

ORGANIZING A COLLECTIVE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

*Will You Live Your
Elder Years
in Community?*

**Graying
in Community**

**Elder Cohousing:
An Idea Whose Time Has Come?**

**Would I Live in
Community Again?**

Ecotopia in Japan?

Ernest Callenbach explores
Yamagishi Toyosato

Start a neighborhood
**Dinner
Co-op**

Fall 2006 • Issue #132

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communities.ic.org





This is an artist rendering of AVALON,
an Eldershire Community being formed
in Sherburne, New York.

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ready to work with



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Contact: Arthur Rashap
2 North Main St. / PO Box 546
Sherburne, NY 13460
607.674.2650
www.eldershire.net
Email: arashap@eldershire.net

SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook



"At last, here is a guidebook to a new way of aging for older Americans ..."

-Kathy Goss, Journalist, review for Amazon.com

SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook

"This book is the most comprehensive and up-to-date book currently available on the topic of senior cohousing ..."

... Durrett has done a superb job in thoroughly covering the psychological and social aspects of cohousing in addition to the logistics, operations, and design

elements. Although an architect by training, Durrett has an intuitive feel for what a reader needs to know about this fast growing new trend. The comprehensive nature of this book, demonstrates Durrett's knowledge of the topic from a holistic perspective way beyond the mere design facets of creating cohousing communities. He innately understands all the concerns, fears, misunderstandings, and objections people may have about cohousing – and logically and thoroughly addresses each one in an easy to follow logical style.

Not only is this book unique in its subject matter, but also the presentation of the content is the most comprehensive and "usable" of any book currently available on this subject. Durrett's book quite simply is the "gold standard" for anyone interested in this subject. Regardless if you are a layperson wanting basic information, a highly motivated individual wanting to create a cohousing community, or a professional working with seniors and/or the aging field, this book is a "must read."

Senior Cohousing is not only a pioneering book in its presentation and coverage of a fast growing social and lifestyle trend, but it is an insightful, comprehensive overview addressing every aspect of cohousing. This book is cohousing from A to Z – all presented in an engaging and easy to follow format. Durrett is clearly the US leader and expert in this field, and his book is guaranteed to have far-reaching impact as people become more aware of this practical, economical, creative, and resourceful way to live."

– Alice Jacobs Ed.D., MS;
Senior education and learning specialist

"... and cohousing – perhaps the most creative housing options for seniors – is one that we can make happen for us NOW ... It is easy to read, highlights all the major issues one needs to anticipate, and gives clear how-to-do-it guidelines to a group wanting to take charge of their own housing future. It tackles problems that any group will undoubtedly face and gives helpful solutions, making the often daunting task of creating a cohousing community seem "do-able." It is a very inspiring testament to growing old "in community."

– Lisa Anthony,
Second Journey
secondjourney.org



Senior cohousing is an entirely new way for seniors to house themselves with dignity, independence, safety, mutual concern, and fun. Developed with the residents themselves, senior cohousing combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of shared facilities and community living. Senior cohousing residents live among people with whom they share a common bond of age, experience, and community – a community they themselves built to specifically meet their own needs.



Twenty years of working with, and living in, cohousing helped create this 249-page book by Charles Durrett, licensed and award-winning architect. After the first introduction of the cohousing concept

to the U.S. by husband-and-wife team Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett in 1988, almost 100 such communities have been built and more than 150 groups are currently in the process of creating a cohousing community.

Illustrated with photos and graphics, this book addresses in great depth the advantages and the why and how of senior cohousing. This book is also for younger people working with their parents to come up with alternatives to traditional retirement homes, in the same way they now plan their finances, to also consider the need to address their social and emotional well-being. The book is divided into four parts: Introducing Senior Cohousing, Senior Cohousing in Denmark, Creating Senior Cohousing, and Pioneering Senior Cohousing in America. The book offers detailed steps, so anyone can create a senior cohousing community.

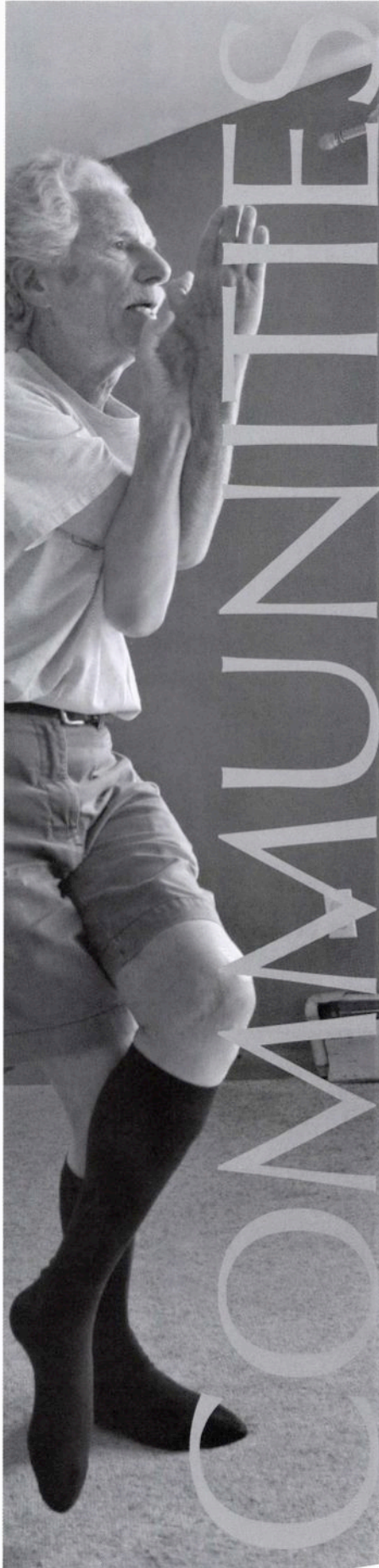
To order the book 'Senior Cohousing', send check payable to:

McCamant & Durrett
Architects
1250 Addison Street #113
Berkeley, CA 94702.
ph. 510.549.9980

or

Online at
www.cohousingco.com

\$34.00 (USA), \$35.20 (Canada & Mexico), \$39.50 (other locations in the world). Prices include shipping & handling.



SASHA ISREAL

SPECIAL FEATURE

WILL YOU LIVE YOUR *Elder Years in Community?*

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Darin Fenger asks nine elder communitarians—ranging in age from 56 to 90, living in cohousing, ecovillage, rural homesteading, and spiritual communities—what they like and don't like about growing older in this setting. Is it working for them? Will they be able to continue to live in community as they grow older?

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This photograph is part of a series on the neighborhood surrounding the Somerset Community Garden in the Southside of Providence, Rhode Island. The garden is administered by the Southside Community Land Trust (www.SouthsideCLT.org).
Photo: Lucas Foglia
To view more of Foglia's photographs, please visit www.LucasFoglia.com.

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

EDITOR

Diana Leafe Christian (*Earthaven*)

PHOTO & ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

Susan Patrice (*Ganas*)

ART DIRECTOR

Amy Seiden (*Dancing Rabbit*)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Billie Miracle (*WomanShare*)

PHOTOS

Frank Beaty, Richard Brodzeller, Ernest Callenbach, Jonathan Castner, Tim Conner, Tony Finnerty, Glacier Circle, Bruce Gourley (*Tierra Nuevo Cohousing*), JMH Architecture, Julie Haney, Martha H. Harris, Sasha Isreal, Scott Kellogg (*Rhizome Collective*), La Selva Community, Lisa Paulson, Stacey Pettigrew, Susan Patrice (*Ganas*), Craig Ragland, Silver Sage Senior Cohousing, Tod Seelie, Mick Sopko, Yamagishi Toyosato, Lucas Foglia.

COPYEDITING

Lee Finks (*Earthaven*)

PROOFREADING

Susan Tereza Brown (*Dancing Rabbit*)

DISPLAY, REACH, & CLASSIFIED ADS

Patricia Greene (*Ness Community*)

OFFICE MANAGER

Tony Sirna (*Dancing Rabbit*)

CIRCULATION MANAGER

McCune Porter (*Twin Oaks*)

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Deborah Altus

Laird Schaub (*Sandhill Farm*)

Tony Sirna (*Dancing Rabbit*)

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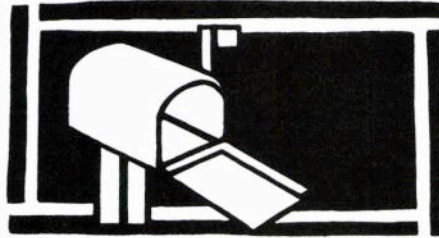
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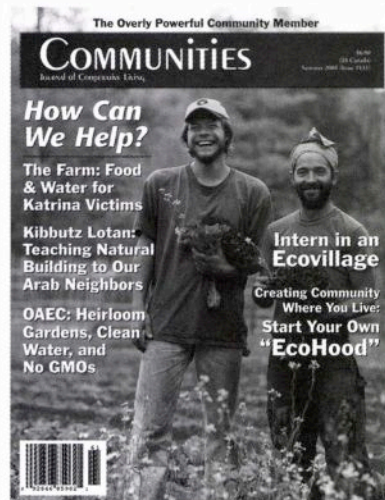
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LETTERS



Send your comments to communities@ic.org or *Communities, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711*. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!



Good Works in Communities (Summer '06)

Dear Diana,

Just wanted to thank you for the great article in this issue of *Communities Magazine*, on the Plenty organization's work with Katrina victims. We are trying in a small way to move the discussion forward in the permaculture community and our local community as a result of seeing what happened when Katrina struck and what unfolded after.

Wes Roe

Santa Barbara Permaculture Network

Santa Barbara, California

Rainbow Gatherers Aren't "Members"

Dear *Communities*:

I loved reading about the relief work of intentional community members after Hurricane Katrina in Geoff Kozeny's most recent "Peripatetic Communitarian" column. I'm writing to thank him, and also to correct a common error he has unintentionally perpetuated about the Rainbow Family by including it in a list of "established groups" and referring to its "members."

The Rainbow Family has never been a "group" in its 35-year history. The Rainbow gatherings are based on the right of all citizens to peaceably assemble on public land, so there are no "members." Rainbow councils and gatherings are open to absolutely everyone, and anyone at all may participate in the creativity and hard work that make them happen. The results have been both beautiful and chaotic, with some individuals abusing the right of assembly, and the vast majority rising to their potential for nonviolence and respect.

It's an important distinction, because in numerous prosecutions of individual gathering attendees, the federal government has based its case on allegations that it is dealing with a "group" with an organized structure of "leaders" and "members." Several gatherers have now served time in prison for attending non-permitted gatherings, and the level of harassment by armed federal agents is increasing every year.

While so far the courts have ruled that the Forest Service may require permits for gatherings in the National Forest, the rules for granting such permits are skewed against Rainbow-type assemblies—exactly as the rules for logging permits are skewed in favor of large logging companies. In neither case are the true interests of the forests and the American people served. Even the Forest Service acknowledges that the individual volunteers who stay for "cleanup" after the Rainbow Gather-

ings do an exemplary job. I wish I could say the same for the timber industry.

Besides our right of assembly, these rules also violate the right of religious expression, since the central focus of the annual Rainbow Gathering is a unified prayer and meditation for peace every Fourth of July. Our much smaller regional gathering in the Southern Appalachians celebrates the Summer Solstice.

Hundreds of thousands of people have learned basic community skills by passing through a Rainbow gathering, and many who return year after year are well-versed in feeding and caring for large numbers of people in primitive conditions. I'm proud to call some of those who responded so ably to Katrina my friends. But so many other kinds of people show up at Rainbow gatherings that they can in no way be considered a "group." For the same reason, there is no central contact or information source.

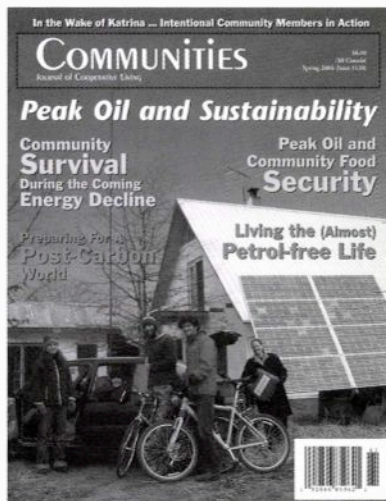
Thanks and blessings.

Stephen Wing
Atlanta, Georgia

Call for Graphics

Are you an illustrator or photographer who makes images of cooperative living? Do you know someone who is?

Professional photographer Susan Patrice is setting up a web-based Photo Archive for the purpose of creating a pool of good images for *Communities* and other FIC publications. If either you or your acquaintances are interested in having images considered for publication, we'd like to talk with you. Please contact Susan for guidelines about what we're looking for and how to submit them. In general, illustrations should be original art, and photographs should either be 35 mm negatives or digital images taken with a six megapixel camera or better. Susan Patrice: susan@ic.org; 912-272-6353.



Peak Oil and Sustainability (Spring '06)

Dear Diana:

The new *Communities* "Peak Oil" issue arrived today. The printing has moved up to a new level of quality and the issue is a great one.

Albert Bates

Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm
Summertown, Tennessee

Dear *Communities*:

I over-the-top congratulate you and yours for a job well done in the recent Peak Oil *Communities* magazine! Of all the reporting I have pored over regarding this issue for the last five years, yours was some of the most honest and realistic portraying of the depth of the problem and the critical limits on the potential responses that I have seen—and I applaud that. That has been part of my personal mission here at Lost Valley and beyond and that mission has received a positive injection from your efforts.

Stuart Kunkle

Lost Valley Educational Center
Dexter, Oregon

Dear *Communities*,

Congratulations on the Peak Oil issue! I thought your opening article (by Diana Christian and Jan Steinman) was terrific. It envisioned a far more realistic scenario

of the effects of expensive fossil fuels than I have seen elsewhere. I was especially impressed with how well you thought out how the effects on the general economy would impact intentional communities. I hope *Communities* readers will take it to heart and plan accordingly.

Alex Daniell

Walnut St. Co-op
Eugene, Oregon

Dear *Communities*:

I thought issue #130 on Peak Oil was great! Thanks so much for all your hard work in putting the magazine together. I am not in community yet but in the "thinking about it" stage.

One topic I haven't seen addressed in *Communities* is the question of economic growth and the steady state economy. It is easy for environmentalists to fall into the trap of saying that economic growth doesn't necessarily require environmental degradation. While a small amount of growth may or may not be possible, overall this idea is misleading. No economy can grow forever. The theory of the steady state economy is that what we should be aiming for in an economy is not perpetual growth, but a sustainable steady state based on strictly limited population and limited resource input. The main proponent of this is Herman Daly, whose ideas are still controversial in economics but are finally receiving some attention (he was recently featured in *Scientific American*). Has *Communities* done any articles on the steady state economy? If so, please let me know which issue so I can back-order it. If not, would you consider doing an article?

Paula L. Craig

Member, United States Society
for Ecological Economics
Falls Church, Virginia

We are going to do an article on the desirability of a steady state economy in a future issue, most likely written by this reader, Paula Craig. —Editor

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- Resource privatization
- Floating islands to clean stormwater
- Energy depletion and city futures
- Biofuels: veggie oil vehicles, methane digesters, wood gas and ethanol
- Post-petroleum economies
- Social justice: dual power anarchism

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www.rhizomecollective.org/rust.html

Dear Laird and Diana:

Congratulations on the Peak Oil and Sustainability issue. I liked best that you had no easy answers, but held to your perspective.

As a Board member of the CERES Coalition and Co-op America and a member of the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative, I've been thinking about the interface between community and globalization. The story of the past few decades has been fraught with contradictions and compromise. A global economy speaks of the freedom to choose, but the choices are most often more of the same, with community and the environment as an afterthought, or no thought at all. The generation that was touched and changed by the '60s faces a problematical future filled with threats of global warming and international terrorism, at the same time as it profits from the wealth created by exploiting the Earth's resources and the labor of those least able to organize.

The world seems divided between hope that technology will somehow save us, and faith that heaven awaits in some rapturous future. The response to the challenges we face will not be so obvious as the demonstrations and protests we mounted forty years ago. Yet our ability to craft a response now will equally define our legacy: not just a generation that burned brightly in its youth, but one that leaves a better world in its maturity. If there are solutions to problems that often seem intractable, they will come both from confronting global dysfunction and building practical, community solutions. Hopefully we will meet somewhere in the middle.

Thanks for contributing *Communities'* piece of the puzzle.

Paul Freundlich
Higganum, Connecticut

Paul Freundlich is a former editor of Communities magazine. —Editor

Dear Diana:

Just finished the new Peak Oil issue. Great job. The Peak Oil event is also the closing of the frontier . . . and that is why *Mother Earth News* got started. It would be very useful to read *The Great Frontier* by Walter Prescott Webb to get a broader perspective. Another enlightening article is "Futures," in Bill Mollison's *Permaculture Design Manual*.

I just had no idea that the closing of the frontier would be so complicated. Many thanks for dealing with tough subjects. Bless you and Jan Steinman for inspiration in making that transition.

Patrick McGinn
Panama

Dear *Communities*:

Maybe the Twin Oaks' Communities Conference and other communities conferences should begin to discuss what to do if the corruption and ineptitude of the system results in massive job loss and masses of people showing up looking for some alternative way of life.

The only practical suggestion I can think of at this point is for intentional communities to get into the livestock businesses, and thereby be buying grain stocks that could be quickly used for human consumption if the need arises.

Katrina showed us what a massive exodus looks like, but that was with some governmental agencies still able to function to deal with the relocation problems. If there is financial panic, state and local governments will be far less able to cope.

Day Brown
daybrown@wildblue.net

Dear *Communities*:

I wanted to express my support for your "Peak Oil and Sustainability" issue. The point when demand exceeds possible pumping rate promises to be a shocking wake-up call to most of humanity.

Can there be a nonfossil-fueled yet high-technology, educated, and developing human civilization? Certainly. But absent some miracle energy discovery, it is not going to have the surpluses we see today. Envision an "heirloom" economy, a low-energy civilization, with an emphasis on quality and durability, vs. the throw-away society of today.

Carrying forward from Jonathan Dawson's comments in "Peak Oil as Opportunity?", it is not just ecovillages that are likely to need to change radically, but essentially everyone.

A rhetorical question: Assume you, and/or your family completely equipped a homestead, or expansive ecovillage, with everything you can imagine. Do you have the technology and technique to repair or replace a broken plate or cup? How about a PV panel? Or even a light bulb?

Community and the specialization it facilitates is essential. But with reduced economic activity, it is not just profit margins and incomes that are reduced. As more people disengage their lifestyle from dependence on the oil infrastructure, and reduce income and spending, the tax base of governments is also reduced.

Peak Oil is not just about fuel for transportation and factories, or fertilizers and pesticides for crops. It's about the end of big business and big government.

If you are dependent on a continued payment stream, whether from work, a private pension, interest, government pension, or government welfare program, you need a "Plan B" for when the flow trickles to a halt.

Ronald Greek
Yuma, Arizona

Co-Moderator Peak Oil discussion group, "Running on Empty"

Dear *Communities*:

Everyone should understand that energy is the foundation of the world's economy. The "petro-dollar food chain"

flows from the Earth, to the owners of mineral rights, to the drilling companies, to the pipeline and trucking companies, to the refineries and their products, and finally to us. People are either near the top of the food chain, where they benefit from the ever-decreasing supply and ever-increasing demand for oil and natural gas, or remain at the bottom—we consumers—where we can only lose as inflation accelerates.

If you live in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Ohio, or any other oil- and natural gas-rich areas, and you own the mineral rights to your land, then you can have a well drilled, without any out-of-pocket expenses, and receive 15 to 20 percent of the well's output indefinitely. You can then have your well's "Certified Recoverable Reserves" estimated, and use your percentage of that amount as collateral to secure a loan, which can be invested in more wells, solar panels, wind turbines, rainforest restoration, farm land trusts, etc. . . .

My research indicates that an 800-1,000 percent return on investment is common when drilling a well: a well which costs \$250,000 to drill will be worth from \$2 million to \$2.5 million. A four percent ownership in such a well could cost \$10,000 and be worth \$80,000 to \$100,000 or so. A well can be drilled, producing, certified, providing a steady stream of income, and used for a loan within two to three months.

You may see it as inappropriate to be directly involved in the production of petroleum products, but I suggest it's inappropriate and counterproductive to continue struggling at the bottom of the petro-dollar food chain, barely able to afford to equip one household with the technology of energy sustainability, when one can be at the top of this chain, generating enough power and money to retrofit and/or develop whole intentional communities and organized neighborhoods with sustainable technologies.

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Executive Director, at: 603-878-4796
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Sunrise Credit Union

Why should all the self-serving, environmentally indifferent, noncommunitarian, nonvisionaries make all the money and have all the power? The wells will be dug, the oil and gas will be sold, and people will get rich—and they'll use that money and power to rapidly and effectively advance their own agendas. Let's use it for ours. It's Alchemy, not turning lead into gold, but turning oil into solar panels, negative into positive.

Aaron Camacho
Talladega, Alabama

Dear *Communities*:

To the impressive stories of transformation contained in your wonderful Peak Oil issue, I would add these reflections:

Sustainability begins within. In our zeal to make our external life more sustainable, we can perpetuate the workaholicism that is the root of our current unsustainable way of life. We could call this "too much yang and not enough yin." Most people concerned about these matters have already begun to find a healthier balance between yin and yang, inner and outer. Understanding the origin of our unsustainable "excess yang" can help.

The feudal lords who expropriated the commons for their development of industrial capitalism also created an ideology of industriousness that ensured a steady supply of exploitable workers. By punishing attempts by the "have-nots" to rest and be self-directing based on their own inner guidance, the owners of capital inculcated over centuries the fear that relaxation, rest, and an inner life meant one was "lazy." In this way, they dominated a pliant workforce suited to the exploitation of Nature. As we dismantle the gross materialism and environmental devastation resulting from this warping of the human being, we must heal these deeply ingrained workaholic tendencies that cause us to be overactive (and thus unconsciously exploitative). In our enthusiasm to heal the planet, we must not punish or

pressure group members who express a desire for more rest, meditation, and a slower pace. We must remember that the yin that guides each healthy, self-directing human will provide the insight, balance, and direction needed to create a sustainable life globally.

C.A. Wilkie
Prineville, Oregon

Dear *Communities*:

The article written by Jan Steinman and Diana Leafe Christian in the Spring issue of *Communities* concerning Peak Oil established that we could well be already at the peak oil point as far as supply is concerned.

I happened to be reading the latest issue of Exxon Mobile's quarterly magazine, *The Lamp*, Vol. 88, No. 1, 2006, which maintains that humans have used up about one-quarter of the natural oil reserves in the world. There are about 4 trillion barrels that can still be pumped or distilled from shale. They calculate Peak Oil not until about 2050. They cite US Geological Survey as their source.

Why such a large discrepancy?

Jim McGinn
James_24106@verizon.net

Dear Jim,

Setting a precise date for Peak Oil is a bit like arguing about anthropogenic climate change—there's a bunch of people who more-or-less agree, then a very few who hold extreme opinions that there is plenty of oil left. A fairly tight cluster of estimates by a large body of experts form near-consensus that we have used close to half of readily recoverable petroleum sources. Then there are one or two "outliers" who think the large majority are wrong.

The people who claim we have a long time before Peak Oil most often start by including "nonrecoverable" reserves in their estimates. For example, there is still no "emergy" (embedded energy) efficient

way to recover liquid petroleum from most of the oil shale—it simply takes more energy to get liquid fuel from oil shale than the energy in the liquid fuel produced! Note that this is not simply a matter of money—it's a net energy loss to recover these sources.

Unfortunately, those small number of dissenting voices have tons of money behind them to push their message—as well as having the weight of the US Geological Survey behind them. But even within the government, this is a minority opinion—Google for “The Hirsh Report” (produced by the US Energy Department) and the testimony of Representative Roscoe Bartlett in the US House of Representatives to find assessments that are in line with the growing consensus.

—Jan Steinman, EcoReality Co-op,
Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

Community Consulting Services at No Charge

Dear Communities:

As a graduate student in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois, I am very interested in intentional communities, especially the ecovillage and cohousing movements. For my masters program, I have the option of completing a masters project, which can be damn-near anything as long as I can get it approved by the department. So I have an idea. What if I could offer my consulting services free of charge to a group of people desperately trying to get an ecovillage or cohousing community built? I know there are groups like this out there. I have met some in the past. I could move out to wherever they happen to be for a semester (or longer) and help

them with planning-related problems like visioning, site selection, site planning, fighting hostile zoning codes/boards, etc. I also happen to be a fairly talented (though amateur) conflict mediator. I can't say I have any professional credentials, just a bachelor's degree in urban planning, a year of graduate school in the same subject, knowledge of a bunch of the relevant software, a strong work ethic, and a lot of idealism. Is there a forming community out there that could use some help but can't afford a “real” consultant? If you are a member of such a community, or if you know of someone who I should talk to about this idea, please drop me an email. Thank you.

Pete McAvoy
pmcavoy2@unic.edu

Seeking “Choice Moms” Living in Communities

Dear Communities:

I'm doing some research on Single Mothers by Choice (via sperm donor or selected donor) who are raising their children in residential communities. If you are one or know others, I'd love to hear from you. Thanks!

Leanna Wolfe
LAWolfe@aol.com



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Communities; communities@ic.org; 828-669-9702.

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 interfere 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 the Writer's Guidelines: **Communities**, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711, 828-669-9702; communities@ic.org.

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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.

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Patricia Greene, Advertising Manager, patricia@ic.org; 315-347-3070; 381 Hewlett Rd., Hermon, NY 13652.

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.

"Ruth" or Consequences: Defining Tough Love for Groups

I was visiting community friends this spring when someone handed me a *New York Times* article with this opening: "Sociologists have long known that communes and other cooperative groups usually collapse into bickering and disband if they do not have clear methods of punishing members who become selfish or exploitative."*

It got my attention right away. I've been deeply involved with the North American intentional communities movement the last quarter century and "clear methods of punishment" is not what leaps to mind as the cornerstone of successful communities. I wondered just how widely these unnamed sociologists were defining "punishment." Were they referring solely to loss—of rights, privileges, resources, or even membership? Or would having to attend a meeting where your disappointing behavior was discussed openly with your neighbors be construed as punishment—the modern equivalent of time in the public stocks?

The story was based on an experiment in Germany where cooperative groups who were allowed to fine members who

displayed selfish behavior were found to be more profitable than groups that didn't have such methods. While I think there's room to question the study's methodology or the most appropriate interpretation of the findings, I agree wholeheartedly with the study in one respect: broken agreements are one of the most vexing problems that communities face.

Over the years I've worked with a number of groups wrestling with this issue, and none have found an easy path

through the thicket of thorny issues that sprout up around broken agreements. In the hope that others' struggles might be a useful guide for those who follow, I've drawn together a collection of six major pitfalls that I believe must be addressed by any workable policy on handling broken agreements. The findings of German sociologists notwithstanding, solutions are a good bit

more complicated than just slapping someone with a fine.

Pitfall #1: What Agreements?

While the necessity of establishing clear agreements (as well as a sense of the conditions under which exceptions might



Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (publisher of this magazine) and a cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri.

be made and how those will be determined) may seem obvious, achieving that goal is not as straightforward as you might think. For some members of cooperative groups, getting detailed about expectations comes across as rule-making run amok; they're looking for relationships based on trust and love, and they hear the request (demand?) for explicit agreements as a straightjacket, almost the opposite of what they were hoping to find in community. In the presence of this relatively common anxiety, it can be slow sledding coming up with a solid statement of agreements ("Can't we just trust one another?") Yet if you don't do the work, it's a guaranteed mess. Have you ever tried to hold someone accountable for breaking an agreement that may have been implied but was never articulated? It can be ugly.

Pitfall #2: Bridging the Gap Between Perception and Fact

Groups need to establish a process by which the perception of a broken agreement will be examined. If you thought that spelling everything out was going to eliminate ambiguity, think again. No amount of agreement-setting will cover all contingencies, and even when there's no vagueness about the understanding, there will be disagreement about the "facts." Count on it. And believe me, it's far better to have a process established ahead of time for how you're going to handle this situation, than to make one up in the middle of a dispute.

Pitfall #3: Bringing New Members Up to Speed

Does your group have a process by which prospective members will be made wholly aware of the agreements they will be expected to follow if they join? I'm constantly amazed at how many people join communities (and even build houses) before finding out the complete set of agreements they've signed on for. This

is membership roulette, which is perhaps attractive if you're addicted to high drama, yet a poor way to secure harmony and happiness. I recommend it be someone's regular job (Membership Committee?) to see to it that new folks get the full skinny on what's expected of members in your group. Save the fireworks for Fourth of July.

Pitfall #4: Balancing Compassion and Accountability

Try asking members to place themselves physically on a continuum where one end of the room represents 100 percent compassion (or concern that people get adequate support from other members) and the other end represents 100 percent fairness and accountability (or concern that no one gets taken advantage of by other members). In all likelihood, your group will be all over the room. Almost all groups include in their core values a commitment to compassion, flexibility, open-hearted communication, and fairness (meaning everyone will pull their weight). If you have these values, you'll have to talk about how they'll be balanced when handling broken agreements. You'll have to decide how far the community is willing to labor with someone who is perceived to have broken an agreement and how this is affected by the stakes. (For example, a group is likely to be far more flexible about a member who was unrepentant for having missed one of his four cleaning shifts last year than someone who was defiant about having beaten up his next-door neighbor.)

Pitfall #5: How Do I Get Help?

Almost all groups hold an ideal of offering community support for members struggling to resolve tensions (which is what you'll have if an agreement has been broken and direct one-on-one communication is unavailable or unsatisfactory). However, has your group clearly laid out the communication pathways available to



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each member? Are members' rights and responsibilities when involved in tensions well articulated? Do members know whom to approach when they need help? Is there a budget to support this?

Pitfall #6: The Sanction Menu

If it's been found that an agreement has indeed been broken, and steps to resolve the issue satisfactorily through communication among the affected parties (either informally or formally; directly or indirectly) don't succeed, then what? Now, finally, you're into sanction territory.

Note that I've placed punishments (this thing that all successful cooperative groups purportedly must have) at the end of the line, after everything else has failed. The main objective is clearing up tensions and getting the group back into connection and high function. Sometimes that means you bend over backwards to support a person going through a difficult time (perhaps their mother is gravely ill, and you decide not to impose sanctions even though you've established the right that you could); sometimes you hold their feet to the fire ("This is the third time you've blown off your cook shift this year without an excuse, what gives?") If your members are going to accept sanctions (either as givers or receivers) everyone is going to need to feel that a decent effort was made to solve the problem in other ways first. That's what community is all about.

In the case of the most serious offenses (aggravated assault, embezzlement, drug trafficking) communities always have recourse to normal legal options and working with civil authorities. Setting those aside, let's focus on the stuff in the middle: where a community agreement has been broken, but not a law; where attempts to work through the issue have been made, yet it remains unresolved. What does the real menu of sanctions look like?

While it can make sense—depending on the offense and the people involved—to make use of fines or the suspension of privileges, I think, in the end, the main sanction available to cooperative groups is the withholding of relationship. In the extreme, this amounts to denying membership, as in shunning among the Amish. Not through legal action, but through non-engagement. The group goes on with its life without that person, whether they continue to live on the property or not.

I do not mean this as hurtful or spiteful; I mean it as a shift in attention. After a reasonable effort at finding a cooperative solution, groups can reach a point where it is time to move on. They can make a deliberate choice to reinvest in the relationships that are working, rather than continuing to focus on the one that is not. While delicate, it is possible to do this in stepped gradations that are tailored to the person and the situation. This is a serious matter and should not be taken lightly or in anger, and I urge groups to leave the door open for the possibility that the relationship can be rehabilitated if conditions improve.

Lessons from the Game

I want to conclude with a personal story about the dangers of underestimating the consequences of broken agreements and the importance of examining them.

Early my freshman year at college—and years before my first community experience—I was invited one evening to play a complicated seven-person board game called Diplomacy. A couple of the players were unknown to me, and it turned out that one of these new acquaintances had most of his pieces close to mine on the board and we decided to be allies early in the game. After a number of moves where our pieces worked in concert, he decided, unilaterally, that he would betray me, and substituted different orders for his pieces at the last

second. I can still recall my sense of outrage and the look of glee on his face when the betrayal was revealed.

He had not done anything that was against the rules of the game and was thus within the letter of the law. However, I never forgot the incident, never felt I could trust him as a person, and never developed him as friend. For me, he had broken a law of moral conduct, and the consequences ran far beyond the board game.

From this I learned that no matter how clear you may be about agreements, others may have a different understanding; and you will never have a chance to clear up a misunderstanding that is not revealed. In community (unlike board games played by college freshmen) there is a presumption that relationships among members have high value. That is a precious advantage to groups as they struggle with broken agreements.

Many people use the term “consequences” as a synonym for “punishment.” I prefer to separate the terms, reserving “punishments” to mean sanctions (see Pitfall #6), and expanding “consequences” to include the whole shooting match. As I see it, there will always be consequences to broken agreements, though only in a small number of cases (hopefully) will there be punishments.

Community is about integrity and living one’s truth. It’s also about relationship and connection, which means it’s also about ruth (meaning compassion and sympathy; the opposite of “ruthless”). Finally, community is about integration. I believe the most successful ones are those who find a way to select both ruth *and* consequences. ❁

* Excerpted from “Study: groups that punish, profit” by Benedict Carey, appearing on page 22 of the April 7, 2006 edition of *The New York Times*.



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The Palestinian with a Green Thumb

Those who rouse us most strongly—to tears, anger, love, or all the above—have the most to teach. My friend Murad Alkhu-fash has a tendency to provoke strong feelings in everyone he meets. How could he not? He is Palestinian, unapologetically so. He speaks directly, from the heart, about the predicament that his people find themselves in—and this is bound to make many people uncomfortable.

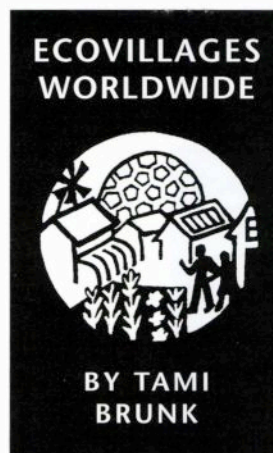
I met Murad at the Ecovillage Training Center (ETC) Inn at The Farm in Tennessee, where I had recently taken a job as the ETC innkeeper. Murad had been visiting the ETC for the past four summers, staying a month at a time, assisting with the permaculture and natural building courses, madly flirting with each new group of girls—and inevitably pissing some off with his traditional views of men and women. For the rest of the year, he worked 13-hour shifts in a poor neighborhood of Chicago, flipping burgers, learning Ebonics, and sending money home to his family to build a house.

Murad had been invited to the US in 2000 by ETC founder Albert Bates, who had heard of the fate of the Marda Per-

maculture Center—the first Permaculture Center in the Middle East—which Murad had helped to found. From 1993 to 2000, when Israeli forces shut the Center down, Murad had worked alongside Australian permaculture instructors in Palestine who were trained by Bill Mollison. He wrote a letter to Albert soon after, asking for an invitation to move to the US.

Murad's second summer at The Farm, he met ETC innkeepers Allison and Shmuel, an Israeli couple currently living in Montana. They raged many a battle in the ETC Inn kitchen—Murad expressed his frustration and anger against Israelis and the oppression his people endured under the occupation; Allison and Shmuel voiced their belief that it was an absolute necessity that Jewish people have a safe haven in Israel.

The honesty, tears, and anger worked at all their hearts. After a time, they agreed on a kind of truce—they would never agree about everything. They could, however, agree that in their time together, they'd come to see the humanity of the other.



Tami Brunk was formerly the Innkeeper at the Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm in Tennessee.

Murad and I struck up a quick friendship—in some strange way we felt like family to each other. Perhaps this was because I grew up in a very conservative Christian family—not so different, in some ways, from the Islamic upbringing Murad had had. Once, in a workshop, he told me that the way I sat reminded him of his sister.

Once I talked him into coming with me to attend a writing workshop at the North American Bioregional Congress held at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina. The workshop leader shared a poem as a prompt, then we all wrote silently. We went around the circle, reading what we'd written. When Murad's turn came, he hesitated. "It's in Arabic," he said.

"Go on, go on," we pushed him. He began, speaking the fluid Arabic words

Design courses, promised to help as well. She was volunteering with an Israeli environmental justice organization named Bustan al Shaalom, which works with Bedouin Arabic Israelis.

A couple of weeks ago Nirah, Allison, and Dev from Bustan, visited Murad's village in Marda. Allison led a solar oven workshop with the women, then joined Dev, Nirah, and a group of Marda women in discussions about the needs of their community and their vision for the future. With an unemployment rate of 95 percent in Marda, the women there—many of whom had been educated at a nearby University—were desperate to put their hands and minds to work. The idea of becoming more economically self-sufficient was tremendously appealing.

*He tried to translate—
he was speaking of his beautiful country,
and what was happening to it.*

but then stopped, and his voice broke. He tried to translate—he was speaking of his beautiful country, and what was happening to it. But he started sobbing, and had to leave the circle. A friend and I went to comfort him. He was embarrassed—in his country, it would have been unthinkable for him to cry openly in front of strangers. And yet, I would see him break down twice more at The Farm. He told me later that it was the only place he'd ever felt safe.

Over his five years at The Farm, Murad built up a network of friends across the globe. Each of us heard, at one point or another, about his dream to reestablish a Permaculture Center in Marda. Allison and Shmuel, who had moved back to Israel, promised to help him when he returned. Nirah Shirazzipur, a videographer and student in one of my Permaculture

Now Murad's work to establish a permaculture training center, complete with nursery, permaculture garden, community compost, water catchment, graywater, and seed bank, have been enriched with the collective ideas of the women—to sell olive oil, sun-dried tomatoes, and other foods grown at the center and surrounding villages as Fair Trade products, and to establish a biodiesel fueling center for all the surrounding villages.

The biofueling station seems a perfect fit, as nearly all of the cars in the West Bank run on diesel, and falafel frying oil is available at every household. After the workshop, Nirah was so inspired that she made a DVD highlighting the visit and promoting Murad's project.

For my part, I've compiled a list of Murad's friends—in communities ranging from Asheville, North Carolina, to Missoula,

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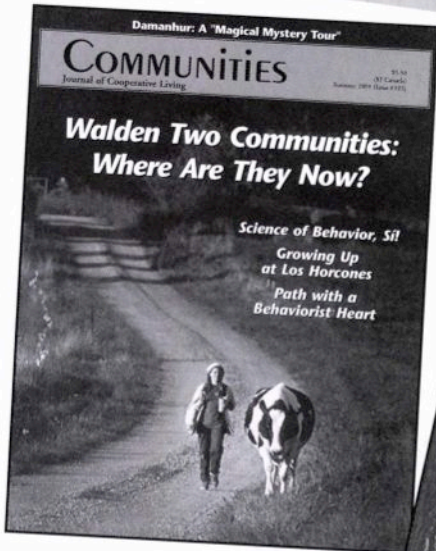
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Montana; Denton, Texas; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Chicago, Illinois; and a little town south of Barcelona, Spain. I'm sending them all Nirah's DVD and other promotional materials to enable them to put on fundraising benefits for the project. I'm also working with Allison and Dev to finalize a budget proposal for the project, while a Bustan volunteer seeks potential funders. The new Marda Permaculture Training Center has just applied for membership in GEN Europe.

The biofueling station seems a perfect fit, as nearly all of the cars in the West Bank run on diesel, and falafel frying oil is available at every household.

This, to me, is the beauty of the network—both formal and informal—of international permaculturists and ecovillage founders (and other grassroots sustainability activists). We meet and play together at gatherings, workshops, or in communities. We think that nothing will come of those meetings, but we are wrong. Murad's story is one of many. When we touch each other's lives with songs, stories, tears, laughter, and even, yes, anger, and when we do so at this very potent moment in history where our desire for positive change is so ripe—who knows what might sprout out of the fertile soil of our collective dreaming? For the Marda Permaculture Training Center, the dream is in its infancy. And yet, I believe that with such a strong net of support, it can and will become something real, and tremendously valuable, to the people of Marda and their neighbors.☸

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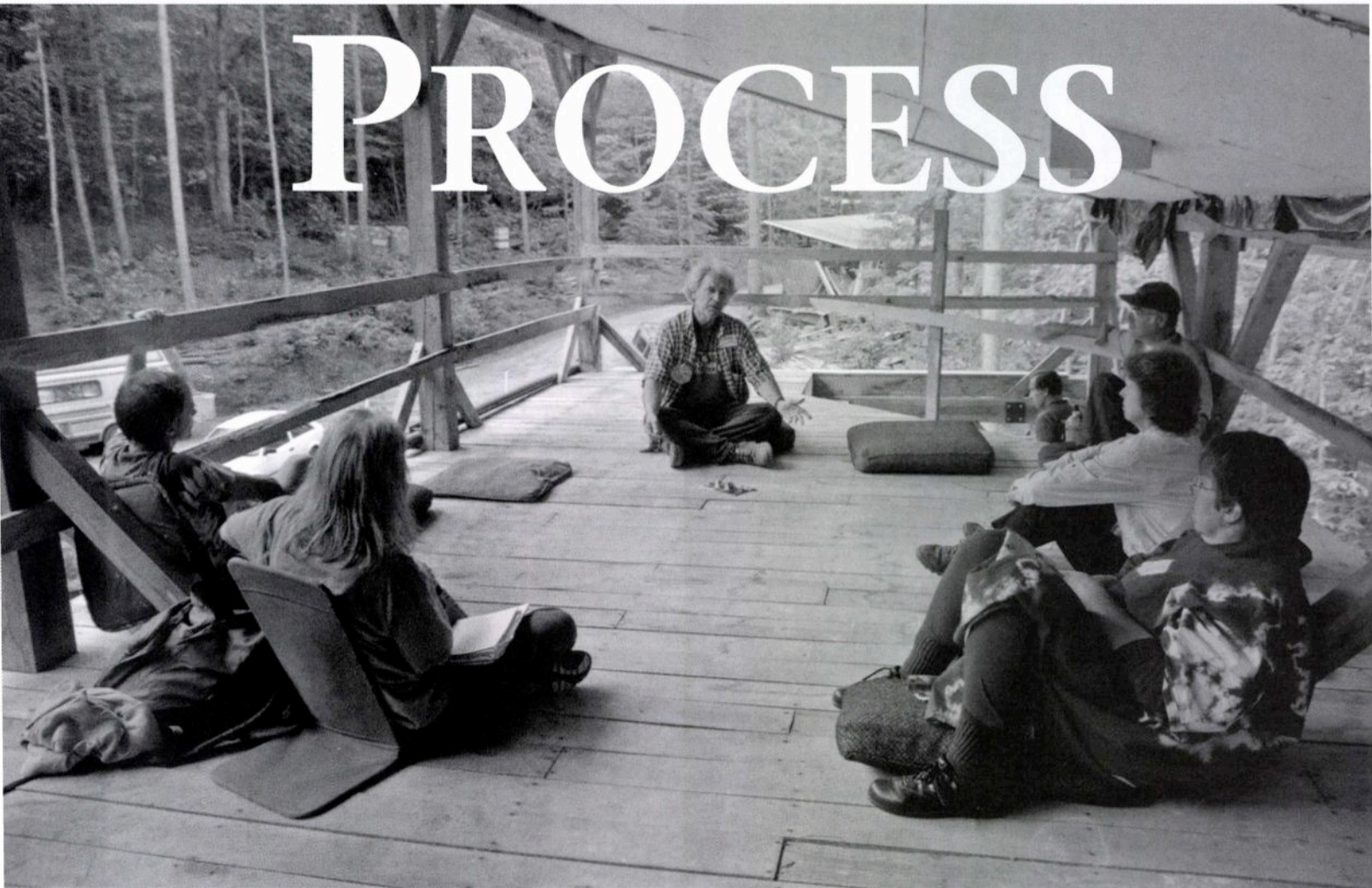
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WHAT TO SAY IF SOMEONE
QUESTIONS
THE VALUE OF

PROCESS



Committee members gather at a biannual meeting of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC).

Q After good experiences in communities with pretty solid process expectations, I became a firm believer in them. However, in much of my work now, I often find times where trying to create good process seems to bog everyone down and it seems best to just accept the inconsistencies and occasional mayhem and go along with the flow more “process-free” than I would have preferred before. Have you experienced this, and have you found any good pointers about when this nonapproach might be more beneficial or more detrimental? Any thoughts on the topic would be welcome.

—*Jacob Stevens Cordivae*
Urban Ecovillage Network, Detroit



Laird Schaub responds:

People’s awareness about process tends to be all over the map, and it is common to find a significant number of people in all but the most exceptional groups who have little patience with process. These are the self-styled “product” people, who insist that group time must justify itself by tackling issues and making decisions. Anything else—including a focus on “how we do things”—is dismissed as so much navel gazing.

locked in conflict, naming undercurrents that are distorting the conversation, etc.) People tend to enjoy the experience of being heard deeply and clearly, and being able to see how their input has been factored into proposals. While your contributions may be subtle and never consciously recognized by others, you can nonetheless have a demonstrable impact on how the group operates and improve both the civility and utility of meetings.

Second, if you want to aim higher (and feel the group is open to the attempt), ask for permission to tackle a known

You have to demonstrate how better process produces better product.

In this situation, I think you have to sell good process in terms that product people can understand. That means you have to demonstrate how better process produces better product. In my experience, there are typically two strategies to accomplishing this.

First, as a process “guerilla,” you can often influence things positively simply by applying good communication skills (accurately and concisely summarizing people’s statements, offering bridges between two or more positions that seem

complex and messy issue in a different way than the free-wheeling, jungle-ball discussions that characterize current meetings. (Hint: this might work best if you pick something the group has already struggled with and found difficult to resolve.) If the group goes along, then give it your best shot with processes you’ve come to know and respect from your prior experiences. Maybe bring in outside help to make the most of your chance.

If you go this route, be sure to protect time at the end of your experimental meeting to discuss what got accomplished, expressly asking participants to reflect on how the meeting felt (in contrast with regular meetings) and what impact it was likely to have on next steps and implementation. After all, the efficiency of meetings is more than how many decisions were reached, it's also about how much connection and understanding have been enhanced and ultimately how well the group is accomplishing its mission.



Beatrice Briggs responds:

I have encountered what I call “process resistance” and, like you, have struggled to understand both its source and what to do about it. In my opinion this resistance stems from power dynamics in the form of impatience, impotence, and laziness. If the process is vague, inconsistent or nonexistent, it is easier for some participants to manipulate the outcome, since no one is really clear about

In my opinion resistance to process stems from power dynamics in the form of impatience, impotence, and laziness.

Laird Schaub, a member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, has been doing consulting work on group process since 1987. A longtime activist in community networking, he has lived in community since 1974 and been involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. laird@ic.org; 660-883-5545.

what is going on—until it is too late to affect the outcome. Symptoms of process resistance include failure to define the issue under consideration, the criteria by which a decision will be made, a timeline for the process, those responsible for the steps along the way, how the process will be documented, who will make the final decision, and what decision rule (consensus, majority vote, etc.) will be used. Poorly planned and/or poorly publicized meetings and weak or nonexistent facilitation also contribute to the “anti-process” phenomenon. Taken as a whole, these behaviors render transparency and accountability impossible. This situation is very convenient for those who, deep in their hearts, really do not want to share power. It is equally convenient for those who do not want to invest the time and energy necessary to create and carry out a respectful and responsible process.

The only circumstance in which I can see any reason to go with the anti-process flow is when the participants will not or cannot meet together regularly. In the ecovillage where I live, Huehucoyotl, in central Mexico, this occurs frequently because many of our members are away from the community for days, weeks, or months at a time. Lacking critical mass for good process, meetings are infrequent. The result is often an “act first, ask forgiveness later” approach to getting things done. The benefits? Things happen. The downside? We drift apart.

Beatrice Briggs is the director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Consensus, a professional team of consultants and trainers with affiliates in 12 countries, and author of Introduction to Consensus. Beatrice lives in Ecovillage Huehucoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, and travels extensively giving workshops and facilitating participatory processes in English and Spanish. bbriggs@iifac.org; www.iifac.org.





Committee meeting at Westwood Cohousing, Asheville, North Carolina.



Tree Bressen responds:

I think that “good” process is whatever best serves the needs of the participants.

Typically the smaller the group, the less formal the process. For example, while most families and groups of friends have very few official meetings, decisions get

made and things get done.

In a group that has really good flow together, a synergistic magic can arise, where everyone knows what needs doing and attends to it without needing to process explicitly.

If you are getting good results (happy members, effective follow-through on tasks, lack of later upset over decisions that weren’t commonly understood when they were made, and

rather than out. When process and roles are clear, it may be easier to talk about changing them.

In order to last, groups need to find a balance between structure and flexibility that is appropriate to their mission and culture—too much openness and your group dissolves into disarray, too much rigidity and people flee. The dance of group dynamics is most alive when it follows the energy and searches out a place in between.

Feel free to experiment, and trust your instincts.

¹ Reprinted in *Communities Directory*, 1991.

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant who works with intentional communities and other nonprofits on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. She is a founding member of

Too much openness and your group dissolves into disarray, too much rigidity and people flee.

so on), then it sounds like you’ve got a process that works for you. If some piece goes awry, it may be more effective to tailor an intervention to that specific need than to impose a more formal framework overall.

On the other hand, beware the “tyranny of structurelessness” described by Joreen in a landmark feminist article of the 1970s¹. Basically she pointed out that the lack of structure in wimmin’s rap groups, created as an alternative to hierarchical roles, actually drove power dynamics underground

Walnut St. Co-op in Eugene, Oregon, which celebrated its fifth anniversary in the fall. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers free tools and resources. tree@ic.org.

What burning questions about conflict in community would you ask an experienced process and communications consultant? Send them to communities@ic.org, or *Communities*, 1025 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711. Thank you!



TOD SEELE

Participants chow down and socialize at Grub in Brooklyn, a bi-monthly volunteer-run communal meal of rescued (dumpstered) food.

SET UP NEIGHBORHOOD DINNERS

BY DAN CHIRAS AND DAVE WANN

Community dinners are a great first step in creating community. Food draws people like a magnet. (Interestingly, the word companion literally means “with bread.”) Besides bringing people together, potluck meals and neighborhood picnics usually introduce participants to a wonderful assortment of new foods. Even more important from the standpoint of community development, friendships often emerge from casual conversations. Even something as innocent as recipe swapping may cook up new relationships.

The N Street Neighborhood began many years ago with five students living in a rental house in an older suburban neighborhood in Davis, California. Recognizing the benefits of common meals, they decided to sponsor potluck dinners. That effort has grown considerably. Today, they share meals with 17 households. They’ve switched from potluck dinners to meals cooked by individual members of the community. Why switch from potluck?

“The problem with potluck meals is everyone has to devote time to it,” says Kevin Wolf, one of the organizers of the neighborhood. “In 1979 we realized that having a single person responsible for each meal was the way to go. That way, you come home from school, work, or other activities of the day, and you just show up.” The neighbors eat on a common patio in the summertime and in a garage-turned-dining room in the winter. “If neighbors didn’t know how to cook before moving in, they certainly do now,” says Kevin.

The GossGrove neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado, has established regular barbecues that accompany neighborhood meetings and garage sales. The events take place in one of three pocket parks that came into being when the city closed off the end of the street to make the neighborhood more pedestrian-friendly. One of the small parks will soon become a community garden, contributing produce for the meals.

How to get started: You and your neighbors don’t have to belong to a cohousing community or create a formal neighborhood association to eat together. Boulder resident Dominique Getliffe suggests making short, simple contacts with your neighbors, such as borrowing milk. From that, progress to potluck dinners. He and his neighbors set up tables on a driveway to share meals on warm summer days.

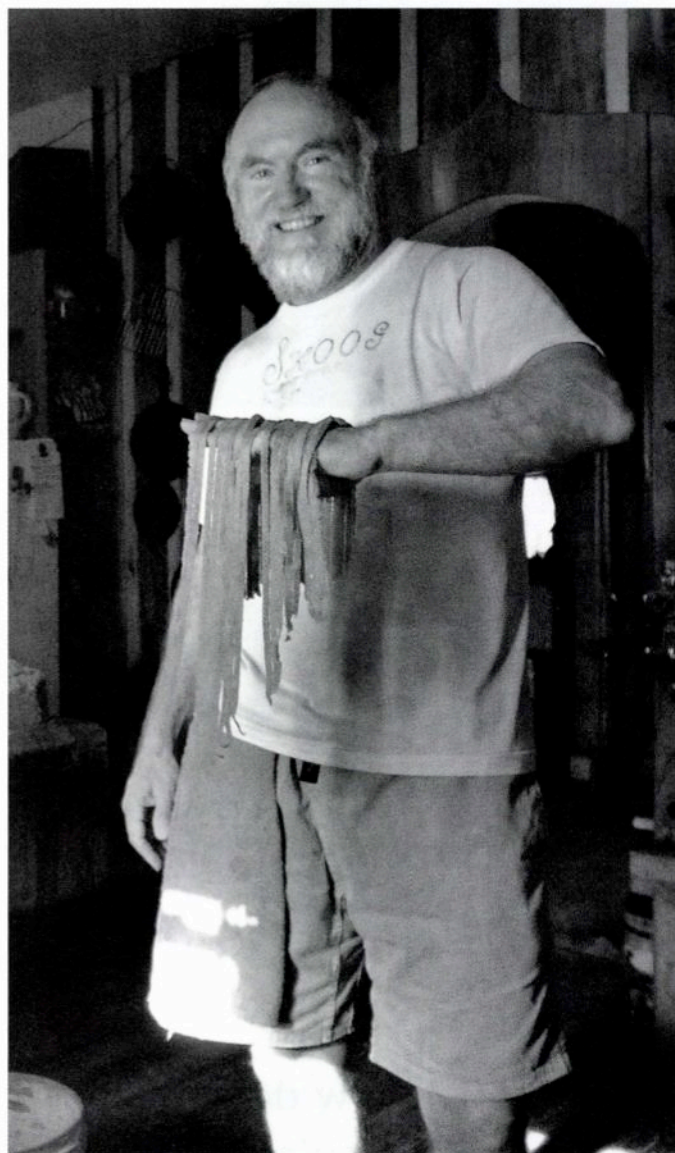
Julie Rodwell, a resident of Winslow Cohousing in Washington, moved to Bellevue and missed having meals with neighbors, so she made a point of gradually meeting people who shared the same stairway in her condo. Then she organized “staircase dinners” that have created a sense of community in the condo.

Many neighborhoods have perfected the art of “progressive dinners,” in which a small group of neighbors moves from one house to another for various courses of a meal. And

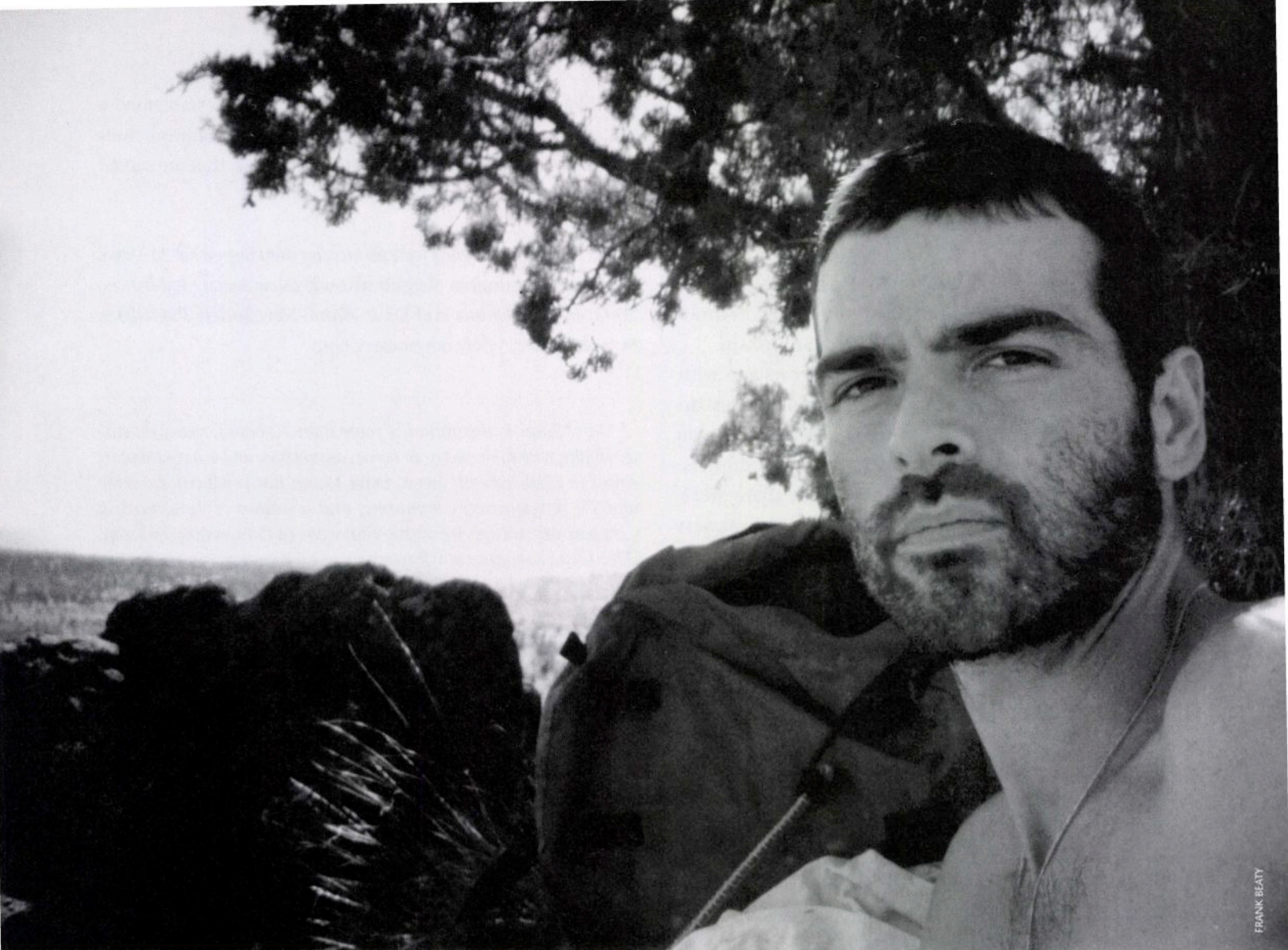
the P-Patch community garden in Seattle has established a “Chefs in a Garden” tradition in which local restaurant chefs volunteer to use garden produce to cook meals that are served right in the garden!

Excerpted and adapted with permission from Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods (New Society Publishers, 2003) by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann. New Society Publishers: 800-567-6772; www.newsociety.com.

Dan Chiras is the author of more than 20 books, many on sustainability, renewable energy, or home construction, and is a contributing editor to Mother Earth News. Dave Wann has produced six video and TV programs on community, and is author of Reinventing Community: Stories from the Walkways of Cohousing (Fulcrum, 2005), and co-author of Affluenza: the All-Consuming Epidemic. Dan and Dave both live in Colorado.



Laird Schaub making pasta in the Sandhill Community kitchen.



FRANK BEATY

The author on day three of a desert solo vision quest, part of his apprenticeship program at Lost Valley Educational Center in Oregon.

THE Dilettante's JOURNEY

~ PART I ~

How do you pick a community to join if
you're interested in . . . EVERYTHING?

I yanked up my 5,000th root of the day. This one loosened and slid out of the dirt without a fight. I stood up and stretched my back. The sun was hotter than hell, and I knew there'd be a headache later, no matter how much water I drank. I was out of shape for this kind of work.

I saw Farmer, one of my hosts at Earthaven, balancing on a beam of his barn's new roof. I could tell from two hundred yards that he was smiling at me, checking in. I lifted both arms and released a "Wahoo!" I was blistered, burning up, and out in the field alone, but I was having a blast. I could hear some lively music coming from the boom box and tried to guess who it might be. Phish, maybe? I wondered briefly if they always listened to jam bands around here.

So this was Earthaven. I'd heard of this ecovillage for years and followed some of its progress with interest. Finally I was here, and better yet, I'd discovered the Gateway project.

Gateway Field was new at Earthaven. After the morning tour, Clark, the tour guide, had told me he suspected I would enjoy working with this particular gang. Earthaven had always seemed to have everything going for it—courses, businesses, at least two serious quarterly publications, and the whole place was off-grid—but it never had a farm. And for me, no community without one would ever do. Now I was clearing roots from several acres of freshly cleared topsoil, a forest just two weeks earlier, which lay between a sparkling stream on one side and a brand new barn-in-progress on the other.

I came in for a break and Farmer, 31, gave me a quick tour of his and his 21-year-old partner Brian's state-of-the-art tool shop, complete with every construction tool they would ever need. Oh, and did I mention the shop was solar-powered? Oh, and did I tell you it was inside a former U-Haul truck? Oh, and did I say the truck runs on biodiesel? I marveled at their super-rig and wondered how the hell these young home-builders afforded it.

Farmer pointed to the perfect spans of timber they were using for the barn's frame and said he'd negotiated them for free from a local lumber operation, which would otherwise burn, dump, or chip these "mill ends" as waste. He explained

that he and Brian had raised the money to buy and equip the truck from building homes for other Earthaven members, and raised most of the Gateway project money from multiple friendly loans from community members, with no collateral. "For ten years I've wanted to clear some acres and start a farm," he said, smiling. "This is my dream."

He mentioned that the band I'd heard earlier was not Phish, but Widespread Panic. Then he added, "But we don't just listen to jam bands around here." We got back to work—Brian and Farmer bickering on the roof, another visitor-helper and I standing below, hoisting up metal roofing and laughing at them.

I have told myself and others, like a mantra, that I aim to someday live in intentional community. I have read books and articles, watched documentaries, and traveled around the country to learn more about them. My values continue to

evolve away from those of unsustainable cities and toward those of most intentional communities. I have enrolled in courses and even taken jobs that I hoped might lead me into the bosom of intentional community. But here I am, eight years later, still hanging out in Los Angeles.

My mother looked at me once and said matter-of-factly, "You're a dilettante." I was stung, and went straight to the dictionary to confirm that she was indeed calling me an indolent, decadent, grape-eating faux-aristocrat. She explained that she had simply observed me as something of a dabbler, a sampler of life. While the dictionary does offer some of the more scathing definitions I feared, I have come to understand what she meant. As you'll see, the way I conducted my search for community only proves her point.

Lost Valley

The Dilettante got his feet wet at Lost Valley Educational Center in Dexter, Oregon, in the summer of 1998. I'd learned about the apprenticeship program by way of an encounter with their lovely quarterly, Talking Leaves. I knew nothing of intentional communities and couldn't even imagine the physical environs of such a place, but Lost Valley's Apprenticeship

*I have told myself and others,
like a mantra, that I aim
to someday live in
intentional community.*

Program seemed the perfect antidote to my Los Angeles malaise. There I could slake my thirst for meaning, which had come to a ridiculous, raging boil.

I fired off an impassioned application for the program, confessing that for years as an actor I had been little more than a pretty-faced pitch-man for pharmaceuticals, detergents, booze, and even the British beef industry (I was the last beef spokesman before the outbreak of mad cow disease in England). I needed redemption. I wanted to change my life. Please accept me into your heavenly hippie home, et cetera. By early June, I was shopping for supplies and packing my bags.

Somewhere around Fresno, my vehicle vomited oil all over the interstate and broke down at a gas station. I broke down myself, blubbering and wondering just what the hell I had done with my life. Somehow I managed to sleep, right there in that buzzing parking lot, my first night ever in my brand new (30-year-old) VW camper.

Leaving my shitty life in L.A. was going to be even lonelier and more terrifying than I'd imagined.

Somehow I made it to Lost Valley, and the land's loveliness unraveled itself: sunny fields, gardens, meadows, streams, fir and cedar forests, cabin clusters, yurts, teepees, a solar shower, sheep, chickens, and children. The residents greeted me quietly, sweetly, but I could tell they were excited about the

(He would prove a lasting influence on me, a role model even to this day.) I was disoriented and ambivalent, but decided to join the pile in one of the cars. We got to Eugene a half-hour later and I dissolved into the crowd, still in some culture shock. Two hours later I was drenched and loopy from do-si-do-ing with the locals. Spirits fairly soared on the ride home, and I found comfort and relief in the easy camaraderie.

It didn't last. Within a week I was hermetically sealing

myself into my camper. I was struggling hard with something I could only identify as "spiritual correctness," a somewhat stifling community rectitude—and I took the only refuge I knew, solitude. The apprenticeship program called for extraordinary immersion in personal-growth practices of all kinds, and that alone would have tested me. But then, even the everyday protocols in the community, like greetings in passing, seemed suffused with an odd, reflective hyper-awareness, a heaviness I could hardly



Brian Love of the Gateway Field project, whom the author worked with during his stay at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina.

pinpoint, much less address.

Was it my lack of reverence? Should I have more respect, be more spiritual? Was it all in my head? Or was everyone just stilted and morose? I could not know, and it left a relatively hardened city boy like me questioning his marbles. In meetings, for example, custom called for avoidance of the word "but" for its negative energy, in favor of the word "and." I

I went straight to the dictionary to confirm that she was indeed calling me an indolent, decadent, grape-eating faux-aristocrat.

arrival of this new batch of summer apprentices. Julie, a tall, gentle, lovely woman maybe a little older than me, looked into my eyes and furrowed her brow.

"You're very different from how I imagined." I guess she'd formed some ideas from the L.A. actor's essay.

"Maybe it's the shaved head," I replied, smiling. Right now I looked more like Shel Silverstein than George Clooney. I wasn't exactly sure what she'd expected, but I liked Julie already. She was real.

I heard talk of a folk dance that night at a school gymnasium in town. I think the idea came from Chris, master gardener, talented editor of *Talking Leaves*, and regional music aficionado.

tried to flow with it, but I was clearly a square peg (I mean, "and" I was a square peg) in a round hole. I was craving an ease, a lightness of being, maybe even a dirty joke to make things feel more grounded, more real. And the more I struggled, the worse it got.

My frustration, of course, aimed directly outward. In the morning sharing circle, I shifted and huffed while the other apprentices, who were roughly college-age and nearly all female, seemed only to want to process feelings—from last night's dramas to early childhood traumas. I was 30, male, and garden time was wasting. When my turn came it was always "Pass." In return for my hissing, judgmental bile, the

women outvoted me nightly on the choice of kitchen-duty music (Ani DiFranco—All-Ani, All-The-Time).

And so the tension mounted. At the weekly Well-Being meeting, I first encountered the process of “milling.” Milling was where you drifted around a room from one person to the next, in a room full of people doing the same, stopping long enough to express aloud the single thought or feeling you would never otherwise want that person to hear. Then the other person got a turn, and then you moved on to the next one, and so on. The idea was, of course, noble: to foster deep honesty in a safe environment, to face difficult feelings from within and without, to grow and build a spiritual relationship with self, with other—with life!

have worn them out. But one day Dianne, a Lost Valley founder and elder, turned her infinite eyes on me during a meeting. She had the face (and spirit) of a shaman. She held both my hands and declared “I hope you stay.” Not “good riddance” or “stop acting like an ass,” but “I hope you stay.” My momentum to escape broke then and there, and I finished the summer. She remains my dear friend.

By summer’s end, the mood had lightened to the point where Larry and Karin, an important couple in the community, shocked a group of us at lunch with the hilarious, sexy, scandalous story of how they’d first met. I’d always liked them, but now I was getting the realness, the ease—the dirty joke—that I’d craved all summer. Only a couple of weeks earlier Larry and I had locked horns in a public, symbolic battle—

I came up with a real humdinger of heartfelt communication: “You have a muscular back.”

I wanted no part of it. I thought I did at first. But my virgin Well-Being had been torture, plain and simple. Conflicted and constipated, I faced one after another and croaked out some inanities that, mercifully, I don’t remember. I finally got to one young woman, a fellow apprentice, and came up with a real humdinger of heartfelt communication: “You have a muscular back.” I don’t remember her reply, but it was downhill from there. Soon I was making myself scarce, same time every week.

Don’t get me wrong. All told, the apprenticeship was a great success, in fact a dilettante’s delight. I soaked up gardening wisdom at the foot of the master, Chris Roth; I learned (failed) to build a fire with sticks; I studied herbs and made candles; I stuffed myself giggly on roadside blackberries; I participated in powerful self-help seminars—taking my turn before 30 others to expand with loving, cosmic compassion one moment and to shudder in wracking grief the next; I swam naked in rivers and dodged rattlesnakes in the desert while fasting, alone, for three days—the mighty Vision Quest. And, ultimately, I was offered at least a provisional home at Lost Valley, if I so chose.

But between the high points, the doldrums always returned. I was always “almost-leaving.” That poor community, I must

climax of tension between me and the community. Now as we laughed together I realized I could not blame “them” for my somber, often suffocating summer. I’d been the creator.

Lost Valley shaped my reveries so deeply that for years I wondered whether I should return there for the longer term. But the final analysis was clear: the Dilettante’s adventures would continue.



The field at Green Gulch Zen Center near Muir Woods, California.

Maplewood Farms

After Lost Valley, I learned not to be quite so dramatic with my search. A dilettante doesn’t pull up all his roots and “change his life,” sight unseen. To start with, he opts for smaller samples, and in that spirit, I arranged a night’s stay with Maplewood Farms (not its real name), many hundreds of miles east of Lost Valley.

I love driving cross-country about once a year to visit my folks in Atlanta, so Maplewood

was reasonably on the route. Also, I loved to read about Maplewood, more than about any other place. It just seemed too damned good to be true. They shared their income. They were stewards to hundreds of acres of wild forestland. They were numerous and, from the photographs, clearly happy. They played music in the woods and jumped off rocks into the

river and ate together and worked harmoniously in any of a handful of bustling, impressive businesses. And this part of the country was stunningly beautiful. As the camper putt-putted over low, green, rolling hills, I could not wait to get there.

I hated it. I felt unwelcome from the first five minutes. They plugged me in immediately with the dinner crew, but for hours I chopped onions alone, failing to connect positively with anyone (I guess the newbie always gets onion duty). Some of the people were particularly ragged and, if not actually drunk, then two steps away. A woman brought a 12-pack of Budweiser to dinner and dropped it loudly on the front porch. The men vaguely glowered in my direction.

The Dilettante was not accustomed to such treatment. The next morning I managed to gain the favorable attention of one lone angel, Mary Beth (not her real name), who introduced herself at breakfast and offered to give me a tour of the land. I almost wept in appreciation and relief. We walked and talked, around the pottery shed and through the cow pasture and down near the river. I was full of questions and she was ready to confide some inside scoops, certainly feeling some frustrations of her own.

It seemed Maplewood had been having a hard time keeping some residents in line—and keeping newcomers at all. They had a music and rec room, which I think they renamed the “wreck”

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society

After a couple of years volunteering for environmental and political causes, I took a position as office manager with what I considered the purest, most bad-ass organization in the world: Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Its founder Captain

Paul Watson, at a mere 50, was a legend already. He has called Greenpeace (which he helped found but then dis-owned) “the Avon Ladies of the environmental movement,” and he rams fishing and whaling ships at sea and sinks them in port, though without a single human injury and only if those poachers persist in violating international conservation law.

Watson is a controversial figure, as one might expect. I came to the organization admiring him but otherwise

without any personal investment. The Dilettante, however, chafed in his job duties. Set up payroll? How on Earth does one do that? After six months of office managing I quit. I disliked the work, yes, but I positively loathed my direct supervisor (who was fired just two weeks after I quit). Nevertheless, in this role I had helped select about half the ship’s current crew of volunteers, and I’d always wished to be one of them. So now, since I was unemployed anyway, I took the opportunity to sail aboard the *Farley Mowat* from San Diego up to Seattle as a Sea Shepherd volunteer.



Aboard the SSCS vessel *Farley Mowat*.

FRANK BEATY

I hated it. I felt unwelcome from the first five minutes.

room, since the evenings unfailingly ended in drunken brawling. In a vicious cycle, Maplewood became gun-shy from hosting a series of uninterested visitors—thus the cold reception for anyone not bubbling over to join the community, and thus more uninterested visitors. Mary Beth herself was struggling to extract herself from a troubled relationship with a young punk I certainly didn’t like on sight. The feeling, I noticed, was mutual as we passed him on our walk.

I have no idea how Maplewood is doing now, a handful of years later. I never again visited their website or read their materials. I wish them well and take simple solace in knowing that I and, eventually, Mary Beth, both made our escapes.

I saw no combat on the voyage. I did wage one battle, though, against seasickness. I swooned and burped for days but never puked. (So did I win?) Anyway, even the salty crew admitted these were the worst seas they had seen all summer, and a few of them took to their beds for a spell. At night it was like trying to sleep on a giant roller coaster. I lay in my bunk for three nights, listening to the ship pop and crack and groan like a person, and wondered how the hell the thing stayed together. I considered a watery death and felt surprising serenity.

The crew could not have embraced me more warmly than they did, from the first night when they handed me a beer to the last waves good-bye as they putted and blared their

way out of San Francisco Harbor. And they formed a perfectly harmonious, if unlikely, community. They had their strict assignments and carried them out as if in the military. Some had come on board only a few weeks ago and others hadn't left in years. The head mechanic was a crusty Brit in his early sixties. His assistant was a woman in her forties, soon to be the mother of an Iraq war veteran. A young woman from Germany, a conservatory-level musician, was 19. One gentle

I am not sure if anyone ever really gets used to the impossibly loud, stabbing clang of a monk's hand-bell at 4 a.m. I can tell you that the Dilettante did not. However, for the first time in my life, I meditated in deep peace and comfort for two virtually uninterrupted hours, almost every morning. The Zendo at Green Gulch was the most serene and beautiful sanctuary I have ever seen. Giant globes hung low from the high vaulted ceiling, turned only to the dimmest setting in the

For the first time in my life, I meditated in deep peace and comfort for two virtually uninterrupted hours, almost every morning.

Canadian in his early 30s was a Disney animator. He drew hilarious, uncanny caricatures of the whole crew.

I disembarked in San Francisco, by the way, only because of the heavy seas. Seattle was another five days away, and I ain't stupid. But it saddened me to leave the Farley Mowat, and I could tell that a few crewmembers genuinely hoped I would change my mind. So to this day, the Dilettante will occasionally rub his chin and consider future whale-saving voyages with the Sea Shepherd "community."

Green Gulch Zen Center

Green Gulch is just too beautiful and good to be true. But there it sits anyway, successful for decades now as a Zen retreat center and sprawling seaside organic farm in Marin County, California. A stone's throw from the Golden Gate Bridge, towering eucalyptus trees line the steep hills surrounding their northern California land, which also neighbors Muir Woods, a jewel of the state's redwood preserves.

I, the Dilettante, am a spiritual seeker without a practice and an organic farmer without a farm. So, three springs ago, Green Gulch's six-month farm apprenticeship program was calling out to me. Apprentices participate fully in the community's formal Zen practice, as well as in the curriculum of the farm program. But before I could establish my candidacy, I had to complete a two-week trial run of meditation and work.

pre-dawn. The quiet had substance, blanketing us and keeping us warm, and as the sun slowly took over and lit the windows high above the birds lifted the blanket, one chirp at a time.

This practice actually felt right. I could almost imagine a life here. But alas, I am a you-know-what, and so this two-week trial—a dilettante-detection device of sorts—discovered me and gently rooted me out. While other work-students at bedtime were reading *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, I had hooked into *The Party's Over—Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies*, and was freaking myself out but good. Also, I was chatting a lot with the farm apprentices and filling my notebook with

names of nearby farms and farmers, stars from the world of sustainable agriculture. I started to chomp a bit at the bit.

I didn't leave Green Gulch because I was drowning in spiritual torpor. No, in fact I was delighted by the easy and down-to-earth, time-for-the-dishes kind of geist around the place. And I actually enjoyed the rigor. Green Gulch would emerge a clear and formidable contender for the Dilettante's affections, but I had only two weeks' vacation and suddenly much else to see. So after only half my scheduled stay, I set out on a one-week,

whirlwind, seat-of-the-pants northern California sustainable-farm communities tour.

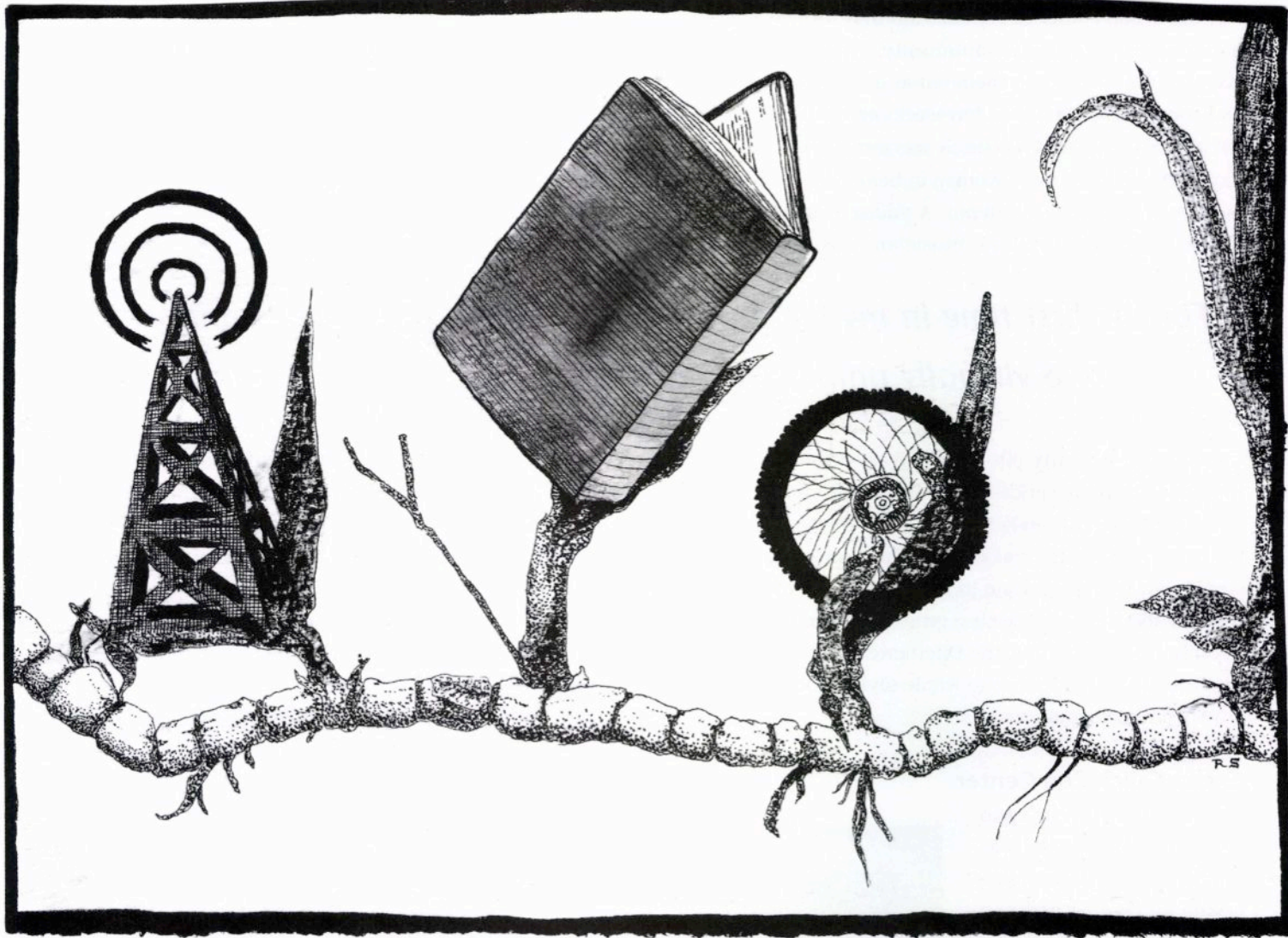
To be continued in the Winter '06 issue.

Frank Beaty works as a medical editor, volunteers in progressive politics, and is helping start both a community garden and an alternative fuel co-operative. As of this writing, he still lives in Los Angeles.



SSCS crew member Joost Engelbert shows author Frank Beaty (right) the view from the crow's nest.

FRANK BEATY



THE RHIZOME COLLECTIVE: Starting an Activist Urban Community

Vibrant green organic gardens and fruit-tree canopies burst forth across an industrial landscape of warehouses and salvage lots at the Rhizome Collective, a new intentional community in the manufacturing quarter of Austin, Texas. A windmill constructed of recycled bicycle parts spins wildly; a biofuel-powered tractor rattles along in the garden. Ponds made from old 55-gallon barrels teem with aquatic life. Free-ranging chickens and turkeys gobble and cluck. Amongst this, neighborhood folks are busily working and building community with each other. At any given time an activist group might be meeting in the warehouse space, assembling bicycles from used bike parts, mailing books to prisoners, or creating large, beautiful protest puppets for the next street parade.

The Rhizome Collective, a nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization owns three warehouse buildings with a beautiful courtyard in the center, where we have been building a Center for Community Organizing and an Educational Center for Urban Sustainability since 2000. Collective members and involved community members meet every other week to make consensus decisions about the functioning of the space. One building is the residential area, home to caretakers who do maintenance and upkeep on the space and tend to its daily needs. The two other buildings provide low-rent space to the local organizations Bikes Across Borders, the Inside Books Project, the Austin Independent Media Center, the GI Rights Hotline, and a newly formed web radio collective. A stage and open area is also available to social activist groups for meetings, as well as educational and fundraising events. The Rhizome Collective also runs Art Reach, a city-funded after-school art program at a nearby elementary school.

For several years we also hosted Thursday night community dinners. Bringing in a diverse group of people, the dinners served as a valuable tool for local networking and community building.

The Bikes Across Borders nonprofit holds regular bike workshop nights, where people can learn how to assemble and repair bikes that are then later sent in large shipments to Mexico and Cuba. The organization frequently holds cultural events involving puppetry and music. The Inside Books Project sends free literature to Texas's rapidly growing incarcerated population. They also have regular volunteer nights that draw a loyal crowd.

Throughout the space, numerous ecological tools and technologies are on display for the public to learn from and interact with. These include constructed wetlands, aquaculture ponds, microlivestock (chickens, ducks, turkeys, and guinea hens), vermicomposting, strawbale rooms inside the warehouse buildings, edible forest gardens, low-tech solar and wind devices, bioremediation experiments, and waste-grease-burning vehicles. These systems are designed to give urban residents more

autonomy over life's basic resources: food, water, energy, waste management, and shelter. We encourage their incorporation into the design of communities with the hope of reducing the city's demands on the environment, and easing people's transition into a post-petroleum economy. Recently, Rhizome has begun offering the Radical Urban Sustainability Training, or R.U.S.T., a weekend intensive that goes into these topics in depth.

In 2004, the Rhizome Collective was donated a nearby ten-acre piece of land that had been blighted by years of illegal dumping. We applied for and received a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Cleanup Award to fund the removal of the debris from the site. We plan to create an environmental justice park on the property after the clean-up. The participation of the local neighborhood is integral to this project.

Prior to starting the Rhizome Collective, I (Scott) had been part of many experiments in temporary community. These ranged from squats that got raided and wound me up in jail, to expensive rented spaces that were heartbreakingly evicted, to nomadic circuses that moved to a new site every few days, reveling in the "temporary autonomous zone." Financial

pressure and the threat of eviction prevented these endeavors from being long-lasting models of radical community organizing and permanent autonomous sustainability. I knew that for this to be possible, we would need to have secured access to space.

In 1999-2000, with protests in Seattle, D.C. and Europe, the Global Justice movement was at its peak. A catch phrase of the time was "another world is possible." For me and many others involved with this movement, it was imperative to create spaces where we were simultaneously working for social justice while creating functioning alternative models for the social institutions we opposed. This included not only survival issues such as food and water, but it also extended to education, health care, transportation, and media. It was envisioned that such a space would have connections to similar projects, and that the model would inspire others. This is why we

***A windmill constructed of recycled
bicycle parts spins wildly. Ponds
made from old 55-gallon barrels
teem with aquatic life.***



Young participants of Artreach, one of Rhizome Collective's affiliated onsite organizations.

chose the rhizome as a metaphor for our community, the rhizome being literally an underground system that networks individual plant shoots that is persistent and difficult to uproot. From this idea the Rhizome Collective was born.

We got the warehouse space when I received an inheritance and used it to purchase the property. Recognizing that

The dynamic of unequal ownership has been an ongoing challenge. At the very least, we community members openly acknowledge this circumstance and seek to rectify it through ongoing conversation. Consensus decision-making along with cultivating shared responsibility seem to offer the best solutions so far.

Following the purchase of the building, a small group of us formed to start the project, and after much tumult and turnover, we became the nucleus of the Rhizome Collective. In hindsight, we would have been more careful forming the initial group and creating a more clearly defined purpose from the start. During the first few years, we spent much time and energy on reconciling conflicting agendas and creating structure and process. While we've made improvements, maintaining process is still challenging, especially when it comes to accountability for work hours. In our first few years, we had people wanting to do everything from having retail businesses to recording studios to turning the space into a school. It became apparent early on that it would be impossible to accommodate all of these visions, and some people were inevitably going to be left out, and disappointed about it. We had to frequently remind ourselves, "You can't please everyone."

When the warehouse was purchased, it had been neglected and recently damaged by a fire. The courtyard was a steaming asphalt parking lot. Our first project was to jubilantly rip out the asphalt and begin accumulating biomass for gardens. Our biggest job consisted of repairing numerous leaks and structural problems. We spent many nights frantically bailing heavy rains out of our hallways and rooms as water streamed through the leaks in a poorly made flat roof. We also had to learn how to navigate the bureaucracy of Austin city codes. After two years of hard work and anxiety, the building was made habitable, both structurally and legally.

***We hope to have more autonomy over life's basic resources,
and attempt to ease the transition into a post-petroleum economy.***

with privilege comes responsibility, I wanted to do something that would benefit others while modeling what another world might look like. It would have been ideal to have first established a group that collectively bought property together. However, the opportunity existed at the moment to buy this space and I had to move on it quickly.

Our urban location, while a very deliberate choice, provides special challenges. There is a constant influx of people, which not only brings lots of energy, but also lots of people's needs and demands. We made a conscious decision to make the semantic distinction between calling our project a "center

for community organizing” rather than “community center.” In many people’s minds, the term “community center” implies a space that is completely open and welcoming for anyone to come and hang around and not necessarily reciprocate anything. After frustrating episodes in which a few people worked while others hung out and drank beer, and of chasing off strangers lurking around the space at 3 a.m., only to be cursed and told how unwelcoming we were, it became apparent that we would need to establish some boundaries. By using

while our neighborhood is predominantly Latino. It became apparent early on that our political agenda and style often alienate our more conservative neighbors. Our suspicions were confirmed when a reporter from the local newspaper interviewed our neighbors in an article about the Rhizome Collective. We learned that we freaky Anglos who rode bikes were alright, as long as we didn’t try to influence their children! We strive to find a balance where we are an asset to the local community while staying true to our ideals. Attempts include the Art

*It is difficult to be in service to a community
that you are simultaneously displacing.*

the term “center for community organizing,” we expressed that we wanted community participation that was planned and announced. To avoid masses of folks lazing about and confirming our neighbors’ fears that a “hippie commune” had moved in, we asked that people come over for scheduled events or with the intention of volunteering with us or with one of the hosted organizations.

Living in a public space also creates challenges, particularly when there are not acres of distance between the public and private spheres. Many residents find it extremely difficult to come downstairs day after day having to be in “friendly public mode” before breakfast. Not wanting to seem rude to visitors can conflict with the need to have a regular morning before being bombarded with the public’s needs. On the other side, being in a public space that might also feel like someone’s home can put the public in a highly awkward position and result in unwelcome feelings. Our solution was to make clear distinctions between public and private spaces. One building is residential and the other two are community spaces. This solution reasonably maintains everyone’s sanity, and although we have clearly marked signs, we frequently still have to vocally reinforce this distinction.

A major question we have asked ourselves since the beginning is which wider community did we intend to serve? The majority of people involved with Rhizome have been Anglo environmental and social-justice activists,

Reach program, the bike shop, community barbecues, and participating in *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) parades.

A related concern is the impact that we might have on the gentrification of East Austin. It is difficult to be in service to a community that you are simultaneously displacing. We have addressed this issue in a number of ways. To help fight the rising tax rates that drive many elders out of their homes, we have contested our property assessment. We keep our own property value as low as we can by convincing the assessors that the building is poor condition. Secondly, we try to promote an awareness of the issue of gentrification, especially



Participants in Bicycle Circus Migration, another of Rhizome’s affiliated onsite organizations.



where it is either an unchallenged paradigm, or is not even recognized. One trend we find troublesome is the new, relatively expensive “sustainable” or green homes being built on cheaper property in East Austin, without any consideration to the impact that their presence may be having on the wider community of their far less affluent neighbors.

Like most community projects, we have also struggled to stay afloat financially. While our operating expenses are not extravagant, we barely break even with the rent paid by the residents and organizations. One of our biggest assets is the open space in the largest warehouse which local groups rent for benefit parties and fundraisers at reasonable rates. During the first few years, we would have events nearly twice a week. This took a sharp toll upon Rhizome residents, who suffered into the early morning through countless high-volume punk shows and raves and the accompanying messes and security issues. Caretakers grew tired of picking cigarette butts out of gardens and scooping beer cans out of fish ponds. As the courtyard has transformed from a parking lot to a garden, it has become too environmentally sensitive to allow hordes to trample it. Huge parties also put a great strain on our relationship with one immediate neighbor, who didn’t enjoy drunk people stumbling across his front yard. As a result, we have scaled back the number and the intensity of the parties and are looking toward other ways of raising funds. Our Radical Urban Sustainability Training (R.U.S.T.) was a great success, suggesting that focusing on serving as an educational center could be a promising new source of income. We are also looking to establish a cooperatively run, veggie oil-powered composting operation on our new 10-acre property, collecting abundant wastes from local businesses and turning them into a sellable product.

We have learned an enormous amount since 2000 about the benefits and challenges of managing a project on this scale. We have had moments of utter despair and disgust as well as successes so surprising that they erase any doubt in our minds of the rightfulness of this path. The work has been exhausting, but deeply rewarding. We will continue the work of building Rhizome into the future, excited by the challenges that lie ahead.

Scott Kellogg and Stacy Pettigrew are both founding members of the Rhizome Collective in Austin, Texas.

Constructed wetlands at Rhizome Collective (top); entrance to the community (middle); overhead view of the grounds (bottom).

COMMUNITIES

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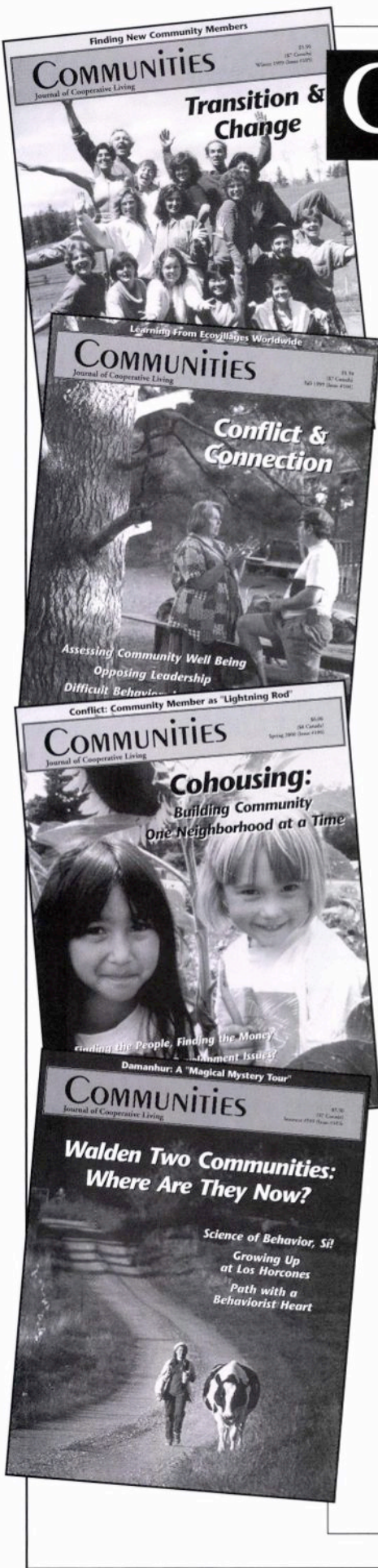
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#132



High Wind members at a summer folk dancing seminar in 1986.

WOULD I LIVE IN COMMUNITY AGAIN?

In August 2005 the High Wind Board of Directors sent out a questionnaire to people, nationwide, who had either lived in our intentional community (roughly 1981 to 1992), or had been involved in related activities over the 25-year span of the ongoing work. We were curious to find out what the impact might have been on the thinking and lives of people touched by our ideas as we spun them out as dreams and projects. We sent the survey to 180 of those with the closest contact.

High Wind is located in the countryside near Plymouth, Wisconsin, 50 miles north of Milwaukee, with solar buildings, an independently owned organic CSA farm feeding 450 families, and, in our intensive period, some 22 residents. High Wind offered a comprehensive educational program, often co-sponsored with the University of Wisconsin, as well as conferences, think tank consultations, and international seminars linked to other communities such as Findhorn in Scotland and Eoures in the French Alps. For a couple of decades it ran an alternative bookstore in Milwaukee.

It was interesting to note that the most upbeat and unfailingly positive replies to our questionnaire came from those who had not

lived in the community but participated in High Wind-related events as well as serving on various boards. On the other hand, the communitarians soon found their financial security often next to zero, the flexibility and skills required constantly stretched, and the ability to adjust to sharing lives closely with a group of heterogeneous strangers held up to scrutiny. Not to mention the stamina needed to sit through endless group meetings for every decision. Yet one key former community resident concluded, despite the ups and downs (or maybe because of such vicissitudes), that in the end the experience was a “perfect” learning mechanism.

There was a final survey question for those who had lived at High Wind: “Would you live in a community again?” My husband Beldon Paulson and I wrote our answers separately without showing them to each other first. (He wrote that he would live in community again, not a residential community, but a non-residential community of people committed to sharing the vision of building a more sustainable world.) Here’s how I answered the question:

No, I wouldn't choose to live in community again. It was an incredible experience—from its buildup and preparation from 1976 to 1981, and then through some 12 years of intense togetherness as a very earnest, idealistic little group committed to living the experiment, to attempt modeling a more honest, more conscious, "clean" way of living than we felt we were seeing in the world at large. There was both exhilaration and terrible pain at various times,

together, made decisions, assessed our interpersonal relationship skills obsessively in regular meetings—it felt not only right but enabled us to draw a huge collective sigh of relief. We could say "we did it!" and not feel guilty about morphing into a more loosely supportive neighborhood of friends who were suddenly free to pursue our own passions and interests. It needn't mean giving up the values we'd championed so fiercely about conservation and a sustainable lifestyle. We

Frankly, I wouldn't have the stamina to do it all again.

successes and gratifying public recognition, as well as personal and collective dark periods with false starts and stumbles. There was often an excruciating flashlight shone on each of our foibles and missteps, and then the wonderful, close friendships and just plain fun as we labored shoulder to shoulder and knew we were breaking new ground in this corner of Sheboygan County. There was personal growth and greater self-understanding. There was validation of what we were about, even though at times it seemed we'd crawl forward a step and then fall back two steps. Often it was hard to see what we were accomplishing, what we were achieving and stood for in the eyes of the public; we were too close to it and tended to judge ourselves mercilessly.

So it was quite wonderful and even amazing to look back and realize that I had stuck it out and could feel positive about the whole experience. I knew it had been valuable, important. I think most of the others in the community felt the same.

But when we decided to loosen the bonds we were holding ourselves in—the lock-step closeness in how we functioned

realized we might even become more effective in our loosely structured setting as neighbors with shared values, when we weren't under constant group scrutiny. We could also flower as individuals.

Frankly, I wouldn't have the stamina to do it all again.

And after so much intensity when we seemed to almost live in each other's heads, it was wonderful to just take a rest from all that. I realized how much I prized my freedom, my privacy, and the solitude I could indulge in when I needed it. It felt as though I had paid my dues, done my bit to inch public awareness along.

I can't exactly say what I'd do differently if I were to do it again. As some have noted, with all the stum-

bling toward creating something good and worthwhile, in the end it was really "perfect." The joys, the pain. It was a glorious way to learn and to point others on a path of awareness too. But I wouldn't want to try it again—not for myself anyway. Perhaps a model with more viability or longevity would be a less rigidly structured regime. Just as the Israeli *kibbutzniks* after awhile often opted out of their strictly com-



Raising a beam for the Bioshelter balcony roof, 1981; Bel Paulson in center.

LISA PAULSON



RICHARD BRODZELLER

High Wind residents 1982 clockwise from bottom center: Alida Sherman, Bel Paulson, Cindy Moran, John Smithson, Lisa Paulson, Cindy Smithson, Jim Priest, David Lagerman.

munal situations to join or create the *moshavim* (where their families had their own homes and people could hold paying jobs, but where there was still a strong community cohesion), maybe a similar structure could work better here. Maybe the answer is some kind of cohousing community. But we often

Now the High Wind board has a chance to strike out in new directions, to carry the lessons learned over the past 25 years to a new generation that increasingly is realizing that the very survival of our society and our Earth are in jeopardy. I can certainly muster enthusiasm for such an initiative.

We decided to morph into a more loosely supportive neighborhood of friends.

remark that we wouldn't be the close group still living at High Wind if we hadn't gone through the "bath of fire" together. We'd be just a bunch of exurbanites living in energy efficient houses in the same vicinity. We shared a lot and that is a precious bond.

Lisa Paulson is co-founder with her husband Beldon Paulson of High Wind Community in Wisconsin (no longer an intentional community), and the nonprofit Plymouth Foundation.

THE GIANT SEA TURTLE IN OUR SHOWER



Author Molly Prentiss today.

**Growing up in community can mystify your friends,
but by the time you get to college, can turn out just fine**

A giant sea turtle, dead and stuffed, loomed like a shadow over the shower. The adults had dragged it home years ago, nailed it to the wall behind the showerhead, and seemed to have forgotten what it was. To them it became a fixture, a statement, a real piece. To me, already weighted with the adolescent traumas of growing breasts and kissing boys, this dead turtle equated to pure embarrassment, epitomizing the abnormality of my family and living situation. I grew up on a commune: three families, one piece of land, and hundreds of quirky “pieces” like the tortoise. Combined with our orange velour couch, a neon sign that read “eat!” in the kitchen, and the unfinished paint-jobs on various walls, the shower turtle became an immense source of stress when friends would come over to my house. Sleepovers or after-school snacks meant explanations of our communal kitchen, justifications of our barn-shaped houses, and a patient ques-

tion and answer period in which I was forced to address subjects like why is the bathroom outside? And why don’t you just live with your *own* family? I cursed these abnormalities daily as I shampooed my hair, forced to glare back at the marble eyes of the stuffed turtle.

My friends would arrive at the commune and want to see everything: “Ohmygosh, take us on a *tour!*” they would yelp, spreading themselves like insects over the expanse of wooden floors. I would gather them up (Jessica, Sonya, Meika, Lacey) and shuffle them through the house as if it were a museum. I was careful to emphasize our restaurant-style dishwasher and fully stocked pantry, steering clear of rat-traps and cobwebs in corners. I would show them the enormous circle of a dining room table where we ate every night, the three-door refrigerator, the personalized mailboxes for each commune member. Always, there were questions and answers. “Like, *where* do

you guys *sleep!*!” Lacey would chirp with the realization that there had been no bedrooms on the tour so far. “We cook and eat and hang out in the big house,” I’d explain. “We sleep in the little houses.” The girls, intrigued and puzzled, would follow me like soldiers along brick paths and through overgrown gardens to the little houses where we slept. “So I don’t *get it*,” Sonya would bark, “Where do you *shower?*” I would reluctantly lead the group to the communal bathhouse, an open room made up of cement and tile and three showerheads, and expose them to the immense presence of the turtle. They would squeal and giggle and I would remember how strange this must all seem to them: sharing space, sharing showers, and sharing daily lives with people outside of my bloodline.

In 1979, my parents and a band of ten other idealistic hippies bought “La Selva,” a ten-acre plot of land in Santa Cruz,



Making candles with commune sisters; Molly is in the middle.

The dead turtle equated to pure embarrassment, epitomizing the abnormality of my family and living situation.

California, that overlooked the bay and smelled fresh like oak trees and new beginnings. They pooled their resources, their skills, and their spirits to envision and create a housing system based on sharing, coexisting, and community. What started as a small, overcrowded shack turned into individual wood-framed houses and sprawling gardens; the commune evolved

into a tiny village. Its members were individuals—artists or stock-brokers or office managers—but also active members of a cohesive group. Systems developed: each adult cooked one night a week, everyone showed up for dinner and pitched in with the garden or household projects. Bills

were split, responsibilities were shared. Living each day became something entirely different from the nuclear norm. Life, both its “dailies” and its ideals, became communal.

The commune was a perfect playing field for the game of growing up: acres of exploring, an encouraging ensemble of adults, and consistent kid companionship. Six adults made up the core of the commune: three couples, two of them with two daughters each. The clan of four daughters developed a community all our own: we ran barefoot in fields and stole strawberries from farms, devised games with sticks and baked mud-pies from scratch. As the oldest daughter at the commune, I acted as the ringleader for dress-up dance productions and ploys against the parents. We even started a commune newsletter, “The Household Times,” which featured highlights such as new pets and recent dinner parties. Our community fostered creativity and communication and supplied us with a strong feeling of kinship and connection with those around us.

As we grew older, with more visits to friends’ two-story houses in ostentatious neighborhoods, we began role-playing games where we pretended to live in conventional nuclear homes. We would envision future lives for ourselves: a husband named Chris, a black lab named Midnight, and a house all our own at the end of a cul-de-sac. We would play “neighbors” (which we didn’t have) and ask each other if we could “please borrow a cup of sugar because we had just run out and we had already started baking cookies!” The lure of normality became a source of inspiration for our antics; a touch of longing wove itself into our make-believe. We became mildly obsessed with things like fences and sidewalks, things we didn’t have on our rural chunk of land on the hill. Sometimes, when raccoons scratched anxiously under the floorboards as I tried to sleep, I longed anxiously for the suburbs.



LA SELVA COMMUNITY

Molly age 9 on stilts (left); sister Grace, commune sister Annie, commune sister Maddy, and author (right).

Yet despite youthful longings for two-car garages and next-door neighbors, the commune kids grew and evolved in the communal setting in a very natural way. Living as a part of a community was all we knew. Enormous feasts infused with conversation and interaction were what we came to expect from a nightly meal. Interacting with multiple sets of parent-like figures was organic and unforced. We knew nothing of borrowing sugar from neighbors because our sugar was already shared. These things, although they required explanation to friends from traditional one-family houses, were our way of life from the start. Our parents had been the visionaries, the seed-planters, the innovators. As their children, born into this environment of interconnected houses and relationships, we were raised

feeling that it was the natural way to live. We became active participants and respected members of the commune. We had our own slots for mail, responsibilities around the house, and places to voice our opinions at the dinner table. We were born into a vision that had already been realized; for us, that vision was our home.

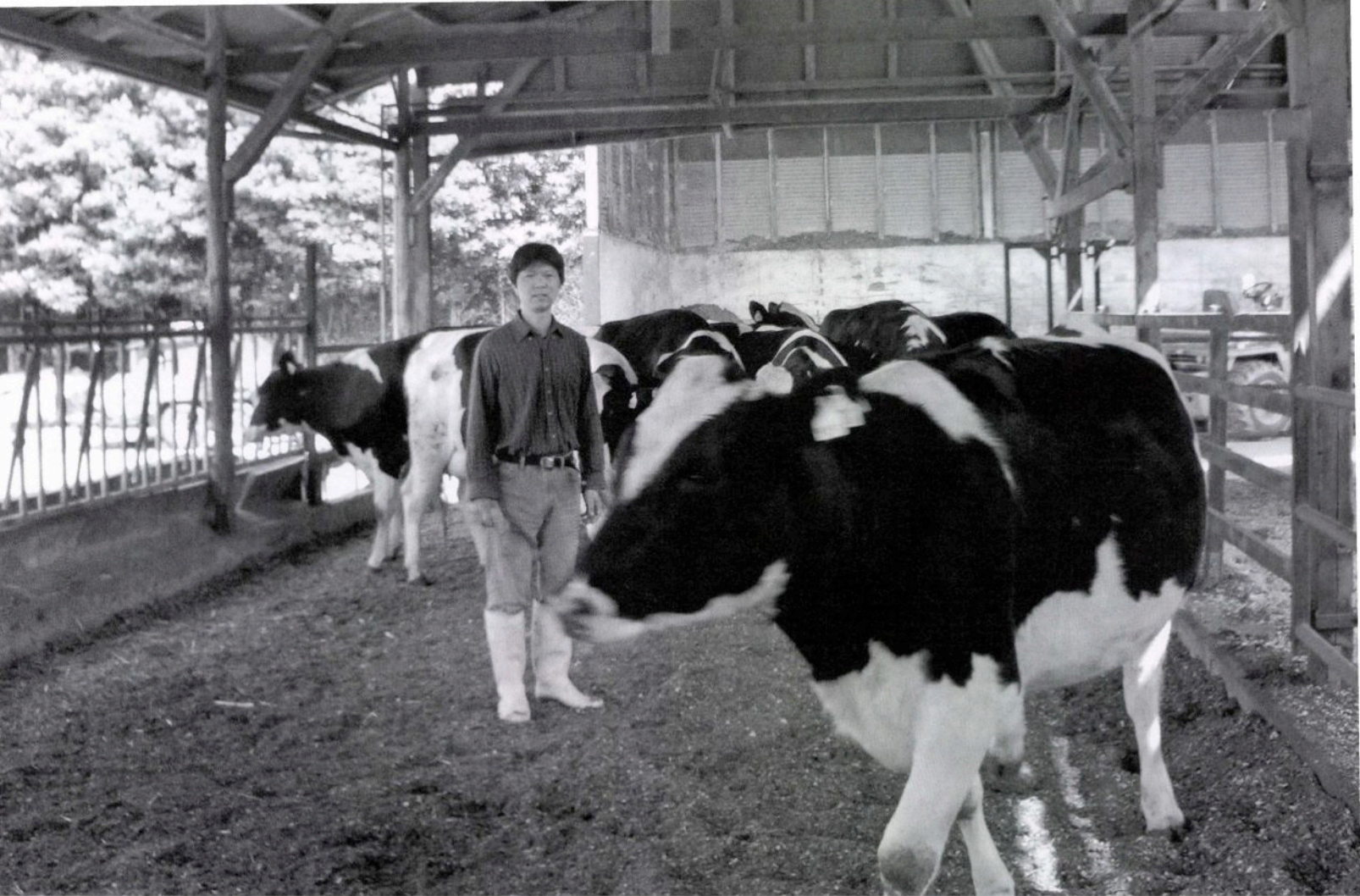
It is interesting to me that there are not more communities like the one I grew up in functioning in our society, that my living situation was the one that was always considered different or abnormal, and that more people would not choose to be part of a collective group of other humans. I often find that people consider communal living to be overly utopian or painfully idealistic, concerned with concessions of personal space or freedom. But La Selva, a leaf clinging to a weathered branch

of idealism, is just one example of a community idea that has remained a working reality. It has no religious philosophy, no intensely structured organization, and not even perfect communication among members. What La Selva does have, however, is flexibility. It shows that communities can grow together, adapt to changes, and move through generations. The sea turtle was eventually removed. The commune girls, college-ready, eventually waned in numbers. But the lasting members of La Selva remain, eating dinners together, making decisions, and acting as an example of co-existence.

In my college years I return to the commune every few months. I bring friends with me and give them tours of the buildings. "This is amazing," they say. "What a great way to grow up." I now understand that it was great, and I was indeed part of something important. On the tours, I proudly lead my friends to the remodeled shower room; it is now my favorite room in the house. I tell them with a chuckle how there used to be a four-foot-wide sea turtle bolted to the wall, looming like a shadow over the shower. They laugh with me and don't really understand.

"Like, where do you guys sleep?!"

Molly Prentiss was raised in La Selva commune in Santa Cruz, California, and is now attending college.



Part of the dairy operation at Yamagishi Toyosato commune in Japan.

“ECOTOPIA” IN JAPAN?

Meet back-to-the-land communarians with the goal of “sustainable happiness for all.” Do they live like people in that fictional country, “Ecotopia”?

My wife Christine and I visited Toyosato, an agricultural intentional community in Japan, because an ecology-minded professor friend told us it seemed to him reminiscent of the sustainable future society I had described in my novel *Ecotopia*. Ecotopia’s citizens conducted their agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy production, land use, transportation, and much else on principles that would ensure the long-term survival of their society. At Toyosato we saw a unique approach to a sustainable future: 500 residents living in the flagship village of a nationwide network of 34 such villages—raising hogs and cattle and huge numbers

of chickens; tending abundant fruit orchards and greenhouses and fields; producing almost all their own food; and generating cash by selling high-end largely organic products through retail outlets including 40 of their own stores. They were composting animal wastes for use as fertilizer, utilizing only energy-conserving light bulbs, minimizing water consumption in toilets and urinals. Living in an income-sharing commune according to the tenets of their Yamagishi movement, they also minimized the ecological impacts of their housing, their communal dining hall, their vehicles, their “stuff,” and even their clothing. While they were still hooked up to the national

energy grid, and using lots of gasoline, they were certainly moving in Ecotopian directions.

A year later, as part of a conference trip to Japan, we wanted to learn more. Could this obscure movement actually be demonstrating much of what it means to live sustainably? Yamagishi people are eager for scholars and journalists to examine their ways, since they believe they have found solutions to most of the underlying problems of modern society—they believe their practices can bring happiness, prosperity, and peace to the world. So they invited us to participate in *Tokkoh*, the introductory orientation week for anyone considering either membership in the movement's Association or residence in a village, and a visit Toyosato for two weeks. Our three weeks amid Yamagishi people proved an astounding and thought-provoking experience, and changed the way we look at the world—and in particular, at its prospects for a sustainable future.

Toyosato

Toyosato is located in Mie prefecture, a fertile, temperate, mostly agricultural area east of Osaka and Kyoto. Most Yamagishi villages, called *jikkenji* (which means something like “demonstration communities for the world”) are much smaller, numbering two or three dozen people, except the nearby original village of Kasugayama, with 163 residents. The *jikkenji* are communal societies, even more rigorously so than present-day *kibbutzim*, with shared dining, limited individual living spaces, children residing in a separate dormitory after age five, a strong emphasis on equality and distributed decision-making, and all members participating in productive work.

Toyosato's residential sector looks like a small college campus, with clean, orderly, massive architecture. There are many residence halls, an auditorium building, a bath house, a dining hall, and some accessory buildings. Soon after arriving, you notice a pervasive, not entirely unpleasant smell: pig

Plants are so healthy that pesticides are virtually never needed.

Tokkoh

The Tokkoh course lasts eight days and is held at a special school located amid remote farm fields. Our total immersion program included eating together, spending the days and evenings in discussion sessions, and sleeping Japanese-style in large gender-separated tatami-mat rooms. The program aims to detach you from your habitual ways of thinking and to entertain the possibility of seeing the world differently, acting differently, and living differently.

The role of the group's facilitators is mainly to persistently ask rather unsettling questions, which function like Zen koans: as participants jointly mull them over, unexpected new understandings may occur. And by the example of lengthy difficult discussions, participants experience *Kensan*, the Yamagishi term for patiently getting deeply into problems or situations.

Tokkoh also includes discussions of the thinking of Yamagishi Miyozo, founder of the movement (1901-1961). Participants thus become familiar with key concepts that are central to the emotional and practical life of Yamagishi villagers.

manure. It's a reminder that Yamagishi communities are basically agricultural. In fact, in the livestock sheds that cover substantial parts of its 183 acres of fields, Toyosato is a massive operation, currently housing about 40,000 chickens, thousands of hogs, and hundreds of dairy and beef cattle. (There is also a Toyosato forest of more than a thousand acres.) Yet this is by no means conventional commercial agriculture. In Yamagishi terms it's “social” agriculture. As it turns out, the underlying goal for the founding and evolution of the Yamagishi movement is not merely material prosperity but “thriving with others.”

The thinking of the movement's founder began, not with religion or politics, but with chicken farming. Yamagishi worked initially on nine acres, and he imagined sustainable, self-supporting farms which, through the liberal application of their own chickens' manure and a small addition of fertilizer from outside, could produce abundant meat, eggs, vegetables, and rice—enough to feed the farmers but also to sell—with enough rice and plant wastes to support a lot of chickens.



Yamagishi Toyosato from the air.

Yamagishi's first farm had only 200-300 chickens. Crucially, he argued that the number of chickens should be determined by an ecological criterion and not by commercial opportunity. A farm's chicken population, he declared, should be set according to the amount of chicken feed the land could produce. In other words, Yamagishi envisioned farms based on synergistic mutual support among chickens, humans, and land. Through careful record-keeping he proved to his own satisfaction that this was easily possible, and soon legions of fellow farmers followed his lead. The movement evolved to have the overarching aim of nothing less than humans becoming an integral and inseparable part of one total natural system, creating a society that would be "at perfect ideal peace and harmony within itself, with anybody in the present and future, and with everything in nature."

Yamagishi had been a rebellious youth under surveillance by the wartime Imperial secret police. On the run, he took refuge in a chicken house, where he passed the time observing what made chickens happy. As a boy, Yamagishi had idly thrown away a peach-pit which hit a man nearby. Enraged, the man chased him; safe at home, Yamagishi asked his mother why the man had become so angry. "Why indeed do people

*Their underlying goal is
"thriving with others."*

get angry?" mused his mother—setting the young Yamagishi off on a lifelong quest to answer the question. These two incidents apparently became the twin pillars of Yamagishi thought: If chickens could be made happy (or we might prefer "contented"), why not people? And if people were to get along happily, they would not only need appropriate social surroundings, but they would have to control anger in order to avoid the chronic personality conflicts that plague modern society. We met several pioneers or "founders," now in their seventies, who had known Yamagishi; they emphasized that he seemed modest, kind, and very interested in other people.

The movement's pioneer period, like that of the Mormons in Utah, was arduous. We spoke with several founders who had participated in the first village construction at Kasugayama, not far from Toyosato. The soil was sticky red clay, needing much amendment. Forest had to be cleared. Milk was scarce for the children, and there was not even good Japanese rice, only millet and a little foreign rice. But exactly how the basic social structure was devised is not clear, though some people still alive somewhere probably remember it. We were told only that "Yamagishi and his associates worked it out," according to his vision of an ideal new society.

With the exception of bananas in a fruit salad, a tiny smoked fish, and a festive sashimi plate, everything we ate during our Toyosato visit was Yamagishi produced: meat in quantities and frequency much greater than in standard Japanese cuisine; eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, yams, tofu (superb!), blueberries, rice (from another village), and so on. Annual sales of Yamagishi eggs, milk, yogurt, green tea, chicken meat, pork, beef, pear-apples, grapes, strawberries, sweet and regular potatoes, vegetables, and other products total about \$120 million, through a network of 40 Yamagishi shops and through contracts with supermarkets and department stores. So far, there is no Yamagishi fishing or fish farming, although the village in Thailand raises shrimp.

Yamagishi agriculture, like modern agriculture elsewhere, is quite mechanized and enormously productive with limited human labor. However, due to the communal structure, labor costs are not directly reflected in pricing—an edge in labor-intensive products. (After Peak Oil, higher energy costs will be a growing burden on productivity, but the Yamagishi system should retain substantial labor advantages over commercial agriculture.) Japanese land costs are high, so all livestock are housed in compact quarters; the “free range” concept is almost unknown in Japan, even among the many people exploring alternative agricultural techniques. Abundance of Yamagishi labor power permits elaborate trellising of fruit trees and grape vines, tomatoes, and even eggplant—leading to harvests unbelievable in my own gardening experience. And the collective spirit has a charming side: on the bulletin board of every village is a yearly schedule of major harvest and compost-spreading times, when young volunteers go for several festive if hard-working weeks to villages needing help.

Daily Life

“Comfortable” is a frequent term in Yamagishi thinking, and today Toyosato living is indeed comfortable. Since the population has dropped from an earlier peak of above 1,000, living

space is in surplus. Dining and bathing facilities are spacious and uncrowded. For the past seven years, air-conditioning has been normal; Mie’s climate in the summer is hot and humid. Single or married residents have a modest main room in which they usually have couches and chairs, TVs, desks, shelves, and so on, with a fair stock of miscellaneous small stuff. Across the hall, they normally have a sleeping room with no furnishings except for a lightweight table; there are

also cabinets to store the futon mats and bedding brought out at night for sleeping. Families with young children may have a third room, too.

On joining a Yamagishi community, members contribute to the Association all their private property (if they have any) but thereafter they’re entitled to share “abundantly” in the community’s resources. However, Toyosato life is materially simple. This actually seems very relaxing: no ostentatious display of consumption power, no competition over status-

symbol possessions, and not even much sense of clothing style. Dress, a reliable sign of social distinctions, is informal—everybody wears similarly modest shirts, pants, skirts, and sandals. Residents’ clothes are kept in cubbies in a giant locker room, washed by the communal laundry service, and replaced

when you feel like change from a communal supply. Going barefoot or with socks is common inside living areas. People have their hair cut or styled—quite conventionally—in the communal salon. Most people have watches, and many have cameras. Anybody can requisition the use of computers and cell

phones, which are in frequent use to coordinate the complex life of the community. Nobody owns a car but, knowing of Toyosato’s ecological reputation, I was shocked when I was first driven onto the grounds to see a parking area with about 50 vehicles, and people use them quite a lot.

Informality prevails, with none of the evident status anxiety that pervades outside Japanese society. In Toyosato there is little physical privacy in the closed-doors, separate-dwelling Western sense that we design into our neighborhoods and



Yamagishi girls harvesting plums.

Could this obscure Japanese movement actually be demonstrating much of what it means to live sustainably?

even our cohousing communities. And in general Toyosato people cannot escape each other. Their major decisions are all matters for joint attention; apparently, anybody can call a Kensan meeting about anything, and these meetings are regular features of the day.

Because money in the usual sense is virtually absent from the Toyosato scene—we never saw anybody handing over cash for anything—it takes a while to grasp the financial aspects of life there. What we came to understand is that everybody works, but nobody is paid directly.

Each person is credited with something like \$120 a month, which is apparently thought of as “pin money,” and children get a regular allowance. This money can be drawn on whenever you feel like buying a book, CD, etc. If you don’t use it, it just stays in the general fund, most of which is generated by agricultural product sales. People who work in agricultural

Yamagishi residents prepare meals through specialized and highly efficient crews and people usually eat in the communal dining hall, though they can also cook in little kitchens at the end of each residence hallway. Toyosato food is extremely fresh, abundant, nutritionally well balanced, simple, and tasty. It’s also quite varied, and of course changes with the seasons.

Work and Play

Life in Toyosato is slow-paced, simple, relaxed; day by day life is stable, safe, routine, easy-going, with little variation. The economic and psychological stresses that make much of contemporary Western life so painful are absent. The Toyosato people we met were a friendly, frank, and jolly lot, laughing at the ironies of trying and failing to avoid anger, of missing the conveniences of outside life (and having to walk perhaps 200 yards with an umbrella to take a bath, or to eat in the dining hall), of constant

Kensan meetings. Many seem sharply observant and thoughtful: you can easily see them coming up with plenty of ideas for improvements in how things are done. Yamagishi people work carefully, and they claim to love their tomatoes, or pigs, or whatever. It’s harder to tell if the food preparation people, or the laundry people, also love their work, but when we visited the kitchens of the dining hall building we found the 14 department members relaxing in their lounge, finishing lunch and a Kensan meeting. Bottles of 0.0 percent beer stood empty, and the group seemed in a jovial mood.

The village office provides mail boxes, supplies, a public computer room, photocopying machine, and so on. However, though people often cross paths there,

they don’t hang about, so it does not serve as an informal social center. Nor do the two lounges. One with a nice view and an ice-cream dispenser is a popular stopping place; another offers a kitchen and facilities for parties, with benches and coffee tables, but people generally use it only as a meeting spot, and to read the many newspapers available on a reading rack. Nothing in Toyosato functions as a social hub like a village cafe in Mediterranean countries or even like a coffee shop in Northern European societies or the US.

Toyosato has its own clinic with a doctor and two nurses. Drugs are paid for by the community. If an operation or other specialized care is needed, members are sent to the nearby university medical center and hospital. Residents can also go directly outside for medical care, since every Japanese citizen has a national health insurance card. There is also a dentist,



ERNEST CALLENBACH

The food preparation team. Author Ernest Callenbach and his wife Christine (to his left) are in the back row.

production are credited with a salary, and about 60 percent of the Toyosato population is involved, for an average of some 40 hours of productive work per person per week. Work hours vary depending on the seasons, and apparently people can alter their schedules quite easily. Since living collectively is extremely efficient, the system appears to generate substantial surpluses. (Money received by the Association from residents as they join goes into a capital fund used for building new villages.) If you develop a need for substantial funds, say for a trip to Europe—surprisingly, many Yamagishi people are big travelers—it has to be dealt with through meetings of a Kensan committee, but we were told that most such requests do get granted. Still, it’s not clear just how rich the movement is.

a hygienist, and a dental fabricator. Acupuncture and herbal medicine are available. Everybody we saw looked trim and healthy, even people in their 80s.

For amusement and supplies, Toyosato residents do go into the neighboring small town, which has a cinema, a bookshop, and other stores, though shopping in the Western sense of a consumer diversion is not a feature of Yamagishi life. Yamagishi people do not seem to drink even sake, and it's doubtful the young men get much into pachinko, the game addiction of so many Japanese youth. But young and old are curious about the outside world; like foreigners elsewhere, many of them know a startling amount about America. People around 20 who have grown up in a Yamagishi community often decide to try life in the outside world. Many stay there, although they may do Tokkoh and remain members of the Association, coming home only for holidays; apparently they prove prized employees. Others return after a year or so, unimpressed or distressed by what they saw.

Some people who live at Toyosato—especially when wives have pushed for joining in order to bring up children in the Yamagishi manner—continue working outside at professional jobs in aviation, medicine, or business; their salaries go into the pool of village funds (and are kept confidential). And in some families, spouses or children may live elsewhere. People move from village to village at different times of life—after due Kensei consultation. In many respects, Yamagishi life is surprisingly flexible. “We can do anything we want” was a frequent refrain.

And for some people, life in a Yamagishi village is one stage in a life that may include quite other styles, before and after.

Is Toyosato life, overall, a bit like the life of well-cared-for chickens? We have no clear picture of those people who fly the coop, but perhaps they are the more ambitious or adventurous or reckless ones, willing to sacrifice contentment for outside challenges of success or failure—or perhaps the easily bored, who may not find contentment anywhere.

The Sustainability Perspective

On balance, how does Toyosato look to an Ecotopian? It does universal recycling and composting in its agricultural operations. Waste water from hot baths and kitchen use is combined

with some pig urine and after treatment is used on plantings. Soil fertility is carefully maintained; plants are so healthy that pesticides are virtually never needed. Feathers and other wastes from chicken processing are sold or composted. Compost produced from animal and chicken manure is used on Toyosato's fields and grounds and a lot is bartered with neighboring farmers in return for rice straw used in bedding or feed, and some is sold in bags.



Feeding some of Toyosato's flock of 40,000 chickens.

A great deal of thought goes into improving all production operations from both an efficiency and an ecology viewpoint. In its “household” operations, Toyosato is ecologically advanced in many ways. Lighting is universally provided by energy-efficient fluorescents. Drinking water comes from on-site wells, as does livestock water. Toilets are low-water-use (with no-water urinals); waste is pumped out and trucked to the local government treatment plant. In all these ways

Toyosato approaches the closed-loop, zero-waste ecological ideal.

Toyosato is much more self-reliant than most of our ecovillages and in many ways a model of “circulatory agriculture,” though Toyosato and other Yamagishi communities are not ecovillages in the Western sense, where sustainability is the primary goal. Still, I was surprised to learn that it's a heavy importer of about 30 percent of its livestock feed—mostly from Australia and Canada.

Interestingly enough, Yamagishi and his colleagues justified imports from outside on the ground that they were counterbalanced by a flow of exports—eggs, meat, fruit, and so on. Moreover, the current situation reflects Yamagishi's own early practices: he too imported about a third of his little farm's

fertilizer and feed. Thus the ratio, although insufficient from a rigorous sustainability viewpoint, has at least remained constant. What drove the movement's evolution to large-scale operations? It was probably a response to the desire to support growing populations in the villages, in a context of expensive land.

In any event, Toyosato is far from energy self-sufficient. It brings in from outside a lot of gasoline, gas, and electricity. So far, vehicle fueling is conventional, though they're now studying biodiesel. Biogas from pig manure is a promising

The people we met were a friendly, frank, and jolly lot.

possibility. Discussions and small experiments are taking place concerning solar photovoltaic and solar water heating; Japanese baths, as well as food preparation, food processing, and dish-washing consume huge amounts of hot water, and Mie has a sunny climate. Ironically, because Yamagishi operations are large, compared to individual households, the sliding-scale utility rates set to favor corporations minimize the community's motivation to conserve energy.

Yamagishism and Us

Ideally, of course, the Yamagishi movement would like to expand worldwide, bringing its vision of shared happiness and peace to all humanity. And some members are ardent recruiters. So far, there are small villages in Brazil, Thailand, and Australia, made up of people of Japanese origin. In southern California, two Japanese families growing oranges have formed a community. But except for a well-established village in Korea, to date non-Japanese are only represented in the movement among the 30,000 members of the Association, not as village residents—although 11 Swiss members run a very small farm.

Whether Yamagishism can develop a broad international appeal is unclear. My own guess is that it's unlikely. Japanese

culture provides a substrate of cooperativeness which makes collective living comfortable for quite a few people. Moreover, Japan is full of serious and idealistic folks willing to walk their talk. But outside Japan, individualism is a formidable force. Worse still, in the West, even groups with strongly egalitarian ideals can turn into unacknowledged fiefdoms or become feud-ridden, contentious failures.

What can Westerners, and particularly North Americans, learn from the Yamagishi movement? Personally, my experiences at Toyosato forced me to recognize that meeting the ecological challenges of a future sustainable world is in a technical sense comparatively easy—what's hard are the social prerequisites. Thanks to our permaculture move-

ment and even to some enlightened commercial developments, we know how to do sustainable agriculture, and for that matter, sustainable forestry and fisheries. We can build structures with small embodied energy and very low operating energy needs. We know how to design low-impact cities and transportation systems.

In 1975, when I published *Ecotopia*, I thought that we don't do these good, sensible things to any serious extent simply

Toyosato is far from energy self-sufficient, yet is much more self-reliant than most of our ecovillages.

Some Yamagishi History

Although Yamagishi strongly advised his followers to keep religion a purely private matter in their movement, Yamagishism nevertheless incorporated echoes of Buddhism, Shinto, and early Christianity. Loving thy neighbors as thyself (sharing everything with them) became a central theme. Material possessions were to be given up for a higher calling. Although no one speaks of "turning the other cheek," violence and anger were to be abjured. What was Caesar's was rendered unto him: Yamagishi communities pay taxes, are subject to government regulations about fire safety, schooling, food preparation sanitation, and so on. Misunderstanding from the outside world was expected, understood, and transcended, not resisted. In 200 years, Yamagishi predicted, erroneous ways would vanish and everybody would accept the soundness of Yamagishi ideas and practices.

Unlike religions, Yamagishism has remained astonishingly egalitarian. Indeed, in its proliferation of committees diffusing and counterbalancing power, its institution of every-six-months elections to its many governing boards, and its constant offering of opportunities for every member

to be heard, the movement seems uniquely democratic. Its only even half-way equivalent in the West would be employee-owned, employee-controlled companies. This form of governance was evidently laid out during a big meeting of 50 or 60 adherents from all over Japan, including Yamagishi himself, in April 1958. They pooled all their assets and worked up the member contract that has been used until recently. Membership and enthusiasm grew. In 1968, Toyosato was established, and gradually other villages were begun in Mie and throughout Japan.

Over the years, the Yamagishi movement has retained its unique communal social structure, and yet it is quite dynamic. While the present Yamagishi population is diverse, there have been distinct phases of membership growth. Through the 1960s, members were rural people almost entirely—a few were evidently like the urban-refugee radicals who took up chicken-farming in New Jersey and in Petaluma, California during the late forties. Through the 1970s, new members were mostly veterans of the peace and left-wing student movements who had become disenchanted

because those who now control our political and economic system see no way it could further their interests. But after studying the Yamagishi example, I suspect that, much more profoundly, we lack the necessary social framework, a framework in which sustainability makes sense to large numbers of people. We are captives of the market ideology, which has turned out to be an ecological self-destroying machine. The Yamagishi movement, on its limited scale, has been able to escape this trap by creating new social institutions that look on survival in terms that must sound laughably naive to economists: "sustainable happiness for all." Yamagishism thus may be only a small, bright, improbable lighthouse, shining out from a rocky coast on which our industrial society is about to go aground. Still, it demonstrates that an equalitarian, secular, democratic social order is possible, and sustainable ecologically, and it thus deserves to be studied very carefully.

The final lesson from Toyosato is that, as the regime of oil-driven industrial consumerism goes down, we Westerners



The restaurant at Yamagishi Toyosato.

must seek a social basis for sustainability which is indigenous to our culture. The cash nexus (another way of saying the market) is a corrosive that has been busily eating away all bonds between us save buying and selling—leaving the social playing field to greed and corruption. If the West is to be saved, it must locate in itself social models that can contain and tame the market. We might benefit greatly from experiments directly inspired by Yamagishi ideas. But it's also conceivable that in America only some kind of quasi-spiritual evolution can make possible the social cohesion needed for a sustainable social order and a sophisticated eco-economy. Yet the Yamagishi movement, full of people "thriving with others," tells us that it can be done in a secular way.

Ernest Callenbach is author of the ecological science fiction novels Ecotopia and Ecotopia Emerging. He also wrote Ecology: A Pocket Guide and Bring Back the Buffalo! A Sustainable Future for America's Great Plains. He was especially intrigued by Yamagishi thinking because his father, a professor of poultry husbandry, helped to invent industrial chicken-raising.

with large-scale campaigns and felt that Yamagishi ideas offered the chance to embody a new ideal society in smaller, more practical terms. During the 1990s, many members came from white-collar circles. These were office workers, "salary men," and professionals seeking to escape the overwhelming pressures of conventional Japanese living and find a more meaningful life for themselves and a better upbringing for their children. Currently, new full members are mainly young people who have grown up in Yamagishi villages. Overall, 30 percent of the membership have some higher education, and in the last decade the proportion is around 40 percent.

Relations between *jikkenji* and the outside world have traditionally been distant if friendly. For one thing, most of the villages are relatively isolated in agricultural regions. For another, despite deriving much of their cash income from product sales, villagers have a spirit reminiscent of 1960s-era back-to-the-landers: they seek to minimize connections with the surrounding society. But in recent years they have been forced into legal contact: a number of members who wished to withdraw sued to recover the funds they had

contributed upon joining. This was, of course, specifically not provided for in the entrance contracts they had all signed, which made clear that members joined "without conditions" and donated their money permanently.

After several years of litigation, the Yamagishi Association, which is the movement's overall coordinating body, agreed to revise its contract so that courts would accept it as proper under Japanese law; this is not yet in final form, but it will apparently be lengthy, lawyerly, and accompanied by an informational brochure. Entrance steps into the organization now seem fully transparent: (1) experience a once-in-a-lifetime Tokkoh training/orientation week, such as we participated in; (2) attend a general Kesan two-week training course, which includes half days of work and can be taken again at any time; (3) after a several-month waiting period and lengthy Kesan meetings with a village committee (spouses must also participate) apply to join, and execute the contract; (4) live for a year on probation in a village, after which the would-be members can withdraw or the community can reject them. If either side rejects, the whole contribution is returned.



Community elder Fran Allison at Earthaven (age 87 at the time of this photo), and Kayla Bartalos.

GRAYING ^{IN} COMMUNITY . . .

Can we continue to live in community as we grow older?

Will Kennedy loves the cohousing lifestyle, raves about neighbors, enjoys being around young people, and quietly fears nursing homes.

Kennedy's mind booms with ideas and his choice of words tells of great mental articulation, but two strokes have wracked his body of 86 years with considerable injury—and that concerns him. The resident of Frog Song Cohousing in Sonoma, County, California said he would never easily choose to leave his beloved ark of friendship, safety, and comfort. But he quickly admits how that sad departure may still be forced upon him some day—but just not yet.

So in the meantime optimistic Kennedy erupts into handsome chuckles of glee when he describes the life he so greatly enjoys today.

"This is a wonderful adventure," the retired social worker enthused, his excitement breaking through the normal slur of his labored speech. "I really can't conceive of any other way of life. I benefit all way around from being here. There just isn't enough I can say about how wonderful it is to benefit by living with this group of people."

And that is why Kennedy is determined not to leave.

I would hope to be able to stay, but I certainly know there is a nursing home situation in our lives these days," he said, giving way to mirth again. "I have been in a nursing home before and I don't recommend it for anybody!"

Countless communitarians, however, share Kennedy's situation and worries to some degree. In fact, *Communities* magazine spoke to men and women across the country about the challenges—and the joys—presented by graying within community. The overwhelming response revealed that while staying in their desired place of living may not always be easy to manage, trading intimate community for mainstream anonymity is usually not easy to swallow. The advantages of spending one's elder

years in a commune, ecovillage, or cohousing neighborhood, these folks insist, are truly rich with worth and wonder. In fact, many would insist that reasons to be there only grow right along with the years.

After having spent her life in such huge cities as Dallas, Houston, and Austin, Fran Allison should have been a hard sell on the topic of intentional community. But then a daughter suggested moving to Earthaven, an ecovillage near Asheville, North Carolina.

"I was strictly a city gal," Allison, 89, said chuckling. "I'd heard about ecovillages from my daughter for years, but I sure never dreamed I would ever be part of one. But let me tell you, I have not had one regret. I am so glad that I'm here."

Like most elders interviewed, Allison pointed to the rich companionship that intentional community can promise, all compared to being isolated in an apartment or tiny house somewhere in regular society. Most communitarians have certainly noticed the

sometimes stark contrast between their lives and those of friends and family living in mainstream America, where a throw-away mentality is all too often applied to human resources as well.

Allison stressed that Earthaven not only gives her a life right in the middle of the most beautiful mountains she's ever seen, the place also blesses her with the best sons and daughters—her neighbors—that her dreams could ever design.

"I just love the people here! Here everyone

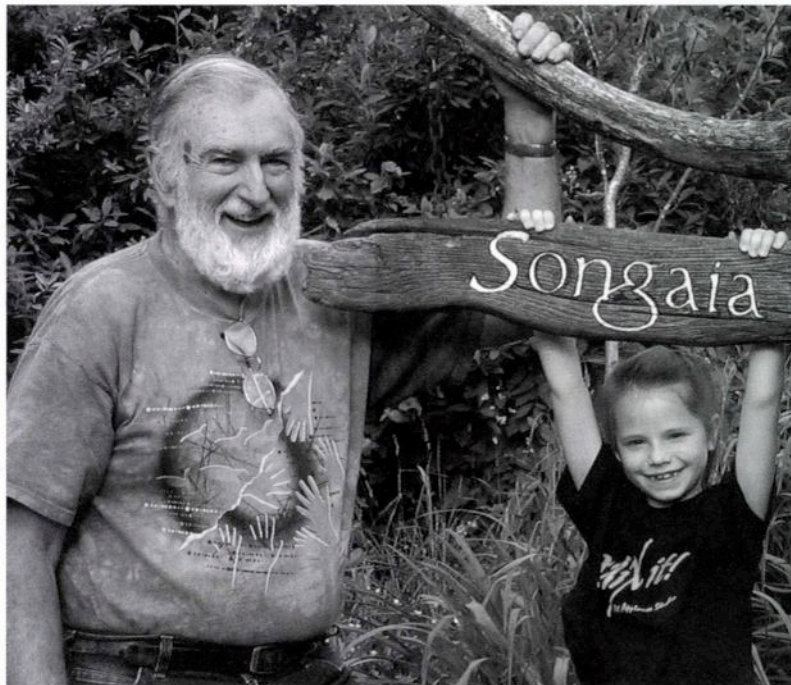
knows each other's business. We don't have too many secrets!" she said, laughing and quickly explaining how such a way of

life is a good thing. "There is a lot more honesty than on the outside, a lot more outgoingness and helpfulness, too. I have never asked for help that I didn't receive just what I needed."

Sara Pines, a resident of Eco-Village at Ithaca in New York

(comprised of two adjacent cohousing communities on 175 acres), says that cohousing gives her the chance to "grow old together with others" within an environment of "trust and safety."

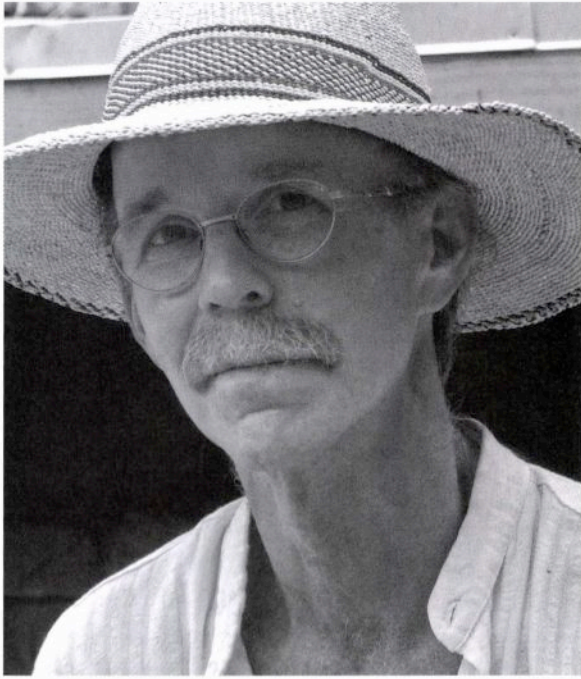
"Having someone to eat with is like going to a restaurant with friends three times a week," Pines told *Communities*. "I enjoy celebrating holidays and special occasions with friends,



Songaian Elder Fred Lanphear (age 70) with Lily (7).

CRAIG RAGLAND

"This is a wonderful adventure. I really can't conceive of any other way of life."



A major concern isn't just the matter of receiving help, but elders questioning what they have to give in return, especially tangible acts of labor.



Don Clark of Wind Spirit Community, in Tucson, Arizona (top); Sara Pines of EcoVillage at Ithaca, in New York (below).

consulting on problems, spur-of-the-moment invitations, and meetings without formality.”

Then there is the stability that comes from living so intimately with like-minded people, a blessing that Pines said can also be a healthy and stimulating challenge.

“You can’t just ‘blow someone off.’ They will still be there tomorrow and tomorrow,” she said. “This way of life is about working out challenges, the beauty of the community, my home, celebrations—identity.”

Still, Pines is one of the few elders interviewed who says she will most likely leave the ecovillage for a more mainstream facility some day.

“I plan to stay here as long as I can,” she said. “But I will move to a more physically supportive facility when I need more care.”

Pines added that an elders-only community wouldn’t offer a clear set of advantages, either.

Fred and Nancy Lanphear of Songaia Cooperative Cohousing near Seattle, 70 and 68 respectively, say their plan for the future is simple, to remain in their wonderful community until the last days of their well-rounded and satisfied lives.

“Our goal is to be continually engaged in creative roles in community, forging creative roles ‘til we die,” Fred said, “and maybe even in our deaths, as we provide meaningful models of planning and participating in final passage.”

Don Clark, 56, swears that he can’t think of even a single disadvantage presented by being an elder member at Wind Spirit Community, an ecovillage of sorts and organic farm north of Tucson, Arizona.

“Well, the advantages are that you have closer relationships with people in a healthier environment,” Clark said. “People can assist you when you need help because they live in very close proximity and you are more bonded to each other due to community group activities. Then there is the constant personal growth that comes from living this lifestyle, the awareness, the paying attention to life.”

Social connection among members is obviously nothing strange to members of intentional communities. That was the point of Elect Star, who prefers not to give her age, a founding member of the Children of Light, a small, Christian commune deep in the desert east of Yuma, Arizona. She stressed that total care of a resident should always be the rule.

“Anyone that gets elderly is taken care of, that’s all,” Elect Star said. “It’s just like you would take care of anyone in the home. They are our brothers and sisters and we take care of them.”

It’s interesting to hear this matriarch speak of the elderly, because Elect Star herself fits into this category at Children of Light, where ages now reach into the 80s. The rest of the full-time residents, numbering around five or six, are in their 60s or 70s.

“There are a lot of families that are not that good to their elderly people. So many are put away into care centers,” she said. “Here we have each other and all our needs are met. Through God, everything is provided.”

Since there are no young members—only youthful visitors—commune members take the duty of heavy labor into their own willing

and capable hands. It's true even when the work is amazingly heavier or harder than most people would ever associate with elders.

"I still drive the truck," Elect Star said, chuckling, and adding that she stops at using the chainsaw. "I let the men use that!"

She also said that she's been known to join a small construction crew by swinging a hammer herself. "We still do most of our own building, too. So far we've been able to keep up most things ourselves, but sometimes neighbors come and help out. People are, I would say, amazed at how the place is kept up and everything by all of us."

Elect Star, who helped create the commune as a young woman, credits that work, communal living, and a strict vegetarian diet for residents' good health, the very reason such physical exertion is possible. That's good news, too, because the nearest hospital is 90 miles away.

"I never even went to a doctor in all of my life until one time that I had a fall and had to get something done," she said with pride. "Apart from that, we hardly ever go to the doctor."

Will Kennedy, back at Frog Song in California, marveled at how willing neighbors are to share their talents with a resident in need.

"For instance if I have something wrong with my electricity, one of the men that lives here is an expert and will come over and help," Kennedy said, adding that most of his day-to-day needs are met by paid, live-in caretakers. "The whole feeling here is one of helpfulness. That's the basis of a good cohousing group. The fact that everyone helps everybody is absolutely necessary."

Growing older obviously means special needs sometimes, ranging from help with heavy labor to trips to medical appointments that may be quite a distance away. But most elders interviewed stressed that in most cases such calls for help aren't just met, but met with joy from fellow residents and neighbors all too willing to help.

Kennedy also emphasized that elders must avoid becoming consumed with worry about being too much of a burden on their community, becoming fearful about asking for help too often.

"That's something you just can't worry about," he said. "If you have done everything you can to shore up all the problems, then you just go ahead and live."

But a major concern isn't just the matter of receiving help, but elders questioning what they have to give in return. While elders contribute to their communities in countless ways, it seems that for many it is hardest not to be able to offer tangible acts of labor.

"I wanted to get myself and my wife into a 'lifeboat community,'" said Lee Finks at Earthaven. "The worst disadvantage is my inability to contribute to the work parties that are busy felling trees, building bridges, etc. I'm 71 now and [not able] to be physically active any more. So I feel useless and left out as a result."

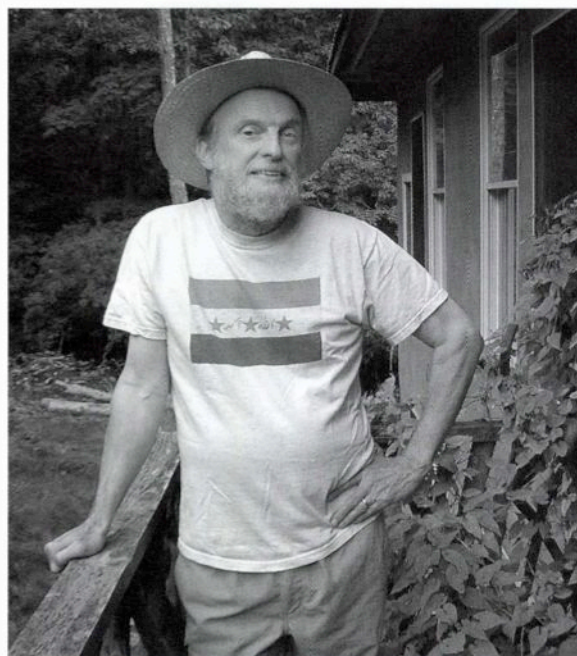
But then there is the matter of Finks's mind, which, as is the case with so many elders, represents a valuable gift, with facets that can only be made through age and experience.

"My favorite aspect (of ecovillage life) is the satisfaction that comes from cooperating toward a common goal," he said. "Another is the



CRAIG RAGLAND

"I like being with elders more than younger generations. We understand each other better and are more empathetic and compassionate."

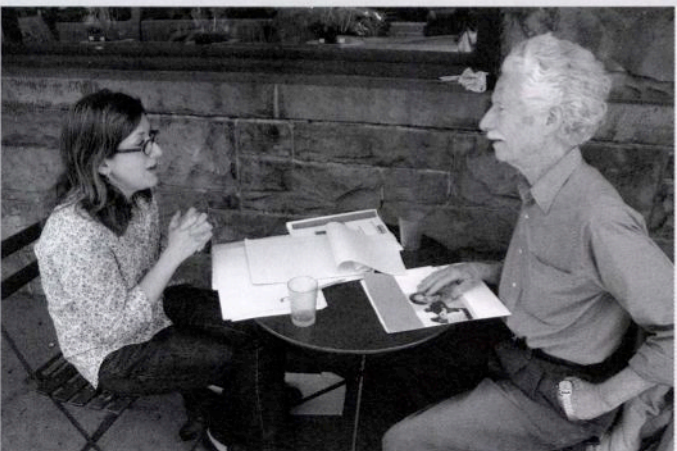
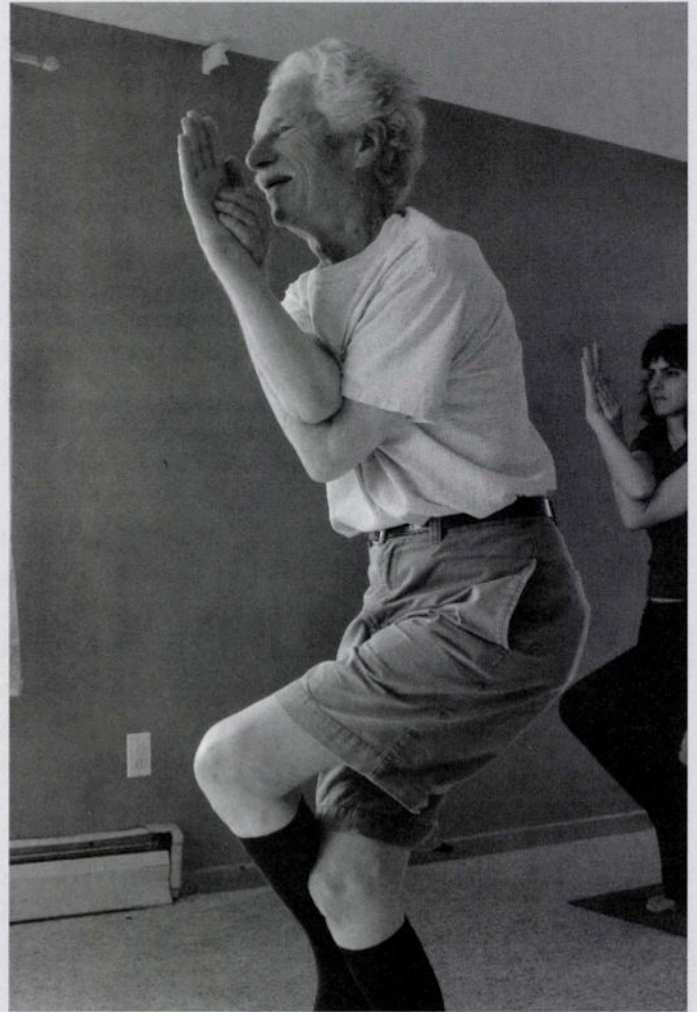


MARTHA H. HARRIS

Marilyn Hannah-Myrick, 67, of Songaia Cohousing in Washington (above), and Lee Finks, 71, of Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina (below).

Monty Berman: Portraits of a Community Elder

PHOTOS BY SASHA ISREAL



Clockwise from left bottom: Monty and Kelly Speiser meet for the first time as then new co-chairs of McCormick Secure Facility, a maximum security facility for juvenile offenders. Monty has been involved with this facility for the past 4 years (bottom). Monty plays pool at the Jolly Joker Game Hall in Ithaca (middle). Monty co-organizes the Sunday Summer Services at the First Unitarian Church of Ithaca with active member Amy (top). Every week Monty leads Yoga in the Common House in Eco Village which is open for all to join (top). Monty enjoys dinner on Monday's in the Eco Village common house with many of his neighbors and friends (bottom).

thrill and inspiration I feel as I am involved intellectually in the communities movement, and more specifically, the progress we are making here at Earthaven."

Finks added two more reasons why elders can make valuable community builders.

"Many or most of our elder members have professional experience in various fields," he said. "There is also the literal enrichment that comes with having some money in the bank and a desire to invest it in the community."

Most elders, though, seem to be well aware of their worth to communities. Marilyn Hanna-Myrick, 67, is a good example. She originally told *Communities* that as an elder at Songaia Cooperative Cohousing she was simply too busy enjoying her life in community to be interviewed.

"The elders at Songaia are the glue of our shared meal program, which is admittedly probably one of the most complex programs in cohousing out there," Hanna-Myrick said. "If it were not for the elders, who have the time (since we are not going to daily jobs) and the energy (since we are not raising families full-time) our food program would not work."

The fact that, according to the majority of people *Communities* interviewed, most communities boast the presence of all ages, is a bonus that only deepens their decision to chose intentional community. The majority of people reported that living around younger people not only gave them a great chance to care for and mentor others, but also the chance to soak up some of that youthful energy, too.

"We both have a good relationship with younger community members, particularly Nancy who gets to care for them frequently," said Fred Lanphear about the life he and his wife enjoy at Songaia. "Kids interact with us in many ways—visiting our home, participating in rituals, singing. Elders are treated with as much respect as the other adults. We each have a mentor role with a youth in the community, too. They get to choose."

Monty Berman, 76, another resident at EcoVillage at Ithaca, said he feels that most adult residents not only enjoy having youngsters around, but feel a certain welcome sense of moral obligation, too. He described a drive to both make an investment in children's general upbringing, and to share wisdom and experience with them.

"There is a sense that what goes on here regarding the children involves us all," Berman said. "It is the business of everybody."

Berman's experiences with younger folks has proven positive, too.

"I have a nice, close proximity with them," he said. "Most of them are very respectful with the adults here and the adults respect them. It's a mutuality of respect."

Don Clark at Wind Spirit Community in Arizona stressed that we're talking about exceptional young people in most cases.

"Younger people who visit communities for experience and learning show elders more respect for their wisdom and seek out their counsel more than you see in mainstream society," Clark said. "My experience with younger people here is that I have a much closer relationship with them than those I know in the mainstream. I don't think age determines if one is respected. It's an individual thing with each person."

But surprisingly, the issue of age did surface persistent concerns about living in intentional community as an older person. Even some of the same people who truly do adore their communities can still point to some challenges that come when the generations live together.

Sara Pines at EcoVillage at Ithaca referred to a "silent division of generations," a phenomenon that stops her, for example, from just dropping by to visit neighbors of a younger age.

"Sometimes I feel lonely," Pines said, adding that an elders-only community is still not the answer for her. "On the other hand there would be less loneliness and I would have more in common with the other elders. I like being with elders more than younger generations. We understand each other better and are more empathetic and compassionate."

The Lanphears at Songaia reported that although they celebrate multi-generations with great enthusiasm, there is still at least one point of difficulty.

"The noise level is a challenge to those of us who are older," Fred said.

Lee Finks at Earthaven simply noted, but didn't criticize, a "generational divide" that arises when it comes to personal choices for finding pleasure.

"The two subgroups have different tastes and appetites when it comes to fun, as anyone would expect," Finks said. "The best example is music, and there are others."

He added, however, that he doesn't let the issue of age get in his way when it comes to enjoying his neighbors. "I am a friendly, good-natured man and I like people," the Earthaven resident said. "My relationships with younger members are the same as with everybody else."

Then there's that good-humored Kennedy and his experiences, which are quite different.

"I'm the only older one here. You might say it was my problem to get along with everybody and we haven't had any conflict," Kennedy said, chuckling. "In some respects, really, I am more liberal than the rest of them!"

Darin Fenger works as a newspaper reporter in Southern Arizona.



BRUCE COURLEY

June Knack

HEALING IN THE COMMON HOUSE

(With a Little Help from My Friends)

It was a day of celebration at Tierra Nueva CoHousing in Oceano, California. My neighbors and I were planning a vegetarian dinner with organic produce from an exceptional local gardener. After months of planning and waiting for the optimum time for harvest, the morning was auspicious. It was a clear, sunny day with a teasing breeze. With an especially happy heart I drove to the market to buy bread. Then my world turned upside down. The slight incline to the store was slippery; I fell hard and lay on the ground in shock.

At the hospital X-rays confirmed I had broken my right leg. Al, my closest friend, came immediately. We were both supported by an outpouring of concern, love, and care from the Tierra Nueva community. My cohousing neighbors rushed to my hospital room and their positive energy transformed my experience. Despite all the difficulties, I was filled with joy. Everywhere I went in the hospital I was asked, "Are you the woman who has so many visitors, in the room with all the flowers? What is going on here?"

I was happy to tell them about Tierra Nueva. I told how the founders worked for ten years to find the land and start construction. That now we had 27 households, and members ranging from seniors in their eighties to a

baby not yet a year old. That during the years of planning, fund-raising, and physically building the community, members have been as concerned about relationships between people as the design of the houses. That we have created a strong community based on consensus and heart-to-heart connection with regular Community Life meetings, business meetings, and a willingness to keep learning how to use our differences to keep evolving and growing.

In the evening a hospital doctor told me that surgery to set my leg would be difficult. He could not guarantee success with the amount of osteoporosis he had detected in my bones. I was devastated. I've been a backpacker and a hiker and now I was faced with the possibility of being immobilized for a long time.

My community was there for me. Jane assured me she was already sending Reiki energy and would be sending energy throughout the operation. Bea rubbed my feet and my back to restore my circulation. Rick meditated with me every night. At the beginning of the operation, Al stayed with me as I was anesthetized. Four hours later I woke up to learn the operation was a success: the plate was in my femur and the screws were holding.

While I was in the hospital, Kay, Floyd, Gail, and Hari Nam met to discuss how to care for me when I returned to the community. They talked about ways to establish the most positive experience for healing at Tierra Nueva. Hari Nam had pioneered using the handicapped-accessible guest room in our Common House during her convalescence after a serious operation. They considered Hari Nam's experience and asked themselves what could be done to create the best possible situation for the person who was healing, and for the community. After many practical suggestions of ways to arrange the room for long term care, Floyd suggested a key concept: "The disabled person can hire a community member to help out wherever needed, and to act as ombudsman for both the person and the community."

My cohousing neighbor Steph agreed to be my caretaker, and facilitated my healing in every possible way. She, Kit, Gail, and Hari Nam arranged the room. Kit brought in a floor lamp that reminded me of Aladdin's lamp in the fairy tale. Gail brought a TV/VCR so I could watch movies, and supplemented the thin, trundle-bed mattress with an additional pad. Kit thought of a backrest that made it possible for me to sit up comfortably against the knobby bed frame. Hari Nam greeted me with a delicious lunch. I was away from the hospital and its institutional food; I was home in the Tierra Nueva Common House. Rather than the limited facilities in my home, I had the use of the handicapped-accessible bathroom, the library, the dining room with a gas-burning fireplace, and the sunny south terrace.

*He could not guarantee success
with the amount of osteoporosis
he had detected in my bones.
I was devastated.*

The most pressing need was to acquire a cell phone to stay in touch with the physical therapist and the home health care nurses. I didn't make this any easier as I had an aversion to cell phones. Steph gave me a lesson on her cell phone and soon I had my own. The first hurdle was successfully passed.

I had a small table in my room, but there wasn't enough shelf space. Steph and I thought about various ways to create shelves, but nothing seemed feasible. I rubbed my Aladdin's lamp, "a way to store all these things, please," and by nighttime Kay and Floyd dropped in to say that they had just what I needed, a bamboo étagère they had taken home from the community give-away table. Floyd brought it in the morning; Steph patiently sorted and arranged all the miscellaneous items essential for living and recuperation. Everything I needed was in reach: I was self sufficient for my basic needs.

I was sustained from the first by a community awareness of what I needed. The first night I was in the hospital, Cecelia arrived with a shopping bag full of carefully selected books. When I came to the Common House, Al provided meals, including freshly squeezed orange juice every morning. Kit thought of fresh peach smoothies to taste delicious and soothe a stomach irritated by medications. Steph was a constant support, a person I could freely turn to for help who always had a solution, from how to respond to the insurance adjuster, to how to get me to doctor's appointments.

A cohousing community of 27 families has almost endless resources and skills. Norman fixed the balky brakes on my wheelchair. Elita conferred with a naturopath to choose the most effective homeopathic remedies. David, an artist, rearranged the paintings in my room. The children, Molly, Rachel, Naomi, and Hannah, added their drawings. Ruth kept vases of fragrant roses filled from her garden.

Perhaps the most important aspect of those days in the Common House was the constant, freely given assistance. I realized I was living in a higher realm of consciousness. My

neighbors dropped in all the time to see what I needed and how they could help. Susan said, "Let me clean that bathroom." On a grey day when I was struggling to not give in to feeling downhearted, Kit appeared. "Those sheets might

My neighbors dropped in all the time to see what I needed and how they could help.

match the quilt," she said, "but they are too dark." She replaced them with golden sheets and pillowcases that lit up the room and raised my spirits. Gail arrived one day, "I've been thinking you need a haircut," she said, and promptly gave me some style. Nancy removed a Kwan Yin pendant from her neck and put it around mine, saying, "You need this more than I do now." That night when Patty Mara arrived I wavered on my walker and was feeling intensely afraid of another fall. She assured me that Kwan Yin was the goddess of compassion and that I could call on her for help whenever I needed her. The next morning I woke to a physical sense of Kwan Yin being with me. That

afternoon I was longing for a cup of tea, knowing that everyone I could think of at that moment was engaged elsewhere. I rubbed my Aladdin's lamp and Penny arrived ten minutes later. "Would you like a cup of tea?" she asked. I looked at my lamp intently: was there really a genie in there ready to fulfill my wishes?

How did the needs of the community and my personal needs conflict? One night I was awakened about 11:00 p.m. by chanting, singing, and talking just outside my window. I realized a group of teenagers were breaking our curfew on the hot tub and partying just outside my room. I thought of my options. I knew there were a number of neighbors who would come if I phoned them, but I did not want to get anyone out of bed in the middle of the night. Nor



BRUCE COURLEY

From left to right: Rachel, Naomi, Nina, June, Molly and Hannah making pictures in the library.

did I wish to risk going outside in the dark on my walker even though I preferred to be self-reliant. I decided to put a blanket on my walker, go to the library, stretch out on the couch and read. The next day I talked with several parents and almost immediately Erin, one of the teenagers, arrived at my door to apologize. My heart went out to her bravery in coming to me personally to do this. She willingly agreed to do all she could to ensure no more mid-night escapades while I was staying in the Common House.

The pool room/ping pong room is directly above the guest room I stayed in. One day a jam session with lots of foot stomping erupted over my head. Bea heard what was happening and asked them to shift their activity for that day. "No problem," they said, and continued in the TV room out of my hearing. On a Saturday afternoon a group of boys was enjoying a game of pool with lots of shouting. David came to see if I was okay just as I was trying to plan how to maneuver myself into the wheelchair to roll out onto the sunny terrace. He cheerfully arranged the chair and pushed; everyone was satisfied. When voices from hot tubbers came too clearly into my room on a quiet evening, I put my headphones on and lost myself in a concert on my Sony Walkman.

Being in the Common House gave me accessibility. The day after I settled into the guest room was another day of Tierra Nueva celebration, our seventh anniversary of life as a community. I enjoyed the entire evening of dinner, a play, and dancing from my secure perch in my wheelchair. I attended a Rosh Hashanah dinner, regular evening meals, Community Life meetings, and Business Meetings. Neighbors stopped in to chat on their way to and from meetings, while checking their boxes for mail or after dropping their compost into the kitchen chute. Many fellow members stayed to talk, some I had not known well before, and I was enchanted to be given this bonus of deepening friendship.

On overcast days, I sat by our fireplace in the Common House dining room, a perfect set-up for a party. Someone would arrive with a bottle of wine, someone else with munchies, and people would drift in and out, adding to the festivity. On



Left to right: Laurie, Lloyd, Steph and June prepare dinner.

***A cohousing community of
27 families has almost
endless resources and skills.***

sunny afternoons, I sat on the deck and often others would arrive to lean back against the wall in the sunshine in companionable silence or brief conversations.

For me, a much deeper healing was occurring than mending a broken femur. When I was seven years old I was severely injured with second- and third-degree burns. My father took me to the hospital, left me there, and no one from my family visited or made any further contact. I don't know how long I lay there in the hospital alone before my aunt arrived from New York City to carry me back to the hospital where she

was a nurse. It was long enough to leave a permanent internal scar of abandonment, a persistent awareness that I did not matter enough to my family for them to care for me when I most needed help. Perhaps another traumatic event with a completely different outcome

was the only way to heal this childhood pain. When my community rushed to my assistance, my life changed forever. The old feelings of not being worth enough to be cared for were replaced by feelings of belonging and love. My community has given me a more joyous life and I am grateful beyond measure.

June Knack, Faculty Emeritus in English/Humanities, Phoenix College, and an avid former backpacker, is an original resident of Tierra Nueva Cohousing. She appreciates the daily opportunities cohousing offers for personal growth.



Members of Glacier Circle Retirement Community in Davis, California.

ELDER COHOUSING

An Idea Whose Time Has Come?

In 1996 Dene Peterson and a group of friends had a great idea: Why not apply the basic principles of cohousing's intentional neighborhood to a community for people 55 years old and older? The group, several of whom are former nuns, wanted a home where they could share later-life spirituality, meditate, do service work, and enjoy their aging process together. Later, Peterson would meet Chuck Durrett: Durrett and his wife Katie McCamant, are the authors of *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Ten Speed Press, 2000) and are considered founders of the cohousing movement in North America.

Durrett had just returned from doing research on senior/elder cohousing in Denmark where 20 out of the last 25 cohousing communities had been targeted for elders and where, he claims, "I haven't seen people have as much fun as they do in senior cohousing since the college dorms." Durrett went on to author

ularly to share "what heightened or diminished spirit in my life this week," and simply to listen to one another.

This past January 2006 also saw the opening of Glacier Circle Retirement Community, an eight-household neighborhood on a .83 acre site in Davis, California. Their first meeting was in founding member Ellen Coppock's home in March 2002 and was attended by about two dozen individuals and couples, many of whom, including Dorie Datel, 80, had known each other for 40 years as fellow congregation members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Davis. That first meeting produced seven out of the eight founding households of their elder cohousing community.

Says Datel, "The nicest part of living in this community is that it reminds me of the small town where I grew up. Everyone knows one another, it is intimate, and I feel like I belong." The community has arranged for a young man in chef school

"I haven't seen people have as much fun as they do in senior cohousing since the college dorms."

a second cohousing book, *Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living* (Ten Speed Press, 2005). (See review, pg. 70.) In January, 2006, Durrett offered a "Train the Trainers" workshop, based on the Danish three-step "Study Group" approach in which older people determine if elder cohousing might be right for them, as described in *Senior Cohousing*. Participants in Durrett's workshop are currently creating a manual of the Study Group process.

Encouraged and further excited, Peterson and her group, FOCIS Futures, formed their own nonprofit, Trailview Development Company, and secured \$1.5 million in funds for affordable homes, both equity and rental. They built the 29-household ElderSpirit Community on 3.7 acres in Abingdon, Virginia, and, although construction is not yet finished on their common house and prayer room, they moved in in late January 2006.

Peterson calls it "a hard job made light by all the excitement." Cindy Poppen, President of ElderSpirit's Resident Association, says the ElderSpirit members meet for informal dinners and small group meetings in each other's homes, and also meet reg-

to cook for them two to three times a week. He gets to practice his cooking skills and, in return for being food critics, the Glacier Circle group gets a great meal. The residents pay the chef by the hour to cook and shop. The community members do the set up and clean up. Datel's daughter and son-in-law, currently professors at UC Davis, hope that they will also be able to retire in the community when they are ready.

Both ElderSpirit and Glacier Circle are fully occupied, and ElderSpirit has so many people on its waiting list that Peterson is looking at creating a second neighborhood in Abingdon. A third cohousing community for active elder adults, Silver Sage Village in Boulder, Colorado, with Wonderland Hill Development Company in Boulder as its project partner, had its groundbreaking in August 2006. This 16-household community has members in their 60s and 70s, including Wonderland Hill Development Company founder and president, Jim Leach, and his wife Brownie. Wonderland Hill has also completed 18 other cohousing neighborhoods in Colorado, California, Arizona, and Washington. Leach is an early pioneer in sustainable



JONATHAN CASTNER

Aaron Savitz, an elder at Hearthstone Cohousing in Denver, Colorado.

expressing a hunger for this interdependent elder village lifestyle. What is the draw to this age-targeted model of cohousing?

In addition to the six common characteristics of cohousing—participatory process, designed for community, shared common facilities, resident management, collaborative decision-making, and no shared community economy (meaning they're not income-sharing)—elder/senior cohousing has four additional principles: shared vision and values, designed for aging in place, "spiritual eldering," and environmental consciousness.

Shared vision and values are crafted by the group of future residents. These operating agreements guide community members through the development process and become the foundation for living together. It is common for these values to include living a healthy lifestyle and having respect for the environment. Groups may also be drawn together by a common interest in the arts, later-life spirituality, lifelong learning and personal growth, or through their place of worship. (For example, we are working with the North Texas Association of Unitarian Universalist Societies on creating UU-sponsored cohousing communities in the Dallas/Ft Worth area.) Each cohousing community is unique and is based on the individual site, resident group, and professional development team.

Designed for aging in place means the private homes and shared common facilities are wheelchair-accessible and can allow a resident to stay in his home should motor skills become compromised. Being close to medical facilities and/or sharing the cost of healthcare attendants and an on-site healthcare provider can make health care more accessible and affordable. Healthcare treatment rooms are now being included in the design of the shared common house. Some communities are looking at including a suite in their common house for an older resident to live in if more intensive care is needed, with an adjacent bedroom for a family member or caregiver to stay during the time the resident may need such intensive care, or when he or she may be in the dying process.

building and has consistently created neighborhoods with energy-efficient buildings and designated spaces for community interaction.

At least 25 more elder/senior cohousing communities are in the planning stages in the US. The Elder Cohousing Network,

Baby Boomers who began turning 60 in 2006 do not want to retire or grow older in the same kind of aging institutions in which they placed their own parents.

founded by in Boulder, Colorado by co-author Neshama Abraham and husband Zev Paiss, maintains a national database of people interested in this lifestyle. The Network has received over 7,000 inquiries nationwide from people 55+

"Spiritual eldering" is a term which means the process of conscious aging fostered by elders living in close proximity to one another in a self-managed and empowering environment. This setting is conducive for contemplation and deep

inner work, civic participation, social activism, mentoring children and adults, and pursuing one's personal spiritual path, enhanced and supported by the company of others. The ElderSpirit Community was influenced by two books for its spiritual philosophy: *From Age-Ing to Sage-Ing: A Profound New Vision for Growing Older* by Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, (Warner Books, 1995), and *Spiritual Passages: Embracing Life's Sacred Journey* by Drew Leder, MD, PhD (Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1997).

Environmental consciousness often goes hand-in-hand with the increased social sustainability of living in cohousing. Cohousing is a return to a sustainable model of living where neighbors typically participate together in recycling, composting, sharing and consuming fewer resources, growing organic produce and eating it at community meals, living in smaller-than-normal clustered energy-efficient homes, obtaining passes for and using public transportation, consuming less water and electricity, exercising together and enjoying the benefit of group wellness practices such as Tai Chi, Qigong, and so on in the common house.

Why the Popularity of Elder/Senior Cohousing?

A quiet grassroots impulse to reject the common options for housing for older people—retirement homes, nursing homes, and so on—has been growing over the last decade. Baby Boomers who began turning 60 in 2006 do not want to retire or grow older in the same kind of aging institutions in which they placed their own parents. In fact, it seems from the Elder Cohousing Network's response from people aged 60 through 90, the Boomers' older siblings and parents are not excited about managed-care facilities either. Instead, people are drawn to the idea of an old-fashioned, egalitarian neighborhood where neighbors help one another through the minor challenges of everyday life, and support one another through the major ones. Older adults like the word "active lifestyle" better when it refers to living in a way that connects to the wider community where these elders still have roots and history. Contrary to some people's impressions that age-targeted cohousing is a "senior ghetto," these elders believe living in close proximity with others in the same age range and with similar values is a life-enhancing choice, and one which facilitates social



Future Silver Sage residents Jim Leach, Brownie Leach, Maureen Cassulo, Gene Junk, and Patrice Morrow share a picnic dinner.

What Older Cohousers Say about Elder Cohousing

BY CRAIG RAGLAND

Craig Ragland visited 22 cohousing communities in 2006, asking older residents about the idea of elder cohousing.

In general, older adults who currently live in multi-generational cohousing are very curious and eager to discuss the idea of elder cohousing . . . though not necessarily for themselves. I found that the response to this new form of cohousing depended a lot on what the people I asked were comparing it with. When they compared it with the choice they had already made, their specific mixed-age cohousing community, the idea of a senior-only community often seems less desirable, since many older people specifically sought out the energy created by being around kids. Some empty-nesters found themselves missing children and moved into cohousing specifically to continue more active “family-style” lives.

But when comparing the elder cohousing idea to the senior housing choices most broadly available to most North Americans, retirement “communities” or assisted care facilities, where seniors in effect become patients within an institution, the alternative of elder cohousing seemed extremely attractive to almost everyone. Elder cohousing seems to offer the promise of committed people who will support each other at a time of life when a certain depth of support is required.

Here are paraphrases of what I heard.

- “I feel the need for sharing quiet spaces—for meditation, conversations, circles. I want adult-only spaces where the kids do not take over. Unless our community kids are in school or asleep, they have the run of the place . . . sometimes joyful, but also sometimes loud and uncomfortably stressful.”

- “I am attracted by the promise of depth within circles of my peers. In smaller communities, there may only be a few older adults. Being alone in a cohousing community during the day, while most adults are off at work, is still being alone. I crave a richer adult lifestyle with day-to-day interaction with peers—doing this within a cohousing community would be better than being somewhere else.”

- “I am attracted by the richness that’s possible from more fully facing my mortality—with all the grandeur and power that this holds. This is quite present for me, whereas it seems so distant for most of the younger people I live with.”

- “I find the needs of children and the passion of their parents so immediate and intense that it can be overwhelming. Conversations on adult topics are too often interrupted and suspended when the parent/child needs burst forward.”

- “As my body ages, I have new needs . . . it’s harder for me to hear in groups. This will only get worse and good design for older folks would be very helpful.”

- “I would find it much less interesting to live with just older people... so much of life would be just memories—I value all of life, not just listening to ‘organ recitals’ and issues which are present for older adults.”

- “Caring for and mentoring children and youth helps keeps me young—how could I be happy without kids as part of my life?”

- “I’m appreciated here for my years of experiences. That would be much less valuable if it were just shared with other seniors.”

- “I am here now—and my intention is to relate to this place, this community for the rest of my life. I will stay in my existing community as long as possible and hope my community will support me as I age.”

- “It is healthier to share across the generations—why should I support people seeking a ‘senior ghetto’ lifestyle? I think the whole idea of senior, age-targeted housing stems from unhealthy cultural programming which segregates age groups for largely commercial reasons—that the “choice” to not live with young people is unhealthy and shouldn’t be supported. Perhaps seniors who don’t want to live with young people can live in an age-targeted cohousing community that is in close proximity to a multi-generational cohousing neighborhood.”

The only way I personally would leave Songaia Cohousing for elder cohousing is if it was built next door, like Silver Sage Cohousing in Boulder, Colorado. As I think about what might be in the future of Songaia, this excites me . . . creating communities that are really good for elders relates to doing the same for people with families.

Craig Ragland, who lives at Songaia Cohousing in Bothel, Washington, is a board member of Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US).

activism and deep inner personal and spiritual growth work. They like the idea of continuing to grow as human beings through later life, embracing spirituality that elevates their experience, and having a physical space to do inner work in the companies of others so inclined.

The press hasn't missed this sentiment, either. As early as November 2004, the *AARP Bulletin* featured an article by Ben Brown titled, rather tongue-in-cheek, "Communes for Grownups," which was picked up by the syndicated press and ran in hundreds of local papers. Since then, articles on elder/senior cohousing have appeared in *USA Today*, *The New*

a desire for old-fashioned neighborly caretaking, knowing that someone will notice if you don't bring your paper in or haven't opened your curtains by 10 a.m. and that there will be someone to water the flowers and care for a pet if you are away or unable to for a period of time. And consistently, people who have contacted the Elder Cohousing Network are excited about not having to cook or eat alone, preferring instead frequent shared meals in the common house. There is also interest in combining resident-prepared meals with dinners made by an outside chef, the model which the Glacier Circle community has adopted.

"In Denmark there is a natural, complementary relationship . . . the younger people help the seniors with their more demanding tasks and . . . the elders serve as babysitters and mentors for younger adults and their children."

York Times, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the nationally-syndicated "Savvy Senior" column. A segment of the national PBS-TV series, "Boomers Redefining Life After 50," which aired in late winter of 2006, also covered the topic. In addition, *Time Magazine* and *ABC World News Tonight* have produced reports about elder/senior cohousing.

What Do Seniors Want?

The majority of people responding to elder cohousing are not long-time, multi-generational cohousing residents, although there is discussion among residents of some cohousing who are looking to buy a site adjacent to their community for a group home or an age-targeted cohousing neighborhood.

Many potential residents of elder/senior cohousing are long-time aficionados of the cohousing concept and, now that they are empty-nesters, can't imagine a better setting in which to "age in community." The remainder are folks 55+ for whom creating a community geared directly to their needs and desires just makes sense. In fact, in a poll conducted by MetLife Mature Market Institute and AARP in the Spring of 2004, 22 percent of the 500 respondents aged 50 to 65 said they would be " ... interested in building a new home to share with friends that included private space and communal living areas."

Their interests reflect a desire for friendship, doing art and music projects with others, and having others in the community with whom they can exercise, socialize, meditate, do yoga, and discuss the spiritual facets of later life. There is also

There are several models of elder Cohousing on the horizon, driven by future residents' needs and far-sighted cohousing developers. Although many neighborhoods will be single age-targeted projects like ElderSpirit and Glacier Circle, the model of an elder cohousing community adjacent to a multi-generational cohousing community has been initiated by Wonderland Hill Development Company of Boulder, Colorado, and Cohousing Partners of Nevada City, California.

Elder Community Resources:

- Wonderland Hill Development Company:
www.whdc.com
- ElderCohousing Network: www.ElderCohousing.org
- Green House projects: www.thegreenhouseproject.com
- Collegeville Development Group:
www.collegevillecommunities.com
- Eldershire communities, Sherburne, New York:
www.eldershire.com
- Alex Mawhinny, Carolina Renaissance Communities:
alex@villagegreengilroy.com
- Chuck Durrett, architect, Senior Cohousing Study Groups: www.cohousingco.com
- Janice Blanchard, AIC Network: janicesa@comcast.net



TONY FINNERTY

Senior Cohousing Adjacent to a Multi-Generational Cohousing Community

Wonderland's Silver Sage Cohousing project in Boulder is an age-targeted cohousing neighborhood for members 55+, located across the street from a multi-generational cohousing neighborhood, Wild Sage Cohousing, a 34-household community completed two years ago. Developer Jim Leach says that the most successful cohousing neighborhoods in Denmark have this combination of multigenerational and elder cohousing projects next to one another for easy interaction among the generations.

"In Denmark there is a natural, complementary relationship between the two communities where the younger people help the seniors with their more demanding tasks and, in turn, the elders serve as babysitters and mentors for younger adults and their children," observes *Senior Cohousing* author and architect Chuck Durrett, who did the design work for Silver Sage. "The children grow up viewing aging as a rich, active, and functional part of life. It is interesting, however, that there is less frequency of contact than was expected. Working adults lead busy lives, but even more common is the increased activity the seniors create for themselves in community life. There is far less dependency from the older community members than people may imagine."

Another example of an elder/senior cohousing neighborhood being built adjacent to multi-generational cohousing is in Grass Valley, California, currently being developed by CoHousing Partners, a new development company focusing on cohousing projects in California, led by Katie McCamant and Jim Leach. The 30-household Cohousing Lofts senior/elder cohousing community will have its own common house in a three-story building with elevator, underground parking, and shared community space, and will be across a private drive from Wolf Creek Cohousing, a 32-household multi-generational cohousing community, to allow for an easy flow between the two neighborhoods.

We know of at least three other projects with adjacent senior and multi-generational cohousing communities that are in the works—one in Austin, Texas, and two in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Like Silver Sage, which is being built in a New Urbanist neighborhood in Boulder, Oshara Village and Galisteo Basin (both called "cohousing villages") will be located in a larger planned New Urbanist neighborhood in Santa Fe. ("New Urbanist" neighborhoods, like downtowns and small towns of earlier decades, combine homes and workplaces within walking distance in a pedestrian-friendly area.)

Leach supports the trend of cohousing within New Urbanist neighborhoods, and describes a cohousing project as the "starter dough for community." This trend was covered as a



JULIA RAINIER

Top: Jean (left) and Nira are active members of Nevada City Cohousing in California.

Bottom: John Lightburn (left) and Allie at Harmony Village Cohousing in Golden, Colorado.

feature cover story by Philip Langdon in the June 2005 issue of *New Urban News*, entitled "Cohousing Bolsters New Urban Neighborhoods."

Innovative New Models

The Green House. A third model, the "Green House," was developed by Dr. William Thomas, a gerontologist, author of *What are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World* (see review, pg. 71.), and originator of the Eden Alternative Nursing Home concept, adopted by over 450 nursing homes in the US and internationally. A Green House expands the cohousing village concept with an additional element—a group home for seniors providing healthcare services for people with dementia or a chronic illness. It is a small intentional community for eight to ten seniors, with a private living space and bathroom for each resident, centered around a shared kitchen, dining, and living room area. Dr. Thomas sums up the philosophy of the Green House as *warm*, created by the floor plan, décor, furnishings, and the people who live and work there; *smart*, using cost-effective, smart technologies such as computers, wireless pagers, electronic ceiling lifts, and adaptive devices; and *green*, incorporating sunlight, plants, and access to outdoor spaces.

The advantage of including a Green House in a cohousing village is having on-site healthcare which can then be made available to cohousing residents if they should one day need it. In addition, the Green House can be the home for a person with Alzheimer's whose partner lives next door in the cohousing community. A disadvantage is the increased regulatory environment of operating a licensed nursing home within the village.

Dr. Thomas says the first round of Green Houses have been around 5,000 sq. ft. but they "could be smaller," perhaps as small as 3,000 sq. ft. He has even considered the advantages of having the two staff members of the Green House live in affordable rental units owned by the Green House developer and where staff join the community in the development phase prior to move-in.

Collegeville Development Group. Another new development among intentional elder communities is to provide senior housing connected to college campuses for university alumni and others interested in attending classes and exploring opportunities for lifelong learning. Collegeville Development Group, run by Colleen and Jon Peters in St. Cloud, Minnesota, is creating "retirement learning in the vibrancy of a college town." They have three projects underway in Minnesota. Colleen Peters says they have begun utilizing the cohousing principle of having future residents get to know one another before moving in.

Eldershire Communities. Another model of elder community is the Eldershire model, also originated by Dr. Thomas and his wife Jude, in Sherburne, New York. Several Eldershire-inspired projects are in the planning stages in the Asheville, North Carolina area, initiated by Alex Mawhinney. Eldershire communities are based on a set of principles, says Mawhinney, that includes:

- Creating a network of communities to encourage inter-community visiting and "cross-pollination" by all residents and participants, for new ideas, solutions, and technologies.
- Sustainable development and lifestyles respectful of the Earth.
- Fostering well-being as a principal right of each resident/participant.
- Embracing the concepts of creating "social capital," co-

Starting Elder Communities

Aging in Community Network (AIC Network). This non-profit organization helps people and organizations develop innovative solutions for aging in community, with information, education, research, grant opportunities, technical and advisory services, and advocacy to its members and the public. The AIC Network will be shopping a portfolio of grants to prospective foundations for funding projects and research related to aging in community projects. janicecsa@comcast.net.

Elder Cohousing Network. Through our Elder Cohousing Network, my husband Zev Paiss and I offer "Getting Started" workshops for professionals, landowners, and individuals. These workshops highlight the cohousing development process, from site selection and the professional/resident relationship, to community building, marketing, and the design process, and they focus on the importance of having skilled, professional cohousing designers and developers lead community design and planning to save the residents time and to avoid mistakes. In the past ten years this "streamlined development process" has gotten cohousing communities built in two to three years, while incorporating resident feedback on common facility and grounds use and design. The benefit of this model is also to make the focus of the future resident group on community building and group formation. www.ElderCohousing.org.

—N.A.



caring, and reciprocity as a basis for enriching the quality of life for the residents, the local community, and society in general.

- Spreading the vision of “aging in community” to encourage a paradigm shift in our culture.

Today’s over-55 population is a creative bunch known for eschewing traditional forms and coming up with inventive and effective new ways of doing things. We can expect to see a number of innovative versions of cohousing for elders, with one constant: Intentional elder communities that respect and reflect the creative interdependence of sovereign seniors and our interconnectedness in the web of life.

Neshama Abraham is a speaker, writer, and educator about the cohousing lifestyle. She and her husband Zev Paiss are principals of Abraham Paiss & Associates, which works with cohousing groups from the early stages of development to after move-in. Their next “Getting Started” Elder Cohousing Workshop will be held in Boulder, Colorado, September 14-17. (See ad, pg. 74.) Neshama and Zev live in Nomad Cohousing in Boulder.

Kate deLaGrange is a writer and teacher of sustainable living practices and interpersonal communication skills. She is a senior associate at Abraham Paiss & Associates, where she facilitates community-building activities for forming elder/senior cohousing communities.



Dene Peterson (above). Gene Junk, Patrice Morrow, Brownie Leach, Maureen Cassulo, and Jim Leach hiking together on a trail in the Colorado foothills (below).

SILVER SAGE SENIOR COHOUSING

Elder Cohousing Communities

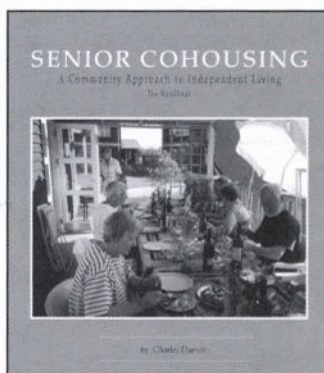
- **ElderSpirit Community, Abingdon, Virginia.** A 29-household, spiritually oriented, elder cohousing neighborhood on a rural 3.7 acre site. Waiting list for new members. www.elderspirit.net
- **Glacier Circle Retirement Community, Davis, California.** An eight-household cohousing project which is part of a larger residential neighborhood. The core group met through their local Unitarian Universalist Church and has known each other for 40 years. www.eldercohousing.org. Click "Elder Communities," then click on "Glacier Circle Senior Community."
- **Silver Sage Village, Boulder, Colorado.** A 16-household, mixed-income, elder cohousing neighborhood on a 1.5 acre site in the award-winning New Urbanist Holiday neighborhood in Boulder. www.silversagevillage.com
- **Elder Family in the Smoky Mountains, Whittier, North Carolina.** Group homes with private and shared space on 8 acres within a larger 80-acre intentional community, including 7 acres of common land and group facilities, near the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. abrahampaiss.com/resources/ElderFamilyProfile
- **Elder Cohousing at Prospect, Longmont, Colorado.** A 25-30-household elder cohousing community in Prospect New Town, a New Urbanist neighborhood in Longmont. www.prospectelders.com
- **Arvada Generations, Arvada, Colorado.** A 25-30-unit, elder cohousing community using renewable energy sources on a 1-acre site, located next to a 30-34-household inter-generational cohousing community on a 2-acre site in Arvada, a suburb of Denver. www.whdc.com/arvada_colorado_cohousing
- **Oshara Village Commons, Santa Fe, New Mexico.** A 20-household elder cohousing development, adjacent to a multi-generational cohousing community, on approx. 12 acres, with 50 percent preserved as open space, next to Santa Fe Community College. www.osharavillage.com
- **Catholic Elder Community, St. Petersburg, Florida.** A planned residential, participatory membership community of mutual support and later-life spirituality for seniors in the Catholic faith, based on the ElderSpirit Community model, who meet monthly for prayer and community building programs. admin@catholicelders.org



Glacier Circle courtyard

- **Cohousing Lofts, Grass Valley, California.** A 27-household elder cohousing community on a wooded site next door to a multi-generational cohousing neighborhood in the Sierra foothills, within walking distance to shops, groceries and restaurants. www.cohousingpartners.com/grassvalley-lofts
- **St. Anthony Park Cohousing, St. Paul, Minneapolis.** Environmentally sustainable elder cohousing community with mission: "to be a community for people who want to live simply among friends rather than extravagantly among strangers." robrankin3@aol.com
- **ElderGrace, Santa Fe, New Mexico.** A Jubilados-inspired, conscious-aging, elder cohousing community on a 3.5-acre site, dedicated to spiritual growth, mutual support, respect for the environment, and service to others. www.eldergrace.org
- **Galisteo Basin Preserve, Galisteo, New Mexico.** A 15-25 unit elder cohousing neighborhood, possibly near a multi-generational cohousing neighborhood in a larger housing development. www.galisteobasinpreserve.com/village
- **Carolina Renaissance Communities, Asheville, North Carolina.** Several age-targeted projects are in the planning stages in the Asheville area following the principles of ElderShire Communities. alex@villagegreengilroy.com
- **Georgetown Elder Cohousing, Georgetown, Texas.** A developer-driven, elder cohousing project adjacent to a multigenerational cohousing community, located 40 minutes from downtown Austin. mblack@mblackarchitect.com

REVIEWS



Senior Cohousing A Community Approach to Independent Living

By Charles Durrett

Habitat Press/Ten Speed Press, 2005
Pb. 249 pp., \$29.95

Reviewed by Diana Leafe Christian

Architect Charles Durrett, with his architect partner and wife, Katie McCamant, brought cohousing to North America with their 1986 book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. With colorful photos and drawings and renderings on almost every page, Durrett's new book makes learning about senior cohousing effortless. For example, senior cohousing in Denmark is characterized by five critical elements: a qualified advisor; a feasibility and informational phase; Study Group I, in which people get to know each other and create their core group; Study Group II, in which they help design the physical aspects of the community; and Study Group III, in which they create their community's agreements and policies.

Several Danish senior cohousing projects are profiled, including an in-depth look at the 20-unit senior cohousing com-

munity within Munksoegaard Ecovillage, not far from Copenhagen. (Although this is one of five clustered 20-unit cohousing communities that make up this Danish ecovillage project, this is not mentioned, nor the fact that Munksoegaard is one of Europe's most well-known ecovillages.) A chapter is devoted to the feasibility study period and each of the three Study Group processes, with wonderfully inviting full-color charts and architectural renderings. This is followed by an in-depth examination of two American senior cohousing projects, ElderSpirit in Abingdon, Virginia and Silver Sage Cohousing in Boulder, Colorado, both of which were in the construction and planning stages when this book was published, and interviews with two seniors who plan to live in Silver Sage once it's finished.

In the last chapter Charles talks about developers who want to cash in on the trend and create cohousing-looking developments that ignore the social-building aspects of the process—which of course does not create community.

He ends with a poignant contrast between the situation of his mother, who, as she became elderly but could still make choices about her life, refused to move to a cohousing community no matter how much Charles "offered, demanded, and pleaded" that she do so. Ten years later, he writes, "while we can still catch glimpses of her former self, her body, increasingly frail, demands full-time institutional nursing home care. And since her mind has become a confused house of fading memories, she has no choice but to live according to the whims and timetables set by the staff of her nursing home. With the exception of the visits of family members, she lives alone among strangers, her chance to make a deliberate and realistic choice as to how and where she would live out her last years long since past."

"My mother made the typical American choice to ignore the elephant in the living room, and, much to her dismay, found herself in institutionalized nursing care. And if neither I nor my family were able to help her avoid a life of unhappy institutional dependence, who could have? The

answer is as straightforward as it is simple: She could have made the conscious choice to take control of the inevitable, in an effort to live as independently as possible, as long as possible, in a community she could have relied upon for support."

He contrasts his mother's experiences with that of a neighbor in his cohousing community, Margaret, who died of cancer when she was 73, and who received a considerable amount of care in her last six months from her cohousing neighbors.

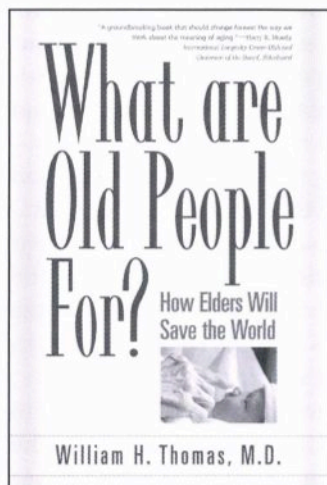
While I liked the book very much, and consider it a valuable addition to the literature about the benefits of living in community and especially the how-to's of creating a new elder-focused community, one thing was off-putting for me. Once again an important cohousing activist perpetuates the myth that non-cohousing communities "are often organized around strong ideological beliefs and may depend upon a charismatic leader to establish the direction of the community and hold the group together." In contrast, Charles says, "cohousing essentially offers a new approach to housing—it does not impose a new way of life on its residents. Based on democratic principles, cohousing communities espouse no ideology other than the desire for a more practical and social home environment."

This is in the first chapter, and any relatively uncritical reader is going to believe the clear implication that most non-cohousing communities have "strong ideological beliefs" created by "charismatic leaders" who "impose" a new way of life on community members. This mangling of facts has been going on since the early days of cohousing, and here it still is 20 years later. I'm getting kind of tired of it, aren't you?

According to the 2005 *Communities Directory* and the Online Directory, 45 percent of communities that listed themselves indicated they have a common spiritual path. Of these, I'd guess relatively few actually have a charismatic leader and of those, I'd say it would be only a small number of ashrams, Zen meditation centers, one Sufi community, some Christian communities, and the occasional charismatic leader in a secular community. My sense of the communi-

ties movement, from studying it rather intensely for the last 12 years, is that strong ideological beliefs and charismatic leaders are pretty rare, compared with the number of communities out there. Similarly, one of the six oft-quoted components of cohousing communities is “Non-Hierarchical Structure”—just like most non-cohousing communities—and “Separate Income Sources,” just like roughly 90 percent of non-cohousing communities (figures from the *Communities Directory* and Online Directory show that roughly 10 percent of the communities that listed themselves indicate they are income-sharing). And as for “imposing” a “new way of life” on people—Egads, I thought most people voluntarily join communities that attract them, rather than an outside authority coming along and forcing them to join one they don’t like! (OK, I’ll get off the soapbox now.)

It’s still a really good book. Give it to your mom and dad.



What are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World

By William H. Thomas, M.D.
Vanderwyk and Burnham, 2004
Hb. 369 pp., \$24.95

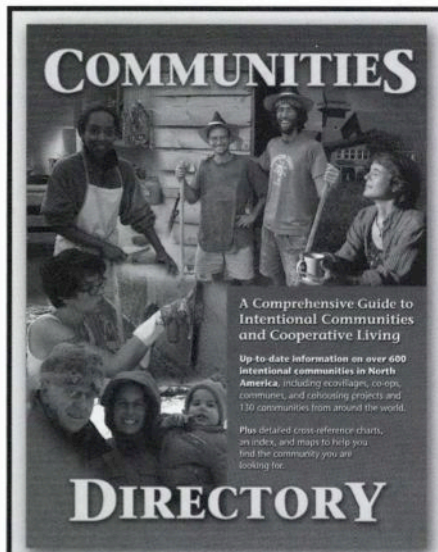
Reviewed by Diana Leafé Christian

Dr. Bill Thomas, as he’s known to his legions of admirers, is a revolutionary geriatrician who denounces the Catch-

22 in our culture that prolongs old people’s lives at great financial cost through the medical industry, while it also marginalizes them and shoves them off into impersonal institutionalized care. The award-winning physician and Harvard Medical School grad wants to overthrow “adulthood,” by which he means that period after we’re no longer kids and before we’re elders, and which everything in our culture, from movies to ads to media, makes out to be the best and most important and in fact only significant phase of our lives. Adulthood has near-tyrannical power, as Bill Thomas sees it, inducing us to mourn lost youthful energy and attractiveness and spend thousands of dollars and pointless worry on trying to restore, revive, or simulate it once we’re past it. He wants older folks to grow up, wake up, and get out of denial. He wants our whole culture to grow up, wake up, and quit dissing, marginalizing, and warehousing its elders. He wants us all, elders as well as non-elders, to value, respect, and seek the wisdom of our older members. He wants being older to be viewed as it once was, and as it still is in many non-Western cultures, as a time of honor.

Besides describing the often dehumanizing impact of nursing homes, Bill Thomas examines how we’re taught to view aging as a disease, the social repercussions of defining elder’s needs in financial terms alone, and the importance of grandparents.

One of his remedies for our elder-bashing society is intentional community. He advocates Green Houses, for example, small urban intentional communities for seniors, where six to eight elder residents would each have their own bedroom/sitting room and bathroom spaces in a house with shared kitchen, dining, and living room facilities, with health-care workers available on site, and within walking distance to stores, the post office, movie theaters, and other services. In fact, the first Green House project is underway in Tupelo, Mississippi. (He wrote the book before his advocacy of the Eldershire community concept, and it’s not mentioned in the book. See pg. __, in “Elder Cohousing—An Idea Whose Time Has Come?”)



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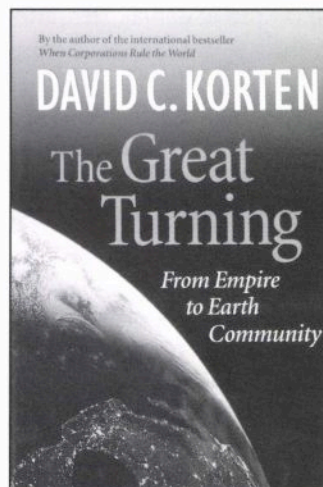
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To his rhetorical question, what are old people for?, Bill Thomas answers: "They are the glue that holds the human community together. To deny old age is to invite anarchy in our lives . . . The liberation of elders and elderhood is not an aging issue . . . It is our last, best hope, for saving our world from the all-conquering power of adults."

Diana Leafé Christian is editor of *Communities* magazine and author of *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities* (New Society Publishers, 2003), and the forthcoming: *Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community* (New Society Publishers, 2007).



The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community

By David C. Korten

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2006
Hb., 416 pages, \$27.95

Reviewed by Molly Morgan

Most readers of *Communities* magazine are intimately familiar with the looming ecological and social crises facing humanity—it seems as though we are racing at full speed toward a cliff. Perhaps the most compelling question of our time is whether, upon reaching the precipice, we will cascade into an abyss or find the courage and skill to soar.

In *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*, David Korten exposes the nature of our challenge so that we may understand the possibilities of this unique time and envision the path to a new era. Absent this, he contends that "we will continue to squander valuable time and resources on futile efforts to preserve or mend the cultures and institutions of a system that cannot be fixed and must be replaced." To persuade people to abandon piecemeal approaches to change, he draws upon the wisdom of a broad range of thinkers and weaves a rich tapestry from threads of history, developmental psychology, religion and spirituality, economics, evolutionary biology, physics, politics, and culture.

In 1995, Korten came to sudden prominence with the publication of *When Corporations Rule the World*, an insider's exposé of the destructive and oppressive nature of the global corporate economy, which helped fuel the rapid growth of a worldwide resistance movement. Through his ongoing investigation of civilization's dilemmas, he came to realize that our economic, political, and cultural institutions are neither new nor inevitable, and certainly not the natural order of things—they are simply the current manifestation of a 5,000-year-old system of domination and exploitation designed to benefit a small number of elite humans at the expense of most people and the rest of the planet. This system has brought us to the brink of self-destruction.

In his new book, Korten wants us to understand how we got here, and so he reviews contemporary theories about five millennia of cultural evolution based on archeological evidence, historical documents, and studies of surviving hunter-gatherer and other indigenous societies. For most of human history, people lived in egalitarian, cooperative groups and practiced Earth-centered, goddess-worshipping religions. For various reasons the ancient Middle Eastern cultures shifted to increasingly abstract, male-god-worshipping religions and hierarchical, dominator cultures, implemented and maintained through wars and violence at all levels of society—the beginning of the Age of Empire. Korten continues

through time to the histories of western Europe and North America, demonstrating how the cultural systems through the millennia have been nothing more than a variation on a basic theme. Today only a tiny percentage of the Earth's population is aware of alternatives to the dominator model, even though it is a short-lived aberration in our species' 200,000-year existence. Although Empire's historians laud its accomplishments, they rarely mention its staggering human and environmental costs or acknowledge that virtually all of civilization's fundamental material and social technologies were developed before the imposition of a dominator society.

Korten also describes the few brief forays into democracy, including ancient Athens and our own experiment in the United States. As he makes clear, however, because these ideologies have always been attempted in the context of Empire, as we can call the imperial model of today, any early success has been quickly co-opted to maintain the status quo. As a counter to our prevailing cultural mythology, he takes a detailed look at the profoundly anti-democratic roles of religion and wealth in our society, linking the earliest days of US history to the plutocratic-theocratic union of the contemporary Far Right and neoconservative movements.

Korten has no interest in dwelling in the paralysis of fear and despair. Although the history of Empire is not a pretty one, we must understand how deeply embedded our cultural beliefs are to change them. He does an excellent job of synthesizing the dominant stories of prosperity, security, and meaning in which we are immersed, trapped in a cultural trance. "For 5,000 years, successful imperial rulers have intuitively recognized that their power rests on their ability to fabricate a falsified culture that evokes fear, alienation, learned helplessness, and the dependence of the individual on the imperial power of a great ruler." But he stresses that we have the power and imperative to choose different stories and to implement them unlike ever before in human experience.

The phrase, the "Great Turning," describes a spiritual revolution rooted in an awakening consciousness of our con-

nections to one another and the living body of the Earth. Given the daunting and overwhelming scope of our challenge, why does Korten think this revolution can happen? He points to recent rapid developments in technology, such as widespread use of the telephone, the Internet, and global travel, that make it possible for the first time in human history for people all over the world to communicate with each other. The great social movements of the 20th century awakened millions to the gap between reality and unexamined cultural codes defining relations between and among people, species, the environment, and institutions. There is a greatly increased number of people worldwide who, through various paths, have acquired the spiritually mature, life-loving consciousness of Earth Community. Korten includes intentional communities among the examples of social models created by such people. Finally, he discusses emerging scientific insights demonstrating that the nature of life itself is fundamentally cooperative, locally rooted, and self-organized.

For those already embracing Earth Community, *The Great Turning* is both an affirmation and an inspiration. But the book is so accessible that it should appeal well beyond Korten's existing readership. As institutions of power increasingly falter, growing numbers of people are breaking free from their trance and seeking alternatives to Empire. Korten applies the wisdom gleaned from observing natural phenomena in advocating a strategy of emergence and displacement: "Cultural change does not take place simultaneously everywhere. It begins with people joining to create new cultural spaces. These spaces gradually grow and link to create yet larger spaces. As the spaces grow, they express and make more visible the opportunities of partnership and thereby facilitate the cultural and spiritual awakening of others." The intentional communities movement is among those creating the spaces that will one day enable us to soar.

Molly Morgan is an organizer currently working on building community through economic localization and sustainable food systems. She lives in Point Arena, California.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Sirius Community Experience Weekend

Sirius Community, Shutesbury, MA. Two-day immersion in Sirius community life: shared meals, work parties, meditation, community meetings, and more. \$20/day. Contact Sirius for dates. www.siriuscommunity.org; sirius@siriuscommunity.org; 413-259-1251.

Sep 5-29 • A Natural Builder's Practicum

O.U.R. Ecovillage, Shawnigan Lake, BC. With Elke Cole from Cobworks, and Holger Laerad. For those who have taken a natural building training program or apprenticeship (minimum two-week workshop). Projects may include cob, bale and plasterwork, as well as roof construction. Focus will be on developing efficiency, productivity, quality. \$800 Canadian, incl. camping, meals. our.pacificcoast.org; naturalbuilding@ourecoillage.org; info@pacificcoast.net; 250-743-3067.

Sep 5-7 • Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) Spring Organizational Meeting

Songaia Cohousing, Bothel, WA. Planning, policies, reports, consensus decision-making by FIC board members, staff, and volunteers. FIC publishes *Communities* magazine, *Communities Directory*, distributes *Visions of Utopia* video, and operates ic.org website and Community Bookshelf mail-order book service. Hosted by Songaia Cohousing. Public invited. jenny@ic.org.

Sep 8-10 • Art of Community Northwest: Building Sustainable Community

Seattle, WA. Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) & Northwest Intentional Communities Association (NICA). Speakers, workshops. Meet people from existing and forming communities. Build Community Where You Are (neighborhoods, workplaces, churches); Tools You Can Use (consensus, facilitation, conflict resolution, ecological assessments); Sustainability (permaculture, biodiesel, CSA farms). Speakers include Laird Schaub, FIC executive secretary, process/facilitation consultant, community founder; Geoph Kozeny, "Peripatetic Communitarian," producer/editor *Visions of Utopia* video; Diana Leaf Christian, *Communities* magazine editor, author, *Creating a Life Together*; and many other speakers. www.ic.org; fic@ic.org/artofcommunity; avatar@ic.org.

Sep 8-10 • EcoVillage at Ithaca Experience Weekend

EcoVillage at Ithaca, Ithaca, NY. Enjoy a balance of nature connection, personal renewal, and hands-on learning—harvesting organic produce at on-site CSA farm, building a root cellar, exploring ecological lifestyle changes. Presentations on place-based learning and land stewardship, green building and renewable energy systems, consensus decision-making, and building cooperative community. Delicious meals, swimming in the pond, exploring Ithaca's famous gorges. \$200-\$250 sl/sc (incl. meals, lodging), local resident rates \$150-200 sl/sc *EcoVillage at Ithaca, 100 Rachel Carson Way, Ithaca, NY 14850*; www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us; ecovillage@cornell.edu; 607-256-0000, 607-272-5149.

Sep 8-11 • Cordwood Masonry Workshop

Trillium Farm Community, Jacksonville, OR. Four-day intensive on the ancient art of cordwood masonry with contemporary masters Rob Roy and Jaki Roy. www.cordwoodmasonry.com; www.deepwild.org/birchcreek.

Sep 10-16 • Midwifery Assistant Workshop

The Farm, Summertown, TN. Learn the skills and knowledge needed to assist a practicing midwife in-home or birth center deliveries. \$795, incl. lodging, two meals/day. *The Farm*

Midwifery Workshops, P.O. Box 217, Summertown, TN 38483; midwives@themacisp.net; 931-964-2472.

Sep 14-17 • Elder Cohousing Workshop

Boulder, Colorado. Workshop with Zev Paiss and Neshama Abraham, plus guided tour of local cohousing communities, workbook. \$525 for 1st person; \$425 for each additional person registering in same group. www.ElderCohousing.org; info@ElderCohousing.org.

Sep 14-17 • Fall Harvest Yoga Immersion with Alison Litchfield Robinson

Hummingbird Ranch Community, NM. Explore the fluid body through meditative flow yoga with emphasis on alignment, breath work, and core integration. Alison's gift of teaching internal form with fluid movement comes from her diverse background in Ashtanga, Iyengar, and Anusara yoga and experience as a Certified Rolfer. Two yoga classes daily, vegetarian meals, and plenty of time for rest, swimming in the creek, and nature hikes/walks. \$175; additional for food, lodging. www.HummingbirdLivingSchool.org; marie@globallfamily.net; 505-387-5100.

Sep 15-18 • Heart of Now: The Basics

Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (Formerly "Naka-Ima.") Part one of experiential workshop about realizing your vision and facing and dissolving the obstacles in the way of being fully and authentically yourself. Through the practice of honesty, in the context of supportive and loving community, we will explore how to be alive, in the moment, and deeply connected with others. Donation, incl. lodging, meals. \$50 registration deposit; suggested additional contribution \$300-\$650. www.lostvalley.org; info@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351, #109.

Sep 15-22 • Natural Building Immersion

Ecovillage Training Center, The Farm, Summertown, TN. Wattle & daub, fidobe, earthbags, Earthships, traditional Mexican styles, bamboo, slip-clay, domes & arches, earthen floors, earthen plasters & alis, passive solar, foundations & drainage, living roofs and thatch. With Howard Switzer, Katey Culver, Matt English, Albert Bates, & guest instructors. \$300 for weekend; \$700 for full-week program, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Sep 16-17, Oct 7-8, Oct 21-22, Nov 4-5, Nov 18-19, Dec 2-3 • Permaculture Design Weekend Program

EcoVersity, Santa Fe, NM. Scott Pittman, founder, Permaculture Drylands Institute, and co-founder, Permaculture Credit Union. Permaculture is a practical design system to create settings with the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems, and to provide tools for building energy-efficient homes, water conservation, alternative waste treatment, soil building, preserving biodiversity, land restoration, erosion control, seed saving, and land stewardship. \$890. *EcoVersity, 2639 Agua Fria Street, Santa Fe, NM 87505*;

The Findhorn Book of Community Living

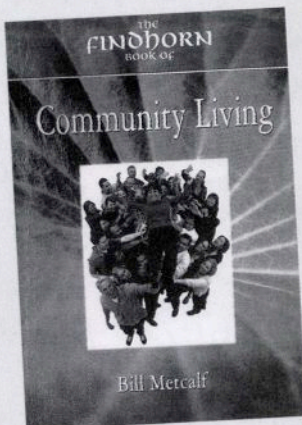
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www.ecoversity.org; info@ecoversity.org; 505-424-9797.

Sep 19-24 • Lost Valley Community Experience Week

Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. Immersion in Lost Valley community life: shared meals, work parties, community meetings, and more. www.lostvalley.org; info@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351, #109.

Sep 22-24 • Community: Crucible of Transformation

Mount Madonna Center, Watsonville, California. Thomas Yeomans, Kay Brownfield, Diane Rossman, Bill Shields. Weaving together our own reflections with recent discoveries in science and the wisdom of spiritual and psychological traditions, we will experience the dynamics of healthy living systems that honor the truth of our individual uniqueness within a deeply coherent web of relationships. Group dialogue sessions, creative expression, individual conversations, and contemplative time, guided by the principles of Spiritual/Global Psychology, Psychosynthesis and Gestalt. \$210, plus lodging fees. www.mountmadonna.org/live/COM-9-22; programs@mountmadonna.org; 408-846-4064.

Sep 22-24 • Farm Experience Week

The Farm Community, Summertown, TN. Tours and shared group activities to help participants get to know The Farm's daily life and culture. \$150, \$175, or \$200, depending

on time of registration; less for two or more; family rates. Incl. camping, vegan meals. Indoor lodging accommodations also available. www.thefarm.org; Vickie@thefarmcommunity.com; 931-964-3574.

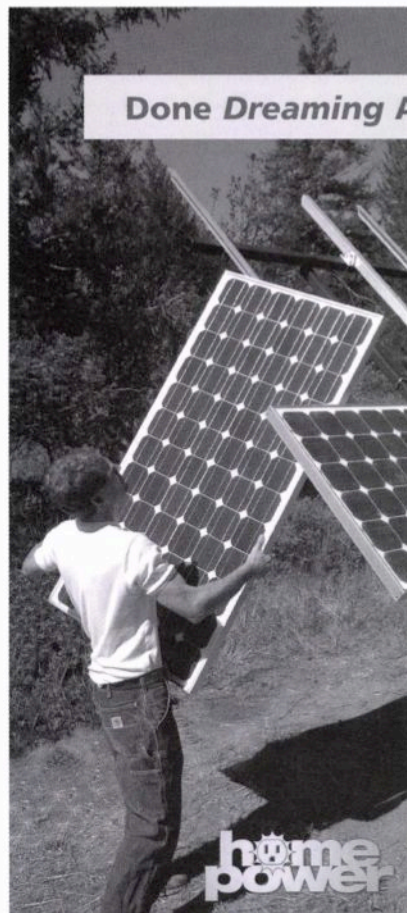
Sep 24-30 • Midwifery Assistant Workshop
The Farm, Summertown, TN. (See Sept 10-16.)

Sep 29-Oct 1 • Earthen Paints and Wall Finishes

Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Mollie Curry. Shaping and prepping straw-bale, cob, and adobe-brick walls and applying base plaster; applying finishing touches for fine plaster and paint application, tints, and embellishments, including bas reliefs. \$125, incl. meals, camping. www.earthaven.org; arjuna@earthaven.org; 828-669-0114.

Oct 2-27 • Ecovillage & Permaculture Certificate Program

Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. Joshua Smith, Mark Lakeman, Toby Hemenway, Jude Hobbs, Rob Bolman, Tree Bressen, others. One-month residential hands-on, experiential course in creating ecovillages and sustainable communities. Permaculture design certificate course (organic gardening, eco-building, eco-forestry, appropriate technology, community site design), interpersonal communication, organizational and financial issues in community, Lost Valley's personal growth workshops. www.lostvalley.org; sustainability@lostvalley.org; 541-937-3351.



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Oct 6-8, Oct 28-29, Nov 18-19 • **Permaculture Design Practicum**
 Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Nine-day intensive. Patricia Allison, Chuck Marsh. \$400. www.earthaven.org; ehpa@direcway.com; 828-664-0076.

Oct 6-9 • **Heart of Now: The Basics**
 Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR. (See Sep 15-18.)

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Oct 7 • **Editor's Tour of Earthaven**
 Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Day-long, in-depth tour of Earthaven with Diana Leafe Christian, editor, *Communities* magazine, and author, *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities*. Permaculture design in an ecovillage setting (with Patricia Allison); how Earthaven financed its property; Earthaven's passive solar natural buildings (clay-straw, chipslip, cob, strawbale, timber-framing, earthen plaster); off-grid power systems (microhydro, photovoltaics); roof water catchment; graywater recycling; constructed wetlands; self-governance with Council & committee; creating a village-scale economy. \$75, incl. lunch. Optional: attend Coffee-house evening, sit in on Earthaven Council meeting on Sunday, Oct 8. (Camping, indoor lodging also available for additional charge.) www.DianaLeafeChristian.org.

Oct 7 • **Wild Plants: Food & Medicine of Our Ancestors**
 Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Corinna Wood of Red Moon Herbs. Some of our most potent herbal allies are frequently overlooked as "weeds." See wild plants in a whole new light as we explore the gardens of Earthaven, looking between the cultivated rows for the useful plants growing there. Learn to identify, harvest, and prepare those plants as food and medicine. \$85-\$95, sl/sc. www.earthaven.org; info@redmoonherbs.com; 828-350-1221.

Oct 7-8 • **Permaculture Design Weekend Program**
 EcoVersity, Santa Fe, NM. (See Sep 16-17.)

Oct 7-Nov 4 • **Ecovillage Design: Training of Trainers, 2006**
 Findhorn Foundation, Forres, Scotland. Fundamentals of sustainability design for urban and rural settlements, based on ecovillage design curriculum of Gaia Education organization, created by ecovillage activists world-

wide through the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), and affiliated with UNESCO. Covers social, ecological, economic and worldview aspects of ecovillage design, through presentations and hands-on experiences. Four separate week-long modules, which may be attended as a whole or separately. Worldview, Oct 7-13; Social Design, Oct 14-20; Ecological Design, Oct 21-27; Economic Design, Oct 28-Nov 3. (See separate modules in Calendar below, for details.) With May East, Jonathan Dawson, and other instructors. www.findhorn.org/ecovillagedesign.


Oct. 7-13 • **Ecovillage Design**
 Findhorn Foundation, Forres, Scotland. (See above, Oct 7-Nov 4, "Ecovillage Design: Training of Trainers, 2006.") Holistic worldview, listening to and reconnecting with nature, awakening & transforming consciousness, celebrating life: creativity and art, socially engaged spirituality. www.findhorn.org/ecovillagedesign.

Oct 8 • **Nourishing Traditional Foods**
 Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Corinna Wood of Red Moon Herbs. Support optimum health with hearty foods and time-honored preservation methods, which actually increase the nutrients and digestibility of nuts, grains, vegetables, meats, and milk products. Hands-on learning how to make sauerkraut, yogurt, chicken broth, and simple cheeses. \$65-\$85, sl/sc. www.earthaven.org; info@redmoonherbs.com; 828-350-1221.

Oct 12-22 • **Energy Week at The Farm**
 Ecovillage Training Center, The Farm, Summertown, TN. Oct 12-15, *Solar Installation* with Ed Eaton. Installing photovoltaic off-grid systems. \$350, or \$490, incl. food, lodging. Oct 19-22, *Alternative Energy Workshop*. Alcohol & biodiesel fuel, photovoltaics, solar oven, solar shower. \$400, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324.

Is Aging in Community For You?

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Oct 12-15 • Solar Installation with Ed Eaton

Ecovillage Training Center, The Farm, Summertown, TN. Installing photovoltaic off-grid systems. \$350, or \$490, incl. food, lodging. www.thefarm.org; ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324

Oct 14-20 • Social Design

Findhorn Foundation, Forres, Scotland. (See above, Oct 7-Nov 4, "Ecovillage Design: Training of Trainers, 2006.") Building community & embracing diversity, communication skills: conflict, facilitation and decision-making, personal empowerment and leadership, health and healing, bioregional and global outreach. www.findhorn.org/ecovillagedesign.

Oct 19-22 • Alternative Energy Workshop

Ecovillage Training Center, The Farm, Summertown, TN. Alcohol & biodiesel fuel, photovoltaics, solar oven, solar shower. \$400, incl. meals, lodging. www.thefarm.org; ecovillage@thefarm.org; 931-964-4324

Oct 20-22 • Women's Work: Designing the Future

Earthaven Ecovillage, Black Mountain, NC. Patricia Allison. \$175. www.earthaven.org; ehpa@directway.com; 828-664-0076.

Oct 21-22 • Permaculture Design Weekend Program

EcoVersity, Santa Fe, NM. (See Sep 16-17.)

Oct 21-27 • Ecological Design

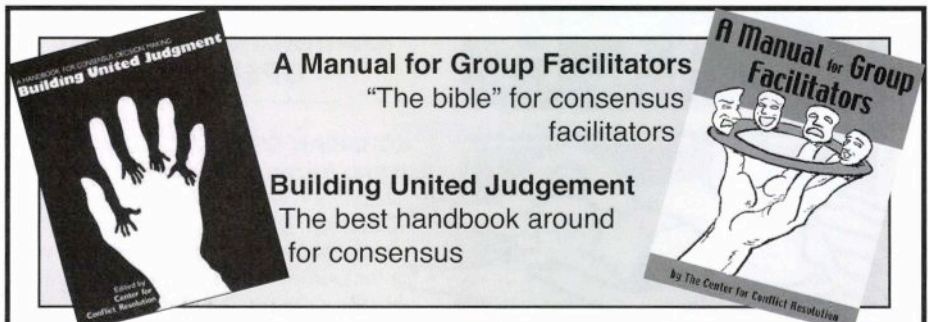
Findhorn Foundation, Forres, Scotland. (See above, Oct 7-Nov 4, "Ecovillage Design: Training of Trainers, 2006.") Green building & retrofitting, local food, appropriate technology, restoration ecology, integrated ecovillage design. www.findhorn.org/ecovillagedesign.

Oct 27-29 • Starting and Sustaining Intentional Communities

Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Occidental, CA. Dave Henson and Adam Wolpert, plus guests. Visioning, how to find land and finance a purchase, various legal forms available for holding land (limited liability company, corporation, land trust, etc.), organizing as a for-profit or nonprofit, group decision-making process (meetings, agreements, facilitation, agenda management, conflict resolution), financial organization of your community, legal and insurance issues and costs, dealing with zoning and regulations, long-term planning. \$425/\$375 sl/sc, incl. meals, lodging. www.oaec.org; oaec@oaec.org; 707-874-1557.

Oct 28-Nov 3 • Economic Design

Findhorn Foundation, Forres, Scotland. (See above, Oct 7-Nov 4, "Ecovillage Design: Training of Trainers, 2006.") Shifting the global economy to sustainability, right livelihood, social enterprise, nurturing local economies, community banks and currencies, legal and financial issues. www.findhorn.org/ecovillagedesign.



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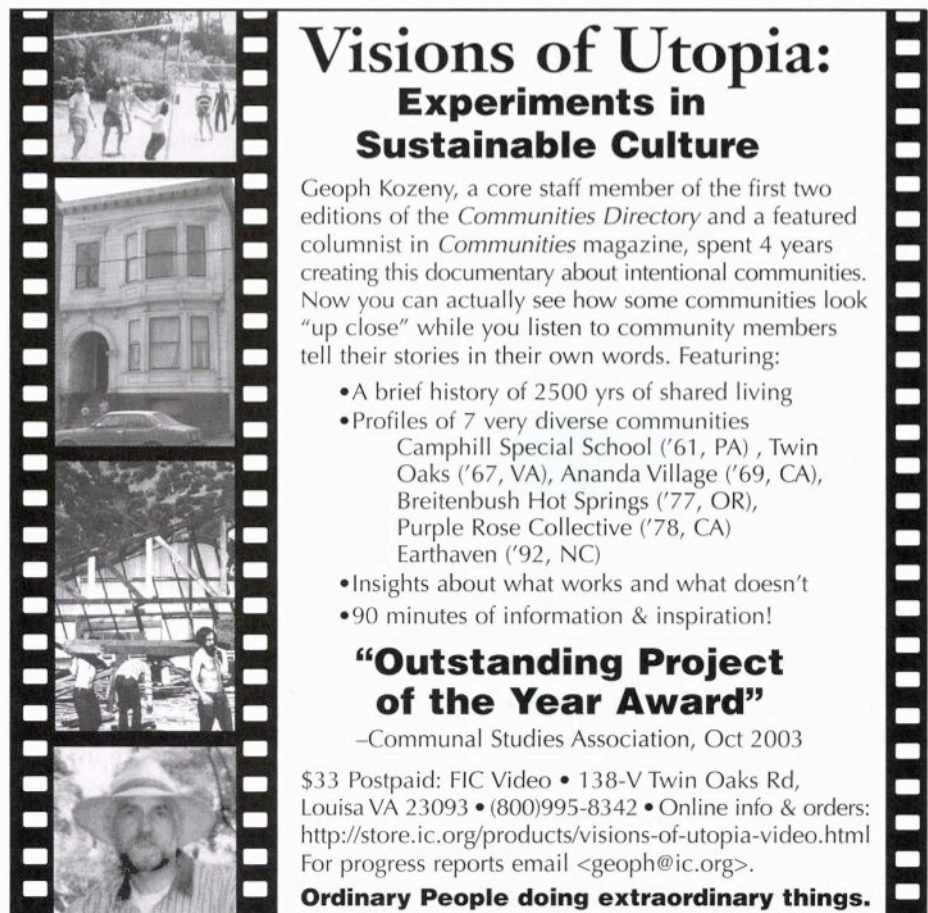
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Visions of Utopia: Experiments in Sustainable Culture

Geoph Kozeny, a core staff member of the first two editions of the *Communities Directory* and a featured columnist in *Communities* magazine, spent 4 years creating this documentary about intentional communities. Now you can actually see how some communities look "up close" while you listen to community members tell their stories in their own words. Featuring:

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REACH

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS



REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach has ads for workshops, goods, services, books, products and personals of interest to people interested in Communities.

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. **THE REACH DEADLINE FOR THE WINTER 2006 ISSUE (OUT IN DECEMBER) IS OCTOBER 12.**

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, 381 Hewlett Rd., Hermon, NY 13652; phone 315-347-3070, email: patricia@ic.org (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online Communities Directory at <http://directory.ic.org> Listing on our web site is free and data from the site is used to produce our print version of the Communities Directory, with a new edition coming out annually. Contact: directory@ic.org or 540-894-5798 for more information on being listed in the Communities Directory.

AQUARIAN CONCEPTS COMMUNITY, Sedona, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Sedona and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 105 adults and children. International members. 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. Organic gardens. Starseed Schools of Melchizedek, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Serious spiritual commitment required. POB 3946, Sedona, AZ 86340; 928-204-1206; info@aquarianconceptscommunity.org; www.aquarianconceptscommunity.org; www.globalchangemusic.org; www.musiciansthatneedtobeheardnetwork.org

AQUARIUS COMMUNITY, Vail, Arizona. Share picturesque mountain wilderness ranch blessed with ideal weather. \$150/mo. includes utilities. SASE. Box 69, Vail, AZ 85641-0069; jkubias@hotmail.com

CASA CLARA, Albuquerque, New Mexico. We are a group of people committed to taking charge of our aging in a supportive, interactive and conscious environment. Twenty garden apartments in a lovely, convenient location near university. All have two bedrooms, one bath. Units will be rentals (\$625-\$825 and rent controlled), but all decisions as to daily life and services will be made by an association. Membership in the association will be a condition of rental. Contact Carol at ceaglass@nmia.com or 505-266-3331.

DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a growing ecovillage of more than 30 individuals of diverse ages and backgrounds, actively seeking new members to join us in creating a vibrant community on our 280 beautiful acres in rural northeast Missouri.

Our goals are to live ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives, and to share the skills and ideas behind that lifestyle. We use solar and wind energy, earth-friendly building materials and biofuels. We are especially interested in welcoming more women and families with children into our community. Help make our ecovillage grow! *One-CM Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org*

EARTHAVEN, Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina. A multi-generational ecovillage on 320 forested acres near Asheville. Dedicated to caring for people and the Earth, we come together to create, and to sustain beyond our lifetimes, a vital, diversified learning community. Our 60 members use permaculture design, build with clay and timber from the land, draw power from off-grid systems, drink and bathe in gravity-fed spring water and use constructed wetlands for waste treatment. We raise children in Earthaven's nurturing village environment and many of us work on the land in community-based businesses. We make medicines from wild plants, use consensus for decision-making, and nourish our families with organic local foods grown at Earthaven and in our bioregion. Our diets range from omnivore to vegetarian. We enjoy an abundant social and cultural life, and practice diverse spiritual paths. We offer workshops on permaculture design, natural building, herbal medicine and other subjects. We're seeking new members of all ages and family situations, especially organic growers, people with homesteading or management skills and skills in the trades. www.earthaven.org; info@earthaven.org; 1025 Camp Elliott Road, Black Mountain, NC 28711; 828-669-3937.

ELDER FAMILY COMMUNITY, near Cherokee, North Carolina. We are a small, growing family-of-choice looking for healthy, financially secure adults, mid-50s and 60s, who are retired or semi-retired, past child rearing, non-smokers, experienced with cooperative groups, easy to get along with,

COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE REACH ADVERTISING ORDER FORM

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Patricia Greene, 381 Hewlett Road, Hermon, NY 13652; 315-347-3070; patricia@ic.org

willing to take training in consensus, and committed to mutual support, spiritual growth through relationships and living together as a loving extended family. We are looking to share ownership in an expanding project of eight acres and shared housing that includes both private and group space. We are near the Smoky Mountain National Park and are part of a larger mixed-age intentional community with community building, swimming pool and nature trails. Contact *Anthony or Ann, 828-497-7102; or email: annariel@dnet.net*

ENOTA MOUNTAIN RETREAT, Hiwassee, Georgia. Live, serve, play and experience the simple life in the beautiful north Georgia Mountains. We are seeking residents for our service-based spiritual, educational retreat center/campground/organic farm located on 60 magnificent acres with streams, waterfalls and ponds. Surrounded by 750,000 acres of National Forest. Our focus is sustainability and serving our guests. We have current need for construction, sales, accounting, front desk, farming, animal care, house-keeping, whatever is needed to operate the retreat center and farm. We offer clean air and water, housing, 2-3 home-cooked sit-down healthy meals together per day, stipend, free long distance, Internet access, free laundry and much more. Come help us build a community and make a difference. www.enota.org; 706-896-9966.

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/handwork 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, 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977; rsffoffice@fellowshipcommunity.org*

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING, Bayfield, Colorado. Located in southwest Colorado, with easy access to the high peaks of the San Juan Mountains and the red rock canyons of Utah, we are a cohousing neighborhood with a deep sense of community. Built in 2000, we support a population of approximately 40 adults and 20 children in a cozy cluster of 24

homes nestled within 250 acres of pine forest and pastureland. We make decisions by consensus and value open and honest communication to accommodate the diverse needs, backgrounds and perspectives of our members. Find out more about Heartwood and available property: www.heartwoodcohousing.com; info@heartwoodcohousing.com; 970-884-4055.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a small family of friends living together on an income-sharing organic farm. We value cooperation, raising children, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differ-

ences, making good ecological choices, and having fun with our friends. We've been at this for 31 years and continue to grow in our visions and our capability to realize them. Sound like home? *POB 155, Rutledge, MO 63563; visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org; 660-883-5543; www.sandhillfarm.org*

SKY MEADOW COMMUNITY, Greensboro Bend, Vermont. In the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. We are looking for working guests and long-term residents. Two to eight people with private living quarters share daily meditation, vegetarian meals, and work to maintain an organic homestead and spiritually oriented retreat center. Beautiful,

Northwest Intentional Communities Association



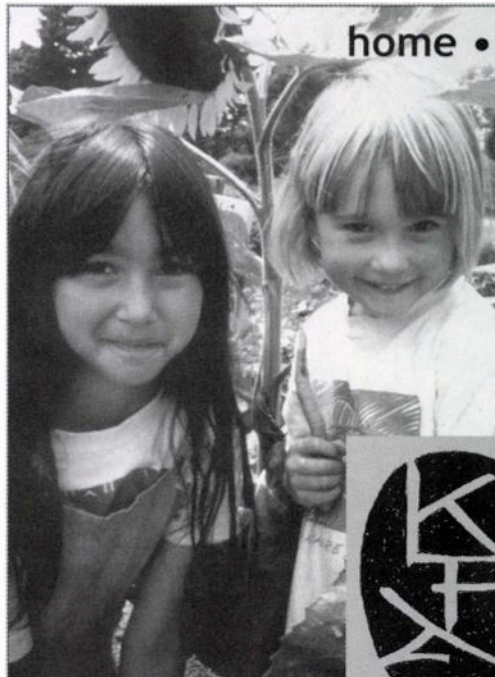
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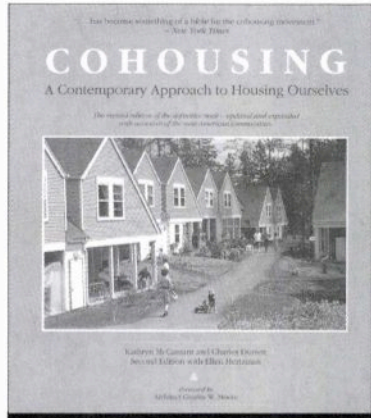
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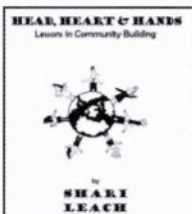


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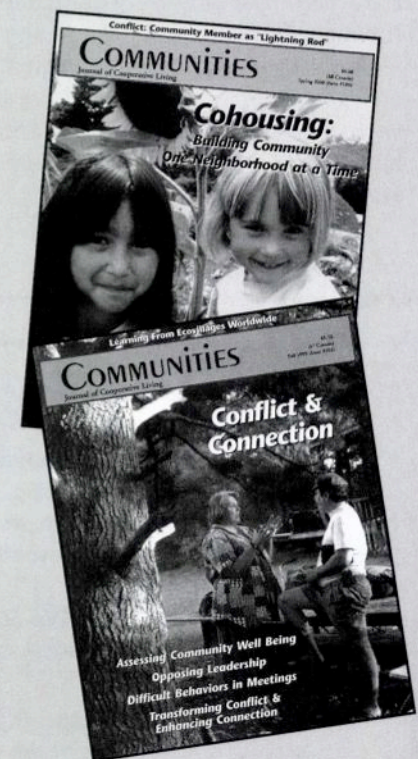
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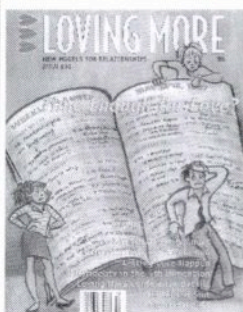
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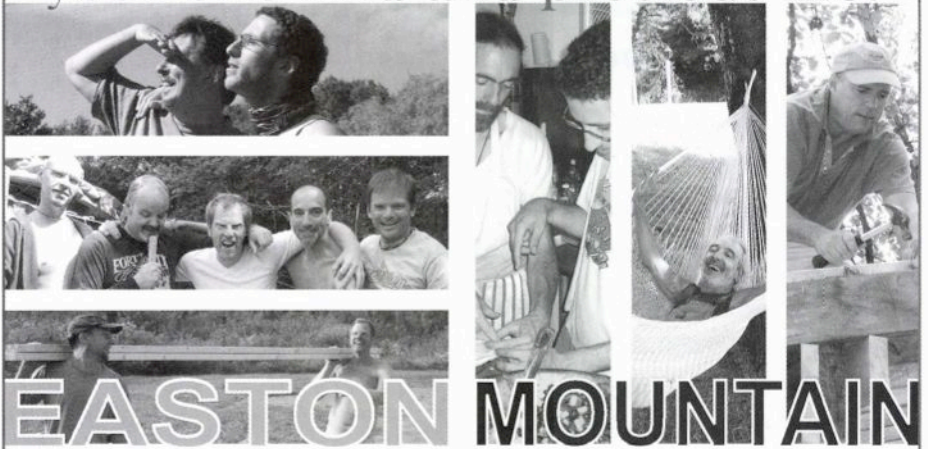
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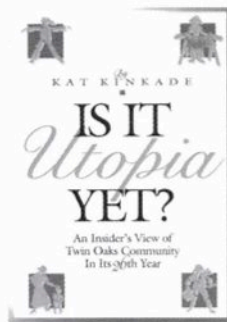
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FEDERATION UPDATE

(continued from p. 88)

evocation of certain traditions of radical leftist politics, such as Marxism and Anarchism. Having attended the meeting at the Emma Goldman Finishing School where this particular language was first formulated for the FEC, I can affirm that this usage of "oppression" was directly inspired by an anarchist analysis of the many "isms" listed and implied in the FEC's fifth principle.

The disagreement over terminology highlights an interesting and problematic rift between those focused on traditional civil rights issues and those with the broader goal of social revolution. Certainly, there is no disagreement that all people should be treated equally, but enormous differences separate those who wish to equalize people within the present framework of society and those who believe that no such thing is possible (because they believe the framework to be inherently, well, oppressive).

In a variety of ways, the argument between the two formulations of the fifth principle captures the long-standing fracture of the left between progressives and radicals. This fracture runs through the FEC communities themselves as well, both within each community and from one community to another. These differences inform the degree to which members consider their communities to be points of resistance against the dominant society, or sanctuaries of escape and refuge. To the extent that we seek refuge, our aim is to create a bubble in which racism and all the other "isms" simply never appear. We seek to create a small and equal society among ourselves, wherein we never discriminate on spurious grounds.

But if we aim to resolve the "isms" of society at large, even if we succeed in making a wonderful bubble within our own community, we must step outside that bubble and unravel the causes that continue to create those "isms" everywhere else. My own vision of the FEC, shared by some but not all those who represent it as delegates, is that the FEC represents the outward-looking face of its member communities. This outward orientation includes

networking among like-minded communities, to be sure, but more importantly involves the projection of our idealistic values onto the larger world.

When the day is done, of course, the semantics of the FEC's bylaws won't make much difference. But the dialogue that these semantics inspire affords a great opportunity for us to delve more deeply into our differences and to explore how to fashion a peaceful and thriving society even as we disagree.

Parke Burgess lives at the Emma Goldman Finishing School in Seattle (www.efgs.org), and is Secretary of the FEC.

This is the fifth of seven principles guiding the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC), a network of communal groups in North America valuing nonviolence, egalitarianism, and participatory decision-making. FEC communities include East Wind, Sandhill Farm, Twin Oaks, Skyhouse, Acorn, and the Emma Goldman Finishing School. For a complete list of FEC principles, see the FEC's website: www.thefec.org

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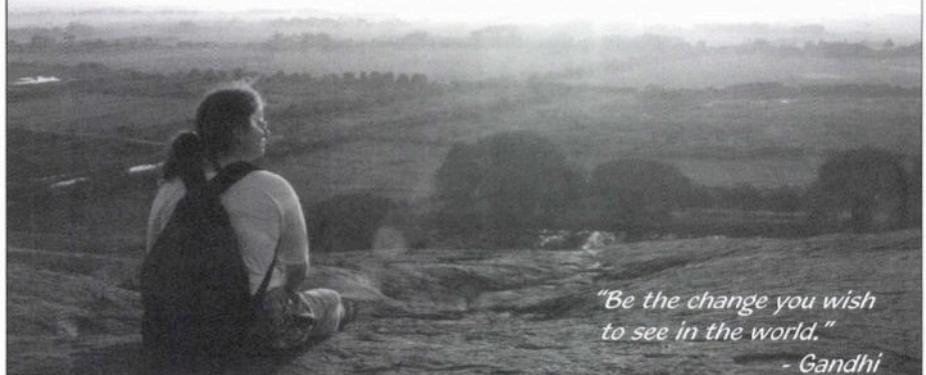
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“To address and dismantle oppression of all kinds . . .”

My ongoing discussion of the seven principles of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) continues in this installment with Principle #5. As it happens, this principle has been the source of some reflection and debate over the past couple of years. For decades it has read as follows: “The FEC works to establish the equality of all people and does not permit discrimination on the basis of race, class, creed, ethnic origin, age, sex, or sexual orientation.” Indeed, this is still the formal language found in our Constitution.

A year ago, the delegates revisited this language and adopted a different formulation which has since appeared on our website (www.thefec.org): “The FEC works to address and dismantle oppression of all kinds, including oppression based on race, class, creed, ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.” This new language was adopted in response to the concern that the earlier language was too passive (and not quite up to date). It was thought that the language of nondiscrimination, while it’s been a stalwart contributor to the advance of civil



BY PARKE BURGESS

rights in the past, has proven tepid in the face of the pervasive implied racism that we still find flourishing throughout the dominant culture. Also, we reasoned that the usual “isms” were but the tip of a much larger iceberg, and we wanted to be explicit about our intent to address them all. And further, we wanted to do more than address these various forms of oppression: we wanted to pledge ourselves to dismantle them actively in whatever ways we could.

But last fall, when we sought ratification of this among a variety of other changes to the FEC bylaws, we encountered some resistance to the new language. Especially in the context of the bylaws themselves—the legal document that binds the FEC to certain agreements—some were concerned about the absence of the traditional legal terminology of non-discrimination. We heard the concern that the new language implicitly allowed discrimination since it was no longer explicitly prohibited. A great deal of law has been devoted to clarifying the definitions and legal principles surrounding nondiscrimination ever since the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted in 1868, and especially since *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954. The worry has definite merit: the last thing the delegates would want is to create a loophole for greater oppression in the form of discrimination.

The term “non-discrimination,” while a stalwart contributor to the advance of civil rights in the past, has proven tepid in the face of pervasive implied racism.

rights in the past, has proven tepid in the face of the pervasive implied racism that we still find flourishing throughout the dominant culture. Also, we reasoned that the usual “isms” were but the tip of a much larger iceberg, and we wanted to be explicit about our intent to

A second objection to the new language arose over the word “oppression.” Some have argued that the word is too broad and overused to have any real meaning. At the root of this objection, I think, is the word’s strong

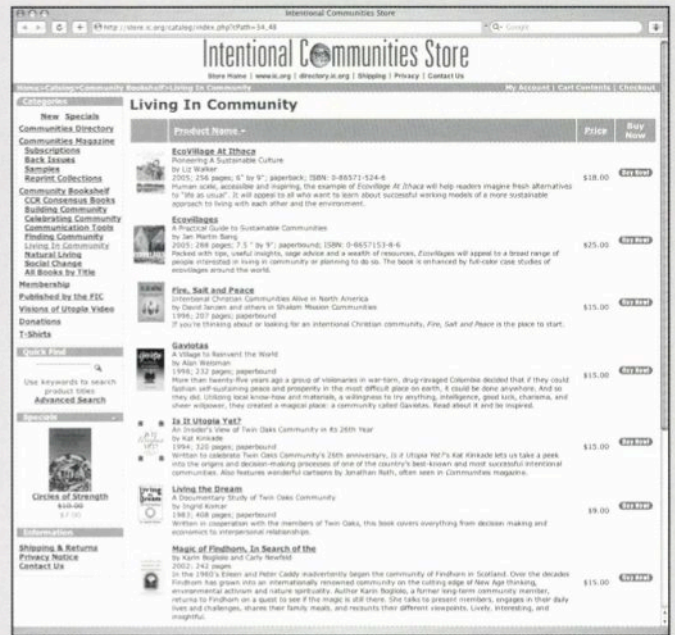
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