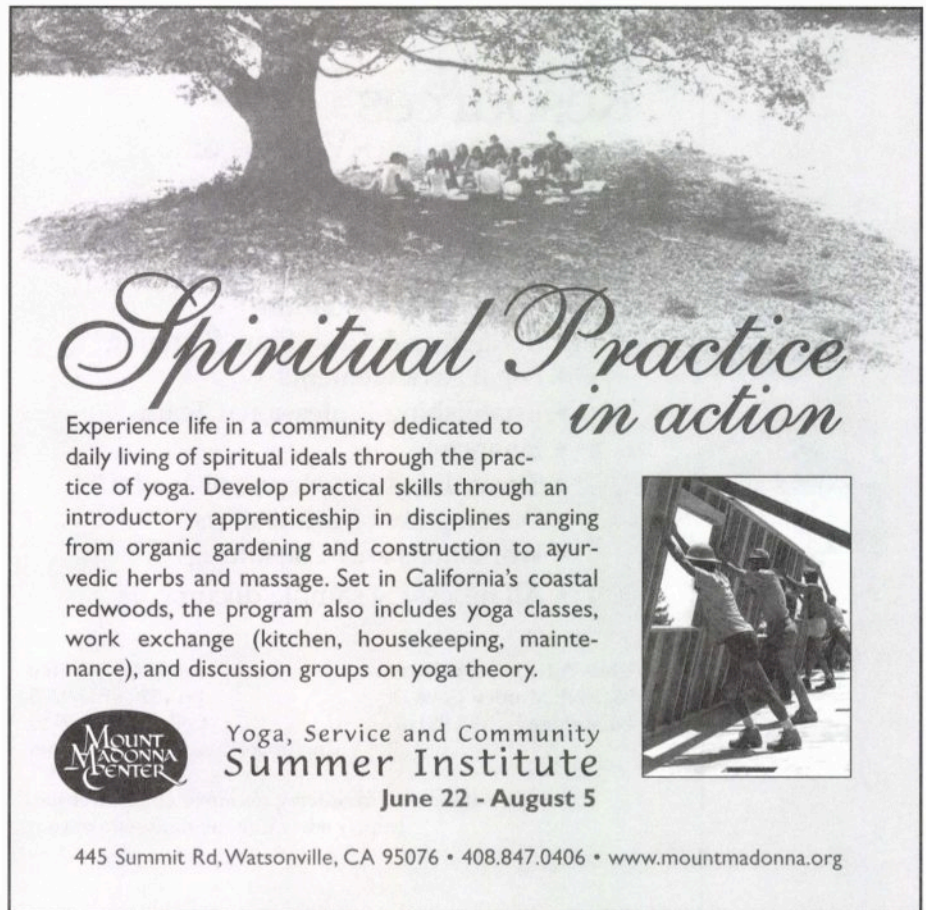
I also believe that those of us who are most passionate about creating community successfully move through surface barriers to connect with people who are different from ourselves. I do a lot of traveling—partly to attend FIC meetings—and regularly engage in conversations about community with people in trains, planes, and automobiles. These people are usually living a more mainstream lifestyle than I am, but are often intrigued to hear about other possibilities and usually end up wanting an FIC brochure so they can find out more. I think genuine spirit and energy moves past people's prejudices and hesitations and calls them to join in the fun.

I SEE POWER IN HOLDING OUR VALUES with love and strength, rather than hiding who we are due to fear of pushing people away. Whether it's an intentional community or an organization, clear vision attracts like-minded others, who bring support and resources with them.

A few years ago, when FIC was beginning work on the 2000 edition of the *Communities Directory*, we ran into trouble with potential lenders of a production loan when they discovered that some of the groups to be listed advocated polyamory (non-monogamy): eight out of 725, as it turned out. Acutely uncomfortable at this prospect, these potential lenders withdrew their consideration, leaving us in an uncertain position.


Luckily a new pair of benefactors came forward, a couple who, as it happened, had formerly identified as polyamorous and, while not currently identifying that way, have said they might again in the future. So in the end, it was the supposedly "fringe" folks who came through with the resources we needed to do our work of documenting all the different kinds of communities in North America and around the world.

FIC HAS AS ONE OF ITS CORE PURPOSES, "To embrace the diversity that exists among communities and to facilitate increased interaction between communitarians and the wider culture." These



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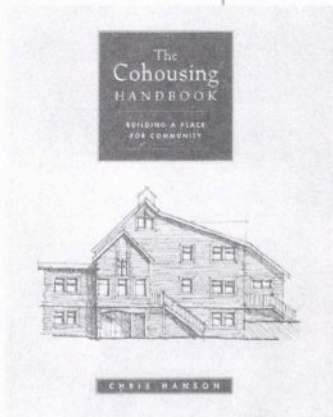
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inclusivity questions that we're currently wrestling with are basically about how to carry out both parts of this mission. We have a bunch of people who genuinely care a lot, trying to work out how to keep working together.

Sometimes i worry that we'll fall apart, as many organizations working for a better future over the years have gone awry due to internal political differences. Other times i think that these differences are so small and we agree on so much, why can't we just get past them already? As we move

I see power in holding our values with love and strength, rather than hiding who we are due to fear of pushing people away.

through the struggle, i keep faith that our emphasis on understanding each other, on staying in the conversation until we reach unity, will bring us through in the end.

At our last meeting, we decided to adopt a policy around "deep dialogue," an agreement to do whatever processing is necessary to get to a place of clearness between people when a conflict arises in our work. While we recognized that some who might otherwise be interested in involvement with us won't have the time or temperament for that, we decided that it was too important to give up.

Similarly, i propose we say that tolerance and diversity are too important to be sacrificed. While I don't think anyone in FIC wants to intentionally exclude anyone, there are choices to be made about priorities. Do we make ourselves palatable to the widest possible audience, or do we honor our potential diversity as a strength? My hope is that we'll adopt expectations for our activities that say all are welcome here, as both participants and organizers, as long as they can welcome others, and do it with an open heart. Ω

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From Chavez House to the Commune

The Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) is a mutual-support organization for a dozen North American communities that value income-sharing, nonviolence, participatory decision making, and ecological practices.

I ARRIVED AT UC SANTA CRUZ in the fall of '97 knowing no one, and by chance got into the Cesar Chavez student co-op. There was no process for joining that I could see. You were supposed to sign a contract, if the Membership Coordinator remembered to offer you one. And if the house was lucky, they got a deposit out of you before you moved in.

This disorganized state of affairs had landed the house into some trouble. Needed maintenance was way past due and the lease hadn't been paid over the summer. The neighbors were furious with house members for, among other things, drumming and smoking pot on the porch till 2 a.m. and the city was threatening a lawsuit.

Under pressure from NASCO, Chavez House started turning around shortly after I moved in. We passed a proposal requiring potential members to attend two dinners and two meetings before being OKed for membership, and all members to attend seven out of ten weekly house meetings or have their membership reevaluated. We also recreated the labor and finance systems, and wrote up the membership contract from scratch.

All of this may sound like a big headache, but it was exciting. Living in the co-op was like Communal Living 101. We were learning how to make agreements about how to live with each other, and because things were such a mess, it

took a lot of focus and patience just to get the bills paid and the food bought. But we experienced a lot of satisfaction from successfully putting these parts of our lives together.

I was very familiar with communities already. My parents met at Twin Oaks Community in Virginia, and I grew up knowing there was more than one way to live. In the summer of '98, after my year at Chavez House, I met up with my older half-brother Shandin in Oregon for that year's Earth First! Rendezvous. Never

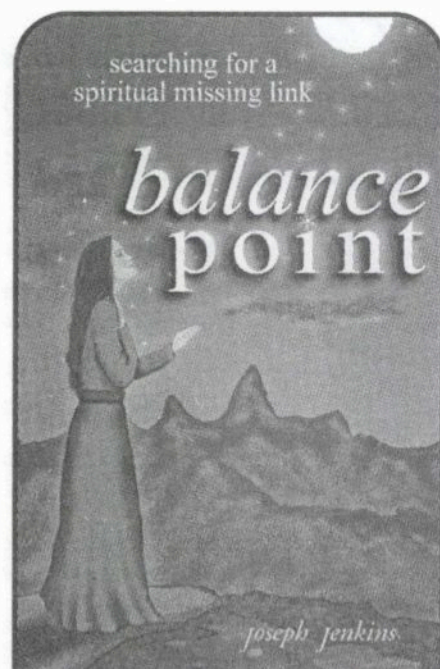
before had I been with that many people all joined in a common goal. Many people knew each other, most had a friend in common. I was treated with a great deal of acceptance and openness. For the first time I got this sense of what it was like to be a part of something that not only fed my soul, but helped to change the world around me.

I then joined Shandin at East Wind community in Missouri for a three-week visit with people I had just met at the Rendezvous. These connections were deeper and more satisfying to me than those I'd had with people I'd known for years. One night, after a sweat lodge, I decided I would finish "school," but not the kind I'd known.

In the Spring of '99 I gave up on institutional learning and joined Twin Oaks a few months later, and began attending the "University of Life." I was struck by how comfortable I felt at Twin Oaks. I resonated with the community: it was like my whole being remembered the feeling of connection and purpose that living in community can bring. I found it at Chavez House, at the Earth First! gathering, at East Wind, and again at Twin Oaks.



Sky Blue has lived at Twin Oaks since 1999.

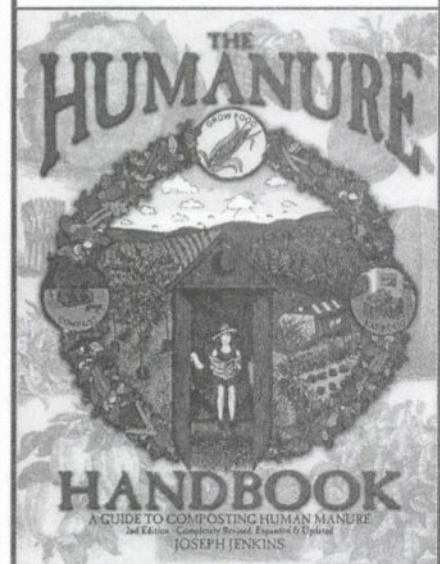


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I see an amazing amount of similarity between living in a 25-person student housing cooperative and a 80-person egalitarian, income-sharing community, especially in terms of learning experiences. If the Chavez House was Communal Living 101, then Twin Oaks is the graduate course.

Because at Twin Oaks the infrastructure is already in place, getting our basic necessities taken care of isn't so much of an

***I see an amazing similarity
between living in a student
housing cooperative
and an egalitarian,
income-sharing community.***

issue, leaving time to explore work areas we may not have considered in the outside world. In the co-op, you could learn how to cook by getting on the weekly dinner rotation, you could keep track of the finances, or you could plan and organize fun events for the house. At Twin Oaks, you can become a gourmet chef, or an accountant, or a sociologist. And instead of these being avocations you enjoy for only five hours a week after working an unfulfilling service job and attending college classes, you spend 45 hours a week fine-tuning ongoing services you provide for 79 other people. You can pick up a wide range of new skills living in a community this large, and you'll never get to all of them. (But the one mandatory task at both Twin Oaks and Chavez House is the weekly kitchen-cleaning shift.)

When a group of people put their lives together, suddenly community business is personal, and being personal is everyone's business. I'm impressed by the fact that people here take steps to acknowledge the different kinds of roles they play, and how they affect each other in their interactions. Often, interpersonal grievances affect how someone reacts to a proposal or comment in a meeting, and having a difference over some policy decision can result in two people who can no longer sit next to each other at dinner.

While this kind of conflict is definitely a factor in co-op living, it is a much more

precarious and pressing issue at Twin Oaks. In the co-op we were pretty homogenous in our values, beliefs, and backgrounds. At Twin Oaks we are very diverse. While we all came here to live in an egalitarian, income-sharing, nonviolent community, Twin Oakers have at least as many reasons for choosing this lifestyle choice as there are people living here.

And this is the challenge, to get along with people who are very different from ourselves. This is the work we in social change circles, not to mention everybody on the planet, need to be doing. There is something self-defeating about a bunch of radical, politically active, socially aware hippies sitting around convincing each other how damaged our society is. At Twin Oaks we push many of each other's buttons around our core values. But despite our differences, in the end we are all in this together, running the businesses, maintaining the buildings, cooking food for each other, raising the children, enjoying life, and treating each other like human beings. Ω

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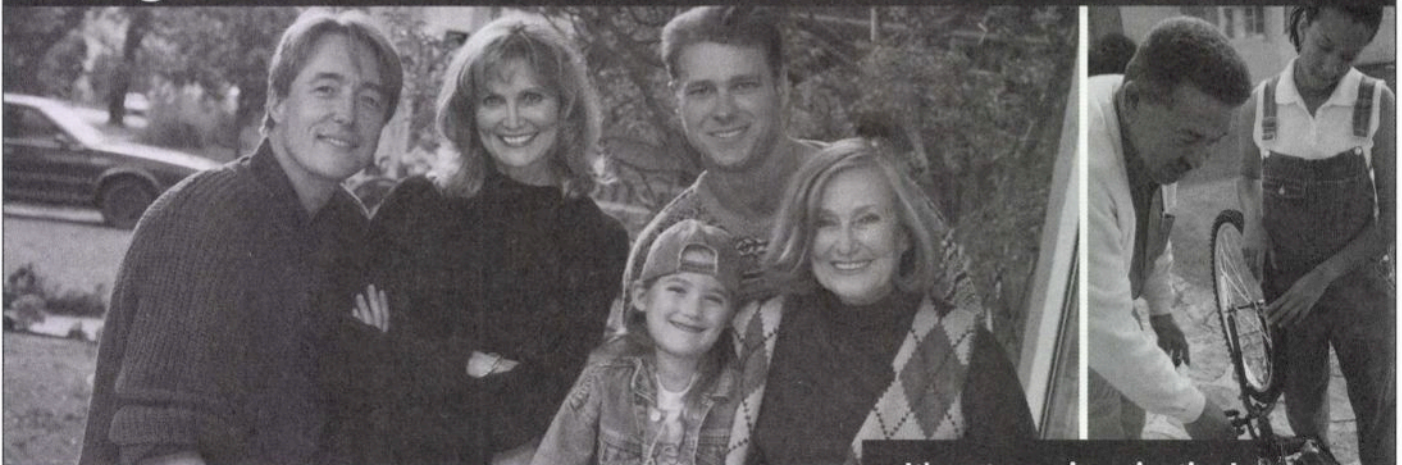
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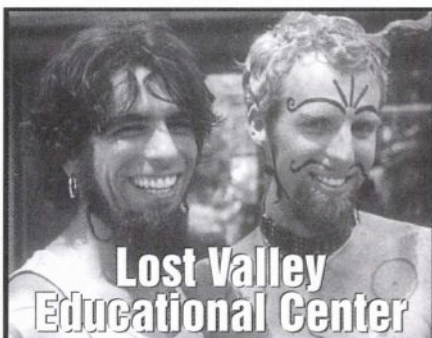
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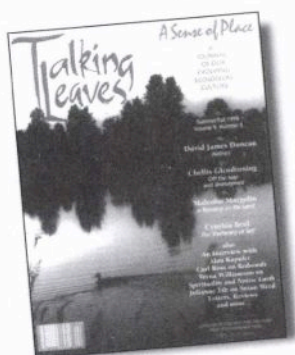
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False Meeting Economy

Learning When It's a Bad Bargain to Go Fast

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU heard people complain about meetings that drag—that didn't deal efficiently with the business at hand? While we've all been at meetings where speakers wander off topic, presenters are unprepared, or no one has read the proposal ahead of time, I want to speak to the dangers of going too fast.

I want to look at the ways in which groups hurry through a topic and avoid underlying concerns. About the ways in which we inadvertently leave people behind because of the narrow choices offered in how we engage. About the power of looking at issues from multiple perspectives. In short, I want to explore some of the more common ways groups can lose ground by stepping on the gas.



Beyond the Gavel

One of my first jobs as a process consultant was working with a seven-person community that wanted to learn the consensus process, based on the up-tempo results they witnessed at an FIC board meeting. The pivotal moment in our session together came during a demonstration where the subject was their financial record keeping. While this didn't look like a such a difficult topic, it was an iceberg—the most challenging issues lay below the surface.

After 15 minutes it was clear which way the wind blew: six members favored a shift in procedures that would streamline accounting. The seventh was undecided. It looked like a slam dunk to approve the proposal. Even with consensus it's acceptable to proceed with six in favor and one standing aside. The problem was that the person standing aside was the finance manager, the person expected to implement the change. I knew we had go more deeply into his ambivalence.

It took another 75 minutes to get to the bottom of his discomfort: streamlining the financial records would mean recording less information, making it difficult to track how individual spending impacted the

budget. He was worried about how to raise concerns if there wasn't solid information about what everyone was doing. At the same time he felt awkward bringing this up because it called into question his trust of fellow community members.

Though it was delicate exposing a trust issue, there needed to be a full disclosure of his anguish and a chance for all the other members to recognize what was hard for him before they could explore ways to address this concern more directly and allow the accounting proposal to go forward.

The beauty of this story is that the

Laird Schaub has worked as a group process consultant for the past 13 years, specializing in whole-person consensus, dynamic facilitation, and using conflict constructively. A self-professed "meeting junkie," he has lived the last 27 years at Sandhill Farm, a community he helped found. Laird is currently Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community.

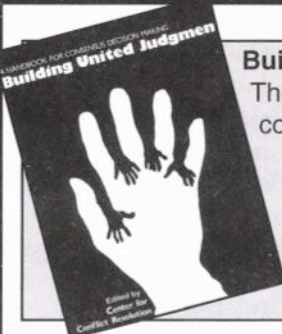
group probed the issue for 90 minutes and came up with the identical conclusion that it had after 15 minutes—to proceed with the change in financial record keeping. On the surface this appeared to bolster the oft-heard complaint that “consensus takes forever.” However, I want to make the exact opposite point: Consensus, if done well, is probably the most efficient form of decision making.

To fully assess efficiency, you have to not only look at the time spent in meetings but also the time spent implementing the decision. What difference does it make how quickly you reach a decision if the follow-through is sloppy or indifferent (or worse, sabotaged)? You have to include what happens after the gavel ends the meeting, before drawing conclusions about the meeting’s efficiency. In the case of the troubled finance manager, the group was well-pleased with the 90-minute price tag. They thought it a bargain because, for the first time, implementation went smoothly and that particular issue would no longer keep popping up on future meeting agendas.

Refreshing the Palette


When it comes to information in meetings, people absorb, process, and share it in a wide variety of ways. While it’s no doubt a triumph of evolution that humans have developed speech and rational thought, that’s a poor reason to undervalue the rest of our sensory capacities. In our love fest with the rational, many groups have allowed the rest of their informational repertoire to atrophy. Emotional, intuitive, kinesthetic, and spiritual ways of knowing have been neglected. Is it any wonder meetings are a drag and many people dread them? Though all humans come equipped with a communication palette rich with colorful choices, for some reason we insist that everyone rely mainly on black and white rational expression. While some folks have proven themselves quite skillful at working monochromatically, I’m convinced we can get much more vibrant results with a mixture of formats.

The good news is that with steady exercise those neglected information channels can be made robust, enhancing the likelihood that everyone will have one or more ways to access their knowing on the subject at hand. On some level, we



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already know this. For example, no sensible group would rely solely on a verbal presentation to inform its members about the annual budget. There would be handouts or wall charts giving everyone the information visually as well as verbally. But there's a lot more to communication than words collected by the eyes and ears.

The Paws That Refreshes

How do kinesthetically inclined people deal with meetings? For the most part, poorly. Most of us were taught to sit still in kindergarten, and some have never ventured beyond the admonition of their first teacher when it comes to "proper" meeting behavior. A couple years ago I worked with a group of 30 who were taking a closer look at their basic community vision. During an animated half hour of general discussion, about three-fourths of the group spoke at least once, with a vocal minority leading the way. This pattern is fairly typical, even for healthy groups. Why didn't the remaining quarter contribute? Shy? Nothing to say?

Not necessarily.

When I suggested we brainstorm a list of characteristics important to the group, the pattern of participation started to shift. After capturing the input on a flip chart, I cut up the large sheets so that each point was on a separate piece of paper, and placed them randomly on the floor. Then I asked the group to help me clump like items. Several people got down on the floor and started moving sheets around during this hands-on portion of the discussion. Again about a quarter of the people were passive observers—but this time it was a different quarter than for the open discussion. For the kinesthetic in the group, the meeting had suddenly become more accessible, and their energy perked up. Here was a format where they felt at home. It turned out they had quite a bit to say, using their hands as much as their mouths.

The key point here is not uncovering a grand conspiracy to keep people in their seats (and therefore quiet)—it's understanding that no single format works best for everyone.

Downshifting to Gain Traction

Similarly, we can sometimes get dramatic shifts in participation simply by changing how we approach an issue. People may zone out for no other reason than that the conversation has not been framed in a way that touches their concerns.

I once worked with a residential student group considering when and if to lock the front door to their dorm. At first I only observed, and noticed that 90 percent of the comments came from the men despite the fact that about half the group was women. Was this a case of overbearing men and passive women?

Comments were centered around the inconvenience of arriving at the front door around 1 a.m. and not having one's key. Why couldn't the group loosen up and either delay when the door was locked (perhaps until after the library closed) or not lock it at all?

Consensus, if done well, is probably the most efficient form of decision making.

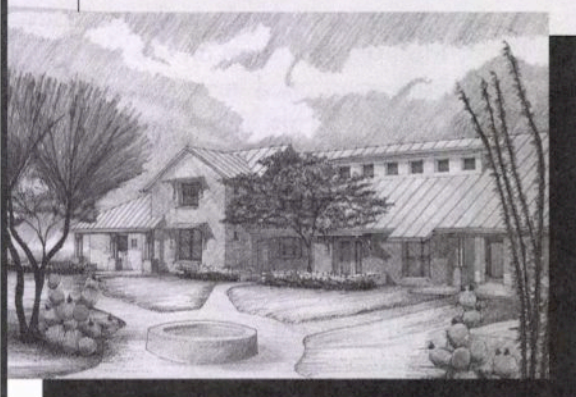
After awhile, when the group solicited my comments, I asked why there had been no mention of safety concerns. The group response was striking—the men looked baffled, and the women woke up. It's noteworthy that one segment of the group was oblivious to another perspective, and that the other segment was silent about their concerns. No one was conspiring to railroad the conversation, yet everyone played a role in creating, or at least tolerating, a meeting where the input was skewed and the energy flat. No one asked had asked the question, "What's not being said?" By taking the time to reexamine the issue from a different perspective, it became much more likely that the discussion would produce a result that worked for everyone.

All of these tales have a common thread: the benefits of taking additional group time to deal more effectively with an issue. What is an obvious and clear path of engagement for one person may look awkward and stony to another. While all may agree on the desirability of staying out of the ditch, what looks like brambles to one may be a promising trail to another, and there are subtleties in choosing which path to take. Once a group appreciates that the most productive road is not necessarily a straight one, it understands that there isn't always enough time to go fast. Ω

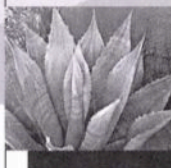
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DYSFUNCTIONAL CONSENSUS—AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

BY ROB SANDELIN



JACOB STEVENS

AFTER HOURS OF WORK OVER four different meetings, the issue of building carports is dead in the water. Nobody talks about it publicly anymore—it's too painful. Resentment, recriminations, and name-calling bristle in private though, and the undercurrent of ill will is palpable throughout the community.

What went wrong?

At several points over the four meetings the facilitator or members could have spotted the “process danger signs” and intervened, but these were subtly missed or ignored. The cumulative effect of the missed opportunities has brought this community to its knees on this issue, and made continued meetings using consensus difficult, at best. So what were the signs along the way?

During the discussion at the first meeting with “Carports” on the agenda, Mark expressed his feelings about what he considered the overglorification of cars in our society. His comments were met with sighs, eye rolling, and facial expressions of disgust or disdain. By sighing and looking pained, the facilitator also participated in this body language barrage, and while no one directly criticized Mark's comments, the message was clear: “Shut up already.” Mark did shut up. In fact, the message was so strong he left at the next break. Few noticed, or noticed that he didn't attend the next two meetings as well.

Undetected by the group, Mark became a disaffected member, a dropout of the decision process, hurt and angry.

During the carport discussion at the next meeting, Jill, a reserved woman who rarely spoke up much, voiced her concern about the possible environmental costs of the carport's construction materials. Redwood was not an easily renewable resource, and didn't pressure-treated lumber use copper and arsenic? The facilitator didn't call for

responses to those concerns, but moved on to the next point, which was a response to a previous procedural point. Then Jeff, one of the most active and outspoken members, brought up a concern about how the community might pay for carport materials, which generated lots of raised hands and further discussion. Not a word about Jill's point, which was swept away in the current of financial issues. As the meeting progressed Jill became aware that she felt annoyed and resentful. Jeff and the other outspoken members always got their points well-debated and discussed but hers had been abandoned without a comment. Over the next few days Jill worked herself into a state of resentment. Believing that if no one responded to her concern in the meeting no one would respond to her concern about how she had been treated there, she confided in no one. In this vacuum of feedback or other people's perspectives, she magnified the situation, imagining that the facilitator didn't respect her ideas.

At the end of the third meeting, after literally four hours' discussion, the group finally consented on a proposal for how they would pay for the carport materials. The facilitator asked for other issues related to the carports. Jill timidly raised her hand and said she was concerned about what kinds of materials would be used and their potential environmental costs. The facilitator, tired after so long a meeting and visibly impatient, told Jill she should take that issue up with the design committee outside the meeting. Unfortunately, the impatient tone of the facilitator's voice reinforced Jill's perception that she hadn't been heard or treated with respect. And because once before Jill had had a difficult experience taking an issue to the design committee, she felt completely thwarted at this point.

At the fourth meeting the entire carport issue was scheduled for a decision. After so much hard work over the previous meetings, expecta-

tions for a final resolution was high. The facilitator called for consensus. To her and the group's astonishment, Mark and then Jill blocked, citing environmental reasons. The room exploded in expressions of outrage and disbelief. Several people angrily accused Mark and Jill of "hurting the community." Even the facilitator joined in these expressions of displeasure, further alienating Mark and Jill from the group.

The key concerns which they cited to block the decision remained unexamined, and the group was left drifting in a sea of ill will and resentment. Carports are now a communi-

His comments were met with sighs, eye rolling, and facial expressions of disgust or disdain.

ty symbol for failure of process, and the subject is largely avoided in community gatherings, although it is a private bone of contention.

Let's examine each of the signals that the group missed. At the first meeting, when Mark's comment about cars evoked strong negative body language, the facilitator could have intervened by stopping the discussion and acknowledging the responses and their potential impacts on community members in that or future discussions. She could have said something like: *Let's stop for a minute here. I'm seeing some eye rolling and other expressions as people speak. This kind of body language sends a very negative message to the speaker. Please think about how willing you might be to continue offering input to meetings or even still attending them if*

people did this when you spoke. When any of us behaves like this it can intimidate and discourage others from speaking. For our consensus process to work at its best, we need to encourage, not discourage, everyone in the group to give his or her input, even if we disagree with it. We need to disagree with people's points without repudiating them personally.

This kind of facilitator intervention points out negative behaviors and their potential consequences without putting any single person on the spot. This also puts the group on notice that the facilitator is paying attention and expects the group to adhere to a certain set of standards for behaviors.

Also, noticing when people don't participate is an important intervention for the group or its process team. If people stop attending meetings or drop out of community participation because they're unhappy or angry, it's usually best not to just ignore it. Some kind of outreach to check in on what's bothering the person can often generate solutions before the person's issues trigger a crisis.

Sometimes in meetings so many different points can come up that it's easy to lose track of them all, especially when some bring up a whole new set of issues to think about. At the second meeting when Jill brought up her environmental concern in the midst of an intense discussion about other carport issues, the facilitator needed some way to keep Jill's point from being swamped by issues that the group considered more interesting or timely. The facilitator could have written Jill's point on a chalkboard (or white board or easel pad) at the front of meeting room to that ensure that this and other issues didn't get passed over in the rush. The facilitator could also have asked a scribe to briefly summarize all the points made and ask the group to quickly prioritize the ones they wanted to solve then and there, and which to save for discussion

later. (C.T. Butler's Formal Consensus process suggests listing all concerns to a given proposal, and then grouping them by similarity. Concerns are discussed one by one until each concern is adequately dealt with.)

When, in the third meeting, Jill raised her point again, it came after a long and intense discussion of costs. When the group has worked hard for a long period they naturally want to come to some closure. A good facilitator is aware of the limits of the group's energy and what happens as they approach those limits. Groups commonly don't function well towards the end of long meetings. In fact, they may hurry through discussions and make rushed, poorly considered decisions in order to "get the



heck out of the room." Even the facilitator can feel this way. It's helpful at this point for the facilitator to ask: "Do we have the energy to do our best work right now?" When this group's facilitator moved Jill's concern to a smaller committee outside the meeting, she didn't ask Jill first if that would work for her. Granted, the pressure of coming to closure may have been so great that Jill would have agreed anyway, but to not even be asked reinforced Jill's perception that she wasn't being respected.

And finally, when someone blocks a decision, it's crucial to not let the group turn against the people blocking. Again, if the facilitator intervened after the first negative remark, it could have derailed the descent into chaos and accusation. The "steamrolling" effect of group anger can snuff out other ideas and issues, even good ones.

Of course, if the facilitator had been paying attention all along—to the body language, the fact that Mark left the meeting and his absence at subsequent meetings, and Jill's uncharacteristically raising a concern and its remaining unaddressed—she might have known *not* to call for a decision until these mat-

Not a word about Jill's point, which was swept away in the current of financial issues.

ters were addressed. Part of the problem here was that the facilitator called for consensus too soon. Another was that Mark and Jill didn't know that the right of blocking is not intended as a substitute for not having been heard. Either could have addressed the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, saying that they weren't ready to make a decision because their concerns had not been addressed yet.

In this case, however, the facilitator could have explored the issues behind the block, but only after a break to allow people to relax and shift their energies. To move ahead with the proposal, a careful consideration of environmental issues, perhaps even exploring what the group feels its environmental values actually

COLLABORATION ATTITUDES

Humility. "My perspective is limited, what I have learned might not apply to others. My values are not necessarily your values. I have one piece of the total solution. I might have drawn the wrong conclusions; I might be missing some key understandings or experiences. I might be wrong."

Desire to learn the other people's perspectives.

"My perspectives are personal, so I need to know more. I need to broaden my understanding by hearing other people's perspectives. I am not just tolerant of your ideas, I actively seek them out. I encourage others to tell me what they think and want, so that my limited experiences and perceptions can grow larger and fuller."

Freedom to speak. "I am free to speak my ideas and

feelings without fear of retribution, shame, put-downs or other negative reactions—and so are you. This is especially true when your ideas or mine are not widely accepted, or run counter to the group's norms.

Confidence about being heard. "After you or I speak we feel our feelings and ideas are listened to and fairly considered. This does not mean they are necessarily part of the final solution but that they were given fair consideration and not just ignored."

Our decisions represent the best we can do at any given time. "When we are asked to consent to a proposal, it represents the best composite that can be accomplished by our group at this point in time. It may not be ideal, it may not meet all the needs of every angle or person, but it is the best work we can do in this group of people right now." —RS

do and do not include, would have shed light on why Jill and Mark objected. If the group had been able to define clearly which environmental values might be held by individuals in the group but not by the group as a whole, it's possible that Mark and Jill might have been able to stand aside on this issue rather than block it. However, in this case—like many—there is more going on with the blocks than just the content.

If the group had a regular period of process evaluation at the end of each meeting, Mark or Jill might have dealt with experiences of feeling disempowered as they happened, instead of storing them for the future. Without such a forum for meeting evaluation, problems with process tend to end up as an undercurrent of resentment, eroding a group's best intentions to work together collaboratively.

For a group to work well, someone needs to pay attention to the emotional aspects of their meetings. Some groups entrust this to the facilitator, others use a "vibes watcher," and some empower the whole group to be mindful of how they treat each other. When you miss subtle but important interactions in meetings, these can build up and trigger big problems down the road. Bottom line: this community, and their facilitator, needed to be better trained in the consensus process. Ω

Rob Sandelin, a consensus facilitator and teacher, is a founder of the Northwest Intentional Communities Association (NICA), and author of the Intentional Community Resource Pages, a Web site on forming new communities and process issues: www.infoteam.com/nonprofit/nical/resource.html. He is author of "A Facilitator's Guide to Making Consensus Work," published on the Internet. He lives at Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington.

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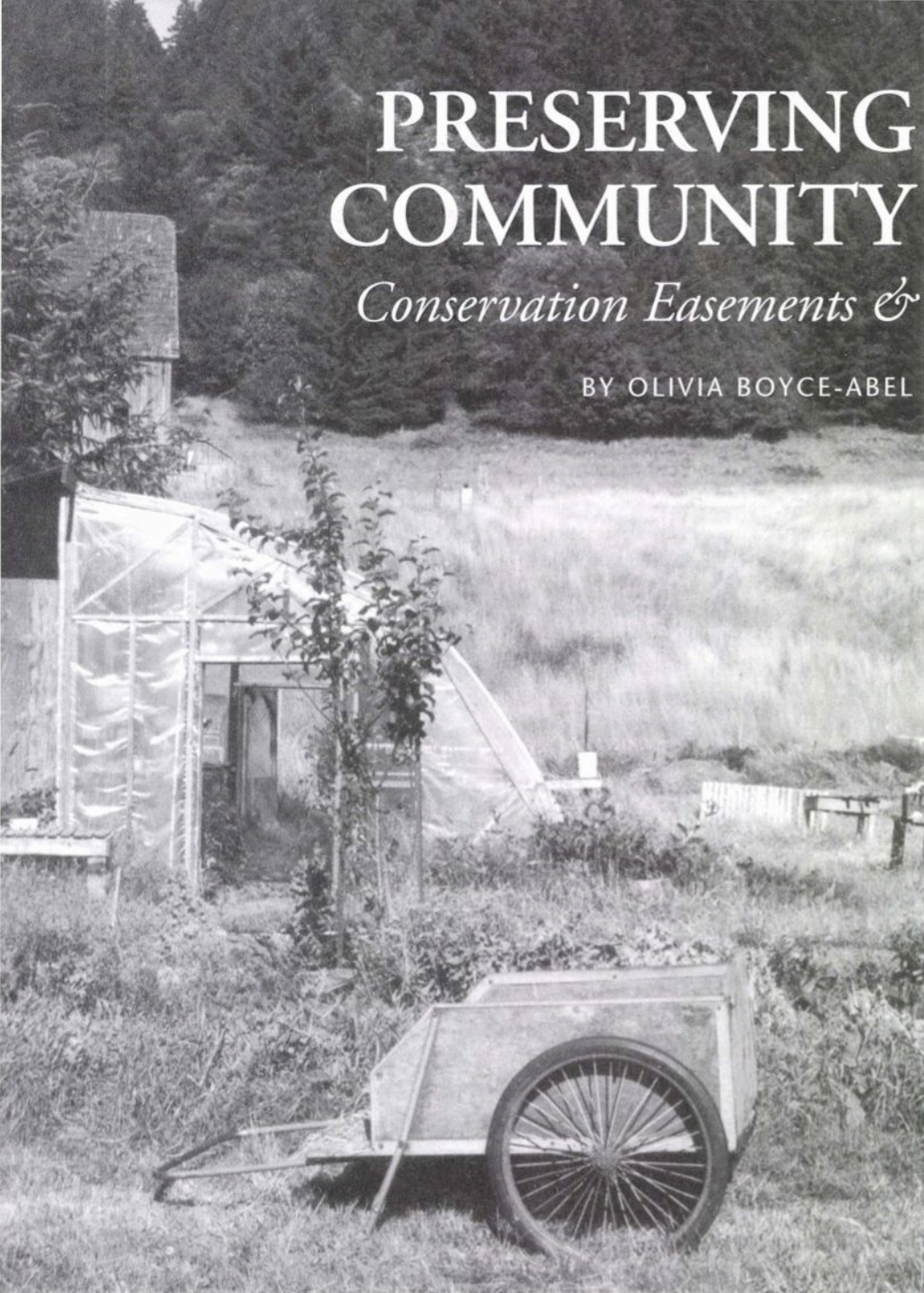
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PRESERVING COMMUNITY LAND

Conservation Easements & Other Tools

BY OLIVIA BOYCE-ABEL



Alpha Farm, Deadwood, Oregon

Of the intentional communities I have either worked with or learned about through other land planning professionals, few have had the structures in place to protect them from tax or zoning challenges, or for when members with equity die, divorce, or move away.

In one farming collective community where I consulted, all members owned the land jointly, either by contributing capital or sweat equity, and their agreement was verbal. If a member died with estate and probate taxes due, how would the rest of the members raise the money? If members left the community needing cash from their share of ownership, how would other members pay them? And since their agreement was verbal, what would happen if different people remembered the agreement differently? I suggested they formalize their agreement in a written contract and place everyone's names on the deed, place conservation easements on the land, have each member set up a living trust (which lower probate costs but not estate taxes), and establish an emergency fund to buy out the share of any members who wanted to leave.

Another time I worked with an environmental education center and community. Their nonprofit organization owned their several adjoining land parcels, and a local land trust organization held conservation easements on one of them. The county tax office, claiming the community wasn't a true nonprofit, assessed them for back property taxes. I advised them to place conservation

IN YOUR COMMUNITY, IF A MEMBER DIES, DIVORCES, or moves on, are you organized so members have enough money to buy out that person's financial interest? As surrounding land becomes increasingly valuable, is your community set up to withstand the temptation to sell or develop part of its land commercially? Would a local zoning change raise your property taxes? Could your community possibly lose its land?

easements on all parcels, which would significantly lower their land values so the county couldn't raise their taxes.

Another example is a large community with property covering several square miles. In this community every member household owned title to their individual parcels, and membership was limited to people who shared the same values and beliefs. This community was susceptible to all the same challenges described above, as well as to the possibility that if some members changed their beliefs over time they might sell their property to new people who didn't share the community's beliefs, or their need to sell might be so great that selling to people who shared the community's beliefs wouldn't be their highest priority. The community was also vulnerable to possible federal anti-discrimination lawsuits if a member selling their property refused the full-price offer of potential buyers because they didn't share the community's beliefs. This community could solve these problems through a legal agreement that would define the community and its members' relationship to it, carefully placed conservation easements, and a document outlining the rights of first refusal (which means the community had the first right to buy a departing member's parcel). My specific recommendation to them was to become a legally chartered club with membership guidelines, to come to an agreement through the consensus process on the mission statement of their community, so all community members would have a clear definition of what being a member meant, thus providing the understanding and framework for future members.

I later heard about a healing and personal growth-oriented community where the on-site landowner, not a member, allowed the community to exist on his land. What would happen when he passed on? Would his heirs want the community to contin-

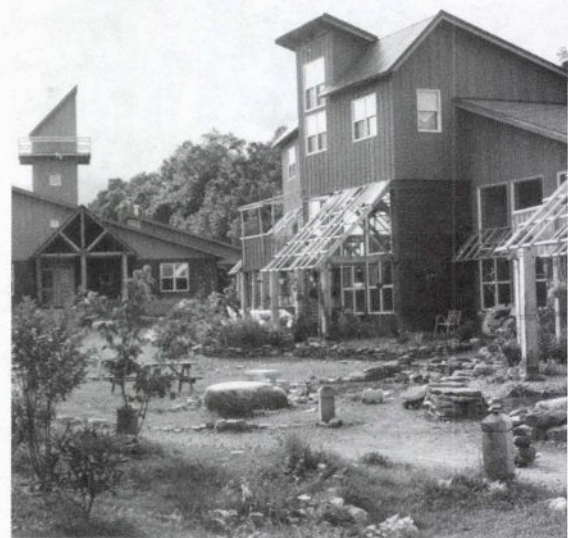
ue on land that had been in their family for four generations? They solved the problem by creating a nonprofit organization which the landowner donated his land to, with a provision that his home would belong to his heirs and their heirs into future generations.

Another example is a large demonstration center for ecological living that offered workshops, classes, and apprenticeships. One couple owned the land and business. Community members, who were also employees of the educational business and taught classes, lived in the center's passive solar houses, yurts, and domes. The owner couple decided to divorce. They needed to split their assets and so sold the property. Although the 600 acres of land, gardens and structures offered an ideal ecovillage infrastructure, the new owner wasn't interested and built condominiums. This outcome could have been avoided if the couple had placed conservation easements on the land in the project's early stages when they were still idealistic and aligned in their marriage, or if they had worked with community members to set up first rights of refusal and a buy-out price, so that if they later needed to sell the land, community members would have the first option to buy the land from them.

How Will You Protect Your Property?

Who holds the title to your community land? Is it one or two of you or is everyone in essence on the title, as tenants-in-common, also called "multiparty ownership"? Many issues are involved when community members own land jointly. Usually each member has differing financial abilities and needs. For some, the community property is their only asset; for others, it may be one of many assets. It is important to plan ahead. As community members change or

they want to move on, their needs differ. Some may be happy to leave their equity in the community until they can be bought out sometime later by incoming members. Others may need cash immediately so they may press for a land sale so they can have the necessary liquidity. And what happens if local property values skyrocket and development surrounds the community? Some members may want to sell off part of the property to help community cash flow; others may be appalled at the idea. Then the whole community would be subject to higher local property taxes as their own property becomes ever more desirable for commercial development. Other financially draining challenges are estate taxes and probate fees when a member dies. While it's crucial to plan



Ecovillage at Ithaca, New York

ahead for these possibilities, many jointly owned communities do not, and subsequently experience the consequences from uncertainty to conflict and lawsuits.

These problems can be largely avoided with skillfully facilitated community meetings, clear communication, careful planning, clear written agreements, and the use of conservation easements. Let's consider some factors in this process.

Estate. This is the term for the total assets a person has at the time of death. It includes real and personal property, cash, and investments, minus any debts.

Estate taxes. Shortly after an individual's death, certain costs of settling the estate are due in cash and are set by law. These include state and federal death taxes. In the United States, each individual is allowed to give away \$675,000 tax free: during their lifetime or as an inheritance for their heirs. (Married couples can jointly give \$1,350,000 tax free.) Thus, only estates worth more than \$675,000 are taxed when someone dies. Estates

any individual annually.) Annual gifting of liquid assets as well as land can lower the value of an individual's estate significantly.

Probate. This is the legal process for transferring money and property to heirs after someone dies.

Probate Fees. Probate administrative fees include attorney's fees, executor's commissions, appraiser's fees, court costs, and funeral expenses. These costs, which vary from state to state, run roughly 4 percent on the first \$15,000, 3 percent on the next \$85,000, 2 percent on the next \$900,000, and 1 percent on any estate over \$1,000,000. An executor is

someone chosen and named in the will to administer the person's estate and distribute assets according to the terms of the will. If an executor has not been appointed in the will, the local probate court determines who should act as an executor and how the estate is distributed.

Living Trust.

This is a trust agreement which remains changeable (revocable) during the per-

son's lifetime. A living trust is similar to a will, except that it avoids probate.

First, worst-case scenario: Let's say Bob and Mary, a married couple, are members of an eight-person community where everyone jointly owns the land. (Bob and Mary could either be tenants-in-common with the other six members or they could be the sole owners who hold the land for the rest.)

After living there 20 years, Bob and Mary die within several months of one another. Bob and Mary have one daughter who has never liked their

lifestyle, and is obviously not interested in taking over their community membership. She's inherited their equity, \$250,000, and wants her cash out now. The community's only financial asset is the property, which has increased in value because of commercial development in the surrounding area. The group has no cash to buy the daughter out. The property is not easily subdividable, so one part can't be sold off. Most likely the daughter would force the community to sell the property to pay her.

If the community had placed conservation easements (*see below*) on the land, their property values would be reduced by about half, and the share owed the daughter would be approximately \$125,000. If they'd then added a buy-out clause to their community agreements, they would have had the option of purchasing any individual member's equity at an agreed upon buy-out value. If they'd created a community savings fund that members contributed to monthly, they could generate the money necessary to buy out any members or members' heirs who wanted to cash out their equity from the property. If money in a community savings fund is invested wisely it can generate sufficient funds for future buyouts. For instance, if a community collects \$3,450 yearly from all members and invests it at 10 percent interest, in 25 years they'll have \$354,049. If they collect \$7,300 yearly and invest it at 10 percent interest in 25 years they'll have \$708,099.

Second scenario. The daughter is attracted to the community and wants to take her parents' place as a member/equity holder, but her parents' estate does not have the cash to pay the probate fees of \$12,300 on her \$250,000 inheritance. (No estate taxes are due since assets are under \$675,000.)

If the community had placed a conservation easement on the property, that would have lowered the value of the daughter's inheritance to



Shannon Farm, Afton, Virginia

worth more than this are taxed at a rate of approximately 37 percent of the remainder over \$675,000. After \$2 million, the estate is taxed at approximately 45 percent of the remainder; and after \$3 million, approximately 55 percent.

In the United States each person may also give away \$10,000 annually to as many people as he or she wishes, tax free. (A married couple may jointly give away \$20,000 to

\$125,000, which in turn would lower any probate fees to \$3,550. Giving the daughter annual gifts of up to \$10,000 could have also lowered Bob and Mary's estate significantly, thus lowering the probate fee. (Combined together they could gift her \$20,000 per year.) However, if Bob and Mary had first created a living trust, their daughter could avoid probate fees altogether.

Regarding the \$10,000 annual gifts, this can be cash or land, gifted as shares to land ownership, or in an outright specific amount of property, with the benefactor's name recorded on the deed. The land must be appraised in order to give the gift. (Some landowners who wish to gift land to their heirs appraise the land in November, then give a

their daughter does want to be a community member. Estate taxes are \$37,000 and probate fees are \$35,000, totaling \$72,000. Neither the estate or the community have the cash to pay these fees. Even though everyone wants to live there, the community must sell the land just to pay estate taxes and probate fees.

If the community had placed a conservation easement, on the property, it would have lowered Bob's and Mary's equity share to \$387,500. No estate taxes would then be due since the estate would be under \$675,000. Probate fees would be \$15,000, not \$35,000. If Bob and Mary had created a living trust, those fees would be reduced to \$7,500. Annual gifting could be used to lower probate even further by gifting land (shares or outright deeded parcels) out of their estate.

Conservation Easements

As these scenarios illustrate, conservation easements can be an important part of preserving a community's land. Having a conservation easement means giving up your rights to develop

the land in specific ways which you determine. The easement goes with the deed and lives in perpetuity. Such an easement can be as general or inclusive as you like. For example, some conservation easements might allow only five houses on a large piece of property, whereas without it (depending on state law), 500 houses might be built. Other conservation easements, might allow agricultural use only in one section of the property, with timber harvests in another section.

Property owners donate a conservation easement or sell it at bargain rates to a local or regional nonprofit land trust organization which holds the easement and, if needed, enforces it. If the owners ever sell the property, the new owners must abide by the easement.

Having a conservation easement reduces property value, since property is often valuable because it can be potentially subdivided and developed. Thus placing a conservation easement on your property reduces its financial value—to county tax assessors, future buyers, and your heirs—and therefore a conservation easement represents a loss of equity which has a cash value attached. Let's say you place such an easement, reducing the value of your property from \$200,000 to \$100,000. If you donate the easement to a land trust organization, you've donated a \$100,000 value. If you sell the easement to them at \$90,000, you've donated a \$10,000 value. A land trust organization usually needs a further donation of money to reimburse them for costs of annually monitoring the conservation easement. With a financially less valuable property your estate tax burden would be lowered significantly. Also, an easement donation provides an income tax deduction for a charitable gift to a nonprofit organization. Generally, it lowers annual property taxes as well.

Let's say your community is organized as a nonprofit, which has title to your property, and let's say no one wants to ever change its current use. Without a conservation easement in place now, future community decision makers (perhaps new members, or the next generation of members), could sell the land to someone who could do anything they wanted with it. A landowner who left his forested land to the Episcopal Church is a case in point. He wanted the church to



Sunrise Ranch, Loveland, Colorado

\$10,000 land gift in December, and another in January of the following year, and thus need only pay an appraiser every two years.) Annual gifts of cash or land can be given through several legal forms that protect the family's financial interests, including a family limited partnership or an irrevocable trust.

Third scenario. Let's say Mary and Bob's equity share in the community was \$775,000 at their death and

preserve the forest and enjoy it in perpetuity. But they wanted to sell his land for development to raise money for church projects, even though everyone knew his wishes. He had made his gift in the days before conservation easements existed.

With an easement on your land, if your community does not continue, then the property is more affordable for the next group to purchase it. (Of course each of you loses the money you would have made by selling the property at market rates.) Easements also make the buyout more manageable for departing members to sell their equity to incoming members. One community I worked with bought their land at a bargain price because the owner had placed conservation easements on the land just before the sale in order to reduce her capital gains taxes. Her foresight saved the community considerable expense.

The beauty and significance of conservation easements, besides financial benefits, is that your land can be maintained in as natural a state as your easement restrictions allow. Thus your community can preserve land for future generations, and contribute to more sustainability on the Earth.

Some people place their entire property in a land trust, or create their own new land trust organization, as some communities have done. While this may be the best option in some circumstances, I

prefer using conservation easements, which are simpler and cost less to set up. If you're interested in land trusts, the Land Trust Alliance can help. (See "Resources.")

Building Agreement About Preserving Community Land

People view land differently. While we may trust our fellow members to uphold the vision and spirit of our community, we also know that people grow and change, and our values regarding land, money, and priorities may change with them. In planning ahead, we reduce the possibility for disagreement later on.

Communities, like families, can have members whose views range from no opposition to development to those who don't want the land developed or changed ever. Just as community members can differ on what "clean" means in their common spaces, they can differ on how best to hold and manage land.

The situation is even more complex because people frequently bring their emotional baggage into community with them. It's wise to act before there's a problem—while there are few external stresses and people's emotions aren't running high. In predetermining your community's course of action for possible transitions later, you pave the way for a smoother community future.

Community members need to agree to how they'll resolve any potential financial challenges brought on by people dying or leaving, as

well as by other issues involving land preservation and use. I strongly recommend using the consensus process, with a facilitator, for making agreements about land and financial matters (even if they normally use a different decision-making method), so that everyone feels part of the process, helps shape the final agreement, and can fully support the final decision.

The timing that I find works best is a series of facilitated community meetings every two or three months over a year. This way members have an opportunity to do their homework between meetings, such as meet with attorneys, accountants, and other professionals, and schedule and get the results of any needed environmental assessments, appraisals, or surveys. Meetings scheduled every two or three months maintain the decision-making momentum. I recommend limiting participation to members only. Land trust officials, accountants, attorneys, and other advisors should only attend the part of a meeting where they give information, then leave so the group can discuss matters freely.

Engage an outside professional for these meetings. Like families, communities can reach a more thoughtful and solid decision about the future of their property when meeting sessions are professionally facilitated or mediated by someone with no vested interest in the outcome. It's impossible for a community facilitator to be truly impartial. With the level of emotion that can arise in these discussions, if a community member acts as facilitator some members would no doubt feel they'd been treated unfairly and not buy into the chosen solution.

I recommend that a good professional facilitating this topic conduct confidential interviews with all the parties involved before the first meeting to determine how close or dissimilar are the views within the

Resources: Conservation Easements & Tax Planning

Land Trust Alliance, 3331 H St. NW, #400, Washington DC, 20005; 202-638-4725; www.lta.org.

Land Trust Alliance. Conservation Options: A Landowner's Guide. Land Trust Alliance, 1993.

Preserving Family Lands. Stephen Small. Landowner Planning Center, 1992.

Preserving Family Lands: Book II: Planning Strategies for the Future. Stephen Small. Landowner Planning Center, 1997.

Beyond Death and Taxes. Gregory Englund. Estate Planning Press, 1993.

group. I recommend that whomever facilitates also has mediation training, as the subject can bring up so many emotional issues. Making sure that everyone is heard, getting at the underlying issues and concerns, using active listening, and other tools of clear communication are crucial for helping communities come to solid agreement.

Finding a Solution for Your Community

You can decide now how to preserve your community property. Depending on what you want, you could use a conservation easement to dedicate one area to open space, for example, and one to housing, another to agriculture and others to woodlots or wetlands. While zoning and property taxes can change, with a conservation easement, property taxes usually should not rise. You have other options as well. You could set aside one part of your land as an "insurance policy" against future needs by designating it as a section that could be sold at a later time for a cash infusion, or as a future site on which to build additional housing. You could contribute to a monthly fund dedicated to buying out the shares or equity of departing members. Your community needn't get caught by unexpected changes. Plan in advance, protect your land, and enjoy life in your community for a good long time. Ω

Through Boyce-Abel Associates and Family Lands Consulting, Olivia Boyce-Abel offers counseling, facilitation, and mediation to help individuals, families, and communities nationwide transfer and preserve their lands. She has lived, worked, and/or taught at Long Branch Environmental Center, Mother Earth News Ecovillage, Esalen Institute, and the UCSC Farm & Garden. She lives in Santa Cruz, California. 831-469-9223; boyceabel@earthlink.net.

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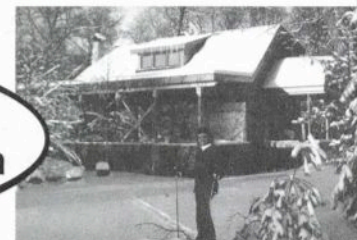
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STUDENT CO-OPS

What I Really Learned in College

AFTER TWO years in the dorms as a student at UC Berkeley, I was ready for something different. The camaraderie of dorm life appealed to me, though I felt a bit stilted by the institutional atmosphere, the cafeteria food, and the lack of control we had over our living situation. I wasn't interested in an apartment; it was fun living with a bunch of other people and I figured I had the rest of my life to try living alone. Nor could I picture myself in a sorority. So, I moved into a student co-op.

Unlike in intentional communities, the majority of students moving into co-ops aren't necessarily seeking community. Most just need a place to live, and co-ops draw them because of cheap rent or the fun environment. Nevertheless, a level of community *does* evolve in most student co-op houses. I have fond memories of my 52-person house: our long discussions over dinner, hanging out in the living room, watching the sunset over the Golden Gate Bridge from our porch, and late-night snacks in the dining room. At

FROM THE GUEST EDITOR • *DENIZ TUNCER*

I Learned More in the Co-op Than in My College Classes



meetings we worked out our differences and decided what we wanted for the house; at work days we repaired and maintained it. We threw great parties and hosted a special "theme" dinner every

semester (I thought our cross dressing and jungle themes were the best). We organized group trips, such as when 15 of us backpacked together in Big Basin. We weren't always one big happy family though—some people in my co-op were decidedly uncooperative (one person thought it funny to put a few bits of meat in the vegetarian meal option).

While you'll occasionally find graduate students on the 10-year plan, the average student co-ops lives in the house for a few years and then moves on. Communitarians may wonder how you can have continuity when no one sticks around for long. Though turnover poses certain challenges, student co-ops have done a good job of providing continuity year after year. The people may change, but the processes for getting the work done and making decisions remain mostly the same. However, the character of the house often

The Co-op Principles: The Rochdale Weavers' Gift

In 1844 a group of weavers in Rochdale, England, created a self-help organization to provide themselves jobs, cheaper goods, and more affordable housing. They each owned an equal part of the business, bought consumer goods at volume discounts, and bought or rented housing as a group. In effect they created community, since they'd banded together for their common interests, and had to cooperate to maintain their benefits.

They were not the first group to employ the cooperative model, but they established a set of principles that have guided the modern cooperative movement. Though the International Cooperative Alliance has since

modified the principles (most recently in 1995), they are based on the vision of the Rochdale pioneers.

1. **Voluntary and open membership.** (People of any gender, religion, or political affiliation can join.)
2. **Democratic member control.**
3. **Member economic participation.**
4. **Autonomy and independence.**
5. **Education, training, and information.** (Includes continued member education about what a co-op is and how it works.)
6. **Cooperation among cooperatives.**
7. **Concern for community.**

—D.L.C.

changes with each incoming group of students. Though some co-ops have created a strong sense of community identity for themselves, more commonly, a co-op may be more cohesive in some years, less cohesive in others.

There is no "typical" student co-op. As far as size goes, they range from a small four-person house to a co-op system of 1,300 students living in many different houses and apartments. Co-ops can live in houses of all sizes, as well as apartment buildings, dorm-style buildings, or even housing for families. Community living really flourishes in the house-based co-ops though, since sharing chores and meals and making collective decisions has a way of really bringing people together. The smaller co-op houses can be almost like little families; larger houses offer a different level of community. Some co-ops are owned by the students; others rent from the university or a private landlord. Some student co-ops admit only students; others aren't as strict. And a number of "community co-ops" have many students living in them and share similarities with student co-ops.

Not all student co-ops provide housing. The co-op at Oberlin College, for instance, provides some housing but is primarily a dining co-op. And many co-ops are retail outlets such as bookstores, bike co-ops, credit unions, and food co-ops. What unites all student co-ops is their adherence to the cooperative principles, which include democratic control by the members (and often ownership). I should point out too, that co-ops are by no means the only type of community on campus, as dorms, fraternities, soror-

ities, Bible study groups, and various clubs all offer a sense of community, sometimes stronger than that found in co-ops.

Many co-op alums, myself included, believe they learned more in co-ops than in college classes. Though some co-ops may hire paid staff, in most the students do the work, honing their cooking, cleaning, gardening, and maintenance skills. They learn about meeting dynamics, group decision making, financial issues, and how to deal with conflict. Living with others teaches them tolerance, expands their horizons, gives them the opportunity to take on leadership



Co-ops learn to cook, clean, repair and maintain their houses, and make decisions cooperatively. At Lothlorien, Berkeley.

positions. And it shows how a bunch of people with limited resources can band together to get things done. (I think I probably chose a double major and stayed a fifth year just so I could continue living in my co-op!)

College is a time when people are open to new ideas. Living in a student co-op can inspire them to consider what kind of lifestyle they'll want after graduating. They can discover they like having regular daily interaction with others in their living environment, that there might be more options out there than the "American Dream" of a nuclear family in a single-family home in the suburbs.

If you know nothing about student co-ops when

beginning this issue, get ready to be delighted, inspired, and entertained. Start at the beginning with "I Was a Teenaged Homeowner" or dip in anywhere. We *guarantee* you'll enjoy the read. Ω



There's no "typical" co-op. Some are huge; others have just a few members.

While a student at UC Berkeley in the early 1990s, Guest Editor Deniz Tuncer lived at Andres Castro Arms, a 52-person student co-op house in the USCA. She worked for the National Association of Housing Cooperatives in Washington, D.C., (an association of non-student housing co-ops) for five years, the last three as director of publications.

While there she lived in two different small cooperatively run houses. Deniz recently moved back to California, and currently serves as president of NASCO.

NASCO: Building the Cooperative Movement

NASCO, the North American Students of Cooperation, serves student cooperatives throughout the United States and Canada by providing operational assistance, fostering networking among co-ops, and promoting co-ops to the general public. Through regular workshops conducted at member co-ops and at its annual conference, the organization helps develop leadership skills and provides pertinent information to its co-op members. (The most recent annual conference, attended by nearly 400 members, featured a track of workshops on community living sponsored by the Fellowship for Intentional Community, publishers of this magazine.) NASCO also facilitates an internship network that matches cooperative organizations with co-op interns for the summer.

NASCO also helps develop new student cooperatives at campuses where none currently exist, primarily through three affiliated organizations to help the student co-op movement expand. The first, the Campus Cooperative Development Corporation (CCDC), creates more cooperative housing on or near college campuses by acting as a development catalyst. CCDC helps interested groups of students find properties for sale, arranges financing, and assists them in designing cooperative organizations.

The second, NASCO Properties, counters the difficul-

ties campus groups often have securing financing by purchasing buildings and leasing them to new or expanding cooperatives. Banks and other lenders generally feel more comfortable lending to an established organization like NASCO Properties, with its proven track record of development and management, than directly to a new student co-op. NASCO Properties also assists with many co-op management tasks, such as guaranteeing that property taxes, mortgages, and insurance are paid.

To help fund the purchase of new cooperatives, CCDC and the Cooperative Development Foundation (an affiliate of the National Cooperative Business Association) established a third affiliated organization, the Kagawa Fund, named after a Japanese missionary who inspired the formation of many campus cooperatives. Funded primarily by existing campus co-ops (with an initial \$50,000 in seed money provided by co-ops in Japan), the Kagawa Fund acts as a revolving loan fund for new campus co-op development.

For more information about NASCO or any of its affiliates, call 734-663-0889 or visit www.umich.edu/~nasco. The Web site includes a searchable guide with links to many campus cooperative organizations.

—D.T.



Madison's Lothlórien community co-op: students, grad students, and non-student "elders."

I WAS A TEENAGE HOMEOWNER

BY AMANDA WERHANE

AT THE TENDER AGE OF 19, I BECAME THE proud owner of a beautiful lake-front property. That's when I moved into Lothlórien* Cooperative in Madison, Wisconsin, one of then-nine houses in the Madison Community Co-op (MCC) system.

Entering into community living as a college student provided a practical education in democratic self-rule, feminism, and collective ownership, even as I pursued an academic education at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

As a kid growing up in the suburbs, I had found few outlets for democratic expression, few role models for a budding feminist, and little exposure to alternative socioeconomic systems. It had become increasingly frustrating to me that I had so little say in matters central to my life, such as education and housing. Moving away for college, I was eager to be "on my own," but admittedly rather clueless as to how to do it.

I spent freshman year in a dormitory, and come

* Not the same Lothlórien co-op as in the University Students Cooperative Association system, described in "It's a Magical Life," p. 41, and "Finding Our Way Home," p. 45.



LEFT: The day the heat went out.

ABOVE: Co-op living in a lakefront castle.

springtime, faced the challenge of finding myself a new home by semester's end. I had no intention of moving back to my parents' house, because in my mind I was an independent adult—and I looked forward to summer in the city. Besides, I could just hear them saying, "This is our house and as long as you live here, you'll follow our rules. When you have your own house, you can make your own rules." In fact, it was just that to which I aspired.

At that point a classmate happened to invite me to dinner at a place with a magical name: *Lothlórien*. I had no idea what to expect of this co-op named for J.R.R. Tolkien's elf paradise in *The Lord of the Rings*. What I found was an intriguing lakefront castle, zucchini parmesan, and the funky community I would call home for the next four and a half years.

As a teenager at Lothlórien ("Loth"), I was one of the youngest members. Remarkably, I found that I had an equal say in the operations of the co-op—equal to my fellow undergrads, equal to the grad students among us, equal to those on government aid, and equal to the non-student members of all ages. In weekly house meetings, we made community decisions by consensus, seeking to

incorporate the needs and desires of each individual into decisions everyone could live with. For the first time, as a young person, I had a voice in decisions that directly affected my life! We created our own annual budget, set our own rent, and deliberated over renovations, major purchases, house dynamics, and policies.

This kind of tangible, direct democracy was a completely new experience for me. While it took time to learn the basics of facilitation and meeting process, active listening and conflict resolution, I had as much opportunity to do so as anyone else in the co-op. And the more I learned, the more confidence I gained. If someone had told me before I moved into Loth that I possessed leadership skills, I would have been quite skeptical. Yet over the years I grew to take responsibility as house treasurer, and later, MCC Cooperative Education Coordinator, then Co-President, and served a term as a board member of North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO).

At Loth I was surrounded by a variety of female role models, and a cooperative community that cared about gender equity. We took care to maintain a roughly 50-50 gender balance, elect women to traditionally male

"Community Co-ops and Student Co-ops"

IDENTIFYING AS "COMMUNITY CO-OPS" rather than "student co-ops," Madison Community Co-op (MCC) houses attract members of varying ages and occupations, including students, workers, parents with children, and people receiving government aid. While at least half of us were students, and housing co-op periods at some co-ops catered to the academic year,

the focus was on providing affordable collective living in an egalitarian setting for the community at large. MCC was founded by existing independent student co-ops in 1968 as the Madison Association of Student Cooperatives, but changed its name in 1971 as a result of restructuring. The city of Madison has had a long history of student cooperation, with the first hous-

ing co-ops providing food and lodging for the growing female student population of the 1910s. Eighty years later, only a handful of student-only co-ops exist, while two dozen community co-ops and two cohousing communities comprise the greater part of the cooperative housing scene in Madison.

—A.W.



For the first time, I had a voice in decisions that directly affected my life!

positions such as treasurers and maintenance workers, and hold meetings to discuss gender dynamics within the house. It wasn't a feminist utopia, but it was a place that listened to the concerns of women. Most important to me was the chance to live, work, and speak honestly with older women who had already experienced the issues in life that I now faced or might someday face. We discussed career choices; body image and beauty; relationships; birth control and sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy, abortion and adoption; sexual harassment and self-defense; sexism; and eco-feminism. My female companions were activists, artists, biologists, doctoral candidates, mothers, political campaign staff members, musicians, and world travelers. It was a safe space to shed habits I'd picked up over the years in order to conform to a concept of femininity to which I no longer subscribed.

Together, the 30 or so of us made a community. We were each responsible in many ways for the collective well-being of our physical and social surroundings. Just because I was young and crazy didn't mean I could regularly flake out on my dish shift or forget to pay the telephone bill without facing the consequences. I gave my time and energy to the co-op, and the co-op provided me with shelter, food, companionship, clothing (thanks to an ever-burgeoning "free store"), and life skills.

Older co-ops, some of whom had been members for six or more years, provided continuity and stability to the community. I respected the systems they had helped to create, the traditions they'd carried on. I also appreciated not having to constantly "re-create the wheel," as the organizational memory provided by long-term members helped us to avoid some problems and recover more quickly from others. Even new members sometimes came to us from other cooperatives or intentional communities across the country, offering multiple perspectives on the issues we faced together.

In this society, it's far more radical for a person in her 30s, 40s, and beyond to live collectively than it is for a col-

lege student—it can take deep dedication to the concepts of collective ownership and communitarianism. Seniority didn't gain them any advantage at Lothlórien when it came to room lotteries, "workjob" (chore) sign-up, or use of common areas. Now that I'm a bit older myself, I admire these folks more than ever. It can be exhausting and frustrating to live with students, as they stress out over exams and papers and experiment with their newfound freedom from parental constraints. Of course, not all young people are students (a fact which many seem to forget) and our membership also included those enrolled in the "school of life" rather than an educational institution.

While I wouldn't trade my experience as a student in a community co-op for anything, I am also a supporter of student-only cooperatives. The factors which drive their formation—housing costs and availability, proximity to campus, as well as the camaraderie and support of fellow students—are compelling forces. I support the further integration of student co-ops into community co-op networks. In this model, individual co-ops form around various interests, joining together as members of an umbrella community. Within the 11-house MCC system, for example, one co-op seeks to attract international members, one has a Jewish focus, one houses only women, one provides subsidies and childcare to parents with children, and one identifies as an activist house. Other urban community co-op networks in the United States include the Solar Community Housing Association in Davis, California, and the Community of Urbana-Champaign Cooperative Housing (COUCH) in Illinois. I believe that uniting student-only co-ops and community co-ops in such co-op networks would combine the best of both worlds. Ω

Amanda Werhane has since lived in various co-ops and collectives in Madison, Wisconsin and Oakland, California. She and her partner, who met as fellow "Elves" at Lothlórien, are currently between communities.



Chi Theta Chi members get away for their biannual canoe trip.

COLIN RITTER

CAN'T GET AWAY FROM THE COMMUNE

From Hog Farm to Stanford Co-op

BY BIASHA MITCHELL

EVERY NIGHT AROUND SIX O'CLOCK (OR 6:20 IF the rice isn't quite done), the dinner bell rings throughout our house. The babbling of hungry young people and the last beats of a passionate drummer mingle with the smell of spices as proud cooks set the night's dinner creation on the table. The line moves forward with clinking dishes, excited words of praise, and an occasional attempt to decipher the contents of each dish.

I move easily through the line joking about the random bags of ice strapped to various parts of my body, the mark of another invigorating afternoon of rugby practice. One of my housemates sees me dig into the meat option.

"Aren't you a vegetarian?" he asks, perplexed.

"No," I reply with a smile, "Do you think I'm vegetarian because I grew up in a commune?"

The truth is that I did grow up in a commune and, no, I am not a vegetarian. Many people hold ideas—true and false—about me. As a freshman, I was the girl with the strange family. Now that I live in a student co-op, some four years later, I am something of an in-house celebrity, simply because I was raised at the famous Hog Farm.

My childhood home has been around for a while. We held our 35th-year family reunion this past October. Founded during the '60s, the Hog Farm is most well-known for running the free kitchen (among other things) at Woodstock. Our most famous member is '60s icon Wavy Gravy (a.k.a. Hugh Romney). Today, the Hog Farm is split between a large house in Berkeley, California, and, as Wavy refers to it, "Our Hog Heaven on Earth," a 500-acre ranch in northern California. Although I was born in Berkeley, I moved with my parents and brother to the ranch when I was six. Until I went away to college, I spent my childhood exploring the Hog Farm's glorious haven of rolling hills, majestic oaks, and pungent pines. Ever since I can remember I have shared dinner with 20 other people of all ages. At the farm, family groups and individual members live in their own small houses scattered around a central kitchen house. The adults share cooking duties equally, one person cooking for everyone else each night. Hog Farmers now all have their own vocations and incomes. They are doctors, engineers, organic gardeners, artists,

My senior year I decided to live in a co-op for the sake of my own happiness.

carpenters, rock and roll promoters, and parents. As a group we do not follow a single creed or doctrine—religious or otherwise—except a deep commitment to living together as a community.

As a second generation Hog Farmer, not only have I shared dinner with these people, but a wealth of family relations which I continue to increasingly appreciate. Growing

up with 20 parents was not easy, but I wouldn't trade this experience for the world. Hog Farmers all came to my school plays and graduations; they all know about my first love, as well as my triumphs and defeats in sports and school. Likewise, weddings, funerals, and birthdays of fellow Hog Farmers are important communal events. Thanksgiving and Christmas, as in any large family, are elaborate affairs not to be missed, boasting on the order of 20 pumpkin pies and two large turkeys. Above all, the Hog Farm has taught me invaluable lessons about the difficulties of living with other people and the importance of community.

When I first arrived at Stanford University as a petrified freshman



COLIN RITTER



BIASHA MITCHELL

ABOVE: The annual Naked Shower.

LEFT: Co-ops enjoy one of the house's many parties.

from the country, I lived in a dorm full of young people with completely different backgrounds from mine. While most kids arrive at college and discover new concepts or experiences like freedom, alcohol, and sex, the new concepts I discovered were strict religion and the political right.

I am now in my final year of college and have found my niche on this campus. I live in Chi Theta Chi, the only student-owned co-op on the Stanford campus (the others are owned by the University). Chi Theta Chi is a delight-filled, co-ed, musical community of 35 some-odd souls who share duties of cooking, cleaning, and maintaining our large, rambling house at the corner of Campus Drive and Alvarado Way. Unlike other campus student houses, we are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the house, as well as its long-term planning and capital improvements. Our prominent location is a constant headache for university officials who hungrily wait for the day they can tear our house down and replace it with “proper” university housing.

Surprisingly, after escaping my obligatory freshman dorm experience I chose not to live in a student co-op like Chi Theta Chi. (In fact, many thought I chose to rebel against my hippie past when in my first year I began dating a Stanford football player and my best friend was a member of Navy ROTC.) The truth is I didn't choose a co-op because I didn't want to limit my college

Despite my best efforts to move away from my roots, I couldn't ignore the call to community.

friends and acquaintances to people just like myself. To me, college was a time to meet new people, to experience new things. At first I held this idealistic vision of a multicultural, multibackground college experience in which everyone would transcend individual differences. However, I

was soon disappointed when I saw that all the different cultural and ethnic groups sat together almost exclusively at meals and all the fraternities were comprised of sporty white men.

I don't believe I made a poor choice in joining the “mainstream campus” when I spent the next two years living in regular houses and dorms. I wouldn't trade the friends I met there for anything (who include two strict Mormons, a woman from a fairly traditional Chinese family, a fashion model who uses a wheelchair, and a Hispanic woman from a large family in New Mexico.) And while they remain dear to my heart, living in traditional student housing was difficult. Lacking the sense of community I was accustomed to, I found myself extremely frustrated when other students made messes they didn't have to clean up because a woman hired by the University cleaned the house every day. I never talked to my dorm neighbors, and they never even said a word of thanks to our hired chef. Alternatively, when I visited the student co-ops on campus, I would feel an extreme sense of comfort in

You Can Take It With You

BY TONY SIRNA

When I first moved into a student co-op at Stanford University it was not the first step I had taken off the beaten path. I was already on my way to an alternative lifestyle, but at Synergy co-op I was introduced to many new ideas that changed the course of my life, especially the concept of community.

I moved into Synergy in 1991, my sophomore year. Like many college students I was a sponge for new ideas—open and willing to explore. Within the first year or so of moving to the co-op I had become a vegetarian, a feminist, and a social activist, not to mention a baker, gardener, accountant, and dishwasher. Day and night I was entertained, supported, and challenged to grow in so many new directions. I learned the power of sharing my home with so many wonderful people.

Over the three years that I lived there I fell in love with the place (I even considered going to graduate school just

to stay there longer). I learned a lot about community living—and about life. For example:

- Vegan cooking keeps both the vegans and the vegetarians happy, and when people are happy about food they're happy about the community.
- If you're cooking for large groups you better have a lot of onions and a lot of help.
- Nothing draws people together in one place like freshly baked bread in the kitchen.
- Consensus decision making is all about communication, and communication is all about listening—to yourself and to others.
- Having a garden, even a little one, tells you about a community's heart.
- You can get a lot more done working together than working apart.

After graduation as I was looking at many possible avenues for social change work, I knew that regardless of what I chose, community life was a given. I knew that the magical time of my student co-op experience was not one



Everyone buses their own dishes after dinner.

the real spirit of community that pervaded them.

So my senior year I decided I had to live in a co-op just for the sake of my own happiness, even though it was difficult not to live with some of my friends in regular student housing. Currently in my second year at

Chi Theta Chi, I love participating in the co-op community and have taken on the responsibilities of a House Manager. At the same time, I also appreciate the difficulties of co-op living.

In Chi Theta Chi, unlike in my former living situations, when I

mention my Hog Farm background I get interesting questions instead of blank stares. I find that in many ways, living in a student co-op is similar to living at the Hog Farm. Here we also share the responsibilities of cooking and keeping the house clean and maintained, and we are a group of individuals committed to living together in a community.

At the Hog Farm, dinner is an important time to gather together, unwind, and check in with one another. Conversation can range from "How was Gabriel's soccer game?" to heated political debate. At Chi Theta Chi, while we're three times the number of people, dinner is also an important time to communicate and check in. But the community gathering starts long before dinner.

Cook crews begin at 3:30 in the afternoon and dinner is served at six. The head cook is in charge of planning the menu and guiding the harmony of the meal's creation. However, this process is far more organic, with input from all four members of the cook crew and any

I wanted to look back on nostalgically but rather live for the rest of my life.

And so I threw my lot in with a group of friends from Synergy planning something we called an "Eco-town," a demonstration of radical sustainable living. From these original talks and planning sessions at Synergy grew Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, the rural community in Missouri where I now live. Living in Synergy had shown us that community would be a vibrant part of our future lives as well as an essential tool in our ecological activism.

It's been five years since my graduation and Dancing Rabbit just celebrated its third anniversary on the land, with three of us from Synergy here still. I'm amazed at the activities we did at Synergy that we still do now at Dancing Rabbit—from the cooking rotation, to cleaning house together, to snapping our fingers to indicate agreement during consensus meetings. When we first moved here we tried a dozen different ways to split up the cooking and cleaning chores but eventually settled on a system quite similar to Synergy's. Not surprising, considering the stu-

dent co-op had 25 years to figure that one out. Little bits of Synergy culture have survived and evolved here at Dancing Rabbit, enough so that when our first intern who had lived at Synergy arrived here she felt right at home.

It's been a long road from the 40-person Stanford student co-op to rural ecovillage of 10–12 people (so far!) in northeastern Missouri. And if I thought I learned much about life in Synergy, it's nothing compared to what I've learned living here. It's almost as if my life in a student co-op was an introductory course in community, and three years of ecovillage living later I've completed an intermediate course. I'm sure that in a few more years of community living I'll feel like I'm in graduate school. But it all started in my student co-op, an experience I wouldn't trade for anything. Ω

Tony Sirna is a cofounder of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in northeast Missouri. He lives in a strawbale home with other members of Skyhouse, an egalitarian, income-sharing group. He can be reached at One Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563, or tony@ic.org.

random passers-by. Last night, for example, our head cook decided to make Chinese dumplings. What at first seemed to be a harmless, tasty meal, turned into the daunting task of making 600 one-inch hand-shaped dumplings! As the six o'clock hour quickly approached and the pile of uncooked, doughy dumplings refused to grow, we had to call in backup. Every curious on-looker or co-op resident who dared enter the kitchen to search for soy

dumpling-makings. The piles began to grow and we soon had enough dumplings to feed an army of hungry Thetans.

While it might be a little simplistic to suggest that community revolves around food, our meals have remarkable power. I have seen this phenomenon both at the Hog Farm and Theta Chi. Work is also extremely important, and our co-op holds several work weekends throughout the year. It is incredible to see people

working together to make things they never dreamed possible. If we need someone to build a spice rack in the kitchen or repair the shutters on the side of the house, we'll always find someone who knows about carpentry or power tools, or even rock climbing to scale the side of the house. At the Hog Farm, we put our collective energies together in similar ways. Most notable is our annual Hog Farm Labor Day "Pignic," a two-day Woodstock-esque rock-and-roll concert that requires an immense pooling of our individual energies for the benefit of the collective whole. And we put on a great party while we're at it!

While Chi Theta Chi is a close community of well-intentioned people, frustration is a real and frequently experi-

enced emotion. This is, perhaps, the greatest similarity I find between the Hog Farm and Theta Chi. When someone doesn't do his or her part, it impacts the entire community. I think if the Hog Farm had a motto or ideology, "Wash your own dish!" would be it. In Theta Chi I get familiar feelings

of frustration when people forget to clean up after themselves or neglect to show up for their assigned job. At the Hog Farm I learned that living with other people is not easy. First, it requires a heightened level of consciousness about one's actions and how they impact other members of the community. To me, washing my knife and cutting board is simply part of the process of making food. I feel this consciousness is something I bring with me to the co-op. I get easily frustrated with others who are struggling to reach this basic understanding of community living, an understanding it has taken me 22 intensive years at the Hog Farm to reach.

Living in a student co-op like Theta Chi will never be exactly like living at the Hog Farm. Theta Chi is a magical community of virtually everyone in the same age group that reinvents itself every year and even every summer. This feeling of transcendence is very tangible. People are always coming and going, and I find this particularly difficult. The Hog Farm is my family, a multi-age group of individuals who maintain long-term, pan-generational commitments to one another.

Above all, by living at Chi Theta Chi, I have learned that, despite my best efforts to move away from my roots, I could not ignore the call to community. It's what I've been taught my whole life, and it makes sense. Ω

Biasha Mitchell, 22, is a Master's student in Latin American Studies at Stanford, focusing on conservation and community development, particularly in the Peruvian Amazon. She plays for the Stanford Women's Rugby team, loves to travel, and enjoys staying home at the Hog Farm and riding horses.



BIASHA MITCHELL

Making music is important to the Chi Theta Chi house.

milk in the fridge became a potential pair of hands. Our crafty questions, "Hey, do you like *dumplings*?" were quickly deciphered by our innocent housemates. Skeptical at first, we soon had 10 people of all colors, shapes, and sizes laughing and joking around the mounds of





MATT BLOWERS

IT'S A MAGICAL LIFE

BY TED STERLING

IN THE FALL OF 1998, I RODE UP TO THE middle of northern California in one of two cars of elves from Lothlorien,* a student co-op house in the USCA (University Students Cooperative Association) co-op system in Berkeley, California. We elves were journeying to the Fellowship for Intentional Community's Art of Community conference held at Christ Church of the Golden Rule, an intentional community in Willits.

My three years at Lothlorien had convinced me without any doubt that I wanted to live in community for the rest of my life, and that my ideal community would look and feel a lot like Lothlorien. The house is an oasis in Berkeley's otherwise vast and impersonal student setting, where high turnover is endemic.

The Art of Community conference inspired faith in

* Not the same Lothlorien co-op in the Madison Community Co-op system, described in "I Was a Teenage Homeowner," p. 33.

me that community is indeed possible, that thousands of people all over North America and abroad actively work at it every day. Even more than that, though, I returned with a profound appreciation for my home. Lothlorien, after 25 years, still attracts those committed

My three years at Lothlorien had convinced me that I wanted to live in community for the rest of my life.

to cooperative living and envelops all who pass through it in the nurturing field of its unique traditions. Where many student co-ops struggle to create a lasting identity, Lothlorien succeeds, persisting as an entity unto itself, where the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.

It may be the way each newcomer gains introduction to Lothlorien: most elves eagerly show visitors around the house, pausing before each mural as though remembering a magical moment spent in its presence. We can't help betraying the common feeling that the physical space is far more than a shell for the students within. There's the haunted staircase, where it is said one may encounter the ghost of a young woman on quiet afternoons when the light is just right. At the end of the hall on one of the top floors, a side passage leads to a drawbridge, across which sits a treehouse perched halfway up our redwood tree overlooking San Francisco Bay—

dreamed of and built by an elf of years past. Every other part of the house seems to possess its own story, too, and almost every elf could tell you that story, or a variation on it. We seem to preserve our own oral tradition at Lothlorien, passed on from each student "generation" to the next, and added to by the inspiration of those of us who live here along the way.

Early each semester our 55 members gather in the living room by firelight for Initiation: we introduce ourselves to each other and to the house, and pass on our history, lore, and stories to each new generation of elves. Our name Lothlorien, and referring to ourselves as elves, come from J.R.R. Tolkien's description of the mystical home of Galadriel and the other elves in the *Lord of the Rings*, a passage always read at Initiation.

The house has its own history as well. By firelight we describe its different incarnations: first as two private homes (there are actually two houses, united by a courtyard), then as a sorority and fraternity, and lastly, in the '60s, as the home of the One World Family commune. The commune's story always piques our collective imagi-

nation, perhaps because we seem to share more than a little in common: for example, we're a vegetarian house; they ran a vegetarian restaurant on Telegraph Avenue. They were a community with a mystical philosophy and some supposedly wild gatherings; we're also a community



Author Ted Sterling bakes for a the co-op's 25th-year reunion.

with uncommon, if disparate, beliefs, and some decidedly uninhibited gatherings.

At Initiation, we explain the origins of some of those gatherings, and the legends of our sauna and hot tub—the latter a giant sewer pipe end rescued by some enterprising elves with a forklift. As the evening slowly fades, Initiation concludes with the passing of chalices fashioned from red bell peppers, each filled with carrot juice. We eat and drink of these as the story of our two house symbols unfolds: the original carrot held aloft by a fist, the image of which graces our homemade T-shirts, was at one point thought too phallic, so the red pepper was added as a symbol of feminine power. With our heads full of these collective memories, we leave Initiation prepared for another amazing semester.

Undoubtedly more traditions emanate from our kitchen than anywhere else. We are the only house in the USCA united by a culinary theme, and we daily pour all our creative energies into vegetarian meals. Everything we can make for ourselves, we do, and since 1998 we've done so with all organic ingredients. My first



ABOVE: Sunset over the Bay from south house roof.

LEFT: Spring outdoor brunch, where (cheap) champagne flows.

BELOW: Annual Food Orgy.



Lothlorien workshift role was Yogurt Encourager, and I was often joined as I made our yogurt by the Granola, Hummus, Salsa, and Bean Cooks, not to mention the Soymilk Cow.

Together each week we provide the substance of all the elfin meals. Naked Pizza erupts from the kitchen some Fridays, and for days prior to our most legendary tradition, Food Orgy, we all create the endless trays of fruit,

vegetables, and other finger foods that we feed each other throughout the party. This Bacchanalian festival is completed with bottomless jugs of wine. There are only two rules as you dance the night away: “No Utensils” and “No Feeding Yourselfs” (although “No Shoes” is also commonly suggested). All of which makes for great fun when the chocolate fondue emerges from the kitchen late at night.

Similarly, when on a weeknight during midterms you hear chants of, “Pudding, Pudding, Joy, Joy!” outside your room, you can expect to find a tiny, padded, waterproofed basement room full of naked elves and a couple hundred gallons of cornstarch pudding all mixed together—enter if you dare. As you might guess, these kinds of celebrations require a familiar atmosphere where we all feel comfortable with each other—otherwise they just wouldn’t work.

Truth be told, Lothlorien is not all revelry and chocolate hand-prints on the dining room ceiling. We do spend many afternoons lingering in the kitchen while the cooks create the evening’s shared meal, and numerous late nights procrastinating in the noble endeavor to decide which are more spirited: the food request sheets in the kitchen or the ongoing debates in the house journal in the foyer. But at most hours of the day you can also spot elves cleaning dishes, scrubbing bathrooms, sorting mail, doing maintenance or house-improvement projects, and completing the other workshifts that keep the house running. There are traditions even here: once, while still a young elf, after I scrubbed dishes a long-time resident approached me and said, simply, “Thanks for washing!” I never forgot that simple courtesy and tried always to pass it on.

Perhaps the greatest labors of love at Lothlorien are our consensus-based weekly house meetings. Meetings are not required, and have occasionally run six hours or more over tricky issues, but attendance is always good. Once the new elf learns that his or her voice will always be

**Lothlorien
is not all
revelry and
chocolate
hand-
prints on
the
dining
room
ceiling.**

heard and factored into the collective decisions that directly influence how we run our home, the co-op mantra, "We own it, we run it" takes on real meaning. Every so often at a meeting somebody says he or she wants a house microwave, or asks why we don't allow televisions in common areas. The answer to both is that we wish to preserve a leisurely pace in the house and rely on our own entertainment, and usually the questioner is convinced. As it turns out, the television issue is backed up by our bylaws, thanks to some pioneering elves of our past.

I firmly believe I learned as much about life living at Lothlorien as I did in the classrooms at Berkeley. It is impossible to convey on paper the immense joy of life there, of living as a family of 55, any of whom you would support to the ends of the Earth. Each year when graduation approaches, it brings the sad but inevitable day when some of us must move on. Those leaving and those staying both face the fear that an era is passing, that Lothlorien will never be the same; but our strong traditions and the magical walls of the house persevere. Each new generation of elves brings its own spirit, but

The vast majority remember their time here as some of the best years of their lives.

it grows in the same fertile setting that nurtured all the elves of the past 25 years.

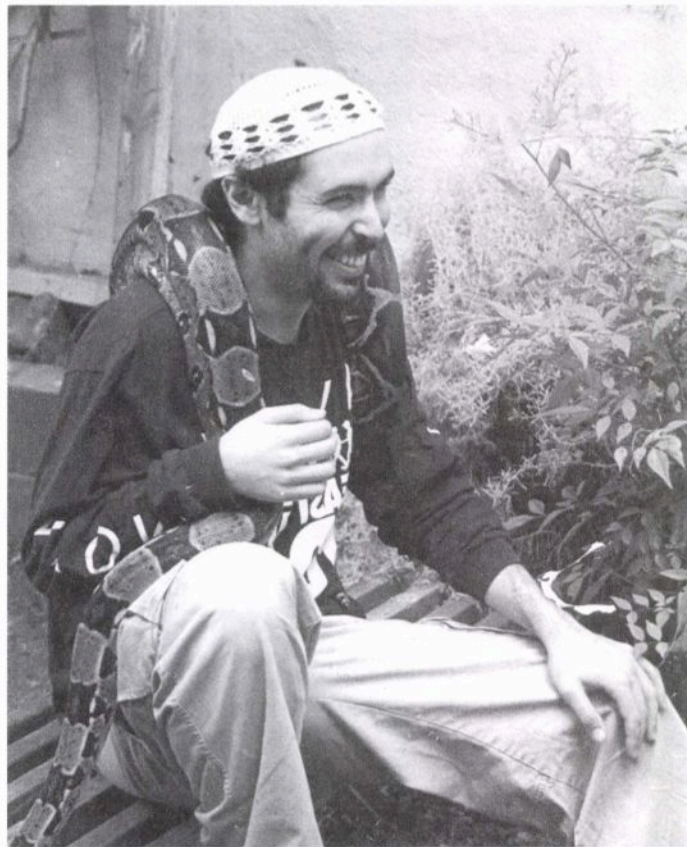
In fairness, Lothlorien is not a haven to all who pass through it. As my friend and old elf Sarah said to me recently, "Loth is just so *much*," and it's true that some residents move in seeking something else. Through our traditions we've largely overcome the constant drain of high turnover, but the weight of our collective identity may not leave enough room for those who wish to create their own. A few residents inevitably leave after only a semester or two.

To be sure, though, the vast majority remember their time here as some of the best years of their lives. At an autumn reunion in

2000, more than 200 elves returned from far afield to attest to the continuity of our elfin magic from our very beginnings until today.

The spirit of cooperation endures even beyond Lothlorien: over the years numerous group houses in and around Berkeley have served as half-way homes for old elves who just couldn't let it go, and return for any excuse. At least two intentional communities inspired by old elves are currently in the advanced planning stages: one is trying to secure a house in Oakland and the other is buying land in Washington state. I hope before long we won't need to really leave Lothlorien; we'll simply emigrate to our cousin communities, carrying with us the memories and traditions of our first true community home. Ω

Old elf and recent Berkeley graduate Ted Sterling spent last year homesteading in northern California with a friend, a cat, and 30 chickens. He plans to buy land for a new experiment in community.



MATT BLOWERS

Cuddling Lothlorien's python during the 25th-year reunion.



All students share cooking tasks at all 20 houses in the USCA system.

FINDING OUR WAY HOME IN THE GIANT OF BERKELEY

BY HONEY SHOR POSNER

ON A BRIGHT, INDIAN SUMMER AFTERNOON in Berkeley, California, I pass a sign surrounded by blue and gold helium balloons, "Welcome Co-op Alums!" and enter a wood-shingled building almost a block long. The University Students Cooperative Association (USCA) is throwing a brunch and reception for visiting alumni here at Cloyne Court, a 151-student co-op, the largest of the USCA's 20 co-op properties.

Since the USCA Alumni Association incorporated four years ago, it has amassed almost 1,000 enthusiastic members. This devotion, especially among earlier members, is easily understood. Without the co-ops, the students would have had to compete for scarce affordable housing in this housing-tight college town. "Why can't conditions be improved for hundreds of students like yourselves by throwing your resources together? Living together! Working together!" asked impassioned university YMCA director Harry Kingman during the Great Depression. Fourteen students did just that, founding the first USCA student house in 1933.

Now, 67 years later, the USCA has grown into the largest student cooperative in North America, boasting a

membership of almost 1,300 students and 20 different co-op residences, drawn from post-secondary school students attending accredited schools all over the Bay Area. Its incredible size alone makes the USCA an anomaly among student co-ops. This student-owned, student-run organization operates on an annual budget of \$5 million and employs 20 full-time staff people as its central administrative core.

Almost nothing about the Berkeley student co-ops is “typical.” For example, while retaining the basic Rochdale Co-op principle of “one member, one vote,” the USCA is structured as a representative democracy. Each house elects one representative to the organization’s Board of Directors for every 70 members (or a fraction thereof). Attending bimonthly meetings becomes the duty of these directors to represent their house’s interests and ensure the well-being of their multimillion dollar corporation.

If the Board of Directors is cooperation at a grander scale, life in the houses is grassroots cooperation. You aren’t just a member of the USCA, you’re a member of a particular house, each with a distinct culture. The houses are organized around a variety of characteristics, from size to gender to dietary preferences. Some are known for their parties, others for their scholastic environment, others for their great meals. Residents of Cloyne Court, a

151-student co-op, are “Clones”; Lothlorien’s members are “elves”; and those at Kingman are “Kingmanites.” Students in the almost 90-person “Le Chateau” will have experiences that barely resemble those of people in the smallest house, Kidd Hall, with only 17 members. For the majority of members, the houses *are* the co-ops; everything else is just politics.

The USCA is the largest student cooperative in North America, with almost 1,300 students and 20 different co-op residences.

For example, Lothlorien, arguably the most popular co-op in the system, is the vegetarian house. While the only tenet is that meat may not be stored, cooked, or eaten within the house, Loth has taken on the counter-cultural aura that so many people associate with Berkeley. You won’t find a TV in their living room or a microwave in their kitchen. Their meals are renowned throughout the entire system as well as throughout the University community. But it isn’t just their food that makes Loth a special place—it’s their community spirit. Unlike some of the other houses, cooperation and community living are heavily emphasized: the elves are more than residents, they’re family.

Two blocks away is the recently purchased Oscar Wilde House, the USCA’s only gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender house. While one’s sexual orientation doesn’t determine who can live there, USCA members wanted to create an environment where girlfriends could feel free to hold hands while watching television, and boyfriends could kiss without other people giggling, staring, or heckling. This isn’t to imply that Wilde House is the only safe haven for those living “alternative lifestyles”—this is Berkeley, after all.

To live at The Convent you must either be a re-entry student or in graduate school. Here residents have their own bedrooms from the beginning (new co-op residents usually share rooms). The Convent property was leased with the help of the university and so only UC Berkeley students can live there. The same is also true for Cloyne, as well as Rochdale and Fenwick, two apartment complexes on the south side of campus built with HUD money. In exchange for housing only UC students, the USCA leases the four properties for significantly less than the usual rental market value. Members are assigned



In the co-op houses, everybody works!

to the houses according to seniority; the longer you live in the co-ops, the more seniority you have.

Each of the houses has a biweekly council meeting to decide house matters. This is important, as the houses retain a tremendous amount of autonomy, deciding for themselves how to spend their individual budgets, which house rules the members must obey, and how they'll resolve their conflicts. All members have the right, and the responsibility that goes with it, of attending their house's council meetings and exercising their voting power.

USCA operations depend on a 20-person full-time staff, along with numerous part-time student staff members (and each house must provide a certain number of work hours to USCA each week). This full-time staff makes the Berkeley student co-ops unique: almost all of them are previous USCA members and have worked for the organization for over 10 years. Central Office, the administrative center, is headquarters for the general manager, operations manager, an accountant, and the housing, member resources, book-keeping, and development departments, crammed together in an office screaming for expansion. Down a claustrophobic stairway is Central Kitchen, where two full-time staff members oversee buying most of the food and supplies for all 20 houses.

Back at the reception and brunch, each house has called its own members home again. Lothlorien alums have come from as far away as France. As Cloyne Court's house approaches its hundredth year, its alums return to see the home that was theirs. Current residents look at the display of pictures from the late 1940s; members from the '60s and '70s top each other's stories about motorcycle races down the main hall and dinners that became world-class food fights (a tradition that seems to have been going on for the last 50 years). As I watch the camaraderie and the old friendships rekindled, I understand why the older members pushed for a USCA alumni association. The co-op experience will be a part of us always. Ω

Honey Shor Posner, a recent UC Berkeley graduate, has served as president and vice president of the USCA and is currently on the NASCO Board of Directors. She hopes to earn a higher degree in urban planning and continue living in the Bay Area.

Almost nothing about the Berkeley student co-ops is "typical."



USCA board members at NASCO Institute, 1999.

THE LITTLE CO-OPS THAT COULD

BY MARGARET J. BLAKE

I COME HOME AT 4:30 TO AN EMPTY HOUSE, SAVE for two cats mischievously trying to convince me they haven't been fed in days, and a brand new kitten who tries to gnaw off a piece of my finger. I wander into the kitchen and plunk down at the table with an assortment of vegetarian cookbooks. It's my responsibility to have dinner on the table in two hours, and I am still without a clue as to what I'm going to make.

By 5:30, I've settled on a menu. Rice simmers in the cooker, soup bubbles on the stove, squash cooks in the oven, and I chop vegetables at a leisurely pace. A key turns in the front door, and the first of my housemates arrives home. Andrea, a Canadian physics grad student, calls hello, then spends several moments communing with the cats. She strolls into the kitchen with the latest issue of a Canadian current events magazine, and we chat for a while about our days, our thoughts on where we're going in our education, and the state of things in my Kansas home and in the Great White North.

At 6:15, I start setting the table. Just then, the key turns in the back door. Lars, a computer science grad student from Denmark, stomps into the kitchen wearing his chain-mail vest and purple tunic, carrying several foam rubber swords. He's just returned from practice with the local chapter of Dagohir, a medieval sword fighting group. I wrinkle my nose at him and tell him to

go shower, suggesting that he hurry, since dinner will actually be on time.

At 6:25, the final housemate saunters through the door. Brian, a recent Ph.D. recipient who adamantly refuses to be addressed as "Doctor," teaches film at the university. He hums a cheery hello, then starts a conversation with me that ranges from leftist politics to baseball to his days in a Catholic boys' school in Boston.

We sit down to dinner at 6:30. The food is spicy and hearty, the bread is freshly baked at the local food co-op, and the conversation is lively and varied. This ersatz family is known as Green House, and we are one of the country's smallest co-ops.

LIFE IN A SMALL STUDENT CO-OP is dramatically different from life

in a large one. Rules are much less formal; house officers are virtually non-existent; and use of the shower is catch as catch can (which can pose some strain on the hot water heater; the earliest users have better showers).



Mickey Blake
making dinner,
with
mushrooms.

However, none of the social atmosphere is lost—it's merely concentrated. Residents in small co-ops tend to know each other well. I, for instance, can name off most of the foods that my housemates dislike, and sometimes even leave those foods out of the meals I prepare (I refuse to bend on mushrooms, though).

Small student co-ops may be dwarfed in comparison to some of the largest in North America, but the spirit of cooperation is no less evident. How we survive and thrive, however, is somewhat different than large co-ops.

Zoning laws in our neighborhood of Urbana, Illinois prohibit more than four unrelated adults from living together in a normal, residentially zoned house, unlike other Urbana neighborhoods and nearby Champaign, where houses can hold as many people as the residents want to take in. As a result, two or three co-op houses in Urbana not zoned as rooming houses practice cooperative living at a scale practically unheard of in other cities. Two co-ops in Urbana have only four members each: Green House was formed in 1985; Avocado House, in 1992. According to Jim Jones of NASCO Properties (a property-holding affiliate of the North American Students of Cooperation) and one of the foremost experts on student co-ops, this makes Green House and Avocado House the smallest formalized student co-ops in North America.

Small co-ops in Urbana have a historical tendency towards a fleeting existence. Lizard House, for example, an Urbana co-op founded in the early nineties, existed for only a few years. It can be difficult to maintain a co-op longer than this, particularly when a house is subject to a landlord's whims.

Taking its cue from organizations such as the Inter-Cooperative Council at the University of Michigan, several co-ops in Champaign-Urbana decided to play upon the time-honored concept of strength in numbers, and in 1997 formed COUCH: the Community Of Urbana-Champaign Cooperative Housing association. I joined COUCH shortly after moving into Green House in the fall of 2000.

COUCH acts as a central organization for five small cooperatives in Champaign-Urbana, ranging in size from four to eight members each. It is also intended to act as a development agency, purchasing houses in order to establish new cooperatives.

Late in the spring of 2000, with the help of NASCO Properties, COUCH acquired Halcyon House, a 15-bedroom boarding house. In Fall 2001 it will become a 14-member cooperative (one bedroom will become a living

Lars stomps into the kitchen wearing his chain-mail vest and purple tunic, carrying several foam-rubber swords.



Avocado House members with dinner guests. With four members each, Avocado House and Green House are the smallest student co-ops in North America.

room) tentatively called Saffron House. Last fall NASCO Properties helped us acquire another 15-bedroom boarding house, currently called Summit House, the 10th NASCO-owned co-op house.

Having realized so quickly our goal of managing one or more cooperative houses, COUCH members are excited about future prospects of co-op housing in Champaign-Urbana. As co-ops in this area rarely have vacancies and frequently have to turn away potential members, knowing that we will soon be adding another 14 members to the family is exhilarating. The fact that in a year and a half we'll add another 15 at Summit House is almost scary, but exciting nonetheless.

Although our organization very much in its infancy, already we're changing the face of cooperative housing in Champaign-Urbana. Meanwhile, life is good at Green House, with its Canadian, Danish, Bostonian, and Kansan housemates, and, not in the least, its three well-fed cats. Ω

Margaret Blake, a graduate student in chemistry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is living in her first student cooperative house. She is the liaison officer for COUCH (a self-made title which allows her to wear many hats).



JACOB STEVENS

HAPLESS IN OHIO

Reviving Our Ailing Co-op & Learning to Love It Too

BY RITA TIEFERT

AT THE END OF MY JUNIOR YEAR AT OHIO University in Athens, Ohio, I was eager to try life off-campus, and the ACME Co-op was the last resort in a tight housing market. I didn't know anything about student cooperatives, but described my skills and interests on the application form, attended one of the co-op's weekly meetings, and was accepted.

When my mother came to help me pack up for summer break in 1999, I proudly took her to see my future home. On a quiet suburban street, the two-story ACME Co-op looked up at the Appalachian foothills of Southeastern Ohio. The house had a gabled roof like a quizzical frown. Its white paint had gone gray, flaking off into the bushes hugging the front porch. On the front steps stood a young man with a dark curly beard watering a tray of tiny tomato plants. When he discovered my mother grew tomatoes, he led us to the back yard to

see the rest. "What do you think?" he asked.

Close to a thick line of pine trees he'd planted a neat and tidy line of tomato plants—directly in the shade. We pointed this out.

He smiled at his mistake. "Oh. Sunlight *would* be helpful, wouldn't it?"

Mistakes, and having a sense of humor about them, were what I would learn well in the following year. I had dreamed all summer of fixing up my first house; at the top of my list was a good paint job. But as it turned out, the ACME house needed much more than a paint job.

We began that fall with seven students: Ryan, Tracie, two members named Josh, two named Chris, and myself. The eighth never arrived. Because he hadn't signed the contract requiring payment regardless of occupancy, the rest of us had to make up the cost of his absence and so started out the quarter on a shoestring budget.

"The taxes aren't finished; I haven't found a job yet; the fufu won't fry right."

Only one of us had lived there before: Josh W., the young man with the tomato plants. The others had graduated the previous June without providing any kind of transition for us. So, though the co-op had existed since 1989, we faced the task of creating it all over again from scratch.

We agreed to hold meetings Sunday nights, the only time we could get our seven different schedules of schoolwork, part-time jobs, and extracurricular activities to remotely coincide. Without any model of consensus decision making, our meetings were disorganized. We decided how to divide chores, to apply for financial assistance to insulate the house (postponing the paint job), and which foods to buy with our pooled money. My beloved taco salads were out, as most of the others didn't eat meat. We also chose our house roles: food buyer, gardener, membership coordinator, secretary, treasurer, and board representative to

NASCO Properties, the organization that owns the house. As the only person comfortable with numbers, I hesitantly volunteered to be treasurer. We even talked about what to call the two Josh's and two Chris's. Fortunately one Chris wanted to be called "Squirrel" (though this was hard, as I'd known him for years and he didn't look at all like a squirrel to me).

The worst discussion was whether or not to lock the front door. Chris (the one I didn't know) insisted that locking the front door was distrustful and would bring "negative energy" into the house. To my surprise, everyone agreed with him. I said that as a woman and former police reporter for the campus paper, I'd rather be safe than sorry. The debate dragged on intermittently over an agonizing, emotionally charged two weeks before it occurred to any of us to compromise by installing a deadbolt on my bedroom door.

Then we discovered the treasury problems. Ryan found a stack of checks that had never been cashed. Squirrel insisted he'd paid a security deposit, but the books showed no record of it, and the other co-ops weren't sure they should trust his memory. Jim Jones, our NASCO Properties representative who came to Athens to advise us on our roles, gave us more bad news—our co-op had been operating at a loss for at least four years, and it didn't help that our missing eighth member meant tight budgeting. To top it off, no one had paid property

taxes in four years. Much to my relief, Jim and Ryan recreated three years of bookkeeping and found a local accountant to file the taxes. This left only the fourth year missing—and the only evidence for its cash flow consisted of tiny scraps of scribbled paper and check stubs scattered throughout a file cabinet.

I felt completely drained. How would we solve our big problems if we struggled to agree on simple issues like locking the front door?

Toward the end of fall quarter, things began looking up. We found an eighth housemate, yet a third Chris (who fortunately chose to be called by his last name, Barcroft). Our financial crisis was over but we were still divided over the problem of Squirrel's security deposit. I believed him and kept postponing talking about it, hoping to find a solution before ill will over the issue deepened. But to have the bank look for a record of the deposit would cost us more than finding the deposit itself. Finally Squirrel proposed that he would only receive half the amount of the deposit back at the end of the year, and we agreed. A bit of grace began to ease into the way we made decisions.

We learned the power of appreciation. A maintenance worker complained to Josh W. that he hadn't been paid. When Josh located the record of the check in the new filing system I had painstakingly created, he was relieved



Hapless no more: (left to right) Josh Beniston, Chris Barcroft, Chris "Squirrel" Evans, Ryan Duvall, author Rita Tiefert, Chris Crews, and Josh Worthington.

and told me so. Suddenly the purpose of my boring treasurer's job was clear: it was important and it linked me to the co-op. Acknowledging each other's hard work was a practice we found so effective that later we made it a part of our regular meetings.

Just before winter break, Tracie, our secretary, discovered an old student co-op guidebook buried in our dining room work center. I found her poring through it with an expression that swung from exasperation to relief. "If

we follow the guidebook,” she said, with a hint of irony, “we won’t have to work as hard!”

When school began again after winter break, Ryan and Tracie were studying abroad and the subleasees who took their places in the co-op weren’t eager to invest much energy in our household. The rest of us attacked our tasks with a new sense of teamwork.

And we needed teamwork, given the nitty-gritty issues that cropped up. Two members decided to get puppies. A sense of humor is essential when you find yourself standing over a pile of puppy poop for the ten millionth morning in a row, not knowing which puppy to discipline.



Squirrel joked that he became an expert in excrement identification.

We were plagued by maintenance troubles. The heat went out a few times; the sewage stopped up; the application forms we’d filed to get

financial assistance for insulating the house hadn’t gone through yet. And, though none of us could figure out why, the upstairs bathtub plug kept disappearing. We took turns rushing home from class to be there when maintenance specialists came to fix things. I kept an eye on our account. Though NASCO Properties reimbursed us for maintenance expenses, we didn’t have a cash cushion to tide us over.

Through all the insanity, we continued to build a team spirit. We upheld the co-op’s tradition of Thursday night potlucks, which were open to the public and largely attended by our environmental activist friends. In winter the potlucks were sparsely attended but in spring people of all ages showed up at our door bearing delicious vegetarian dishes, guitars, folk songs, and sociable hearts.

We housemates still had different perspectives, but we kept a sense of humor about them. Once I accidentally left meat out on the counter overnight. Vegetarian Squirrel, discovering it the next day, was quite upset. After he scolded me thoroughly, I teased him by saying I’d finally discovered how he resembled his namesake. Eventually, I found a vegetarian dish I could make for potlucks: fufu, African manioc root that’s delicious fried in olive oil. Another evening, Squirrel got me back as we stood side by side cooking at the tiny kitchen stove. I was fretting: “The taxes aren’t finished; I haven’t found

a job yet; the fufu won’t fry right.” Squirrel listened intently, and turned his serious brown-eyed gaze to me. “That’s right,” he said. “The entire world is going to end.” I had to grin, and punched his shoulder with the fist not holding a spatula.

After spring break, we swung into our final quarter of schoolwork. Josh W. attended a NASCO workshop on how to manage a co-op, and Chris taught us techniques from workshops on how to run successful consensus meetings. All the taxes were filed. We decided to create exit memos to help next year’s members. Ryan, a plant biology major, began landscaping and gardening the yard. Barcroft, our membership coordinator, realizing the surrounding neighbors didn’t know who we were, made a rainbow flag (the international symbol of cooperatives) bearing the ACME name and co-op logo of two pine trees. He hung it under the gable on the front of the house.

This momentum was interrupted late one Saturday night. After an exhausting day, I fell asleep early. The next morning I had a vague memory of hearing drunken voices shouting anti-homosexual slurs outside, and of wearily rolling over back to sleep.

Stepping out to the porch, I saw that the flag had been ripped partway off the house. Josh W., whose bedroom was above the porch, had chased away four drunken students who mistook our flag for a gay-lesbian symbol. He followed them three doors down—they were our neighbors! He told them they were behaving badly and that we deserved their respect. And in a friendly gesture I thought naïve, he invited them to that week’s potluck. They returned later that morning to harass us, and he finally called the cops.

As we vented our frustrations and fears to each other, we eventually came to the conclusion that Josh’s initial response to them was an adequate response for us. To write a letter denouncing their actions to the Athens newspaper would only further incite them and possibly raise a lot of posturing in the community, whereas the entire philosophy of our cooperative was to get along despite differences. The attack on our flag made us realize our unity, and we became closer.

The end of the school year kept us busy with final projects and preparation for graduation. Chris’s friend Heather entered the chaos when she visited us for about a week

**“I mean,”
she
amended,
“Why
would you
want to
paint it
that
color?”**

**We
cheered
for our
parched
garden,
and
watched
cars splash
by like
log rides
at an
amusement
park.**

and agreed that in exchange for room and board she'd paint the living room. None of us could agree on the color.

At one point, Tracie responded to one suggestion with a strong criticism of the color. Then she noticed her tone of voice. "I mean," she amended, "Why would you want to paint it that color?"

"You say terrible things to each other," Heather pointed out, laughing, "but then you always follow it up with something nice." I reflected that several months ago, we probably would have debated colors for eternity, and "nice" might not have described it.

Now we all genuinely got along, when we had time for each other. One of my favorite memories is the night a rainstorm knocked out the power for blocks, including on campus. We gathered on the front porch, cheered for our parched garden, and watched cars splash by like log rides at an amusement park. Barcroft, ordinarily stressed out

with a job, school, and performing in a comedy troupe, settled down on the porch couch with a glass of wine and a smile. "I can't even do my homework, because the computer I need is on campus," he said, his brown eyes relaxed again.

In fact, my housemates became a great support network. Chris helped me look for post-graduation jobs at magazines by combing through his considerable stack of publications. When my boyfriend and I broke up, Ryan gave me hugs and drew a diagram of my epic life to follow; Tracie brought me a book, *Succulent Wild Woman*, and Squirrel loaned me a bottle of his favorite aromatherapy scent.

The living room finally ended up with two blue walls, one green wall, and one wall that looked like a tortoise shell with blue and green sponge marks. It wasn't my idea of interior decorating, but sometimes, I realized, you just have to let go of the little things.

THE DAY BEFORE GRADUATION, AFTER RETURNING from errands and before going inside to help prepare the dinner we were hosting for our parents, I stopped to admire the facade of the ACME Co-op. The sidewalk and front steps were adorned with chalk declarations of welcome. The porch eaves were festooned with Tracie's purple petunias in blue tin cans and Ryan's upside-down bouquets of drying herbs. The gardening committee, Ryan and Chris, had torn out half of the front

bushes and replaced them with a yellow and green latticework. Under the gable, the flag lifted a little in the slight breeze.

And in the front yard, planted along the porch where the sunlight fell best, was a neat row of tomatoes. A year before, I might have wondered why we couldn't have had flowers in our front yard like normal people. But today the tomatoes looked beautiful to me. Vivid green and already tall and sturdy, they were sure to yield sweet slices and inspire spicy potluck dishes for next year's co-ops. Ω

Rita Tiefert is now an assistant editor at FORM Magazine in Alexandria, Virginia. She graduated last June with a bachelor's degree in journalism from the Honors Tutorial College at Ohio University. Her work has appeared in publications including HOW, Incentive, Inkblots, and Southeast Ohio magazines.



ACME Co-op gardeners in their (sunny) front yard.

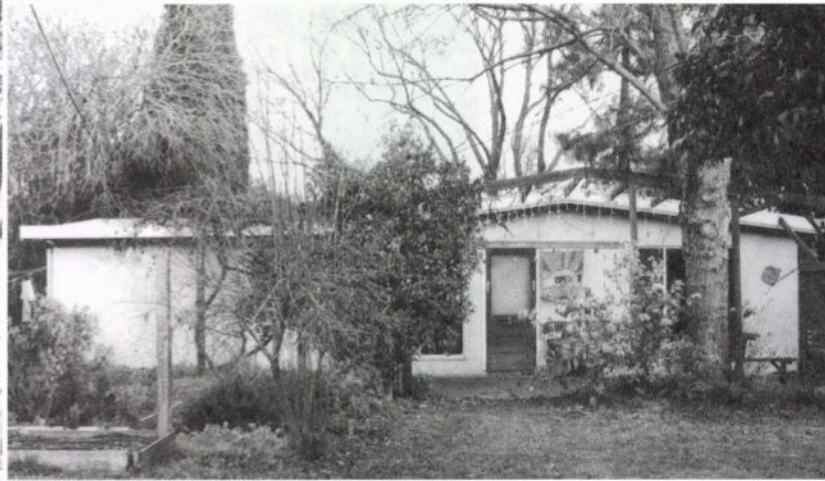


ALL PHOTOS BY SHARA GARDNER

WHO SAYS WE HAVE TO MOVE OUT?

A Tiny Co-op Becomes N Street Cohousing

BY DENIZ TUNCER



LEFT: On the N Street block 15 households took their fences down, making one long common green for everyone.

ABOVE: Back doors have become community front entrances.

BELOW: Original N Street Co-op house, now the community's common house.

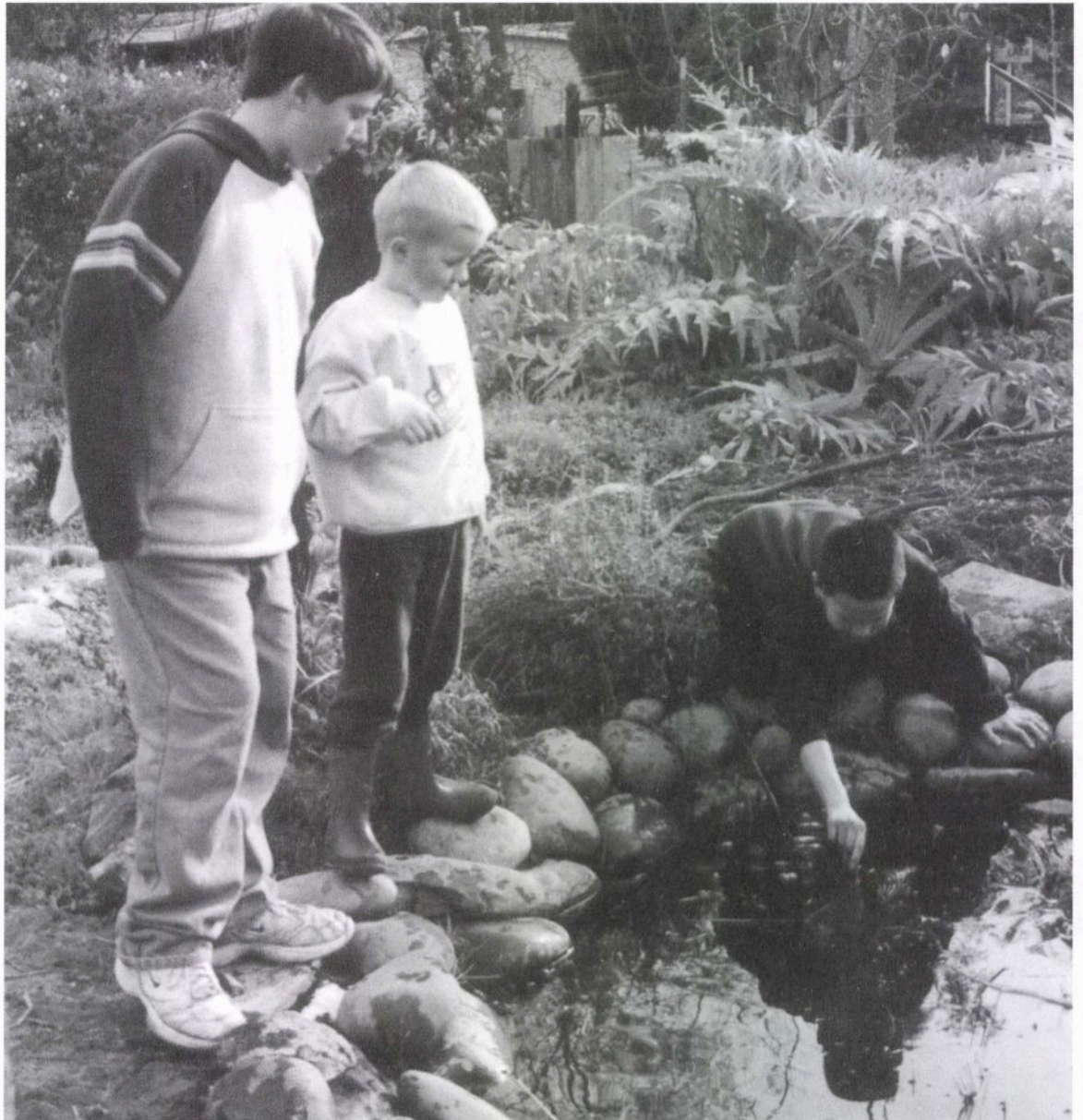


IN THE EARLY 1970S ON SUBURBAN N STREET IN Davis, California, a group of UC Davis students leased a five-bedroom house and began operating it as the N Street Co-op. While membership in this five-to-six-person household changed over time, it operated like most other student co-ops, with members sharing food, chores, gardening, and camaraderie.

In 1984, when the landlord was interested in selling, one of the members, Kevin Wolf, didn't want to lose his co-op home and figured out how to buy it. (He had been there since 1979 but was no longer a student as he'd graduated in 1980.) Kevin continued living there and renting to students and the house remained a co-op. Soon after the purchase,

Kevin and his housemates began looking over the fence at the house next door, dreaming about how wonderful it would be to buy that house as well and take down the fence between them. In 1986, Kevin and Linda Cloud, his colleague and future wife, purchased the neighboring house.

They did tear down the fence, and soon afterward convinced friends to buy or rent nearby houses on the block and do the same, and soon two other fences came down, one in 1987 and another in 1988. Shortly after Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett published *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* in 1988 (Ten Speed Press), Linda organized a slide show presentation by these architect-authors. What Linda and Kevin had been



N Street's many children always have someone to play with.

envisioning on their block was very similar to this new housing concept. They decided that cohousing was the model they would pursue for their community, and N Street Cohousing was born.

Through their first two winters, potlucks were the principal way residents shared meals. After learning about the cohousing concept, they used the garage of the N Street Co-op house as a dining room. Residents cooked meals at home in teams and shared them there, a meal-sharing plan practiced by cohousing communities in Europe.

As more friends bought houses and tore down fences and N Street Cohousing grew, it became clear that the N Street Co-op would make a good common house since it was much larger than the rest of the houses. However, the student co-op residents were a tight group of friends who had their meal structure down and didn't want to participate much in a community beyond their own house.

Although opposed to the idea, none of them planned to live in the co-op much longer, as most would graduate in the next few years and planned to leave Davis soon after. So the community created a two-year transition plan to convert the co-op into a common house after the last students left.

The group drew up plans to remodel the house into a common house. The downstairs kitchen and living areas were still used by house residents, but also became the common kitchen and dining room for the whole community. The community continued to rent four rooms in the house to students and young professionals, since N Street Cohousing couldn't afford to maintain a common house without rental income. The group added other common features to the community over time, including a sauna, hot tub, workshop, laundry facilities, gardens, and chicken coop.



ABOVE: In the Common House kitchen, children often help with dinner.

LEFT: N Street neighbors are proud of their community sauna.

Kevin and Linda still own the house, which they have agreed to sell to the community. Right now N Street Cohousing has almost finished a new design to expand the common house dining area and set up house residents with their own smaller kitchen and communal facilities. Though the community has raised \$10,000 towards the house remodel and purchase, it will probably take an additional investment share or construction of additional rental bedrooms to finance a major remodeling for the common house.

Although there is no longer a student co-op at N Street Cohousing, the community still has a strong student component, as two of their houses are rented by groups of students. At least five of the 32 adults in the community have previously lived in student co-ops, and quite a few former N Street Cohousing members have lived in student co-ops as well.

The N Street Co-op has clearly left a legacy. "The co-op taught us how wonderful it was to cooperate," Kevin recalls. "Four nights a week someone else cooked you dinner. And sharing chores saved everyone time." David Fritz, a current resident of N Street Cohousing who lived in the Berkeley student co-ops, moved into the N Street Co-op in 1984. "Student co-ops taught me that somehow quality of life doesn't mean rising up into increasing levels of affluence and having that perfect *Better Homes and Gardens* house," he says. "A more important quality of life issue is having a supportive social network." Ω

Deniz Tuncer, Guest Editor of this issue, lives near Davis in Sacramento, California. She and her husband are interested in being part of a cohousing community someday.

HIGH RENT & NO VOICE? NO THANKS!

How We Invented Student Co-ops

BY JIM JONES



Nowadays thousands of students live in co-ops during their college years. At Michigan Cooperative House in Ann Arbor, 1991.

JILLIAN DOWNEY

STUDENT CO-OPS *SHOULD* BE IMPOSSIBLE. One would think that, as a group, students have no resources, little experience, and not much time to create community, and that since they're around for only four years their rapid turnover would keep them from developing strong institutions.

Yet, some student co-ops have existed in isolation for 50 years or more, and others have expanded and now house hundreds of members. While the greatest mystery is the very existence of student co-ops, it's also hard to explain why they're so strong. Once a student co-op owns property, it rarely dies. The default rate on loans is near zero. The sense of ownership and responsibility among student members is far stronger than for most other housing cooperatives.

Where did this form of community come from? While student bookstore co-ops began in the 1880s on some campuses (Harvard Co-op, Guelph Campus Co-op in Canada), early housing co-ops for students remain little known and, with some exceptions, poorly documented. Some apparently existed before World War I, some earlier, such as one at Northwestern University, reportedly established around 1886. Many were attempts to provide affordable housing for increasing numbers of women students, often turned down for housing in the predominantly male rooming houses.

Most if not all of these early efforts were sponsored by or affiliated to universities in some way, and the term "cooperative" meant shared housework rather than student ownership and control, as it does today. Membership was often need-based, and the term "scholar-

ship dorm" is still sometimes used to describe these groups.

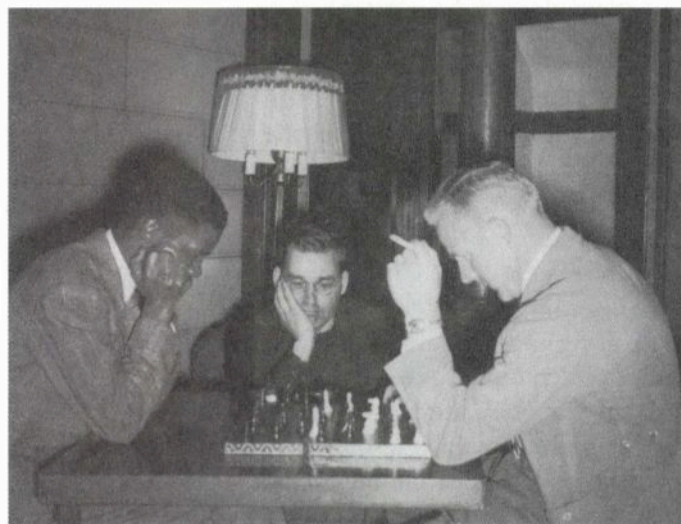
During the Great Depression, some universities expanded such self-help housing opportunities in keeping with the economic challenge of the time. But even as some schools offered affordable "cooperative" housing in this controlled, paternal manner, a new concept began to appear: ownership by the students themselves. Co-ops of many kinds were viewed as a possible way out of the problems of the times and as an alternative to both capitalism and communism. Consumer cooperatives and agricultural co-ops as well became more popular during this period. The Rochdale principles, based on democratic control by the members, suddenly seemed like a realistic alternative for all sorts of social and economic problems.

At universities where the idea of sharing work and expenses to reduce costs was already an established concept, it was a relatively short step to the consumer-ownership embodied in the Rochdale principles of coopera-

tion. Student co-op houses organized independently by students began at Texas A&M in 1931, the University of Michigan in 1932, and in UC Berkeley and the University of Washington in Seattle in 1933. In this same period, colleges in Idaho and Iowa also established co-ops on the older model, but the student-initiated groups elsewhere rightly saw themselves as different.

At Texas A&M, a professor in the agricultural department helped lease a house and organized the group. At the University of Michigan, graduate students in the Socialist Club formed the house. In Berkeley, the head of the University YMCA suggested that students form a co-op; at the University of Washington, an older returning student began the group effort. In nearly every case, someone with experience in the "broader world" brought the cooperative approach to the situation. And as the idea of independent action took root, co-ops of this new breed began to appear in ever-increasing numbers.

A 1941 study identified 124 co-op and semi-co-op houses around the



Co-ops take a chess break, 1930s.

United States, grouped into 116 associations, with more than 7,600 student members. The earliest of these dated from 1926, with the average age of a co-op being just under four years.

The rapid growth of student co-ops came to a halt in 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As with most student traditions at North American colleges in the early '40s, the co-ops were nearly destroyed as large numbers of college men left for military service.

After the war, returning GIs meant tremendous growth for colleges and universities, and housing shortages everywhere. The student population at the University of Michigan, for example, doubled within two years. In some places, such as Texas A&M, the once flourishing co-ops vanished during the war, never to return. Other universities, however, such as Michigan State, had a tremendous flowering of cooperative effort.

The returning military men were older, skilled, and used to group living. They were generally too independent to be interested in joining fraternities or the new residence halls, and the co-op concept was more to their liking. Through the end of the 1940s, GIs contributed to a general revival of the student cooperatives, and in some colleges and universities, new ones beginning.

By the early 1950s, however, campuses began to feel the effects of the Korean War. Once again college men were drafted, and co-ops began experiencing vacancy problems. Moreover, the effects of the Cold War were beginning to be felt through red-baiting and McCarthy-era Communist witch hunts. Seeming "Communist" because they focused on cooperation and shared resources, many co-ops fell under suspicion and their numbers further decreased.

However, the fifties were also were a time that stimulated major growth for at least some co-ops. In 1957, the North American Student Cooperative League (NASCL) and the Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA) undertook the challenge of changing US laws to make federal financing available for student housing co-ops.



Co-ops square dance at the University of Texas, 1940s.

After an incredible effort by all involved, President Eisenhower signed the housing bill in 1959 which included an amended College Housing Program. For the first time, student housing co-ops would be eligible for low-cost federal loans.

Through the end of the '40s, returning GIs contributed to a general revival of student co-ops.

There was a problem, however. The legislation also required that the university co-sign on any loan, which most colleges and universities either were unwilling or legally unable to do. Finally, in the mid-1960s, this was changed to university approval of loans.

In 1964 Canadian students were able to secure an amendment to Canada's National Housing Act to

allow student co-ops to obtain long-term, low-interest financing for student co-op projects. More than \$50 million in projects, many of them high-rise co-ops with 500 to 900 members each, were built in Canada between 1966 and 1974.

Inspired by the Canadian experience, the Inter-Cooperative Council at the University of Michigan approached HUD (the US Department of Housing and Urban Development) with a proposal to construct a complex of student co-op houses on the University's North Campus. Finished in 1970, the North Campus Co-ops became the first major effort under HUD's revised College Housing Program. President Nixon eventually canceled the College Housing Program, and soon afterwards the Canadian program was ended as well. In the meantime, however, these governmental programs provided funding for a number of student co-ops to begin or expand, particularly in Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario, California, and Texas.

Fortunately this growth coincided with the arrival of the Baby Boom generation. The housing shortages and radical world views of this group almost insured a market for co-op

housing, regardless of the co-op movement's scale and pace of growth. The countercultural values of this group emphasized shared self-governance and independence from outside, hierarchical control. What more perfect vehicle to live out these values than co-op living? From the mid-'60s to the mid-'70s, interest in cooperative ideals generated thousands of food co-ops in university communities, as well as long waiting lists for student housing co-ops.

In 1986, a number of the larger student co-ops, working with the North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO) and the National

Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) initiated a more organized approach to developing new co-ops. The Campus Cooperative Development Corporation (CCDC) helped local groups establish student housing co-ops at schools where previously none had existed. Shortly after CCDC was begun, a second entity, NASCO Properties, was organized as a national property-holding company. Together, these inter-cooperative efforts have triggered the development of new co-ops in many university towns from California to Ohio to Vermont.

Nowadays, while student co-ops have little assistance from college administrations or governmental funding sources, they continue to expand where they are well established, and attract interest and attention where they're not. In the last few years a number of new co-ops have been established, often in rented houses. While most of the new efforts are small

groups of eight to 30 members, some of the largest expansion efforts have been in cooperatively owned apartments. Riverton Community Housing in Minneapolis recently doubled from 350 to over 700 members, all in large apartment buildings—a student co-op expansion greater than all other efforts in the last decade combined.

While the smaller group efforts result in the strongest communities, the larger cooperatives, such as the 20-house, 1300-member USCA co-op in Berkeley, have the economies of scale to hire skilled staff and develop financial resources for further expansion. These large, established cooperatives often provide loans to new groups for down payments, and through their umbrella associations such as NASCO and the Campus Cooperative Development Corporation, provide the expertise for technical and developmental assistance.

As noted in the beginning, this form of community is something of a miracle. Student co-ops have developed operating systems and educational systems that keep buildings repaired, fees collected, and food on the table, despite members that begin with few skills in any of these areas. They've developed social systems that build strong communities despite high turnover. They've developed a tradition of cooperation between co-ops, among co-op organizations, and even across borders.

It looks like they're here to stay.

Longtime co-op activist Jim Jones has been a professional student co-op manager since 1971, in Austin, East Lansing, and Ann Arbor. He was executive director of Ann Arbor's Inter-Cooperative Council from 1984 through 1999, and later, served as executive director of NASCO. He is now general manager of NASCO Properties. Jim helped Communities magazine get started back in 1971.



ABOVE: Co-ops swing to big band sounds in Los Angeles, 1949.

RIGHT: Self-governance by students was a novel practice in the 1950s.



Seeming "Communitistic" because they focused on cooperation and shared resources, many co-ops fell under suspicion during the McCarthy era.

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From Dining Co-op at Oberlin to Cohousing at Blueberry Hill

THE PROSPECT OF COOKING dinner for 50 after a long workday is not particularly daunting to me. I am assuming, of course, that someone will have cleaned up after the last meal and left the kitchen in good order, and that at least one of my children will be available to help put the lasagnas together.

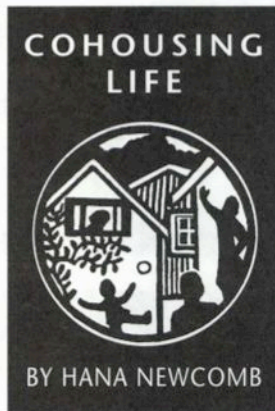
All this optimism is based on my experience, in the late 1970s, in a dining co-op at Oberlin College. Even though it's been over 20 years since I was a menu planner at Fairchild Co-op, I know I could do it again in a heartbeat. As a college student, I inherited the wisdom and experience of my co-op forebearers. As a founding member of a cohousing community, I often long for the simple challenges of cooking for 120.

Almost ten years ago, when my sister Anna and I both had babies and small children, she found out about cohousing. Also an idealistic Oberlin co-op alumna, she convinced me that we could start a

community, live in the same neighborhood, and everything would be wonderful. I now know that life is rarely as simple, organized, and community based as it was when we were in the co-op.

At Oberlin, I was a "founding mama" of Fairchild Co-op. (As a dining co-op, members ate there and lived elsewhere.) I got into the co-op system the same way everyone else did, by lottery, but I happened to be there the year the first dining-only co-op opened. We were lucky: we started out with a core group of seasoned co-ops.

Even before we cooked our first meal, Fairchild had a reputation for moderation. The existing living/dining co-ops at Oberlin had long established personalities—great parties at Tank, extreme menus based on rice and beans at Harkness, meat at Keep, gracious dining at Baldwin—so we found our niche as the civilized, organized, cost-saving co-op. We even served chicken on Thursday nights. As a dining-only co-op we didn't have to share all the



Hana Newcomb was in student co-ops at Oberlin College in 1977-1980. She is a manager of Potomac Vegetable Farms, an organic farm, and a founding member of Blueberry Hill Cohousing in Vienna, Virginia, where she lives with her family.

chores that come with living in the same house, as in most student co-ops.

I remember long meetings about brown sugar vs. white sugar vs. honey. Meetings about where our coffee was grown, and whether we should be allowed to eat as much cottage cheese as we wanted for snacks. I don't remember feeling that people were shirking their tasks. The floors got cleaned, the bread bakers baked every night, there was always a trash can full of fresh granola, and the people elected for special roles (food buyers, menu planners, work coordinators) took their jobs seriously. The kitchen was full of characters: Marc, who made curry from scratch; Connie, who made lunch on Tuesdays out of all raw foods; Carrie, who flew around taking care of all the details; Carol, the experimental baker, who once

I know there will still be plenty of odd characters in the kitchen.

put leftover salad into her bread dough. The co-op was a great training ground for learning tolerance, good humor, volunteerism, and teamwork.

Today Anna and I have finally moved into Blueberry Hill, the cohousing community that eventually came out of that romantic ideal of reliving our co-op days. At Fairchild, there were 120 of us, and our ages ranged from 18 to 22. Now we are building 19 households, and we range from retirees, to families with small children, teenagers, and single women. Like the co-ops of our past, we use a consensus process, conduct a lot of meetings, have great potlucks, work and work, and talk and talk. None of the other members have been in student co-ops. Their optimism comes from other sources.

In those first years after college, when there were no more ready-made co-ops (except buyers' co-ops), I learned that the real world lacks the chatter of community. I learned that people don't even know what they're missing. Only the luckiest ones find themselves in a neighborhood full of friendly people, frequent conversations on the sidewalk, and impromptu baby-sitting offers. Like my peers, I got married, had babies, and thought my

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[The project, delayed by technical difficulties and never dreamed-of complexities, is now nearing completion.]

co-op life was just a pleasing memory from the past.

But now all those skills I learned in the co-op have come in handy again. As soon as we finish house construction and build the Common House, we'll be able to forget about our role as developers, and start to concentrate on what we really want to be: friendly neighbors, connected, in touch. Now that we have spent so much time in committees, making decisions, dealing with the daily crises, I'll bet the shared work of our community will seem natural to us.

I look forward to making those big organizational charts. I can't wait to see those huge bags of flour in the pantry and big pots on the stove. I want my kids to know the chore list in the Common House includes them, and there will be lots of people who will appreciate their prowess with a vacuum cleaner. It will be so great to see my 11-year-old daughter heading out to baby-sit the two-year-old who lives across the street, and know that she is just a few steps away and I won't need to worry about who's driving her home.

I look forward to working with other adults who already know how to work. At Oberlin, almost everyone in the co-op was responsible, willing, and fun to work with. Those who discovered a lack of interest in work eventually drifted away, leaving the rest of us with a sharper and more energetic crew. But we were so young, and most of us were learning on the job. We certainly had some disastrous meals in between the successes. In my new community of adults and children, I hope that the collective experience will help to keep the disasters to a minimum. It won't be all that different, though—I know there will still be plenty of odd characters in the kitchen.

The cohousers of Blueberry Hill don't really know it, but they owe a large debt to the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association. The momentum of that organization, which began in the 1950s when my parents were Oberlin students themselves, has trained many generations of community-builders. Cohousing is just one example of what can come out of all that co-op learning and labor. Ω

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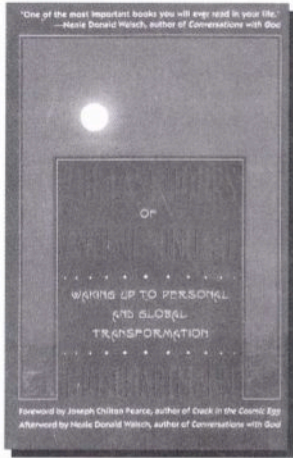
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REVIEWS



The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight: Waking Up to Personal and Global Transformation

by Thom Hartmann

Three Rivers Press, 1999
Pb., 308 pp. \$14

Reviewed by Patricia Greene

MANY OF US ARE GOOD-HEARTED, aware people who feel growing dismay over the state of the world. Familiar with the buzzwords—global warming, population explosion, deforestation, species extinction, the end of oil, designer genes, rampant consumerism, the loss of the sacred—we wonder how to live our lives. Things have gotten out of hand. We feel helpless. Nevertheless, we recycle, buy our food at the co-op, drive gas-efficient cars, turn off our TVs, and some of us work on issues of concern and live in community. And still we seem to live in a state of denial.

This book sounds a rousing and readable wake-up call. Although there are many books out there crying about our situation, this one is different. It keeps spirit or the

sense of oneness at the center, and sets the current problems of ecology and human culture within a broader, historical matrix—and it won't leave you depressed.

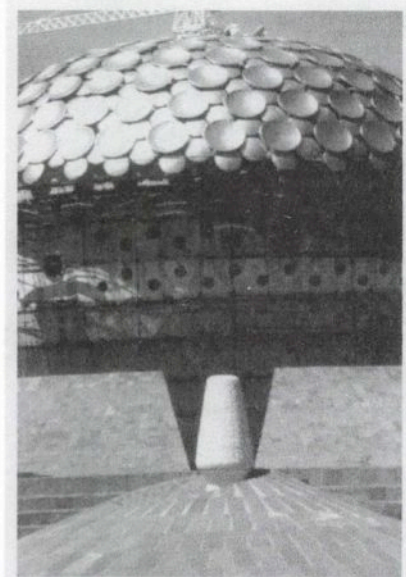
And a little preview for this magazine's segment of the good-hearted—this book even comes round to recommending intentional community as a most viable way out of our dilemma!

The gripping story that Hartmann tells starts before the beginning of human history and leads up to and beyond the present. Nothing he says is new, but it's the way he puts it all together in one place which produces so many "aha's." First, he explains in brilliant detail how quickly we are using up our reserves of ancient sunlight (or oil), how surely overpopulation will destroy us, and exactly why cutting down the rainforests will result in creeping desertification and serious climate changes, among many other issues.

He points out interesting interrelationships between issues, such as the discovery of oil in the mid-nineteenth century making food supplies more abundant and thus leading to today's unprecedented population increase. Then he asks the unavoidable: what will really happen in 30 years when there is no more oil yet the population of the Earth has doubled from what it is today?

He examines how and why we keep denying the obvious problems as a culture, and why we insist on continuing to use our "start-up capital," (read oil or ancient sunlight) as if nothing could go awry. We're not just asleep, he says, we're intoxicated, and limited by a myth that keeps us disconnected from what could save us—nature, spirit, our higher selves, and each other. This myth promotes a hierarchical worldview which says that humans can own and dominate.

This worldview is the result of the "Great Forgetting" which came about a mere seven thousand years ago with the rise of agriculture and the city state. For 100,000 years humans lived in tribal cultures whose worldview was, in a word, sustainable. They did not overuse their environment or dominate their neighbors to extinction. Their form of organization was the circle where each member was respected and granted security, leaders were viewed as servants, and cooperation was the norm. They did not have the growth ethic, therefore they worked only about



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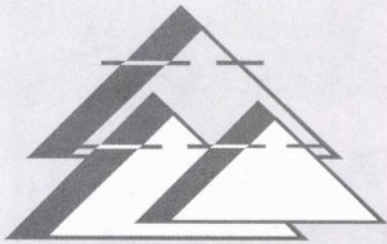
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four hours a day for survival and spent the rest of their time in play and sacred ritual.

Although Hartmann does not completely advocate a return to older culture tribal life, I wish he had explored this option a little more fully. He has a fairly good, though unradical, chapter on intentional community, which is to his credit. Communitarians are reinventing "tribal life," he asserts, and mentions the Fellowship for Intentional Community (publisher of this magazine) and the *Communities Directory*. He even suggests living off the grid.

Careful not to leave out those who remain within the culture, he shows how we can reinvent our myths and technology, recontact the sacred and put ritual back into our everyday lives, completely swear off television and do simple things like shopping in locally owned "one-only" stores. If each of us consciously transforms and reconnects to the matrix of oneness, outer reality will inevitably begin to change.

Patricia Greene, a longtime community activist, is Classified and Reach ad manager of Communities magazine. She lives in Heath, Massachusetts.



Better Not Bigger: How to Take Control of Urban Growth and Improve Your Community

by Eben Fodor

New Society Publishers, 1999
Pb., 175 pp. \$14.95

Reviewed by Jackie McMillan

AUTHOR EBEN FODOR ARGUES CONVINCEINGLY against urban growth in general, and specifically against uncontrolled growth. He notes that pro-growth rhetoric and assumptions are rampant in municipal and regional government, and advisory groups are often comprised of stakeholders with obvious conflicts of interest, rather than involved citizens with the public interest at heart. In fact, public interest has come to be seen as merely another interest group, to be balanced against business representatives with specific agendas to maximize short-term gain for their particular and limited economic arenas.

Here are Fodor's top four myths regarding the benefits of growth: 1) Growth provides needed tax revenues; 2) Growth is necessary to provide more jobs for community members; 3) Business growth must be stimulated and subsidized in order to bring in good jobs; and 4) Limiting growth will cause housing prices to skyrocket. Not true.

In fact, evidence shows that development actually brings in less revenue than the price of servicing it. The costs of growth to local government show up in increased taxes, increased municipal debt, infrastructure deficits, facility maintenance deficits, and reductions in public



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services. In comparisons of cities with and without controls on growth, such controls have no impact on housing prices. Cities which impose growth controls are more likely to have more effective affordable housing policies, as well.

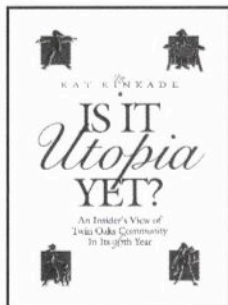
Growth does not reduce local unemployment. Faster-growing cities merely maintain their unemployment rates—more people are unemployed as developers and business attract workers with the necessary skills from elsewhere, and the boom attracts new residents hoping to find jobs. In fact, over the long run, people living in cities without subsidies to attract businesses usually make more money. Subsidies for new businesses also discriminate against, and often eliminate, locally based businesses.

Better Not Bigger is a well-documented summary of the problems of growth, and a concise 12-step program for municipal and regional governments to incorporate long-term, sustainable planning into their day-to-day affairs. Fodor offers cost-effective ways to foster a healthy local economy focused on qualitative, versus quantitative growth.

“There is no limit to how much information, understanding, or enlightenment we can acquire,” he writes. “There is no limit to diversity, complexity, or variety. There is no limit to creativity, enterprise, or ambition. There is no limit to personal growth or achievement. A sustainable community can be a dynamic and evolving place. There is no limit to the richness of our lives in such a community.”

Fodor never directly refers to the healthy cities movement, nor to the national and international healthy cities organizations which are assisting communities in developing criteria by which to evaluate changes in quality of life, and in setting long-term sustainable goals. However, this book will be a powerful tool for those towns and cities already moving towards sustainability, and those rural and urban intentional communities seeking better information for negotiating healthier growth policies within and around their communities.

Jackie McMillan is a jack-of-all-trades focused on sustainable city living in Ontario, Canada.



An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community In Its 26th Year by Kat Kinkade

Is it Utopia Yet? is a lively, first-hand account of the unique struggles and triumphs of the first 25 years of Twin Oaks Community, one of America's most prominent and successful communes. This thoughtful and entertaining 320 page book, from the author of *A Walden Two Experiment*, is illustrated with 16 photographs and 60 cartoons.

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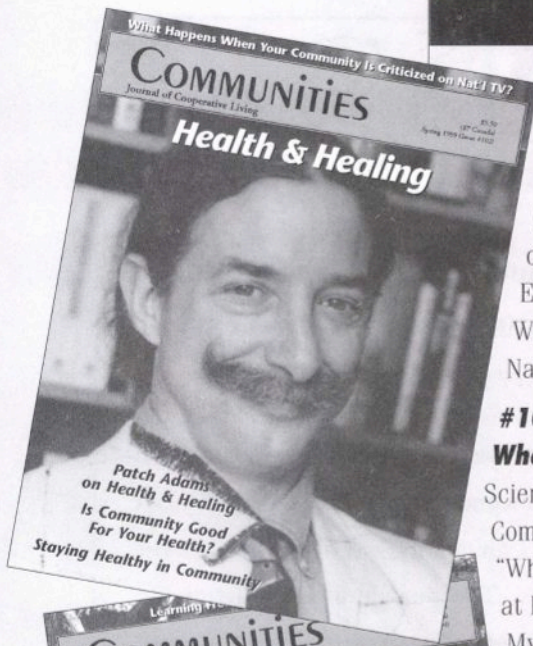
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Community Is Healing; Patch Adams on Health and Healing; Loving to the End; The Hope Street Gang Forever; When Your Community Is Criticized on National TV (Spr '99)

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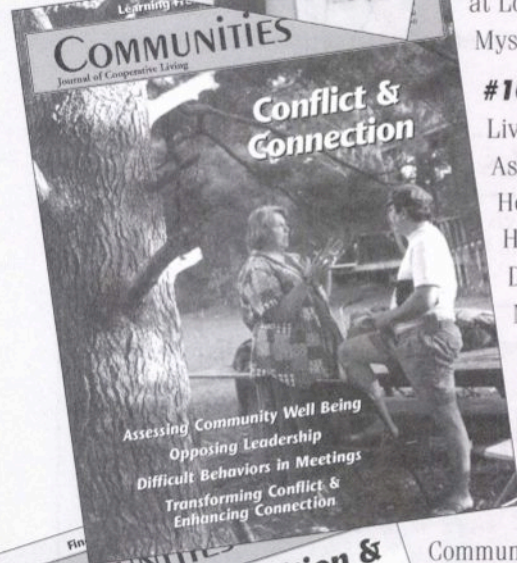
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Living "Naka-Ima" at Lost Valley; Assessing Community Well-Being; A Healing Impulse; About Open-Hearted Listening; Working with Difficult Behaviors in Meetings; Nonviolent Communication: Transforming Conflict and Enhancing Connection (Fall '99)

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What Creates "Community" Spirit?; Dancing for Peace, Joy, and Community; Community Spirit after Cohousing Move-in; How Rumors Can Ruin Community Friendships; Finding New Community Members; Your Publicity Toolbox (Sum '00)

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#110

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



This is a calendar of:

- 1) events organized or hosted by intentional communities;
- 2) events specifically focusing on community living;
- 3) major events with significant participation by members of the communities "movement."

Most of these events occur with some regularity, so this calendar is a fairly accurate template for what to expect next year. Events listed as "hosted" are generally scheduled at a new site for each meeting.

Please send us suggestions about what we might include in future calendars. Also note that the Fellowship publishes a quarterly newsletter (free to FIC members) that includes announcements of and reports about similar events. Information about joining the FIC can be found on p. 78.

Ongoing • Sirius Community Open House

Shutesbury, MA. Sirius community. 1st and 3rd Sundays of each month. Experience community living, shared meals. Community tours. 413-259-1251. www.sirius.org.

Apr 6-9 • Naka-Ima

Dexter, OR. Lost Valley Educational Center. Through the practice of honesty and learning to recognize and let go of attachments, rediscover the depths of the essential self, moving towards greater intimacy, connection, enjoyment, and community. \$300-\$500 s/s, incl. food, lodging. 81868 Lost Valley Lane, Dexter, OR 97431; 541-937-3351; larry@lostvalley.org; www.lostvalley.org.

Apr 8-13 • Spring Service Week

Detroit, OR. Breitenbush Hot Springs. Experience the rewards of service in community. Morning circles & special programs provide sharing & inspiration. If you've ever considered living & working at Breitenbush, join us this week. With Jamshed Ken Storer. \$195 incl. food, lodging. PO Box 578, Detroit, OR 97342; 503-854-3314; office@breitenbush.com; www.breitenbush.com.

Apr 13-16 • Federation of Egalitarian Communities Spring Assembly

Seattle, WA. Beacon Hill and Jolly Ranchers Communities. Delegates from FEC communities plan policy, upcoming events and activities through consensus decision making. Visitors welcome. FEC, 138 Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126.

Apr 20-22 • NASCO West Coast Conference: "Hands on Co-ops"

Eugene, OR. Do-it-yourself hands-on approach to student cooperatives. Robin Brandt, Matt Arcara, 1648 Alder St., Eugene, OR 97405; 541-683-1112; asuosch@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Apr 23-28 • Solar Installation Course

Summertown, TN. The Farm. Become a solar installer. With Ken Olson, Sue Turtle, Ed Eaton. \$500 plus food, lodging. Ecovillage Training Center, PO box 90, Summertown, TN 38483; 931-964-4324; sei@solarenergy.org; ecovillage@thefarm.org; www.thefarm.org.

Apr 28-29 • Cooportunities Portland!

Portland, OR. Northwest Intentional Communities Association event bringing together housing coops, affordable housing groups, cohousing groups, sustainable development interests. Incl. open space design for people to create their own workshops. Kelly Caldwell, Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program; 503-232-0010 ext. 17; kelly@seul123.org; Rob Sandelin, nica@ic.org.

Apr 29 • Medicinal Plant Walk

Occidental, CA. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center. Explore the medicinal plant collection in OAEC's gardens. Plant identification; medicinal and garden uses; ways of incorporating medicinal plants into the garden scheme. With Kalanete Baruch. \$20, 10:30am, 3 hours. 15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465; 707-874-1557; oaec@oaec.org; www.oaec.org.

May 18-20 • Organic Gardening Intensive

Occidental, CA. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center. Garden design and planning; bio-intensive techniques; crop selection; soil fertility management and enhancement; sheet mulching; composting; vermiculture; greenhouse management; seed saving principles; harvesting/cooking from the garden. Receive OAEC's garden planting calendar and a reader of pertinent articles. With Doug Gosling. \$325 incl. food, lodging. 15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465; 707-874-1557; oaec@oaec.org; www.oaec.org.

May 18-21 • Naka-Ima

Dexter, OR. See Apr 6-9.

May 18-26 • Permaculture Fundamentals

Summertown, TN. The Farm. First half of complete design certification course. Learn low impact methodologies that are creating a holistic movement. With Peter Bane, Chuck Marsh, Albert Bates, Patricia Allison. \$600. Ecovillage Training Center, PO Box 90, Summertown, TN 38483; 931-964-4324; culturesedge@earthaven.org; ecovillage@thefarm.org; www.thefarm.org/permaculture/.

May 28-31 • Fellowship for Intentional Community, Spring Meeting

Black Mountain, NC. Earthaven Community. Planning policies, reports, and consensus decision making, by board members, staff, and volunteers for FIC, publishers of *Communities* magazine, *Communities Directory*, and Intentional Communities Web site, and hosts of the Community Day gatherings. Visitors welcome; call or write for details. 660-883-5545; fic@ic.org; www.ic.org.

Jun 1-3 • Intentional Community Experience

Black Mountain, NC. Culture's Edge, Earthaven Community. Friday night and Sunday Earthaven members offer workshops in aspects of permaculture, sustainable living, community life, in conjunction with FIC's June 2 "Community Day" (see listing below). 838-669-3937; culturesedge@earthaven.org; www.earthaven.org.

Jun 2 • FIC Community Day

Black Mountain, NC. Earthaven Community. Fellowship for Intentional Community, sponsor. How-to workshops, networking w/members of dozens of intentional communities as well as authors and contributors to *Communities Directory* and *Communities* magazine. Topics incl. sustainable culture, sustainable building, sustainable agriculture, consensus, resolving conflict, forming new communities.

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June 25-27: INTL. COMMUNAL STUDIES ASSN. CONFERENCE

ICSA's seventh conference, but first to be held at a community: *Communal Living on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Lessons and Perspectives*. Price €205 (euros) + accommodations*. For detailed info: www.antenna.nl/icsa

July 1-7: ZEGG'S FOURTH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES MEETING (ICM)

For representatives of national and international communities and networkers of the communities movement. ICM aims at an exchange of experiences in our work and in our communities and serves the growth and inner building of a network based on friendship and cooperation. More info: Sarah.Vollmer@zegg.de

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Presenters include Earthaven ecovillage pioneers, and community activists Laird Schaub, Geoph Kozeny, Diana Christian, and others. Followed by day-long "Intentional Community Experience" (see listing, above), w/ Earthaven teachers on aspects of permaculture, sustainability, forming new communities, ecovillage life in process. 660-883-5545; arjanette@ic.org; www.ic.org.

Jun 2 • Sustainable Forestry

Occidental, CA. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center. Scale-appropriate timber harvesting; non-timber forest products; stand thinning; fuel load management; forest health; wildlife habitat enhancement; road & upland erosion control strategies; restoration forestry property planning, & more. With Tim Metz, Brock Dolman. \$100, 9am–5pm, incl. lunch. 15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465; 707-874-1557; oaec@oaec.org; www.oaec.org.

Jun 3 • Cooking from the Garden

Occidental, CA. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center. Harvest organic vegetables, edible flowers, culinary herbs, fruit and transform into meal class shares. Focus on salads, savory dishes and seasonal fruit desserts. With Doug Gosling. \$100. 15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465; 707-874-1557; oaec@oaec.org; www.oaec.org.

Jun 8–10 • Natural Buildings (Straw, Cob, and Round Pole)

Summertown, TN. The Farm. Constructing "Nebraska style" cabin; basic techniques of cob construction; visit local post and beam and other examples. With Howard Switzer, Albert Bates. \$325. *Ecovillage Training Center, PO Box 90, Summertown, TN 38483; 931-964-4324; ecovillage@thefarm.org; www.thefarm.org.*

Jun 8–11 • Naka-Ima

Dexter, OR. See Apr 6–9.

Jun 21–24 • Advanced Permaculture Landscape Design

Black Mountain, NC. Culture's Edge, Earthaven community. Elegant traditions & contemporary design patterns & principles. Will Hooker. \$125. 838-669-3937; culturededge@earthaven.org; www.earthaven.org.

Jun 22–24 • Loving More, 15th Annual Conference

Middletown, CA. Harbin Hot Springs. Annual gathering on polyamory, polyfidelity, and multiple loving relationships. *Loving More, Box 4358, Boulder, CO 80306; 800-424-9641; 303-543-7540; LMM@lovemore.com; www.lovemore.com.*

Jun 25–27 • International Communal Studies Association

Belzig, Germany. ZEGG (Center for Experimental Culture Design). Scholarly conference on all aspects of commune and intentional community living. Speakers from communities worldwide, Communities Fair. Followed by three-day tour of German intentional communities. Dr. Bill Metcalf; w.metcalf@mailbox.gu.edu.au; www.antenna.nl/ficsa.

Jun 29–Jul 2 • Women's Work: Creating Sustainable Futures

Black Mountain, NC. Culture's Edge, Earthaven community. Women sharing information, skills, experience, song, prayer, and dance. Introducing permaculture as tool for harmonious lives. Patricia Allison, Mollie Curry. \$175. 838-669-3937; culturededge@earthaven.org; www.earthaven.org.

Jul 1–7 • Fourth International Community Meeting

Belzig, Germany. ZEGG (Center for Experimental Culture Design). Meeting of national & international communities & worldwide community networkers. Topics incl. purpose of our work, political effectiveness, communities' relationship to society, concrete meaning of community, regional networking, raising children in community. Sarah.Vollmer@zegg.de.

Jul 5–Aug 18 • Permaculture Residency Program

Black Mountain, NC. Culture's Edge, Earthaven community. Summer residency program combining beginning and advanced certificate courses with four week's directed work applying design skills to community infrastructure. Apply by June 1st. Camping, meals, materials, tuition, \$2000. 838-669-3937; culturededge@earthaven.org; www.earthaven.org.

Jul 6–14 • Permaculture Fundamentals Course

Black Mountain, NC. Culture's Edge, Earthaven community. Multi-modal format, high teacher/student ratio. Ethics & principles; observation, pattern, design; climate, forest, soils; cultivated ecology (garden, plants, animals); building design, energy, water, waste; developing settlements (land use, appropriate technology, economics & finance, urban applications). With Chuck Marsh, Peter Bane, Patricia Allison, Andrew Goodheart Brown, Keith Johnson. Camping, meals, materials, tuition, \$600. 838-669-3937; culturededge@earthaven.org; www.earthaven.org.

Jul 13–21 • Permaculture Practicum

Summertown, TN. The Farm Community. Second half of complete design certification course. Prerequisite: Permaculture Fundamentals. W/Peter Bane, Chuck Marsh, Patricia Allison. \$600. *Ecovillage Training Center, PO Box 90, Summertown, TN 38483; 931-964-4324; ecovillage@thefarm.org; www.thefarm.org.*

Jul 13–Aug 10 • English Language Community Course

Belzig, Germany. ZEGG (Center for Experimental Culture Design). Four-week English language community course, incl. Summer Camp (Jul 20–Aug 5). Lifestyles of peace (Jul 20–28) w/Heide Goettner-Abendroth on matriarchal research. Individual visions & political consequences (Jul 29–Aug 5) w/Scilla Elworthy, active for a world without nuclear weapons. Children/youth camp, women's space, men's space, parents forum, meditation, dance, music, swimming. ZEGG GmbH, Rosaluxemburg-Str. 89, D-14806 Belzig, Germany; +49-(0)33841-59510; empfang@zegg.de; www.zegg.de.

Jul 20–22 • North American Cohousing Conference

Berkeley, CA. The Cohousing Network. Bi-annual cohousing conference for anyone interested in living in or creating cohousing communities. 303-413-9227; info@cohousing.org.

Jul 20–22 • Art in the Garden

Occidental, CA. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center. Masonry tile making; brick laying; creative mosaic tile setting; laying out planting beds and making borders. Incl. practical information about growing and training plants and other gardening tips. With Adam Wolpert. \$325 incl. food, lodging. 15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465; 707-874-1557; oaec@oaec.org; www.oaec.org.

Jul 20–23 • Naka-Ima

Dexter, OR. See Apr 6–9.

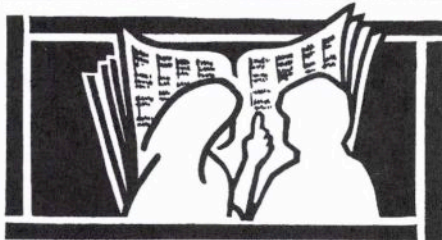
July 21–22 • Coming to Consensus

Black Mountain, NC. Culture's Edge, Earthaven community. Communicate & make decisions in ways that empower everyone in the group. With Patricia Allison, Arjuna daSilva. \$175. 838-669-3937; culturededge@earthaven.org; www.earthaven.org.

Jul 29 • Inner Journey on the Land

Occidental, CA. Occidental Arts and Ecology Center. Day-long journey of solitude followed by storytelling, mirroring, and ceremony. Connect with life of the garden and wildlands. Experience how your inner journey is reflected in the natural world. Fasting optional. With Rachel Gardner. \$85. 15290 Coleman Valley Rd., Occidental, CA 95465; 707-874-1557; oaec@oaec.org; www.oaec.org.

CLASSIFIEDS



Communities classified ads reach 5,000 people seriously interested in community. They include:

- any service, product, workshop or publication that is useful to people living in, or interested in living in communities;
- products produced by people living in community;
- land for sale which may be of interest to people forming or expanding communities;
- personal ads.

Please note that the CLASSIFIED DEADLINE FOR THE SUMMER 2001 ISSUE (OUT IN JUNE) IS APRIL 15TH.

The classified rate is \$.50 per word. We now have a discounted rate of \$.40/wd. for a four time insertion and if you are an FIC member, you may take off an additional five percent. We appreciate your payment on ordering. Make check or money order out to Communities and send it, your typed or clearly printed copy with specified word count, how many times you wish the ad to appear and under which category (you may suggest a new category) to: Patricia Greene, 13 West Branch Rd., Heath, MA 01339. Phone or fax: 413-337-4037; email: peagreen@javanet.com If you are emailing me an ad, please be sure to send your mailing address, phone and put the check in the mail at the same time.

An additional benefit of advertising in Communities Classifieds is that you get a half-price listing on our Marketplace web page if you like. To place your web ad: www.ic.org.

NOTE: new picture listings with Land and Homes For Sale ads. See section for details.

All other listings can be found in the Reach and Calendar columns.

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO CONSENSUS. Useful information about participatory group process and sustainable decision making. Includes 28-page Guide for Facilitators. Also available in Spanish. \$15 check or money order to Beatrice Briggs, POB 25, Black Earth, WI 53515. Briggsbea@aol.com.

CLASSES, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES

COMMUNITY DIALOGS across North America, sponsored by the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine. What does "community" mean to you? What would help you create more community in your life? And how can the FIC help? Community Dialogs are happening in many towns and cities across the continent; your area could be next. Seeking local hosts to bring people together for a discussion exploring these and other topics. For more information, contact the FIC office at RR1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5545; fic@ic.org.

TOOLS FOR INTENTIONAL LIVING on your own and in Community. In the Avatar Course you learn how to get out of your own way, dream—and achieve—bigger, connect more easily, resolve conflicts quickly, and enjoy the process a whole bunch more. We have found these tools to be remarkably effective in our own Community, and we create a strong Community feel during our course. Avatar is the "how-to" course for deliberate living. Group discounts. Contact Ma'ikwe at 417-935-2984; mitrasom@altavista.com.

CONSULTANTS

VASTU VEDIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION. Ancient Indian architectural traditions hold that a building is a living organism and can be designed in harmonic resonance with the underlying energy structure of the universe. Such a building becomes a generator of coherence, attuning the occupants to the universal laws and increasing health, wealth and spiritual well-being. Design services/consultation. Vastuved@yahoo.com.



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The Cohousing Network (TCN) is a membership based non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of the cohousing model of community development throughout North America.

The Cohousing Network serves both individuals and groups who choose to create and live in Cohousing communities by educating, connecting, inspiring and evolving systems for sharing living experiences specific to the Cohousing lifestyle.

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Join TCN and receive a wealth of benefits including our quarterly publication *CoHousing* full of information about building and living in cohousing communities. For additional information please call:

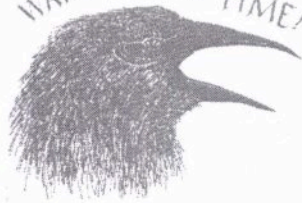
303-584-3237

or visit our web site at:

www.cohousing.org

The Cohousing Network
P.O. Box 2584 - Berkeley, CA - 94702

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FACILITATION AND WORKSHOPS on consensus and other decision-making tools. Learn skills to make your meetings upbeat and productive from planning agendas to dealing with "difficult" people. Save hours of time and frustration and deepen your sense of community. Contact: *Tree Bressen*, 541-484-1156; tree@ic.org.

LAND AND HOUSES FOR SALE

Run a one-inch picture of your land or home with your copy for only \$20 more. Send high contrast, horizontal photo by the stated deadline.

PERFECT FOR START-UP COMMUNITY. 40 acres. Two magnificent post/beam homes, rustic two-story cabin, additional full basement foundation. Beautiful woodworking, grid and solar-electric power, outbuildings. 29 miles NW of Spokane, WA, easy access to Long Lake. Irrigated gardens, year-round spring, two small ponds, meadows, woods. Beautiful views—surrounding forests. Spokane Mesa. \$285,000. 509-258-9443; MargaretRhode@aol.com; johnlscott.com/13751.

REMOTE BUILDING SITES. 15 miles south of Deming, New Mexico. Tillable soil. Pure, abundant water about 200 ft. deep. Quiet. Minimal restrictions. Prime solar/wind. Roads in. Build with adobe. Terms. *Dennis Mack*, HC15, Box 1335, San Lorenzo, NM 88041; 505-536-3813.

SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO. Ideal retreat center/spiritual community land. 200 acres in riparian zone with year-round creek. Adjacent to Gila National Forest. Secluded yet accessible. Neighbors to Sufi Community. Contact *Rashad* at POB 373, Silver City, NM 88062; 505-538-0201; rashad@gilanet.com.

NORTHERN IDAHO. 120 beautiful, secluded acres in the mountains. Approximately 70 treed, 50 meadow, seasonal creek, spring. Well with gasoline generator, building site with drainfield, septic and telephone. Off the grid. Sell all or part. Terms acceptable. \$143,000. 505-388-2237.

IDEAL COMMUNITY PROPERTY. 11 acre semi-rural, partially solar-powered homestead, an hour from Asheville, NC. Two houses (three bedroom/two bath, office, and three bedroom, one bath, office); 4,000 sq. ft. fenced organic garden; three acre pasture; 2,800 watt-hours/mo. solar

system, AC & DC (grid backup) and two wells (one with DC pump); three outbuildings, 4–5 acres woods. 828-863-2802; diana@ic.org.

MAGAZINES, NEWSLETTERS

WHY PAY RENT OR MAKE MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, when you can live rent free? The *Caretaker Gazette* contains property caretaking/housesitting openings, advice and information for property caretakers, housesitters and landowners. Published since 1983. Subscribers receive 700+ property caretaking opportunities each year, worldwide. Some estate management positions start at \$50,000/yr. Plus benefits. Subscriptions; \$27/yr. *The Caretaker Gazette*, POB 5887-1, Carefree, AZ 85377; 480-488-1970; www.angelfire.com/wa/caretaker.

PERSONALS

CONCERNED SINGLES links compatible, socially conscious singles who care about peace, social justice, racism, gender equity, the environment, personal growth. Nationwide/International. All ages. Straight/gay. Since 1984. Free sample: Box 444-CO, Lenox Dale, MA 01242; 413-445-6309; www.concernedsingles.com.

GREEN SINGLES NEWSLETTER. Connecting singles in the environmental, vegetarian and animal rights communities for friendship, dating and romance. Membership around the world and around the corner. Since 1985. Free information: Box 69-CM, Pickerington, OH 43147; www.greensingles.com.

SERVICES

THERAPEUTIC BODYWORK. Seeking community to do bodywork, ie. Trager, Z.B., CranioSacral, Massage, Shiatsu. Ischweit@yourinter.net.



Discover the Affordable Alternative Living Shelter Yomes, combine the features of Yurts and Geodesic Domes



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REACH



Reach is a regular feature intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people. As the most up-to-date and widely read clearinghouse available to you, it reaches those who are seriously interested in community.

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. Note: THE REACH DEADLINE FOR THE SUMMER 2001 ISSUE (OUT IN JUNE) IS APRIL 15TH!

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.50 per word thereafter for all ads) so why not use this opportunity to network with others interested in community? We offer discounts for multiple insertions as well: \$.23 per word for two times and \$.20 per word for four times. If you are an FIC member, take off an additional five percent.

Please make check or money order payable to Communities, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions and category to: Patricia Greene, 13 West Branch Rd., Heath, MA 01339; phone and fax: 413-337-4037; email: peagreen@javanet.com. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number, and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Suggestion: get a larger response by not excluding anyone. Include not just email, but address and phone. Caveat to readers: never, but never, drop in on any community unannounced!

NOTE: new picture listings with Community House For Sale ads. See section for details.

Listings for workshops, land, books, products, etc. including personals, belong in Communities Classifieds and are charged at a .50/wd. rate. Please see that column for instructions.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

ABUNDANT DAWN COMMUNITY, Floyd, Virginia. Experienced community founders seek pioneers. We are committed to dealing openly with conflict and to considering carefully the impacts of our actions on the planet. Our 90 acres of beautiful southern Appalachian land has building sites for four or five small sub-communities ("pods"). So far we are two pods: Tekiah (an income-sharing group) and Dayspring Circle (an independent-income group). We want to grow, both by taking on new members in existing pods, and by taking on new groups. Business opportunities include organic gardening, portable sawmill operation, and a hemp hammock business. Some members work in nearby cities. We include a diversity of spiritual and sexual orientations. Families welcome. POB 433, Floyd, VA 24091; abundantdawn@ic.org; www.abundantdawn.org.

ACORN, Mineral, Virginia. We are a young, consensus community creating an egalitarian culture that values fun, children, relationships and varied, fulfilling work. We share income from selling crafts, organic farming and occasional outside jobs, and work together to build and maintain our home on 72 acres. Acorn, 1259-CM12 Indian Creek Rd., Mineral, VA 23117; 540-894-0595; acorn@ic.org.

AQUARIAN CONCEPTS, Sedona, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Sedona and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 100 members full-time. We love children. International flavor. Global change work for Destiny Reservists in Divine Administration. God-centered community based on teachings of *The URANTIA Book* and *Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation—The Cosmic Family Volumes* as received by Gabriel of Sedona. Clean air, pure water, organic gardens. Starseed Schools of Melchizedek (all ages) and healing environment which includes morontian counseling and other alternative practices. Global Change Music with Gabriel of Sedona and the Bright and Morning Star Band with the vocal CDs "Holy City" and "CosmoPop 2000," and Future Studios with CosmoArt, CosmoTheater and video productions. Planetary Family Services, including light construction, stone masonry, landscaping, cleaning and maintenance, teepees and yurts, computer services, elder home care. Serious spiritual commitment required. Student commitment also available. POB 3946, Sedona, AZ 86340; 520-204-1206; aquarianconcepts@sedona.net; www.aquarianconcepts.org www.globalchangemusic.org.

BREITENBUSH HOT SPRINGS, Detroit, Oregon. We are a wilderness retreat and conference center owned and operated by an intentional community, organized as a worker-owned cooperative. Breitenbush is surrounded by old growth temperate rain forest, one of the last of its kind on Earth, and possesses the highest concentration of thermal springs in the Oregon Cascades. We have a variety of hot tubs, natural hot spring pools, a steam sauna and all buildings are heated geothermally. The work and business ethic is one of stewardship; caring for the land while insuring accessibility of the healing waters to all who respect them. Breitenbush hosts events involving human potential: meditation, yoga, theater, dance. Breitenbush provides housing and a variety of benefits for its staff of 40 to 60 people. We are looking for talented, dedicated people in the areas of housekeeping, cooking, office (reservations, registration and administration), maintenance, construction and massage therapy (Oregon LMT required). Our mission is to provide a safe and potent environment for social and personal growth. *Breitenbush Hot Springs, Personnel Director, POB 578, Detroit, OR 97342; 503-854-3320.*

BROADDUS FARM, East Central New Mexico. Non-smokers only, no illegal substances. Organic gardening. Helping in community is expected to receive free vegetables and live rent free. No particular mind-set expected. Quiet and private. Request details: *Broaddus Farm, POB 153, Elida, NM 88116; 505-274-6440.*

CAMPBILL VILLAGE MINNESOTA, Sauk Centre, Minnesota. Part of the International Camphill movement. Located in rural central Minnesota. Life-sharing community of 60 people, 25 of whom are adults with special needs. We are on 400 acres—woods, fields, river, ponds. We have a dairy farm, beef farm, weavary (rugs and scarves), woodshop

(toys and household items), bakery (bread, cookies, cereals), dollmaking shop, food processing kitchen and large vegetable gardens. We provide our own bread and biodynamic/organic meat, milk and vegetables. We live and work together with respect for each person's abilities. Although we work out of a non-denominational Christian philosophy, we accept people of all spiritual paths. Fostering a mood of reverence and gratitude is an essential part of Camphill life. We celebrate the seasonal and Christian festivals of the year with songs, stories, plays and other activities that are prepared together in the community. We seek people to join us—families, couples, single people. We need people who can be House parents (usually with four special needs people and one or two other "co-workers"), a dairy farmer, gardeners and people willing to lend a hand wherever needed. We are looking for long term, committed people generally starting with a six month get-acquainted period. We provide health insurance, three weeks vacation and meet each person's needs as possible. For information: Rt. 3, Box 249, Sauk Centre, MN 56378; 320-732-6365; Fax: 320-732-3204; CVMN@rea-alp.com.

CHILDREN FOR THE FUTURE, Champaign, Illinois. Join our child-friendly, peace-oriented, income-sharing community of students and grads. We are currently five adult non-smokers and three children. Our houses are just two blocks from the University of Illinois. We are academically oriented, non-sectarian and home school. Student members are subsidized and pay just \$110/mo room/board. Members get back 25% of earning for personal expenses. Student loans and moving expenses are paid by the community. We hope to have and raise many intelligent and well-rounded children who will contribute positively to society. 800-498-7781; C4TF@cs.com; www.childrenforthefuture.org.

DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri. We are actively seeking new members to join us in creating our vibrant home and sustainability demonstration project. We are building our homes with earth-friendly materials on our 280 beautiful, rolling acres in northeast Missouri. We live, work and play together; with cooperation and feminism as basic principles. We grow much of our food and share delicious organic meals together every day. We make our decisions by consensus. If you're looking for a nurturing home where you can live more sustainably and make a difference in the world, come visit us. Help make our ecovillage grow! *One Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org.*

DREAMING LIZARD, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Cooperative housing in a quiet, established neighborhood close to our local food co-op and the vibrant university district. We are musicians, dancers, activists, and anarchists, living simply in the unique beauty of New Mexico's high desert. We currently own two large city lots with three houses, trees, gardens, porches and a greenhouse. As adjoining properties come up for sale, we hope like-minded people will buy them. Some rental space may be available. SASE please. 4507 Marble NE, Albuquerque, NM 87110; 505-266-7567.

EARTHAVEN, Black Mountain, North Carolina. Community in the Blue Ridge invites motivated cultural evolutionaries to live in dynamic harmony with nature (and each other) on 325 acres. Three

**The Farm Midwifery
Workshops
in Summertown, Tennessee
with Ina May Gaskin
and the Farm Midwives**



In the **Midwife Assistant Workshops** you will be introduced to the knowledge and skills that prepare you to become a midwife assistant. We also introduce you to the different paths of midwifery and discuss educational opportunities available.

In the **Advanced Midwifery Workshop** you will have the opportunity to update and learn the newest methods of the following skills: suturing, lab skills, pap smears, breech delivery, twin deliveries, phlebotomy, and urinary catheterization. Ina May will lead discussions on length of labor, prolonged labor, inductions and augmentations, the history of midwifery and the empowerment of women. You will also get to visit an Amish community midwife and visit her clinic.

Workshop Dates:

Level I

March 11-17, 2001
June 10 -16, 2001
August 5 -11, 2001
Nov. 4 -10, 2001

January 20-26, 2002

Level II

April 1-7, 2001
August 19-25, 2001
February 3-9, 2002

Advanced Continuing Ed. Units offered

July 22-28, 2001

These workshops are a rich group experience that will warm your heart and empower you. Accommodations will be FREE for the first 8 applicants in each workshop. Each week long workshop is \$525, and includes two meals a day.

For more information contact:

The Farm Midwifery Workshops
P.O. Box 217
Summertown, TN 38483
Phone: (931) 964-2472
e-mail: midwfeWS@usit.net
www.MidwiferyWorkshops.org

streams, permaculture land plan (70+ house sites in 11 neighborhoods, 25 leases sold), natural building methods, simple off-grid living. Hydro-powered village center with strawbale community hall and kitchen, store and café. Gardens, lumber mill, building coop, workshops and trainings. Growing every day! Accessible to Asheville. Membership and visiting information: info@earthhaven.org; "Infopak" and four newsletters available for \$15 from *Earthaven Association*, 1025 Camp Elliott Road, Black Mountain, NC 28711. Visit our Web site at www.earthaven.org or leave phone number at 828-669-3937.

EAST WIND, Tecumseh, Missouri. A 75-member Federation of Egalitarian (FEC) community, est. 1973. Located on 1,045 acres of land in the Ozark foothills of southern Missouri. The topography is heavily forested and scenic. Like other FEC communities, East Wind members value ecological awareness, equality, cooperation, and nonviolence. Personal freedom is important to us. We enjoy flexible work schedules, incorporating choices from our successful businesses and domestic labors. Write or call and please contact us before visiting. *East Wind Community*, Box CM-R, Tecumseh, MO 65760; 417-679-4682; visit@eastwind.org.

ECHO FARM, Nacogdoches, Texas. How you are born, and birth and parent echoes through your whole life and all your future generations. Cooperative house forming in pleasant, smallish, college town. Service oriented, birth-focused, drug free. Immediate goals: establish cooperative household and provide space to support positive birthing and related issues (LLL, childbirth classes, parent support groups, etc.) Next goals: provide hospitality for pregnant mothers, grow into a land-based community, and offer an "alternative" daycare and/or school. Extended community of midwives, doulas, and educators already in this area and becoming increasingly organized. Families welcome. Contact: *Barr Houston*, POB 631827, Nacogdoches, TX 75963; 936-559-7585; topaz@ic.org.

ECOVILLAGE COHOUSING, Ithaca, New York. A great place to live! We are creating an environmental village that will be composed of several cohousing communities integrated with a working farm and education center. As an experiment in sustainable living, we already inspire visitors from around the world. EVI actively seeks a diverse membership, including ethnic, economic, physical ability, sexual orientation, age and spiritual. We are also seeking new members to join our diverse second neighbor-

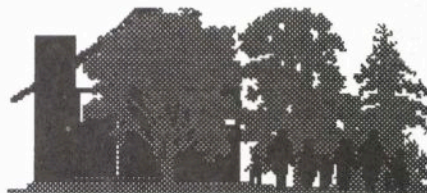
hood group (SoNG), which plans to begin building this summer. Come see our beautiful 176-acre site near a vibrant college town. Stay overnight in our first neighborhood, a lively community of 30 families, share a meal in the common house and visit our 9.5-acre organic farm. EcoVillage welcomes you! Check out our Web site at: www.ecovillage-ithaca.ny.us and contact: *Liz Walker*, 607-255-8276; ecovillage@cornell.edu; *EcoVillage, Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853*.

THE FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York. We seek co-workers. Located 30 minutes north of NYC, we are an intergenerational community founded in 1966, centered around the care of the elderly. Now numbering about 150 elderly, co-workers and children, we grow our own fruit and vegetables bio-dynamically. All ages work together in our practical work activities. They include a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop, weavery/hand-work group, greenhouse, publishing press, bakery, outlet store and medical practice. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives nearby. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of mankind. Check out our web site at www.FellowshipCommunity.org If you are interested in co-working or need additional info, please contact our office at 845-356-8494; or write to: *Ann Scharff*, c/o *The Executive Circle* at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977; fellowship@attglobal.net.

MIRACLES FOR MA, Margate, Florida. Household seeking Patch Adams type lightworkers, healers, artists, clowns, sing-a-longers, huggers. Into voluntary simplicity, simple miracles. Help rejuvenate/heal "Ma," a challenging/fun exchange for rent. Pools, tennis, bikes, hot tub under the stars. Check references. *Carol*: 954-957-7253.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Family-style, income-sharing, egalitarian community looking for new members to help build a caring, sustainable lifestyle, respectful of the earth and each other. We support ourselves growing and selling organic food (sorghum, honey, mustard, tempeh, garlic, horse-radish), helping build the communities movement (we do administrative work for FIC), and by having fun! We grow most of our own food and value the energy put into that process. We operate by consensus and hold group meetings twice weekly. We are looking for people who value simple living, are self-motivated, conscientious, and willing to follow

Northwest Intentional Communities Association



Communities networking
WA, OR, ID

Intentional Communities
and Cohousing.

Newsletter and gatherings

Huge web resource library at
<http://www.ic.org/nica>

For sample newsletter send \$1 or SASE to: NICA 22110 East Lost Lake Rd.
Snohomish, WA 98296 Email floriferous@msn.com

through with conflict resolution. We have experience homeschooling. Single parents or families with a child of four to ten years old are particularly encouraged to visit. We are looking to expand our membership from the current five adults and one child. Having a sense of humor and a joy for living are big pluses. We have recently joined energies with Dancing Rabbit (a community two miles away aiming to build a sustainable ecovillage.) Interns welcome April-November (see ad below). *Sandhill Farm, Rt. 1, Box 155-C, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5543; sandhill@ic.org.*

SALT CREEK INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY, Port Angeles, Washington. We are four non-sectarian, middle-aged, mostly traditional adults seeking members who share our vision of community which is: six to eight "families" who take responsibility to learn, communicate honestly, adapt and cooperate to create balanced, peaceful lives while restoring and sustaining our natural environment on 55 acres of forest, creek and farmland. We are not income sharing. We have a permit for a seven-lot cluster development, and are developing an organic market garden. Our dream is to build a common house and six individually owned small houses. We are still researching our legal structure but are leaning toward a homeowner association with common ownership of the common areas and open space. We are located 13 miles west of Port Angeles, a town of 20,000 near the Olympic National Park. SASE to *Salt Creek Intentional Community, 585 Wasankari Rd., Port Angeles, WA 98363; janevavan1@aol.com.*

THREE SPRINGS, North Fork, California. Our 160 acres, including annual creek, pond, rolling hills and CSA organic garden, is held in a nonprofit land trust. After 5+ years, we have grown to seven adults and two children. We are now seeking new members who share our values of consensus decision making, simple living, and interpersonal growth. Send letter of intent. *59820 Italian Bar Road, North Fork, CA 93643; farm@sierratel.com*

TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. Twin Oaks has been a model of sustainable community living for over 30 years. We are currently looking for new members, and would love to have you visit. We can offer you: a flexible work schedule in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of nonviolence and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live lightly on the land and share income. For information: *Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin*

Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126; twinoaks@ic.org; www.twinoaks.org.

UNION ACRES COMMUNITY, Whittier, North Carolina. Established community seeks responsible and fun-loving people to purchase lots and join us on 80 acres in the Smokey Mountains. Children welcome. Contact: *Union Acres, 654 Heartwood Way, Whittier, NC 28789; swasapp@earthlink.net; www.home.earthlink.net/~lachristie.*

WINDTREE RANCH, Douglas, Arizona. Remote foothills, eco-sustainable, poly, Pagan, naturist, vegan, toxin-free, nonprofit. *RR2, Box 1, Douglas, AZ 85607-9802; 520-364-4611; windtreeranch@theriver.com; www.windtree.org.*

COMMUNITY HOUSES FOR SALE

Run a one-inch-high picture of your home for sale with your copy for only \$20 more! Photo must be high contrast and horizontal and must arrive by the stated deadline.

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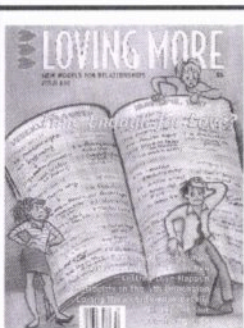
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MOSAIC COMMONS, Framingham/Concord, Massachusetts. We are looking for members and searching for land for a cohousing community in the Framingham/Concord area. *978-779-6286; info@mosaic-commons.org.*

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SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Living. February to November. Gain experience in organic farming, construction, communication, rural and community living. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for six weeks or longer. See community description under "Communities With Openings" above. *Sandhill Farm, RR1, Box 155-C, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5543; sandhill@ic.org*; see our link at www.thefec.org.

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PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

(continued from p. 80)

of reporting expected. Making effective use of committees (also aided greatly by those job descriptions) helps to spread out the workload, and the more the work is shared by the overall membership, the more the efforts of dedicated leadership will be appreciated. Training all members in the use of consensus techniques goes a long way towards building camaraderie and trust, even for groups that officially use a voting system, and getting some of the leaders trained as consensus facilitators is a hugely worthwhile investment. Finally, bringing together leaders from the different groups, both to share information and to provide peer support, is tremendously helpful and quite cost-effective.

To a large extent, the leadership issues faced by student co-ops are identical to those experienced in other democratically structured communities, except that students work with a more demanding time frame due to the built-in turnover. The time is ripe for more networking between students and post-graduates living in intentional communities. If more veteran community folks will look for opportunities to share their experiences and insights with student co-ops, and if what's being learned in the academic laboratories of cooperation is better documented and disseminated, then everyone seeking to live a cooperative lifestyle will benefit, and more effective leadership will emerge to help lead the quest for a sustainable, cooperative future for us all. Ω

Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 27 years, and has been on the road for 13 years visiting communities—asking about their visions and realities, taking photos, and giving slide shows about the diversity and vitality of the communities movement. He is also a co-director of Co-op Camp Sierra: www.coopcamp.com.

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The Neverending Challenge

PASSING THE BATON OF EXPERIENCE AND leadership is challenging in any organization, but it's especially tough for student co-ops because, by definition, they must perpetually confront that great barrier to continuity, the goal of student reality: graduation.

It typically takes a year or two to thoroughly learn the ropes and develop the skills needed to hold down a position of major responsibility in a student co-op, leaving only a year or three to expand and refine the job before the incumbent heads off to post-college reality. Unless a replacement is trained and integrated before the graduating leader departs, the next generation frequently finds itself reinventing the wheel. (See "Hapless in Ohio," p. 50).

Fortunately, a couple of commonly used strategies are available to temper the impact of turnover. One is to create a training manual—although that requires a person who thoroughly understands the job and is a good writer. Plus, whoever follows in this person's footsteps needs to have the skill and inclination to learn the job through the written word. A more consistently effective solution is to hire an ongoing staff from the ranks of current and graduate co-ops, but that can get expensive—it's an opportunity primarily available to the big-budget large-membership co-ops, including the multihouse organizations such as the ICCs in Austin and Ann Arbor, and the USCA in Berkeley. Fortunately, there are also organizations such as NASCO (North American Students of Cooperation), which provide some ongoing history, inspiration, training, and support for all student co-ops, including the smaller ones.

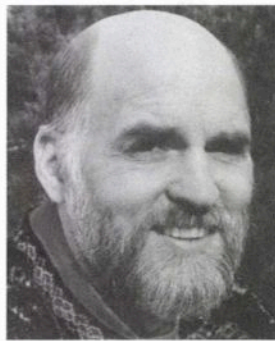
However, even when the continuity issue is solved, a couple of other tricky dynamics make leadership in student co-ops an ongoing challenge. The most common of these, ironically, is the result of a student co-op success-

fully accomplishing its goal of being affordable. A significant number of students with no particular interest in "cooperation" apply for co-op membership simply because the rent is low. These students tend to resist many of the structures and requirements in place for members, making it harder for the co-op to accomplish group decision making and a sense of unity. These students do present a unique opportunity, however: they are a somewhat captive audience for information about the history, purpose, and methods of cooperation. But beware ... any attempt to force such an education program upon bargain-seeking students is likely to meet with failure. Much more promising is an approach which finds ways to grab students' attention by making the member education process interesting, engaging, and rewarding.

An even greater challenge to creating and sustaining effective leadership in student co-ops is the widespread fear of inflated egos and the abuse of power. Co-op members, like people in the surrounding culture, generally mistrust anyone who seeks a leadership role—a skepticism that is healthy in small doses, but which in co-ops tends to be taken to the extreme. As a result, many potential student leaders are reluctant to stick out their necks for fear they'll be unfairly criticized. This results in just the opposite of what is truly needed: the co-ops end up with fewer leaders instead of more.

Besides the obvious solution of cloning leaders with thicker skin, several other helpful steps are available. Creating written job descriptions eliminates a lot of unclarity and sets limits for autonomy and accountability, as long as the guidelines specify what's to be done, by whom, with what resources, and the type and frequency

(continued on p. 79)



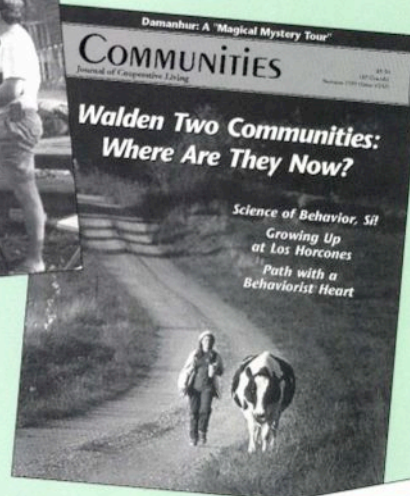
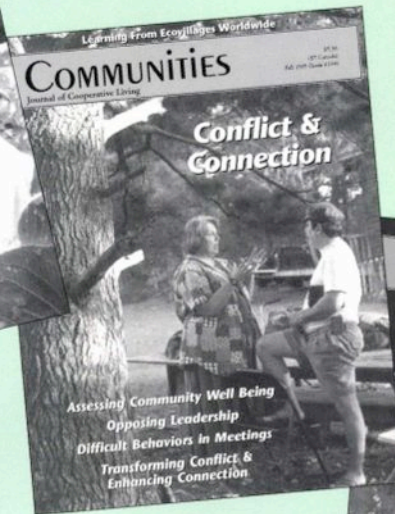
BY GEOPH KOZENY

One perpetual challenge to co-op leadership is that goal of student reality: graduation.

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