WHEN SOMEONE BLOCKS CONSENSUS TOO FREQUENTLY

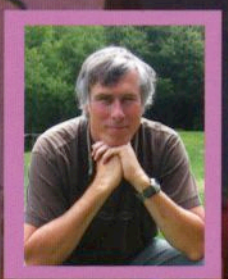
COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

IS BEAUTY IMPORTANT?

Does It Really Matter What It Looks Like?
How Beauty Creates Community Well Being

The "Ten Most Beautiful" Communities In the World



Chuck Durrett ON Beauty In Community

When Adobe Pueblo Meets Star Trek

Fall 2007 • Issue #136

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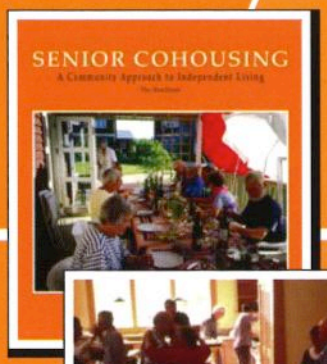
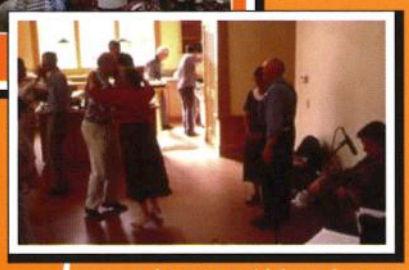




"At last, here is a guidebook to a new way of aging for older Americans ...

-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 helfpul 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 automony 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:

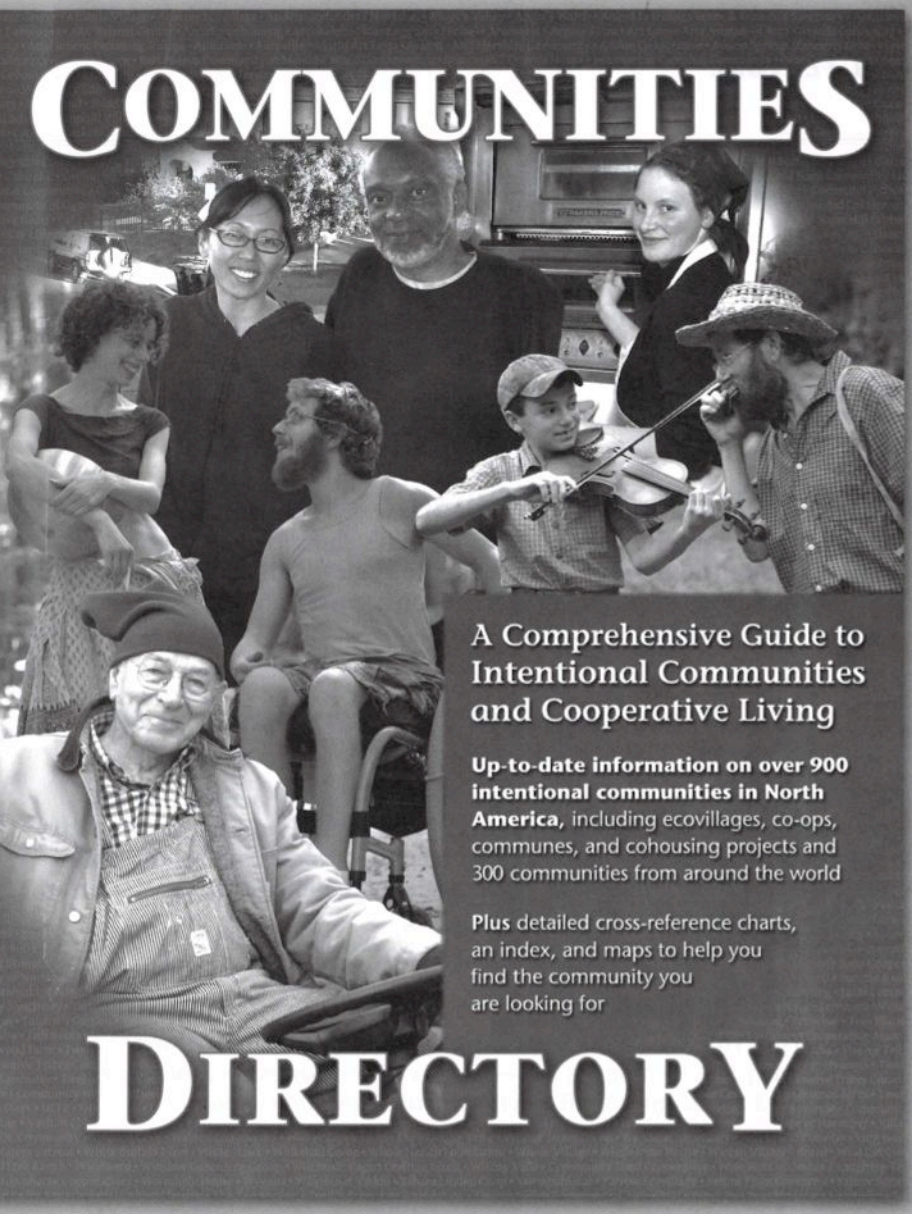
McCamant & Durrett Architects
1250 Addison Street #113
Berkeley, CA 94702.
ph. 510.549.9980

or

Online at
www.cohousingco.com

$34.55 (USA), $38.00 (Canada & Mexico), $40.95 (other locations in the world). Prices include shipping & handling.

NEW EDITION – UPDATED FOR 2007



COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Over 900 North American communities, plus 325 from around the world, provide contact information and describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future.

Includes articles on the basics of intentional communities and tips on finding the one that's right for you. You'll also find information on how to be a good community visitor.

MAPS

For the first time we've included maps showing locations of communities throughout the world. See at a glance what's happening in your area or plan your community-visiting adventure.

CROSS-REFERENCE CHARTS

These charts allow you to quickly scan for the communities that fulfill your criteria, including size, location, spiritual beliefs, food choices, decision making, and more.

All data is based on the Online Communities Directory at directory.ic.org (see below).

Scheduled for release summer 2007. Order it NOW online!

$28 Postpaid (book rate in US, call or visit store.ic.org for other shipping destinations and options)

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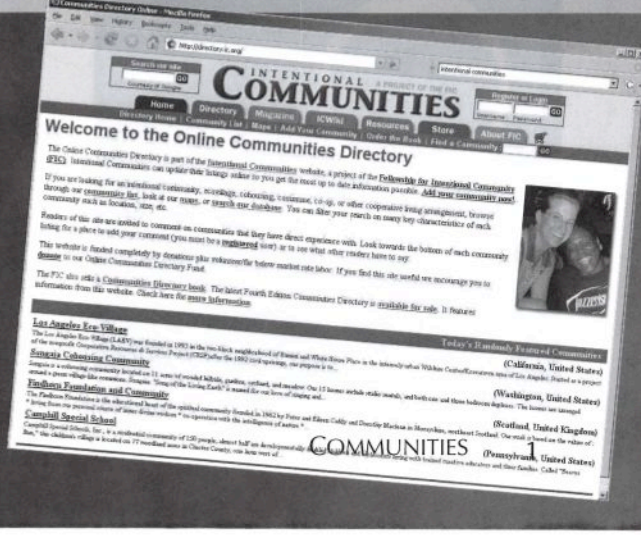
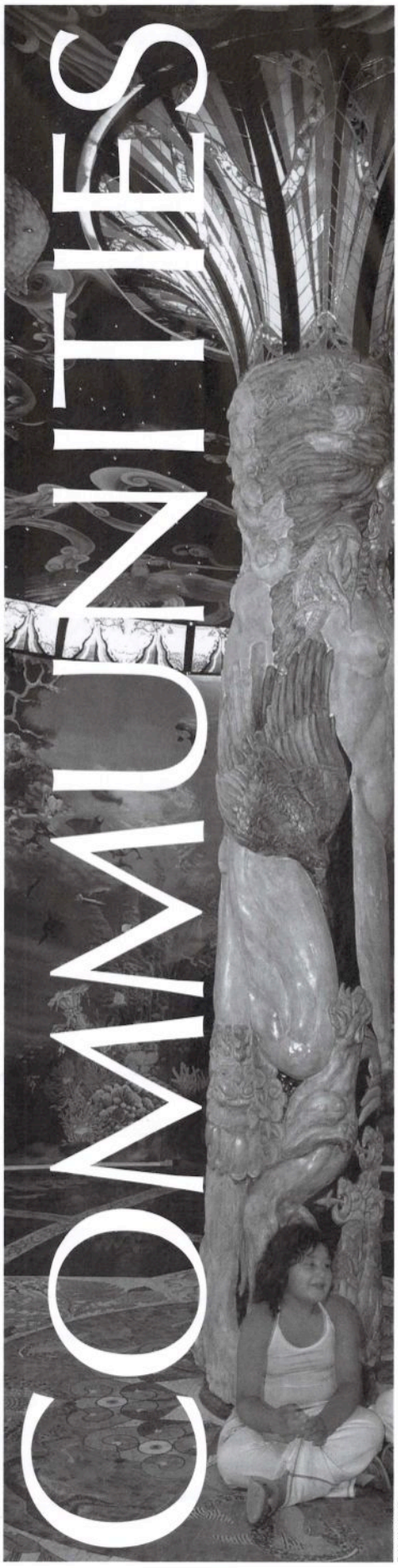
ONLINE COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Don't miss the latest community listing information, available at directory.ic.org. All the data in our book and more. Browse our alphabetical list or search on a variety of characteristics to find the community of your dreams.

Hey Communities! You can update your listing online at directory.ic.org. Our interface allows you to update all aspects of your community listing so seekers will get the most up-to-date information possible. Update your information today!





DAMANHUR

SPECIAL FEATURE

IS BEAUTY IMPORTANT?

ARTICLES

COMMUNITIES
Life in Cooperative Culture

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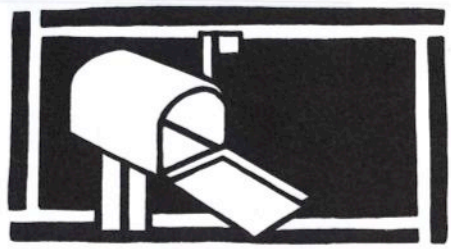
LETTERS



Communities Magazine wants your feedback. What do you love, what do you hate, what did you notice about our last issue, what do you think we should be covering more of? Please send us your thoughts and feelings: *communities@ic.org.*

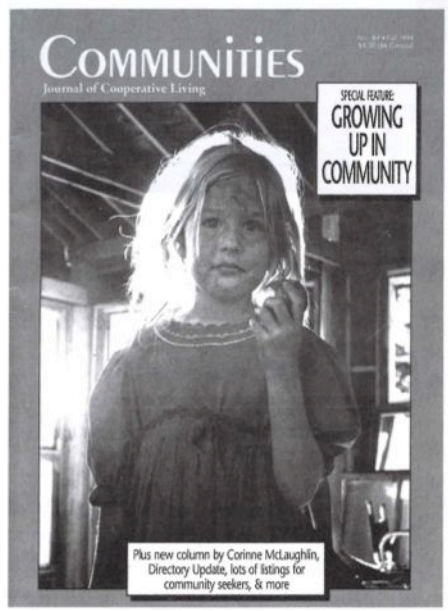
Front Cover Redux

Dear *Communities*,

I particularly liked the international flavor of the recent issue, featuring communities from Ireland, Italy, and Portugal. Each author was realistic about the struggles, dangers, and successes of each enterprise. I also liked particular articles—by Alyson Ewald ("Celebrating the Food Revolution"), Mitchell Johnson ("Stocking our Community Pantry"), Sara McCamant ("Eating Local") , Leila Dregger ("Gardening in the Alentejo"), and Stan Hildebrand ("Food, Glorious Food!"). Lots of good stuff to read, and over too soon!

I had to laugh at the front cover, as it is sooo similar to a controversial cover from 1994 (*see below*), which also featured a smudge-faced little blonde girl. I had interpreted that cover as a kid who had been having a lot of fun, but others claimed it encouraged the "dirty hippie parents who can't keep their kid clean" image. I hope this cover gets a more favorable response!

Harvey Baker
Dunmire Hollow
Waynesville, Tennessee

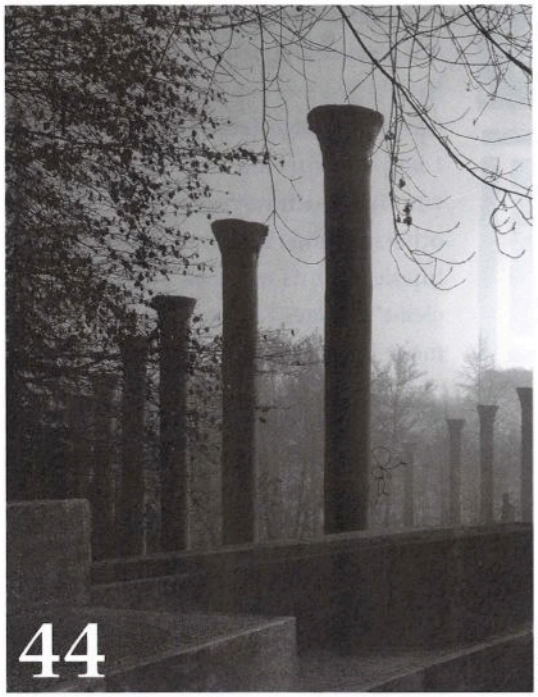


Why No Back Issues on Your Website?

Hello,

I've just read an issue of *Communities* for the first time, and I loved it! I am a new member of Stone Curves Cohousing in Tucson, Arizona. My question is, why isn't the magazine available on the website—back issues at least? I'd prefer to pay for a subscription that allows me to access articles online, as I don't like collecting more paper (recycled or not). It surprises me that a publication built around issues of sustainable living does not have an alternative to a print issue; is there something I'm missing here? Thank you.

Joyce Zymeck
Stone Curves Cohousing
Tucson, Arizona



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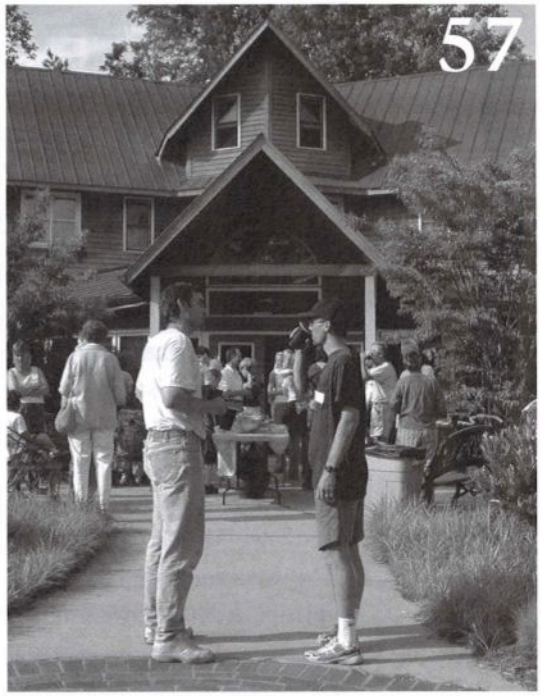


DAVID SWANSON

#136
Fall 2007

ARTICLES

VOICES

VOICES

CONNECTING

FRONT COVER

Cofounders Michael Black (the project's architect) and Alexandra Hart of Yulupa Cohousing in Santa Rosa, California.

Photo: Roland Jacopetti

Circulation Manager McCune Renwick -Porter and Web Master Tony Sirna reply:

Thank you for your suggestion. A revamped Communities *magazine website is in the works and we plan to offer a sampling of articles from current and back issues free to the public. However, our publisher, the nonprofit Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), functions primarily by donations, volunteerism, and a very limited (meaning "underpaid") part-time staff. Thus, "in the works" can sometimes take awhile (if anyone with web programming skills would like to help, let us know). We would also love to post the contents of the more than 100 back issues for which we have no digital format copy, but we would need someone to scan them, prepare them for the web, and work with our webmaster get them in place.*

As far as a paid web subscription to our complete magazine, that is a possibility but would take some extra work to prepare all of our articles for each issue and to limit access to subscribers. If there were high enough demand, this may be a worthwhile endeavor, but for now we have no timetable for such a service.

If any of our readers have these skills and would enjoy this project, please contact our webmaster at ficweb@ic.org. Thank you!

97-Year-Old Kibbutz Switching to "Graded Salaries"

Dear *Communities*:

Incredibly, a recent kibbutz event drew the attention of the international news media! (It even got into New Zealand's *Dominion Post*). Kibbutz Deganya Aleph—the "Mother of the Kibbutzim" and an income-sharing commune for all of its 97 years—decided by a vast majority to switch to having "graded salaries" for community members; that is, compensating members financially according to their productivity, while maintaining a generous social security network for its less productive members. Some of the media regarded the event like the breakup of the USSR, despite the fact that many other kibbutzim have made similar decisions in recent years to privatize. As I see it, in a nutshell, Deganya Aleph has gone over to a classic definition of socialism: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his *contribution*." Thus Deganya will be less communal than income-sharing communities which compensate members according to their needs, yet will remain far more communal than most intentional communities, in which members have independent incomes entirely.

Deganya's decision was taken from a strong economic position, as it's doing very well financially. Ironically, Deganya Aleph's close neighbour, Deganya Bet, which is somewhat worse off financially, has recently decided against such a change. This runs against the conventional view—mine too—that lack of economic success is a big factor encouraging privatization in kibbutzim.

Sol Etzioni
Secretary,
International Communes Desk
Kibbutz Tzora, Israel
solrene@tzora.co.il

Forming Shared Household in Texas

Dear *Communities*,

I'm forming shared housing from a home I own in Sherman, Texas. Do you think the town's 35,000+ population is too few people to draw from in our search for other single people for a shared household?

Alberto G.
Sherman, Texas

FIC Executive Secretary Laird Schaub replies:

A lot depends on how many you want in the house, how your rent compares with market rates, and how much you want to be in each other's lives. If you're just talking about sharing expenses, cleaning, and the occasional meal together, I think that's quite doable. If you're talking about developing a bonded group with common values and interwoven lives, that's a higher bar and I'd cast the net more widely than just the population of Sherman.

To the extent that you're wanting the house to become a community, the Fellowship can help you identify people living near you who have already indicated a serious interest in community living. Contact me for details about what we can do. laird@ic.org.❁

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.**

Advertising Policy

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

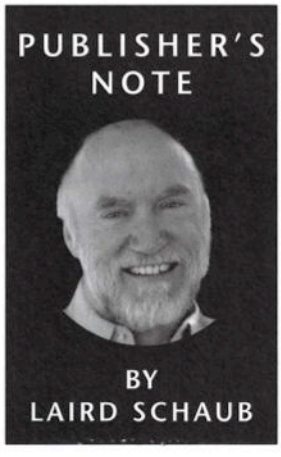
We hand-pick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to people interested in community living, cooperation, and sustainability. We hope you find this service useful, and we encourage your feedback.

Patricia Greene, Advertising Manager,* patricia@ic.org; *315-386-2609; POB 62, Canton, NY 13617.

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.

Tragedy's Hard Questions



For the bulk of its 32 years, Sandhill Farm, where I live, has supported itself principally through growing and processing organic food. Since 1977, our signature product has been sorghum, a regional specialty made by extracting the sweet juice of the sorghum plant—a northern cousin to sugar cane—and boiling it down to get a syrup as thick and sweet as honey.

Five years ago, during the fall sorghum harvest, a visiting member of another community —I'll call her Mary— lost several fingers when she caught her hand in the roller mill used to crush the cane. It was the worst accident in Sandhill's history.

Mary has her own story of this tragedy, and I am not attempting to tell it for her. She was permanently disabled by her injury and was by far the most profoundly affected by what happened. I am not in any way trying to compare our anguish with hers. That said, I am writing to share my personal reflections of the rich and awkward discoveries we made about ourselves while coping with the aftermath of tragedy—lessons that may not be learnable any other way. Other Sandhill members may tell the story differently; this is my version.

Just the weekend before the accident, we'd held a successful first-time sorghum festival and the mood was buoyant—the crop looked good, the weather was fine, and we had plenty of help —right up to the moment of the accident.

Our routine is to have a crew at the mill whenever we're squeezing cane. Minimum is two people, one of whom must be an experienced mill worker.

Laird Schaub is executive secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, where he lives.

Mill shifts last 90 minutes, and it is relatively common for people to work double shifts. The accident happened early into a second shift for Mary, who was working at the mill for the first time and thoroughly enjoying herself. Two others were on the shift with her, both of whom were mill experienced. Fatigue did not seem to be a factor. However, Mary had been observed by one of her co-workers (whom I'll call Chris) to be allowing her hands to get dangerously close to the rollers while feeding cane, and the mill manager (a community intern whom I'll call Terry) spoke to her about it.

What Is Acceptable Risk?

Looking back, we could have saved Mary's fingers if we'd pulled her off the job once Chris raised a concern about her ability to operate safely around the mill. Where does one draw the line about reasonable prudence? Should we have made it clearer that the supervisor has the authority to bounce people from a shift if they are acting unsafely? As it happened, Terry was an intern. While fully competent as mill manager, there was a power issue imbedded in this arrangement that we never anticipated and which may have been a factor: interns do not have the same standing as members and it would be that much harder for Terry to have the gumption to pull someone off a shift against their wishes. This may have been a case where our strong commitment to diffusing power as an egalitarian community inadvertently—and tragically—worked against our equally strong commitment to safety.

What is acceptable risk, and how much can the community protect people from danger? (Should we be making sorghum at all if it relies on equipment capable of inflicting such damage? After all, we've made the choice to drive cars; are they any less dangerous?) Suddenly, these questions were no longer abstract. They came down literally to flesh and blood.

Sensitized to the potential for a hand accident, Chris—the other member of the crew and someone deeply familiar with heavy machinery—was johnny-on-the-spot. No one was looking Mary's way at the moment when her hand caught, but Chris jumped to action with the first scream (Terry was on a tractor moving wagons and couldn't get there as quickly). There is a kill switch located by the feeding station that allows operators to shut off the tractor that drives the rollers. In her panic, it didn't occur to Mary to reach for the switch; Chris did it for her and then pulled the drive belt off the pulley while it was slowing down (this in itself was a dangerous act, yet every partial turn of the roller meant that much greater injury to Mary's hand). As awful as the accident was, the damage would have been worse—perhaps *much* worse—if Chris had not acted as quickly.

Where does one draw the line about reasonable prudence?

As it was, the damage was still severe. At least some of every finger on her right hand was crushed (only the thumb escaped permanent damage) and the skin was torn off the back of her hand. Because the flesh was crushed instead of ripped, blood loss was minimal and Mary did not go into shock. While the pain was excruciating, she was able to walk to the car in which we drove her to the hospital.

For the 20 of us remaining on the farm, we were horror-struck. It all hap-

pened so fast. And no one knew the whole sequence of events.

After a subdued dinner, we called a circle, where people could talk about whatever came up for them in relation to the accident. There was no agenda; we simply shared our stories and feelings. It was a chance for solidarity at a time of grief; it was an attempt to cope together.

What Are Appropriate Ways to Grieve?

At the end of the sharing, there was a brief discussion about organizing work for the next day, to continue the harvest. Without knowing it, we had started to uncover major differences in what we each considered an appropriate response to tragedy. For some, it was getting back on the horse and continuing the work. For others, it was suspending all routine activities to reflect deeply. Some needed to talk; others needed to be alone. Some were outraged that we even spoke about the next day's work at all, as if it somehow cheapened the shock and grief we had expressed earlier.

Because we were not smart enough to anticipate and discuss this likely range of responses in our members, rifts developed between people who made different choices about how to grieve. Some of those continuing the harvest felt abandoned by those stepping away from the work; those taking a break from sorghum felt that the worker bees were being callous to suffering. Though obvious in hindsight, it took us a while to figure out how differently people grieve and how important it is to create acceptance for varied styles. Our error was not making space early enough for an examination of these differences and the tendency to feel misunderstood—even threatened—when others make a different choice about such a highly personal and tender matter. It took us several days and some frayed moments to sort this out.

Should We Use the Juice?

The accident happened toward the end of the day and we had a settling pan full of juice (the routine is to start squeezing the day before we boil, or "cook," as impurities drop out when the juice rests between squeezing and cooking—at the same time, the juice is perishable and must be cooked within so many hours of being squeezed, or it will sour and be ruined). We had a typical amount ready for the next day's cook: in the neighborhood of 100 gallons, which would yield about $400 worth of finished product. The question was raised: should we make sorghum from the juice milled the day of the accident or discard it?

This was not a matter of using physically contaminated juice (that was not the case). It was rather a spiritual question about the energy of the juice associated with tragedy. Some questioned how that could be health promoting. Going the other way, people argued that it was honoring Mary's contribution to complete what she had started. And besides, it represented a lot of money. This question resolved when the others from Mary's community declared a preference for taking home sorghum that had been made from the cane Mary worked with. She had been enjoying the harvest and this seemed most respectful to them.

Without input from Mary's fellow members, I don't think this would have resolved as easily. My community is open to energetic consideration, yet we have no precedent or code to guide us to the "right" interpretation. We just have each other, and our limited ability to hear and hold each other's spiritual responses. Delicate territory.

Who Should Pay?

Mary's hand required serious medical attention to close the wound and give her as much residual use of her right hand as possible. It was a complicated injury. Should Sandhill offer to pay any or all of the medical costs that Mary and her community were incurring? Some of our members felt we should. Regardless of fault, Mary was working on our behalf when the accident occurred and it was the right thing to do. Others were appalled, fearing that this would be tantamount to an admission of guilt and set us up for lawsuits. This consideration carried us into deep mud rather quickly.

Some were responding from a nurturing and wanting-to-help-someone-in-need place; others responded from a community-protective place, worried for our economic stability. Neither concern was misplaced, yet it was hard for those looking through one lens to feel their views were being seen and appreciated by those seeing it the other way.

We were horror-struck. It all happened so fast.

And it was worse than that. While it took a while to surface, there was anger directed toward Mary: if she had been more careful we could have avoided the uneasy passage through this gauntlet of anguish and confusing feelings. Intermingled with this anger were feelings of guilt—how could it be right to be angry with someone who had suffered so much? (And who promised us a free pass from life's tough questions, anyway?)

Regardless of legal exposure, it seemed appropriate to review safety procedures at the mill. We were all agreed we wanted this never to happen again; what could we reasonably do to prevent it? We now have an additional guard at the mill, warning operators to not let their hands get any closer to

the rollers than a bar about 12 inches away. Should we ban people from working at the mill if they are ever observed being unsafe? (One strike and you're out?) Should we let visitors feed cane into the mill at all?

Should We Invite a Lawsuit?

A few weeks after the accident, it occurred to us to examine our product liability insurance policy to see if it had any application in this matter. To our amazement, it did. We had gotten the policy in the late '80s at the insistence of wholesalers who demanded we carry protection against the possibility of someone finding a piece of glass in a jar of sorghum. The company who wrote the insurance insisted that product liability be packaged under the umbrella of a general liability policy, and so it was that, without intending it, we had a policy in force that covered visitors injured while helping with our harvest. There were just two stipulations: the injured party needed to be a volunteer (Mary was) and Sandhill needed to have been negligent. Now we were in an interesting pickle. How did we feel about inviting a lawsuit, for the purpose of allowing Mary and her community access to the insurance company's funds to be reimbursed for medical costs?

Not having lawyers among our membership, we had no clear understanding of how the law defines negligence. We gave Mary a standard orientation to working safely at the mill before she started her first shift, and we've noted that we had warned her about being more careful in how she was feeding cane. But was that enough? Obviously it wasn't enough to save her hand; but had we been negligent? We weren't sure.

Given that Sandhill has not been asked to pay for Mary's medical expenses, and that a substantial claim might lead to higher premiums in the future, or even the possibility of losing access to insurance altogether, there were strong economic arguments for discouraging a claim. And given our naiveté about what constitutes legal negligence, it was possible that the claim would be denied and we'd lose our insurance anyway!

While we mulled this over, some members expressed distaste for seeking money from the insurance company even if it were clear that the claim would be honored and we'd be able to retain our product liability policy at acceptable premiums. Their concern was that we'd simply be contributing to the litigious and adversarial nature of the mainstream culture—a thing we were trying explicitly to be an alternative to.

Rifts developed between people who made different choices about how to grieve.

After taking all this in, we decided to share our information, including the potential application of our insurance policy, with Mary's community. Regardless of the final outcome, we treasured our relationship with them and believed firmly that trust and good will are built on shared information. That part, at least, was straightforward.

Lessons from the Storm

Looking back, the overriding lesson, to my thinking, is to make plenty of room to explore the emotional/spiritual minefield that groups are compelled to traverse once tragedy or a terrible accident strikes. Take time for the full breadth of responses and to carefully

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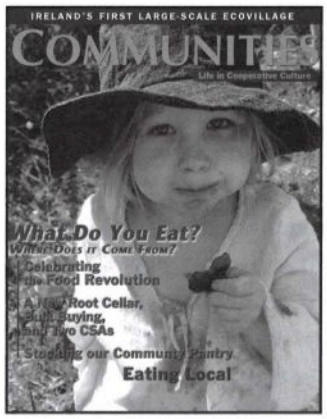

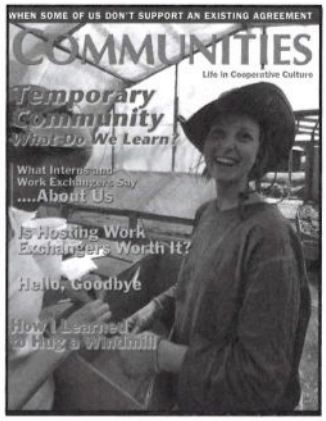

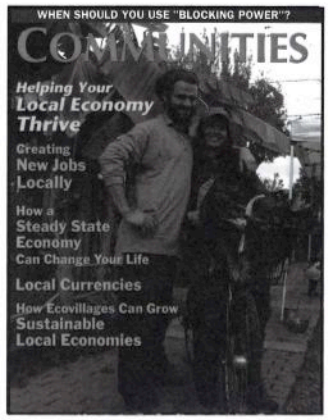

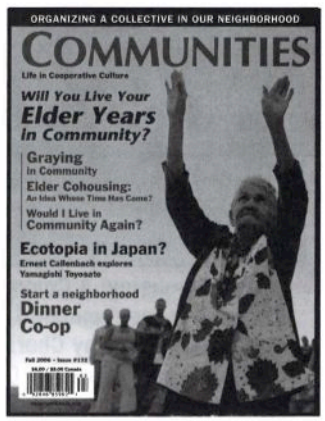

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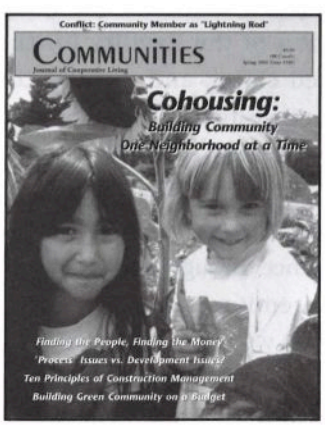

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negotiate what actions to support in light of the differences. While not easy, it can be done—and the price of doing this poorly can be exorbitant.

In the United States, medical costs have been spiraling out of control for a long time. This relates directly to high insurance rates. We live in a culture that is quick to sue, and the sinkhole of distrust gets ever deeper. I am proud that my community chose to share information with Mary's community, trying to seek a cooperative solution to covering the health care costs of the accident. I am even more impressed that Mary's community assumed primary responsibility for covering the costs without looking first to a lawsuit for help. Cooperative theory is one thing, but this is where the rubber meets the road. Cooperation among communities in times of tragedy contradicts the vicious escalation of health care costs and helps make life affordable by obviating the need for legal defense funds.

Finally, there is another, humbler lesson. A number of Sandhill members visited Mary in the months immediately following the accident, both to express concern and to learn directly how she was doing. In all, nothing has helped my community cope with the complications and heal from the trauma of the accident more profoundly than Mary's good will and positive attitude, along with the notable ongoing support of her community. Mary did not blame Sandhill for the accident and for that the credit goes wholly to her. We were lucky that she is a plucky woman who dedicated herself to putting the best face she could on a profoundly bad turn of events. We were blessed by the balm of her grace in the face of tragedy, and it made our rocky road less stony.

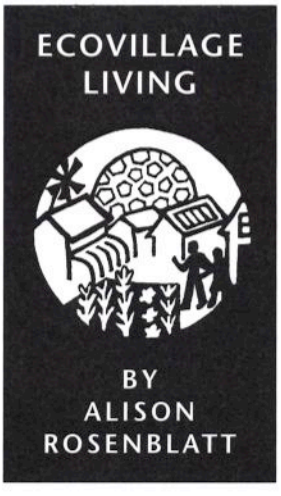
Postscript: This article was written more than five years ago, just months after the accident. At the time, I couldn't get approval from my community to publicly share our struggles while the trauma was still so fresh and uncertainties remained about an insurance claim. Ultimately a claim was filed and Mary received a settlement of $850,000. This did not, of course, replace her fingers, yet reconstructive surgery repaired the skin on her damaged hand and she has use of her thumb and an opposable first joint on her pointer finger.

Through a quirk in contemporary insurance law, no company was willing to offer us affordable rates while the claim was pending, and that left us in limbo for a couple of years. (Apparently any company offering us insurance would be automatically buying into a portion of the liability for the unresolved claim, and our old company was no longer interested in writing policies for product liability.) However, the case finally settled out of court and we've now secured liability insurance through a new carrier. Though the premiums are now substantially higher, we can afford them.

Today, as part of the orientation we give all folks working at the sorghum mill, we make sure to tell the story of Mary's tragedy—in the hope that everyone will fully digest what we learned the hard way.❁

How could it be right to be angry with someone who had suffered so much?

Crossing Generational Bridges at the Brazil ENA Meeting



My assumption was right; I was the youngest person at the Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA) meeting in Brazil, if you don't count Tobias, Silvia and Gustavo's 4-year-old (they're from Gaia Ecovillage in Argentina), and Vanessa's still-breast-feeding baby (she's from an emerging ecovillage in the Brazilian rainforest). My fears, however, about my voice not being heard because of my youth were completely unwarranted. Participating in the first ENA meeting in 4 years was like being welcomed into a large, multigenerational, multicultural family—all 20 of us were appreciated and supported, regardless of our age, ethnicity, or gender.

I was selected to attend the ENA meeting to represent NextGEN, the Next Generation of the Global Ecovillage Network, a program of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), whose relationship with ENA had not yet been formalized. I was sent to the meeting—at Permaculture in the Atlantic Jungle (IPEMA), a remote permaculture ecovillage in a rainforest preserve about four hours out of Sao Paulo—to figure out how NextGEN could work more closely with ENA and gain support from long-time ecovillage movement activists. But, would ENA want to work with us? To us NextGEN members, GEN was comprised of elders who had their act together and their

Alison Rosenblatt currently lives at Lost Valley Educational Center where she is an intern for NextGEN, the Next Generation of the Global Ecovillage Network. She represents NextGEN on the GEN board and is co-secretary of the Ecovillage Network of the Americas. She is also an associate of Gaia University. alirosenblatt@gmail.com. Lois Arkin of Los Angeles Eco-Village (and the Western US ENA Council Representative) also contributed to this article. crsp@igc.org.

hands full. Would they have the time or the interest to work with a group of relatively inexperienced youth who were trying to increase their presence in the ecovillage movement?

Now, time was something no one at the meeting really seemed to have. But, really, how many people living in community actually have spare time? And when you add the need for volunteering countless hours to increase the communication channels among ecovillages in one's region, time becomes an even more limited resource. However, we realized at the Brazil meeting that having the elders in ENA connect with youth would not impinge on the time they devote to their regional networks, but rather would give them more time. Youth can learn by working in the regional networks, helping both parties!

I also realized that ENA was not solely composed of "elders." Over dinner the first night, Lois Arkin (of L.A. EcoVillage) and I noted that, at ages 22 and 70, we were the youngest and oldest representatives present. We decided to figure out the age distribution of the meeting. Lois was convinced that the distribution was pretty balanced between people in their 20s to 50s, while I felt that most of the people were a lot older than me. I was wrong: the range was a bit top-heavy, but overall it was pretty equally distributed.

Not that age mattered. Everyone's ideas were listened to equally; those of the youth, those of the elders, and those of the observers. They even selected me, the youngest person there, to be secretary! Co-secretary that is. While they are inclusive of youth, they definitely realize the wisdom that age and experience bring. The key is intergenerational dialogue: combining the energy and enthusiasm of young people in the ecovillage movement with the knowledge and experience of its elders.

In fact, two of the younger people present organized the whole meeting. Vanessa Marinho, one of the Brazilian representatives to the ENA meeting and who did most of its planning, is only 27 years old. At 17, she joined La Caravana, a mobile ecovillage that travels throughout Latin America educating people on ecovillages, permaculture, consensus and other topics through art and interactive theater performances. Since then she has gone on to start a family and co-found an Amazonian ecovillage that is home to tree-climbing and permaculture design courses.

The other ENA meeting planner from Brazil, Marcelo Bueno, attended the 1999 ENA meeting when he was 23. In the 8 years since then he not only married and has a beautiful 3-month-old child, but he also provided the founding visionary energy for and now directs IPEMA, the forming ecovillage that hosted our ENA meeting.

My fears about my voice not being heard because of my youth were completely unwarranted.

The elders brought much to the meeting as well. I use the term "elder" loosely, because while they are older, wiser, and more experienced than I, they definitely seemed young at heart. I think it was Jeff Clearwater, an ENA representative from the US, who described Lois as "70 going on 16" and me as "22 going on 40."

While everyone paid attention to Jeff as he explained his elaborately

designed mandala of a proposed organizational structure—and I definitely thought we needed organizational structure!—everyone laughed at me for taking it so seriously. Few participants saw the need to spend so much time figuring out how we might function as an organization. Many preferred to simply share experiences, learn from each other, and figure out how to work together without benefit of guiding organizational diagrams.

And we all did a good deal of sharing, learning, and working together, including a packed schedule of outdoor videos each evening on ecovillages in Cuba, Argentina, Los Angeles, and Amazonia, and of course La Caravana, along with my own rather North-heavy power point presentation on the NextGEN organization. Plus GEN cofounder Albert Bates's phenomenal slide show which sets the stage for his new book, *The Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook: Recipes for Changing Times (see www.thegreatchange.com)*. And, an extended evening of sweating, chanting, and drumming in a spontaneously created sweat lodge under a full moon and the guidance of several indigenous teachers and La Caravana cofounder Alberto Ruz, originally from Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage in Mexico. (La Caravana, after 10 years of traveling throughout Latin America, is now under contract with the Ministry of Culture in Brazil.)

Our last evening together found some of us around a dining table ecstatically smelling the many homemade oils and scents the Argentineans brought to sell and trade from their forest ecovillage. Others were gathered around Pablo, a La Caravana member from Spain, who was busily transferring videos and power point presentations to CDs for each of us to take home to spread the wonders of our (yes, it was beginning to be mine, as well) amazing Network. There was last-minute consulting between Jeff (renewable energy guru to the communities movement) and Marcelo Bueno, our host, on the new hydro-electric system IPEMA was planning. A dozen more of us would be leaving with a radically new understanding of how to figure out our energy needs in our home ecovillages, thanks to Jeff's mid-week workshop. Recipes were being exchanged and forest products were being reviewed for potential sale in other ecovillages. Books and publications were given away or exchanged (including several issues of *Communities* magazine with a commitment to send dozens more from Lois's archives).

Yes, there was still that left-brained organizational work we managed to wade through during our week together, many of us being monolingual and going slowly through translations in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, thanks to the nonstop facilitation of translator Orlando Balbas, with the occasional stoppage as translators searched for the appropriate words. Bylaws and finances were reviewed along with that all-important communication tool: email etiquette. Election of officers proceeded along with a very lively presentation by Liora Adler on the progress of Gaia Univer-

The question was still there for me about when to create structure in an organization.

sity (gaiauniversity.org). Linda Joseph, one of ENA's founders and long-time secretary/archivist for ENA and our current representative to the Global Ecovillage Network, brought us up to date on GEN's activities and its special consultative status with the United Nations, giving ENA potential for significant influence within that worldwide body. ENA Committees were revitalized (Process, Outreach/Inreach, Information Services, and Fundraising) and new volunteers recruited from the observers present, while the Council representatives present committed to doing more outreach and recruitment in their home regions.

But the question was still there for me about when to create structure in an organization. Do you build the container first and then work on creating pieces to fill it with? Or build up a diverse range of pieces and construct a container around them? Or perhaps this was just a question that a person from the North would ask. Maybe it's not an either/or issue, as difficult as it might be for me to have a lot of pieces without a container to hold them. And what's the point of having a container if it doesn't contain much yet? But both processes do happen, and ENA people in their home organizations and communities do manage.

The key idea for me is finding the balance. The balance between a structure and the pieces it holds, between giving youth a voice and recognizing the wisdom that elders hold, and between the different cultural lenses of the global North and South.

I think the twenty of us did find a balance at the meeting. The endless round of departing hugs seemed to bear that out. And, after all, ENA has had twelve years of experience working multiculturally and intergenerationally: as I see it, an organizational adolescent, hopefully coming of age with NextGEN to help.❁

ABOUT ENA

The mission of ENA (Ecovillage Network of the Americas), which serves as the Western Hemisphere representative to GEN (Global Ecovillage Network), is "to engage the peoples of the Americas in common effort to join the global transformation towards an ecologically, economically, and culturally sustainable future."

There are nine member regions of ENA, including Brazil, Southern South American, Northern South America, the Caribbean, Mexico and Mesoamerica, the Eastern US, the Western US, Canada, and Mobile Ecovillages. Individuals, ecovillages, forming ecovillages, other intentional communities and organizations can become "members" of their regions. Each region sends two representatives to the ENA Council which meets in the different regions every few years.

ena.ecovillage.org

—A.R.

Innovative Solutions

When our cohousing core group moved into Swan's Market Cohousing in Oakland in 2000,we were excited about being pioneers in urban sustainable living. We were reviving and preserving an abandoned historical market building, practicing urban infill, and revitalizing Old Oakland, a historic pedestrian-access downtown neighborhood. By partnering with a local affordable-housing developer, our cohousing project was helping to create a mixed-use, mixed-income project, incorporating retail, restaurant, office, public space, and even a children's art museum. Energy efficiency was a high priority during our development phase, and it turned out to be an ongoing priority as well, resulting in lasting impacts and showing up in many aspects of how we adapted the site and our building to better serve us ... and the environment.

At one point in the project our builder suggested that, to reduce costs, we use inexpensive electric baseboard heaters instead of the shared hydronic hot water system we had chosen for its quality and efficiency. Stick with hydronic, we said, even though it would add more than $10,000 per unit to each household's purchase price. Although more than one member-household dropped out during this phase, for reasons that included increased prices, we felt we had made the right deci-

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Raines Cohen served on the board of the Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US) for six years and currently serves on the board of Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine. He is a regional organizer for the Northern California Cohousing organization and a Certified Facilitator of Senior Cohousing. He was a cofounder of Swan's Market Cohousing in Oakland, California, where he lived for several years, and now lives in Berkeley Cohousing, in Berkeley, California with his wife Betsy Morris. Through their organization, Planning for Sustainable Communities, Raines and Betsy help people find, build, and grow cohousing neighborhoods, and help people gather resources for "aging in community" in senior cohousing projects.

sion. We had prioritized quality of life and efficiency, not just in terms of reducing our future operating costs, but also to minimize our resource consumption and take advantage of the economies of scale.

When one of our core group members found a new technology on the horizon that might one day allow us to meter our water, heat, and hot water consumption individually, we approved spending more on up-front plumbing costs to make it possible to install this technology easily once it became available. While this individual-metering technology has yet to reach the point where we want to try it, the group was able to go ahead with this kind of "future-proofing" because it felt the small added cost was worth the significant potential benefits.

After move-in, we wanted to put in a grid-inter-tied solar-electric system to power our Common House and our shared heat pumps and lights. This would not only reduce our energy bill but also our environmental impact.

New cohousing projects will face increasing pressure to design their buildings sustainably.

However, even with state and federal tax credits and rebates, installing this system would cost more than $4,000 per unit up front. Because we knew some of our members would have difficulty coming up with that kind of cash on top of their regular mortgage payments and Homeowner's Association dues, we rejected the idea of

assessing ourselves an additional $4,000-per-unit. Further, if we installed this system we would also have to pay more into our replacement-reserve fund (to save for the eventual replacement of this system, given the expected lifespan of some of its elements) which would increase our community dues.

One of our members kept pursuing this project with a passion, and other members had business savvy, financial acumen, and connections. This potent brew led to us finding a solution. First, we borrowed the money to install the system from a loan fund set up by a local solar installer. Investors in this fund were California residents with large incomes from passive sources, which would ordinarily be highly taxed, but by investing in this fund they got the maximum benefit of solar tax credits. So our group (working with our nonprofit developer and owner of the rest of our building, the East Bay Asian Local Development Company) bought the solar electric system on time, with monthly payments. And second, since it was a grid-inter-tied system, generating more than enough power for our needs, we sold the excess power back to our local power company, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), and used their payments to us to pay off the monthly payments on our loan. It was a win-win for the community, and the environment. Upfront cost to our group: *zero*. Reduction in electric rates: *immediate*.

While this example is by no means unique to the cohousing sector of the communities movement, I find myself frequently using it as an example to illustrate why I choose to live in an intentional neighborhood: because collective human intelligence, especially when amplified by good process skills, is a powerful force for good that can make us all smarter and more effective in the world.

In this time of Global Climate Crisis, it is well worth taking a fresh look at our role as cohousers and communitarians, not just in how we build for sustainability, but how we live and how we organize the communities around us, and how we can deepen our commitment, reduce our ongoing impacts, and lead the response.

Collective human intelligence, especially when amplified by good process skills, is a powerful force for good.

Early this year, I had the opportunity to participate in The Climate Project in Nashville, Tennessee, where former Vice President Al Gore trained 1,000 of us to give custom presentations of his film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, for different audiences and venues. We each committed to present the film in our regions at least ten times this year, to spread the message and build the movement. During this visit I also got to tour the Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm community in Summertown, Tennessee, and saw the creative community solutions developed for efficiency-by-necessity by living cheaply and simply, sometimes off the grid.

While I already had confidence in the recently confirmed science behind the theory of Global Climate Change, going through the talking points and seeing the existing and projected cli-

mate effects slide-by-slide with Al Gore and his climatologist colleague really brought home to me not just the enormity of what's facing us, but how well positioned cohousing residents are to lead the way, since many cohousing projects have already undertaken many of these recommended solutions and actions. I'm now facilitating discussions on climate-change issues around the country, and I would be delighted to introduce your group to a graduate of The Climate Project in your area, as he or she can present a version of the slideshow specifically for people who are founding or already living in a cohousing neighborhood or other kind of intentional community.

According to green-building architect Ed Mazria's organization, Architecture 2030, buildings contribute nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions, not only from the power generated and fuel burned to heat, cool, and light them, but also from the process of demolishing existing structures and the manufacture of new building materials. With these facts becoming increasingly well known, and with energy-efficient solutions like those we used at Swan's Market Cohousing, new cohousing projects will face increasing pressure to design their buildings sustainably, and use well-designed process, planning, and marketing strategies that incorporate the values of environmental sustainability.❁

The buildings we live in contribute nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions.

Curious George Steps Back

The Energizer Bunny Pauses to Recharge Batteries.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

BY LAIRD SCHAUB

This past June, FIC board member George Caneda stepped down from all his FIC duties to prioritize the recovery of his health. We'll miss him. In just two years of Fellowship involvement he'd made a major impact.

After checking us out at the spring 2005 organizational meeting in Ithaca NY (only a short trip from Ganas, his community on Staten Island), George jumped in with both feet. By the fall he'd joined both the Personnel and Finance Committees. As a member of Personnel, he crafted a rational basis for distributing staff bonuses (a problem we wish we had to face more often), and played a significant role in reviewing the management structure for *Communities* magazine, helping to draft job descriptions for the new Production Team roles and then assess candidates to fill those slots.

On Finance, he teamed with long-term FIC Treasurer Bill Becker to create an investment strategy for our nascent Directory Endowment Fund and was training to take over the key role of presenting the organization's financial overview at our semiannual organizational meetings (Tony Sirna has been filling this role for nearly a decade, and George was our brightest prospect for a competent replacement).

In spring 2006, he joined the board and became a member of the Oversight Committee, whose job it is to steer the ship between board meetings, keeping everything on an even keel. Always ready to roll up his sleeves when there was work to be done, he ably filled the vacancy we had last summer for a Newsletter Editor.

And yet, for all his accomplishments, I cherished George most for his contributions to FIC culture—for his curiosity and passion. He was never afraid to state what he thought, nor too proud to step back and rethink his position when someone disagreed. Instead of getting indignant or withdrawing, George

Laird Schaub is executive secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, where he lives.

would get curious. Why did someone have a different analysis? How did they get there, and did they have thinking that could enhance his own?

More than that, the room was always brighter when George was in it. Language was more colorful, laughter came more easily, and Heart had a more central place in our considerations. Infectiously, he inspired the rest of us to get more curious and more passionate as well.

Essentially, George is the kind of person you never have too many of.

George came out of retirement and played a major role in helping the community cope with the police, with the media, and with the recovery. It was a long year and George got viscerally reacquainted with why he had retired: it cost him considerable energy to operate again at that level and something had to give. Understandably, FIC was one of those somethings.

The good news is that the crisis at Ganas is now substantially behind them and George has again been able to step back from daily operations at home. By simultaneously letting go of other nonessential claims on his attention—including FIC—we're all hoping that George will fully recover his health and energy.

For all his accomplishments, I cherished George most for his curiosity and passion.

In some ways, it was an accident that George was available for FIC involvement at all. In spring 2005, he was retired from a successful career as a Wall Street analyst and had recently stepped back from day-to-day management roles at Ganas. There was an opening in his life for something new, and we came along at just the right time. Then, tragically, things changed again in spring 2006 when long-term Ganasian Jeff Gross was shot by a deranged ex-member and his community was thrown into chaos.

With luck, there'll come a day when his batteries will be fully recharged and he can consider rejoining the FIC circle. Certainly we'll save him a seat. Meanwhile, I raise a glass in George's direction and celebrate the two years we had together: here's to curiosity and passion!❁

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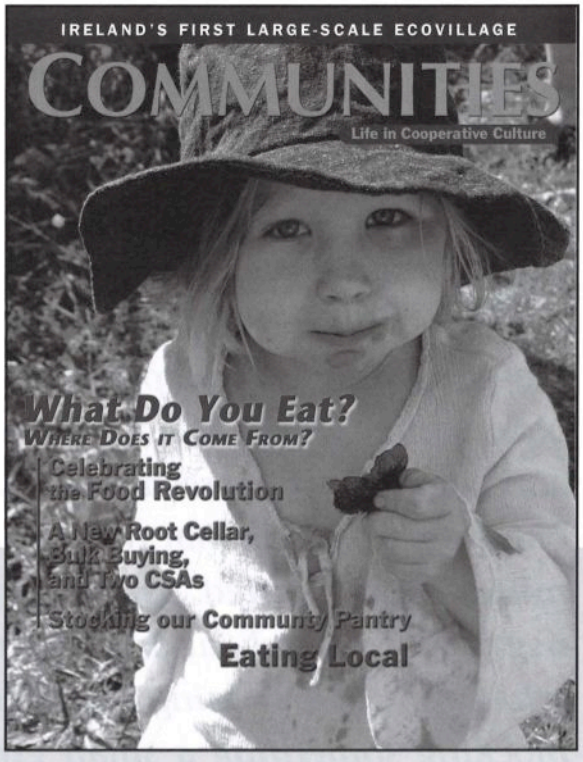

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When Someone BLOCKS

Q. *We have a long-time community member who seems to know a lot about the consensus process, yet in our opinion blocks decisions way too often. We're not talking about blocking seemingly inappropriate new people from becoming members, which seems like a different kind of issue and where blocking seems more appropriate, but blocking proposals that the whole group or committees have crafted. This person gives a lot of negative feedback and criticism for much of what others are doing and thinks nothing of blocking something a small group has worked hard on for months. In fact, in the 6 years we have each lived in this community, this person has blocked at least 3 to 6 times per year. Neither of us has ever blocked once in all our years living in 4 different communities (12 years and 6 years respectively), and we feel offended by this behavior. We were taught long ago that blocking is reserved for grave endangerment to the community and shouldn't be misused. If you think this person is out of line with this much blocking, can you please advise our community what to do about it? Is this something for which there should or could be some kind of consequence? Could a community impose, say, "probation" from process or some such other action? Thank you for your thoughts.*

Caroline Estes responds:

First of all, the person is obviously out of line and misunderstands blocking as it's used within the consensus model. It is important to remember that blocking comes from the Quaker process of "standing in the way of" a decision, and is very seldom used, and on only the most important decisions, from the person's perspective. Blocking is never used on small, incidental items. It must also be used for a substantial reason only; for example, pointing out that the group is violating or making a mistake in relationship to its basic reason for being together, its mission and purpose. I would suggest that the person misusing the blocking-decision process be "weighted on" by those whom he or she respects within the group. ("Weighted on" is a Quaker term meaning people who have wisdom and some standing in the group bringing their weight to bear on the person who's out of line.)

I'm now teaching about blocking differently than I did 30 years ago: now I recommend that the facilitator has the right to overrule a block if it is being incorrectly




FAR TOO FREQUENTLY

used. And the facilitator can be called on their ruling by the group as a whole, but not by the person's who's blocking.

If your community doesn't already have one, I suggest you create a process team: a small group of community members who learn more and help teach the community more about consensus and other communication and process skills. I assume your group has been trained in consensus, however given this person's misuse of blocking, you may want to ask an outside consensus teacher to come and teach the group consensus again. So, to recap, the person misusing the blocking first needs to be talked to by wiser, more aware community members, perhaps by a process team. If that doesn't work, the person and the whole group should receive a retraining in the consensus process, including, ideally, the provision that the facilitator can choose to overrule a block when it's misused. And if these measures don't work, as a last resort the blocking person needs to be asked to leave the community.

Blocking is never used on small, incidental items.

Caroline Estes is cofounder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon and Alpha Institute, which offers consensus training and facilitation services. An honored elder in the communities movement, Caroline has been teaching and facilitating consensus for more than 40 years, and has been a teacher to many intentional community-based facilitators in North America. She currently works with Hewlett-Packard, the University of Massachusetts, the US Green Party, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, and many other organizations. db@peak.net.

Laird Schaub responds:

There are a number of possible explanations for the behavior shown by "The Blocker." Keeping in mind that the actual situation may be a combination of factors, let's walk through the possibilities to see what fits:

I'd start by looking at how well the group's consensus process is spelled out. In particular, has the group made explicit the legitimate grounds for blocking and the process by which that will be examined? To the extent that this work hasn't been completed, it's not fair holding someone to a standard that has not been delineated.

If that's been handled, my next question is whether The Blocker is generally acting in line with the group's agreements about blocking. If the blocks are not violating your process, that suggests one of two possibilities: a) The Blocker is out of alignment with the rest of the group around common values; or b) the upset is more properly directed toward the group for consistently bringing half-digested proposals forward for approval, and The Blocker has become the target of the group's frustration with sloppy process.

You mentioned that committee work is consistently shot down by The Blocker's negativity. While it's hard to imagine

that consistent negativity can be good for any group, how clearly has the small group's mandate been established and has The Blocker been given a fair chance to offer guidance on what they should be doing before they begin their work? If not, I'd tighten up the way assignments are delegated, making certain all concerns about the subgroup's focus—including The Blocker's—are flushed out before work begins.

While The Blocker may have an abrasive style (which I'm not excusing), it's possible that his/her "squeaky wheel" is actually helping the group learn where it needs to apply grease.

All that said, if your process is clear and the agreements are being violated, have you made an effort to call The Blocker on her/his inappropriate behavior? If not, that is certainly the next step. If you have, and the behavior persists, what's The Blocker's story? Does this person agree that his/her behavior is out of line? If so, then I'd ask The Blocker what she/he thinks is the best way to proceed (in the face of consistent inappropriate behavior), even to the point of the group's specifying loss of privileges if it continues.

If The Blocker clearly understands your group's consensus process and has been called on inappropriate blocking, yet denies this behavior is out of agreement and persists, consider suspending some or all of his/her rights.

Finally, if a) you're satisfied that you've worked through all of the above, b) the inappropriate behavior persists, and c) The Blocker alone denies that his/her behavior is out of agreement, then you can consider the involuntary suspension of some or all of The Blocker's rights. In the extreme, this means expulsion. This is, of course, a grave step, and I caution you to be thoroughly satisfied that you've exhausted every other potential remedy before going there.

If it appears you're at this stage, I strongly suggest you get outside help, both for assessing whether there's any hope of stepping back from the brink, and for making the consideration of imposing probations or sanctions as safe and fair as possible. It is not uncommon in the dynamic you've described (where one group member is perceived to be determinedly out of line in their behavior) for both the "problem" member and the rest of the group to be collectively locked into the pattern in such a way that it takes an outside person to see and sell the possibility of solutions that don't involve punishments or vindication. These are dangerous waters and your group can significantly enhance the chances that you'll navigate them successfully by engaging a skilled pilot.

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.

Beatrice Briggs responds:

In consensus process, a block should only be used when a proposal violates the ethics, principles, or safety of the group. I was taught that one has a lifetime limit of 3-4 blocks. By this standard, blocking 3 to 6 times a year is excessive. Before considering "consequences" for the blocker, however, I would like to know why the community's facilitators, elders, or other process-savvy members like you have not spoken up before, What prevents you from challenging these presumably inappropriate blocks? Does your community have clear criteria for blocking and a procedure for handling blocks? If so, when was the last time you discussed them with the whole group? If not, convene a governance committee to draft a written proposal clarifying the norms of consensus decision-making and present it for discussion by the whole group. If possible, involve the "chronic blocker" in the development of the proposal. Try to educate this person. Use specific examples of their past blocks to illustrate why they were inappropriate. Work with your facilitators to make sure that they understand what to do when a block occurs and when and how to declare a block invalid. (See "Tense Moments in Facilitation: Declaring a Block Invalid" in the January 2003 issue

of the International Institute for Facilitation and Consensus's e-newsletter, Bonfire. [www.iifac.org/bonfire]) If the facilitator fails to respond appropriately, someone else—like you—should speak up, then and there, to question the decision-making process. In short, the solution to this problem lies not in punishing the offender so much as strengthening the community's capacity to use consensus process well.

Why haven't the community's facilitators, elders, or other process-savvy members spoken up before? What prevents you from challenging these presumably inappropriate blocks?

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

Tree Bressen responds:

While i can't say for sure without having witnessed the details, if the person blocks with that much frequency, it is highly likely that they are out of line. These days, the sequence of events i recommend for handling inappropriate blocks are:

(1) Nurture solid friendships in your group.

(2) Train all the group members in consensus.

(3) Clarify the group's common values to provide criteria for blocking that transcend mere personal preference.

(4) Establish a clear procedure for handling blocks.

(5) Work with the substance of the concern.

(6) If it seems that someone is blocking based on preference, personal values, or anything short of what you term "grave endangerment to the community," others in the group need to speak up.

(7) Invoke whatever procedures were agreed to in Step 4, above.

A longer, more nuanced description of these steps is posted on my website *(www.treegroup.info/topics/A11-inappropriate_blocks)*. Note that Steps 1 through 4 happen before a particular block ever arises. However, it sounds like this situation is hurting your community, and if you've missed those early steps, I'm not about to tell you to avoid further action until they are complete. Obviously Step 3 (clarifying common values) can take a while, and in the meantime it undermines group morale and cohesion to allow someone to continue blocking inappropriately.

The advantage to having general guidelines worked out is that you avoid accusations of personally targeting this objector. The more general clarity a group has, the less messy it is to deal with inappropriate behaviors. However, it's still going to be an uncomfortable challenge, and there is no policy or procedure that will remove the need for personal bravery when we live in community.

Before doing this type of confrontation, make sure that you first try really hard to listen to the objector's concern, reflect back their feelings, and search out the piece of the truth in their viewpoint (Step 5). If you've done that as best you can and still believe the objector is blocking inappropriately, then i recommend a combination of community procedure and personal action.

When we live in community there is no policy or procedure that will remove the need for personal bravery.

My favorite community procedure comes from N Street Cohousing in Davis, California, where anyone attempting to block an emerging consensus is required to sit down every two weeks for up to three months with people who wanted to pass the proposal in an effort to work out an acceptable alternative. Resident Kevin Wolf says, "If after the 6 meetings, consensus hasn't been reached, the community will vote with a 75 percent supermajority vote. In 18 years of having this process, we have yet to get past two blocked consensus meetings before consensus is reached. We have never voted."

As for the personal action piece, my impression is that in older-style hierarchical communities, when someone acted in a way that was damaging to the group, one or more elders would pull the person aside and talk it over with them, sending a clear message. In our newer, more egalitarian communities, we don't always have "elders," although we do sometimes farm out a piece of the eldership

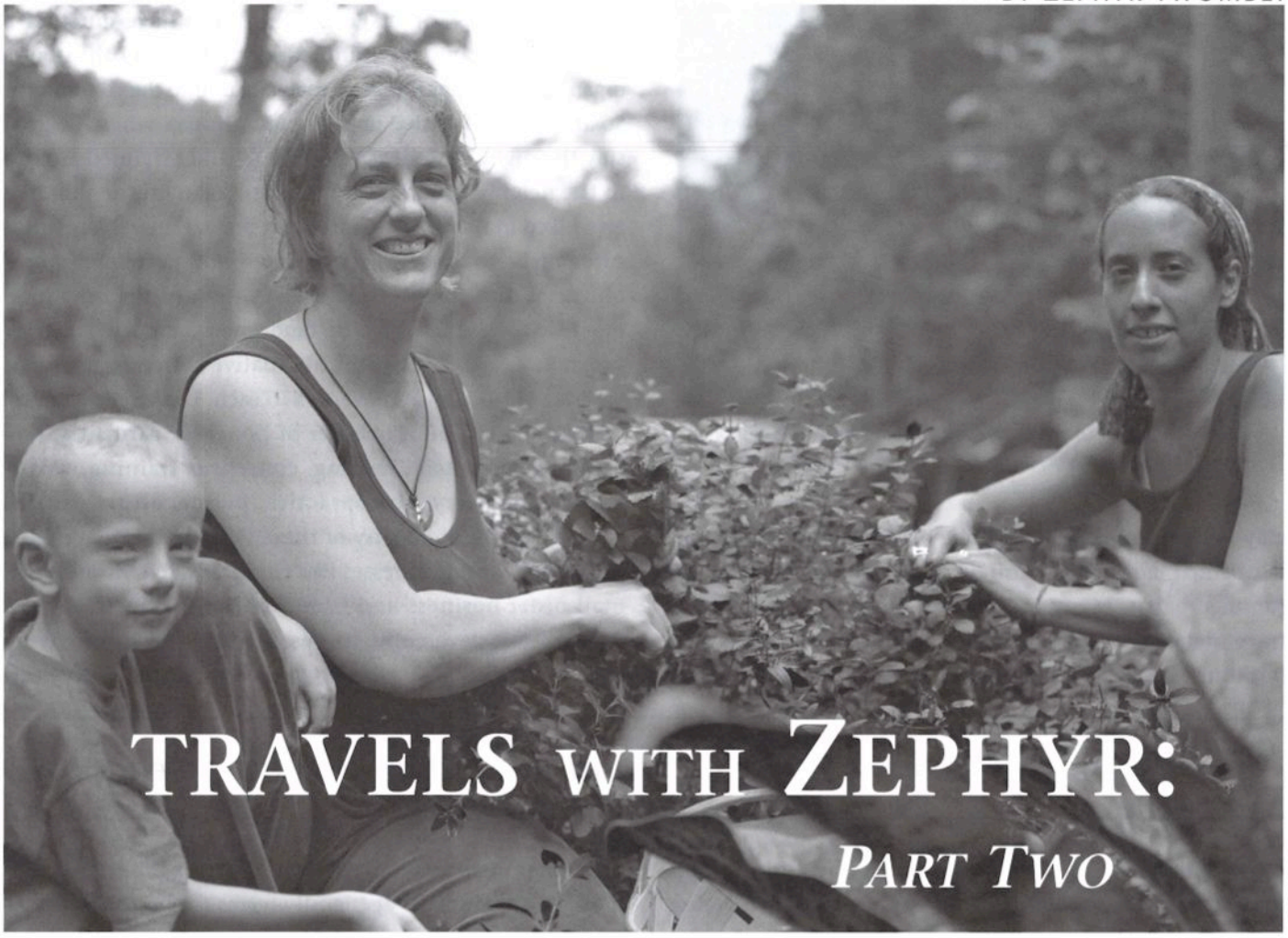
role to a committee such as a process team, conflict resolution, community well-being, or oversight team. But really it's up to all of us to take responsibility for the well-being of the group. Someone needs to have enough guts to call the overly frequent objector on their behavior, and when this happens—usually later than it should have—others in the community have got to back them up! Ideally a bunch of people will speak up, to avoid any one person taking the heat. Carefully avoid personal attacks; instead speak specifically about the behavior that concerns you.

Likely the objector or their allies will counter-attack or accuse you of scapegoating. When this happens, stay as centered as you can, don't be thrown off . . . and keep bringing the group's attention back to the inappropriateness of the block and the negative impacts it has. My experience has been that the more the feedback comes from moderate community members, generally well-liked, who aren't the ones that usually speak up the most, the more powerful the intervention is.❁

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant who works with intentional communities and other organizations on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. She is a founding member of Walnut St. Co-op in Eugene, Oregon, which celebrated its sixth anniversary in the fall of 2006. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers extensive free resources on consensus, facilitation, and more. (Tree uses lower-case "i" in her articles "as an expression of egalitarian values.)"

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

BY ZEPHYR TWOMBLY



TRAVELS WITH ZEPHYR: *PART TWO*

LUCAS FOGLIA

Zephyr learned that at Earthaven some members develop on-site businesses, including Red Moon Herbs, owned by Corinna Wood (left).

One Saturday morning last February, I found myself wending my way along the steep and narrow roads through the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. I followed a mountain road which led directly to "Another Way," the entrance road to Earthaven, a 12 year-old ecovillage of 40-some members and many work exchangers. After the other visitors and I gathered at the tiny Visitors' Kiosk and signed liability waivers, Earthavener Marjorie took us on an informative, three hour tour.

The highlight of the tour was the Hobbit House, a dwelling made almost entirely of natural materials, which we entered through a low round door.

The main focus of the tour was the many different styles of natural buildings and the community's off-grid power. While almost every building is powered by photovoltaic systems, I was especially interested in their streamside micro-hydro system, in which water pressure turns 2 small turbines. Costing $18,000, this system powers the Council Hall, the Trading Post (their small retail store), and the White Owl Lodge (their village social center). Even though they are planning to bring more water into their micro-hydro system to increase power output, Earthaven is already entirely off the grid.

We visited several of the planned thirteen neighborhoods and found housing construction ranging from

LUCAS FOGLIA

At the White Owl Lodge, Earthaven's social center, the author enjoyed a post-tour lunch, and in the evening, bluegrass music and a local currency auction.

clay-straw, chip-slip, cob, adobe brick, or strawbale to an Earthship made almost entirely of recycled tires filled with rammed earth. Many buildings are earth plastered and have metal roofs for roof-water catchment. The primary building requirement is that all housing faces south for passive solar heating. Almost all homes have solar panels as well. And almost all homes are on gentle south-facing slopes (with a few on north slopes) to preserve the flat bottom land for agriculture.

The Hut Hamlet is a cleared slope at the center of the village where founding members built tiny experimental dwellings ("huts") in order to establish a base camp and try out many different building techniques. The Hamlet is a mix of all the above-named building styles, as well as canvas "yomes," a yurt-dome hybrid, often insulated with foil-lined bubble pack. Geoff and Sue, who built the Earthship rammed-earth tire house, plan to have a permitted flush toilet, but all other human waste facilities at Earthaven are composting toilets. In these urine is separated, mixed 10 to 1 with water, and used in the garden. Solid waste is stored for two years in sealed metal drums until it composts and then is used as compost under fruit trees. The highlight of the tour for me was Rod's Hobbit House, a dwelling made almost entirely of natural materials, which we entered through a low round door insulated with a *papier mâché* Earth sculpture. Rod combined adobe brick, cob, clay-straw, and stackwood construction. I was also fascinated to learn that he was fish-farming tilapia in his greenhouse.

After the tour, the other visitors and I went to the White Owl Lodge where we had lunch with various Earthaven members. But beyond the tour and the lunch, I was surprised to discover that Earthaven didn't have much of a visitors' program. We could stay or go, but nothing was organized to further expose or integrate us into the community. So after lunch I settled in at the A&A House, where I would stay the night. Another visitor, Steve, and I traipsed around to the neighborhoods that we hadn't seen on the tour. We also hiked in the woods and walked the streamside labyrinth. After a wholesome dinner and some wonderful music by a bluegrass duo at the White Owl, I attended the Leap Auction held to raise Leaps to help fund a new carpool-to-Asheville program. Leaps, Earthaven's alternative currency, represent an hour of labor and are worth $10 each. I enjoyed watching Gaspar auction off a number of hours for carpentry, day care, massage, Reiki healing, consensus training, woodworking, pottery, chiropractics, permaculture design, hypnotherapy, etc. Many of these skills are also leveraged into small-scale businesses like Corinna's Red Moon Herbs mail order business and Chuck's Useful Plants Nursery. Earthaven is developing its own village-scale economy by encouraging members to start their own on-site businesses, hire other members for labor whenever possible, and lend money to each other at friendly terms for building homes or starting businesses. People hire Farmer and Brian, for example, to design and build their homes, using "green

I was fascinated to learn Rod was fish-farming tilapia in his greenhouse.

LUCAS FOGLIA

Zephyr was surprised that Earthaven raises relatively little food on its 320 acres. Here Cailen Campbell (left) shows a work exchanger how to milk a goat.

building" techniques and materials. (A unique feature of their business is the "Road Warrior," a former U-Haul truck retrofitted with rooftop solar panels that provide electricity for their power tools.)

After brunch the next day, I attended the bimonthly afternoon community meeting in the Council Hall. Listening to a thorough discussion about combining Kimchi's and Suchi's homesites into a larger, amalgamated site, the multi-household "Tribal Co-op," I was fascinated by how everyone was allowed to express his/her opinion and how confusion arose and was eventually clarified. I was heartened to see how everyone supported what Kimchi and Suchi wanted to do, but they didn't want to be rushed into hasty decisions without understanding the potential financial and legal ramifications. Even though all the minutes of each meeting and agendas for upcoming meetings are emailed to members, I was surprised to see how few people attended this Council meeting. I guess people show up and participate if and when they have a vested interest in an agenda item.

TWIN OAKS COMMUNITY

Zephyr took a tour of Twin Oaks as part of one of the community's three-week Visitor Programs, like these participants in a previous Twin Oaks tour.

Decked out in hairnet, rubber gloves, apron, and boots, I helped season, weigh, and seal packages of tofu.

Viewing Earthaven's Council and committee structure through my lens as a former history and political science teacher, I was reminded of the U.S. federal system. The policies and proposals of the committees are implicitly approved by the whole group unless someone lets a committee know they have concerns or blocks a decision within a three-week period following the posting of the committee's minutes. If that happens, the committee either modifies the decision to take into account the person's concerns, or takes the issue to the whole Council, which includes all members. The committees handle the nuts-and-bolts work of making management decisions and implementing them; the Council considers policy-level decisions or deeper or broader issues. The committees are like the executive branch of government, and the Council is like the Congress or any legislative body. In my delineation, there seems to be no separate judicial branch, but Council plays a judicial role when that is called for.

TWIN OAKS COMMUNITY

The author learned that Twin Oaks grows 50 percent of its own food.

The committees are divided among 4 *orbos* (a Nigerian village term for task groups), named loosely after the 4 elements. The Earthdelver Orbo focuses on land and physical infrastructure tasks; the Waterbearer Orbo on financial matters; the Airspinner Orbo, on communications, documents, visitors, and membership; and the Firekeeper Orbo on the well-being of the whole. In my interpretation, all this would be the federal level, and the thirteen neighborhoods would be the state level. While the community as a whole collects dues and fees and decides policies, each neighborhood decides smaller and more local issues for their group and common space. Lastly, the individual homesites in each neighborhood are analogous to the city level. Each level is autonomous as long as their decisions and actions don't contravene any agreements from a higher level.

TWIN OAKS COMMUNITY

Twin Oaks has agricultural fields, small group residences, businesses, offices, and a dining hall on its 450 acres.

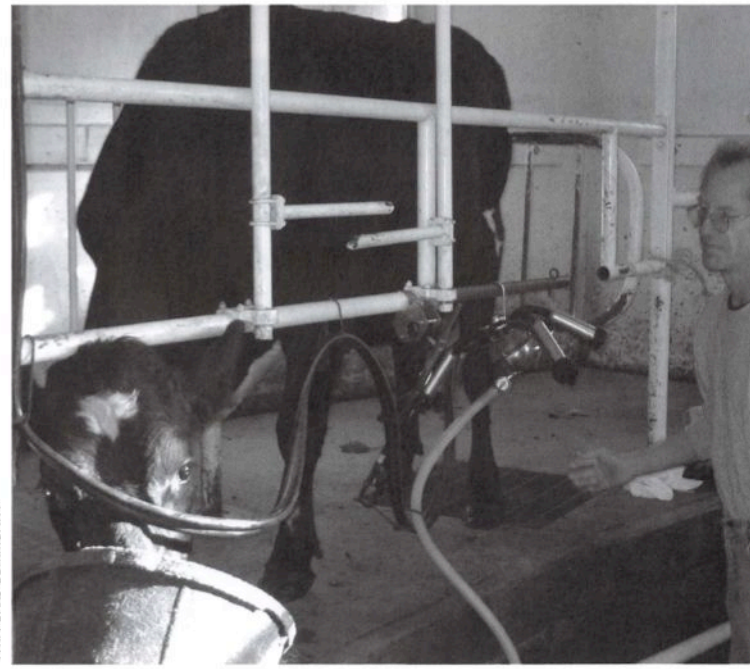
Since Earthaven is a lush, beautiful, very eco-friendly place, I was surprised that relatively little food was being cultivated on its 320 acres. Topography is probably a factor, given a forested mountain setting where three stream valleys converge like a sculpture of entwining roller coasters. While some members grow vegetables and berries on their sloping homesites, the community is set up for members or groups of members to lease their flat bottom or bench land for agriculture. Lee and Mihaly lease Imani Farm, a half-acre pasture which is home to a flock of chickens, two sheep, and a cow. Andy and Julie operate Yellowroot Farm in the Hut Hamlet, a half-acre Biodynamic CSA farm now in its second year. In addition to working in their Road Warrior construction business, Farmer and Brian operate the Gateway Field agricultural project on four leased acres. They'll use the grass rotational pasturage system, with moveable pens of sheep, turkeys, and chickens, to nourish the soil and provide food. Later they'll use half their field for livestock and half for an organic vegetable-seed-growing business, alternating each every year, so the field will benefit from the soil-building effects of rotational grazing. But Farmer, a former CSA owner-operator, contends that in a pinch he can grow enough food for everyone living at Earthaven.

My next stop was Twin Oaks in central Virginia, a 40-year-old, income-sharing community with 85 members and 450 acres. I was one of the first to arrive for their three-week Visitor Program. As other newcomers entered Aurora, the house where we would stay during the Visitor Program, I realized I was the oldest; I could have been a parent to any of them. But there seemed to be no generation gap between us, when, on the second night, most of us went up to the music room at Tupelo, one of Twin Oaks' nine residences, for a spontaneous jam with *djembes*, congas, bass, piano, and violin.

In that first week, we were fully integrated into the life of the community through a system of "oreos" (an abbreviation for orientation). We first had oreos about Twin Oaks businesses. Shal, a longtime Twin Oaker, told us about the hammock business and later gave us individual lessons on how to make hammocks. I learned to cut the harness ends with a hot wire and later to weave the main body of the hammock. Shal told us how Pier One Imports had been their major client since the early 70s up until three years ago, when the company decided hammocks no longer fit its image.

Another member, Aubee, told us how the community's fledgling tofu business had expanded to generate more income during what they call the "austerity period" following the loss of Pier One's business. She also gave us a very animated description of the tofu production process and its machinery. Later in the tofu hut, decked out in hairnet,

(continued on p. 70)



TWIN OAKS COMMUNITY

When a power outage rendered the milking machines inoperative, volunteers showed up to milk cows by hand twice a day in the dairy barn.

BY GWYNELLE DISMUKES

THE FARM COMMUNITY

Potluck meals in community are one of the most obvious ways to "get back more than you put in," in terms of food, good company, and a sense of connection.

WHEN A DOLLAR IS WORTH MORE THAN 100 CENTS

The principles of Kwanzaa, the African-American holiday celebrated every winter (December 26th to January 1st), are based on concepts of communal living observed in traditional African villages. I find it only natural that the fourth principle of Kwanzaa, *Ujamaa*, which means "cooperative economics," should manifest readily in an intentional community setting. From potluck meals to shared property taxes, the byproducts of a communal lifestyle include benefits that may not be measurable in dollar amounts, but which nevertheless contribute to the group's overall well-being. It's a case of, "You put in a little; you get back a lot."

Take the potluck meal, one of the most obvious ways of getting back more than you put in. At The Farm community in central Tennessee where I live, we are blessed with women who have published cookbooks and pioneered vegetarian dishes for more than 30 years. You always get a gourmet meal when you invest the time (and an appetizer or dessert) in a community meeting, fundraising party, or holiday event here at The Farm. House-raising parties are a way in which we reduce construction costs, share labor and expertise (and once again, good food), and boost community spirits all at the same time—a regular 3 for 1!

In many communities, and certainly here at The Farm, businesses, nonprofits, schools, and other organizations directly support community members by providing employment and marketing opportunities. Frequently community needs are supported as well by member-owned businesses. For example, at The Farm we have a member-owned recy-

cling service, a retail food store, and a staffed meeting facility, to name a few. Through avenues such as these, money is circulated through the community, benefiting its members within the wider economic framework.

At the same time, intangible aspects of support generated by communal living add another dimension to the concept of cooperative economics. In mainstream culture, dollars and cents are passed often unseen from one party to another, through online buying or by mail or by phone. But in an intentional community, even monetary exchanges have a face: human relationship is added to the transaction, and the passing of paper or coinage from hand to hand has a personal story attached, one which adds to the life of the people involved. In this context, money can be seen for what it really is—a representation of energy, a means of exchange, and a medium of conversation about resources and how they are used.

Whatever a community's shared physical property—be it a house or neighborhood in an urban area, or many acres and natural surroundings in a rural area—the property is almost always more than one family or individual could afford to maintain for themselves. Those of us who have chosen the community lifestyle gain the use of land and facilities for which we pay only a fraction of the cost of ownership and provide a fraction of the labor required for upkeep. Pooling our resources in most cases allows us to have more assets, amenities, and time than we could possibly attain on our own, thus enriching each of us individually and raising the quality of life for the whole group.

I find it only natural that the fourth principle of Kwanzaa,* Ujamaa, *"cooperative economics," manifests readily in an intentional community setting.

In my own case, a single mother with two children, I've been blessed to acquire equity in a large house, something I could not imagine doing in the outside world. Here at The Farm I was able to take over a house that was up for grabs when the last owner left, a house in such disrepair that no one wanted to take it on; in fact, many people tried to discourage me from getting into it at the beginning. But with credit cards, personal loans, and a young carpenter who was grateful for the work, I could afford to patch up the 25-year-old, 5-bedroom, 2-story house and make it livable for the next 5 years. In that time, my "mortgage" has consisted of paying back the initial rehab costs plus keeping up with current maintenance needs. The Farm has equity in the house, and of course the house can only be transferred to a Farm member; but it seems to me that these restrictions merely balance the great good fortune of my technically "owning" a house, a significant material resource which I can leverage in any number of creative ways.

THE FARM COMMUNITY

Cooperative economics is also demonstrated through work parties, like this wall-raising party.

Of course, creativity has been a hallmark of The Farm from the beginning, visible in the school buses converted into comfortable homes on wheels by resourceful hippies who joined the Caravan from San Francisco to Tennessee. In the 30-some

THE FARM COMMUNITIY

An on-site store selling food and sundries to community members, like The Farm Store, is another example of cooperative economics.

years since then, cooks like Barb Bloomfield *(Soup's On!, More Fabulous Beans)* and Louise Hagler *(Miso Cookery, Tofu Quick and Easy)* have created recipes shared with thousands of people through their books, and they continue to serve up new improvisations of ingredients and presentation to fortunate family and friends here. Veggie Deli owner/operators Roberta Kachinsky and Ramona Christopherson have created their own version of ice bean, a frozen soy dessert that makes summer worth sweating through. The Ecovillage Training Center has recently created the "hipitat" (hippie habitat), a round cob building in varying sizes, generally constructed by students and interns during natural building courses. Frank Michaels, owner of Mushroom People here at The Farm, not only offers mail order supplies for mushroom growers, but also turns out designs for solar showers, cookers, dehydrators, and greenhouses. Plenty International is a Farm-based NGO that provides a creative solution to poverty in developing countries by teaching people how to make and use soy products. There is certainly no lack of creativity on the Farm, and we apply these inventions and ideas to managing our individual resources in the communal setting.

enrich the individual by providing him or her with a personal reward; it benefits everybody by helping to maintain the swimming hole, for example, or paying for our weekly newsletter. I myself am terribly math-challenged, and I can't even begin to understand the figures, but our treasurer, Barbara Jefferson, puts out these beautiful reports that seem to indicate, bottom line, that we are at least pledging ourselves into keeping our heads—and maybe even our shoulders—above water. We definitely have a chance to swim. My

I've been blessed to acquire equity in a large house, something I could not imagine doing in the outside world.

For example, labor for The Farm can be traded for community dues, and residents/members can submit proposals for services they can provide in exchange for their dues. People have paid their dues by pruning shrubs, doing research, and archiving Farm materials. Members have the chance to create a job for themselves if they have an idea about something the community needs that they can offer.

Within the context of shared resources, any financial transaction can be more than the sum of its cash. The Farm operates on a pledge system: all members are expected to pay a minimum monthly amount which covers basic community expenses, and they can pledge more for additional services. Any extra money thus pledged does more than

interpretation is that the magic of community, like the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, somehow multiplies whatever it is that we put into the pot. Somehow, value is added to a dollar when it's shared in a conscious setting of community.

So for me, having my own house represents not at all a symbol of individual achievement or status. Rather, it is an opportunity for me to further share and contribute to the proverbial pot. When I presented my proposal to the board to acquire this house five years ago, I outlined a plan to create group housing on the site, and in the last few months I have begun to dimly see a way to actually begin moving in that direction. It won't be all cash—although certainly some things will require money or other firm payment—but

will also probably include volunteer effort, trades, grants, even student participation. As I remain open to ideas, holding the space for some kind of neo-communal living, I know that the universe will respond and eventually things will fall into place. And what would ordinarily be a simple quest for individual shelter on my part is turning into a project to create a sustainable cluster, using the materials and resources at hand, and involving other like-minded individuals with the ability to expand on the vision and help bring it into manifestation.

THE FARM COMMUNITY

With volunteer labor, community projects cost less. Here, two community members refinish a picnic table for a new children's area at The Farm.

In mainstream culture, the major part of most people's wages or salaries goes into their house: for a mortgage, furniture, appliances, and entertainment systems—all the things that "house" implies in our consumer society. But ultimately, it is a material investment and nothing more; when it is time to move on, the house is converted into a transaction until the next owner puts a saddle on their back and is ridden by the house to work and pay for its continued existence. By contrast, the older houses here in our community have a history that will last as part of the history of this collective, and renovating or maintaining a house adds a little more time for that history to unfold within walls that have held a lot of good energy over the last 20-30 years. Building a new house adds to the community's overall assets, so new houses, too, have value beyond their market price or their usefulness to their individual owners. Most important, because people here enjoy a more flexible work environment, nobody has to feel like they are "working for their house," unless, of course, they choose to do so. Since our lifestyle at The Farm is based more on spiritual values than material features, our members can take on less of the drive and obsession that can come with home ownership in the outside world.

For that matter, some people find that a communal lifestyle actually reduces stress and increases health, so it could be argued that we are saving money on medical care. A great many people both in urban and rural communities enjoy a huge reduction in transportation costs as they are able to work, buy groceries, and visit friends all within walking distance. The benefits of community compound quickly when we begin thinking of all the ways in which we are saving money as a result of living and working together.

As an exercise for practicing *Ujamaa*, I like to explain the idea of the *susu*. Based on a Nigerian custom, the *susu* is a group of people that rotates payments to one another each month, so that everyone gets a windfall whenever their turn rolls around. As I presented the idea in my book *Practicing Kwanzaa Year Round*, the *susu* is intended as a way for people—and especially African Americans—to connect with traditions from the African continent in a way that is meaningful in today's westernized world.

Within the context of shared resources, any financial transaction can be more than the sum of its cash.

In a sense, an intentional community *is* a *susu*, generating financial as well as emotional and spiritual windfalls for its members. An intentional community demonstrates cooperative economics in the broadest sense, and it is a model that our beleaguered world governments would do well to appreciate and consider as the next step in an economically sustainable future.❁

Gwynelle Dismukes is a writer and editor who has lived at The Farm since 1998. She is author of Black 2 the Future, Practicing Kwanzaa Year Round, *and* Afrikan Alkhemy: Spiritual and Soul Transformation in America. *Her books are available from the Farm-based business Mail Order Catalog: www.healthy-eating.com/gwynellebooks.htm.*

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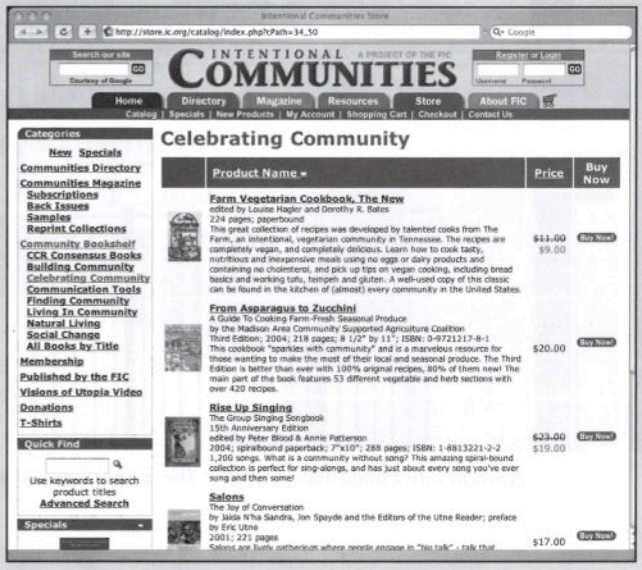

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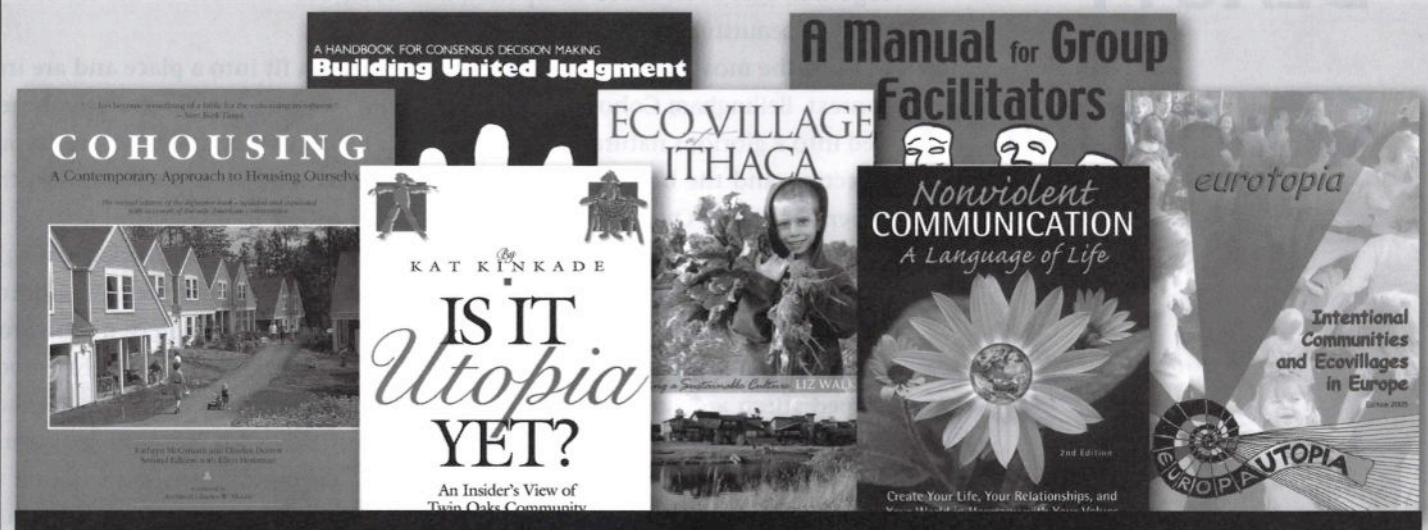

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MCCAMANT AND DURRETT

Nevada City Cohousing in winter. The author believes this may be the most beautiful cohousing community in North America.

NOTES ON BEAUTY IN COMMUNITY

Beauty is an issue dear to me. And for me, in communities, the beauty of the whole starts with land use. Downieville, for example, is a compact and completely walkable town in northern California, and I'm from what you might call the Downieville school of planning. All the people there live in town, and the bears and the deer, the coyotes, foxes, and many other animals live just beyond that compact place. In this analogy, we leave the animals alone and preserve the natural surroundings, and because we live so close together, feel even more compelled and even accountable to the notion of making beautiful habitation and towns.

Thus the most beautiful cohousing communities fit into a place and are in a context. Bellingham Cohousing in Happy Valley, Washington, for example, is nestled into a glorious natural setting, on a street with vast organic gardens in one direction and the beautiful and infinitely walkable town of Fairhaven in the other. Similarly, Quayside Cohousing is also nestled in a beautiful setting in Vancouver. Berkeley Cohousing is completely in the context of its eclectic neighborhood. The renovation of Emeryville Cohousing, a former factory building in the San Francisco Bay Area, was inspired by local industrial design. The presence of this thriving cohousing community in a rundown industrial neighborhood helped stitch a delaminated urban area back into a functioning one. Nevada City Cohousing in California, perhaps the most beautiful cohousing community in North America, is in a forest setting on the edge of town, yet adjacent to Main Street, with architecture inspired by the region's Victorian-era mining history. It's walkable to work, shopping, schools, and play areas.

The energy use of Nevada City Cohousing costs about $20 per household per month. And, yes, its energy efficiency contributes to its beauty. Passive cooling and passive heating make a community integrate just a little more with its place. Grass Valley Cohousing and Fresno Cohousing, both in California, are beautiful because of their natural settings. Grass Valley Cohousing will be the closest visual example of an Italian hill town in the west, and Fresno Cohousing, baking in the heat of the Central Valley, requires considerable response in the way of passive cooling, which forces its own kind of beauty on the community.

People take care of what they love and they love what is beautiful. Buildings can last for several decades or a thousand years—which is mostly a function of how much we love them and their context. For example, a Shinto temple, as with other Japanese architecture, almost always evokes an "ahhhh." And therefore people take care of these temples for hundreds of years. And when something is beautiful, we love it. When we love it, we preserve it. It enriches our soul and our society when we preserve beauty together.

When it's beautiful, we love it and take care of it.

Today, I swam eight miles down the Yuba River, here in northern California. Occasionally, I'd look down to see gorgeous red and yellow rocks and look back upstream and see turquoise water, then five or eight feet of cascading white water framed by rust-colored granite and wildflowers, light blue-tinged trees above that, dark green trees beyond, then even darker green mountains, and finally an azure-blue sky. Some people marvel at the colors and shapes of rocks, or of flowers, or of birds. But it's beauty that they are really appreciating—in its context. My uncle once wrote that anyone can build a building, any bum can do that, but to make it fit, as if the entire location would be remiss without it, that's the trick. My friends and I saw very few buildings as we swam down the Yuba: some felt as if they were born there; others seemed imposed. The trick about creating beauty is understanding the place.

So beauty starts with place—and with you. Don't let any architect or designer rationalize an unattractive box. And too often it seems that people believe that if they just make it out of strawbale or earth, it will be beautiful. *Au contraire*: unless your habitation is an extension of a long-standing cultural tradition, such as a yurt by a Mongolian family, for example, then it's out of place and not necessarily beautiful. Some of the most unfortunate-looking abodes I've seen have been made of strawbale or other natural materials. Unless the building is an extension of your cultural heritage, beauty-making is a serious intellectual act.

Thirty-two years ago this June, I was sitting at an all-day outdoor bluegrass festival in Grass Valley, California. Late in the afternoon, and after watching the best fiddlers in the country all day, I decided to pick up a fiddle propped up in a chair next to me. Those guys on the stage made it look so easy. I started bowing the strings with vigor. I was lost and confused, and perhaps sun-stroked. Everyone around me turned and scowled immediately. Of course, I had no idea what I was doing. Humbly, I put the fiddle down. To assume that a process looks so easy is to disrespect thousands and thousands of hours. However, there are many more bad architects than bad musicians. We don't put up with bad musicians. And we shouldn't put up with cacophony in our landscape either.

So, to anyone contemplating building a new community, demand beauty and you're more likely to get it.❁

Chuck Durrett is an award-winning architect who, with his wife, architect Katie McCamant, brought the cohousing concept to North America with their 1988 book, Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves. *He is also author of* Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living – The Handbook. *Through his and Katie's design firm, McCamant & Durrett Architects, they have designed more than 40 cohousing communities in North America. He lives at Nevada City Cohousing in California.* www.mccamant-durrett.com.

MCCAMANT AND DURRETT

Author Chuck Durrett

Ananda members value beauty as an aspect of spiritual expression. Here, the Expanding Light Center at Ananda Village in Nevada City, California.

Does It REALLY *Matter What It Looks Like?*

Daniel Greenberg admits he's secretly thrilled every time a visitor to Sirius Community in Shutesbury, Massachusetts, raves how the community isn't just interesting and inspirational—it's beautiful, too. "I've always held a hidden satisfaction when someone comes to visit and says 'Oh, I didn't expect it to be so beautiful! I was expecting a hippie commune with half-finished outhouses ... I could live here.'"

Daniel Greenberg of Sirius Community

Fran Hart of Heartwood Cohousing in Bayfield, Colorado agrees. "I personally feel delighted when I see what a beautiful place we've created and by the feedback we receive. I know others feel the same."

And beauty in community does go further than skin deep.

Nurturing the Soul?

Daniel Greenberg and many communitarians around the world stress that focusing on the aesthetics of a community's buildings and lands works far more magic than simply pleasing the eye. These folks make the case that beauty in

community—whether it's a tidy yard or smartly-appointed common area—soothes and feeds the communal soul, making color, creativity, and cleanliness much more than a pretty detail.

"Our surroundings always tell stories that can stretch or constrain us," he continues. "Aesthetics means more than what color we are going to paint the doorknob. Paying attention to how our environment affects us and how we can manifest our highest ideals in our physical surroundings is an art, a spiritual path, and a very practical means of building community. Put that way, it's hard to overrate."

CHRISTOPHER ALLAN

Amy Sophia Marashinsky of Sirius Community

I personally feel delighted when I see what a beautiful place we've created.

Imagine the surprise of a prospective member who has read about a community's dedication as spiritual stewards of the Earth, only to find junked-out buses and piles of garbage standing in for sacred space and altars.

"People come here to get renewed, and beauty plays a part in that," adds Amy Sophia Marashinsky, also at Sirius. "Likewise a desolate landscape can create disconnection and possibly even depression."

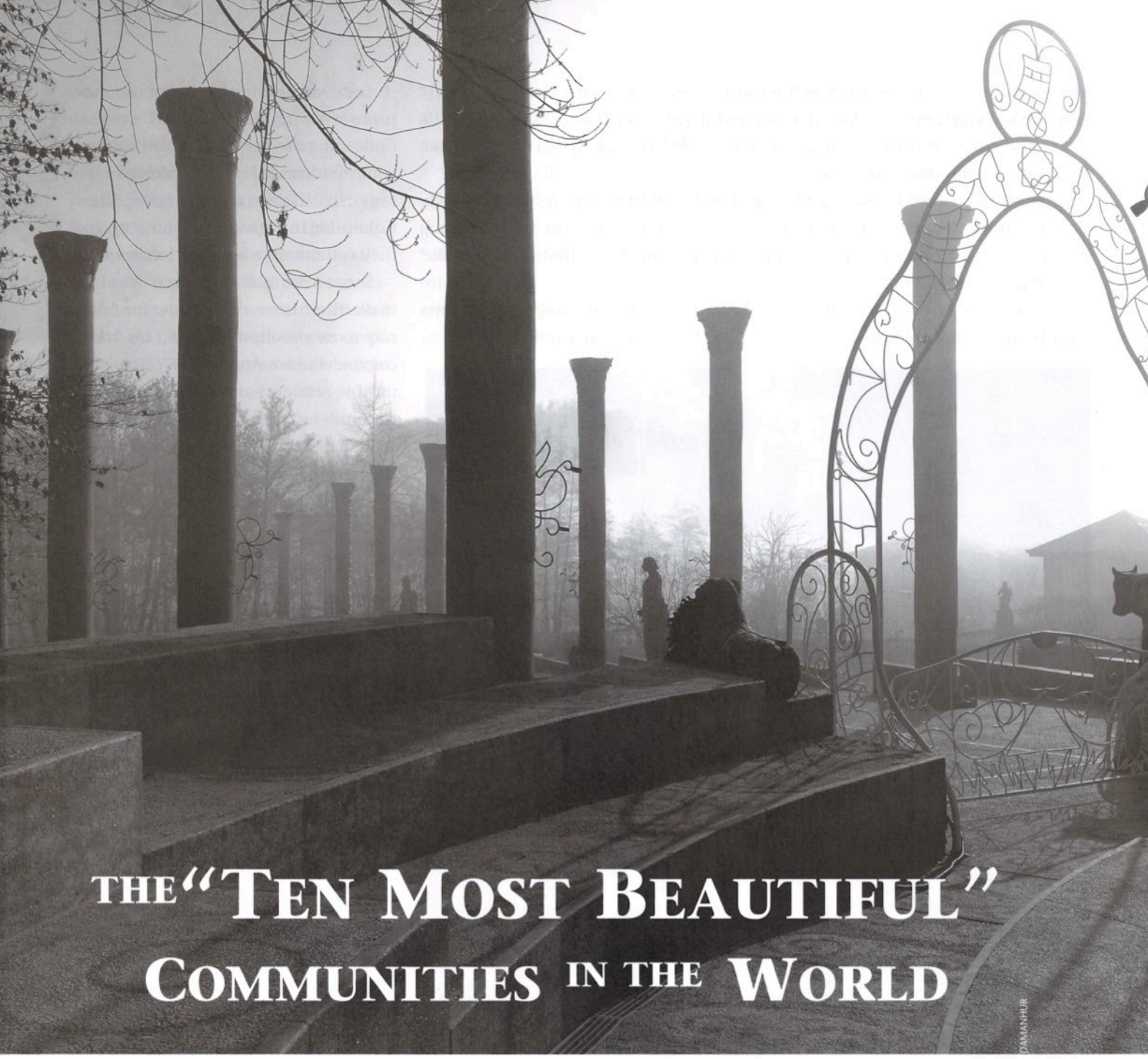
AMY SOPHIA MARASHINSKY

Sirius members share evening meals in their timber-framed hexagonal community building.

Many communitarians say creative order and artistic design are ways we can manifest our spiritual selves in a way that's both holy and a driving force behind our community's health and happiness—and wholeness.

"This physical world is an aspect of God's creation, and as such, we honor it," asserts Jaya Helin, longtime member of Ananda Village in Nevada City, California, and Ananda East in Rhode Island, and currently cofounder of an Ananda community in India. "On an experiential level, beauty uplifts the spirit and stimulates joy. On a subtle level, beauty reminds us of the 'astral realms' from which I believe our soul descends between physical births. I think most would agree that beauty, harmony, and elevated aesthetics are qualities associated with a refined consciousness and that their cultivation attracts and stimulates these qualities within."

In many ways, some communitarians say, a community acts like a giant canvas and all members serve as its artists.



THE "TEN MOST BEAUTIFUL" COMMUNITIES IN THE WORLD

At Federation of Damanhur, Valchiusella Valley, northern Italy.

An informal Who's Who of beautiful human settlements across the planet . . .

As part of our inquiry into whether beauty is important in community, we conducted an informal poll among communitarians who've traveled widely, both in North America and internationally. "Which communities are the ten most beautiful you've seen?" we asked, meaning physical beauty in terms of the built environment and/or the setting. We got a great response, with nominations of communities in 23 countries on 6 continents.

Members of these communities clearly care about aesthetics, in terms of their setting—whether superb views, lush foliage, beautiful gardens, or a beachfront location—and/or

the care with which the community designs, crafts, and decorates their buildings. As you'll see, the responses to our question have created an informal compendium of beautiful human settlements worldwide.

Yet the survey is unscientific—with data skewed since no variables among our respondents are the same. Each could only choose from among communities they've actually visited or heard credible reports of. Some have only been to well-known and easy-to-reach communities, while others have also visited those off the beaten path. And our respondents specialize in different regions. Many have visited communities in Europe, yet Latin Americans tend to be more hip to communities South of the Border, and Down Under folks to places close to home or in Asia. Europeans tend to be both international travelers and have special expertise in one or more regions within Europe. While some North American respondents are international travelers, others tend to have only visited communities on this continent, or only cohousing communities specifically (so we made a separate category for cohousing). And at least one nomination, Arcosanti, may not be an intentional community at all (while its residents say it is one, its designer says it's not).

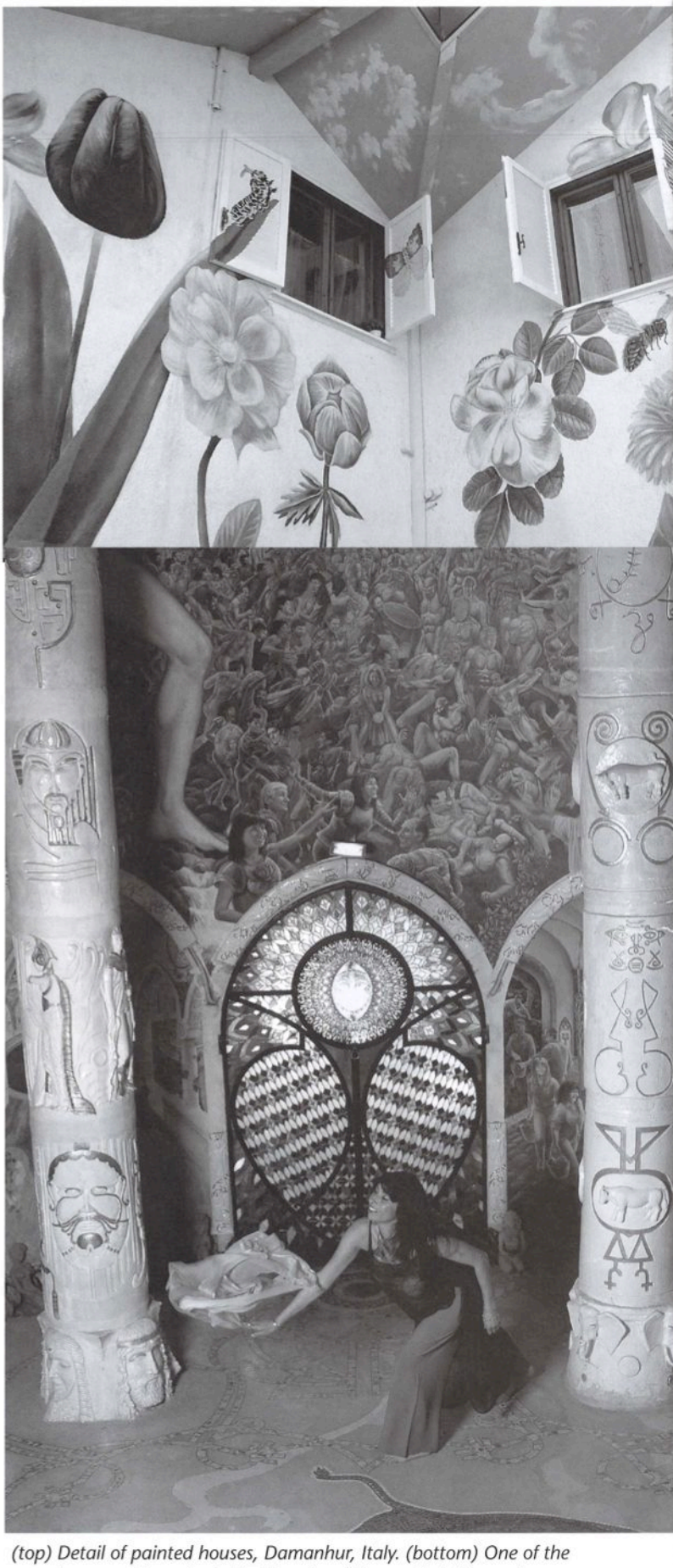
But no matter. This poll is for fun, and to encourage and inspire us and to celebrate the marvelously different examples of community beauty in wildly varying climates, topographies, and cultures. We hope you enjoy getting a sense of their beauty in these photos, and in full color on their websites if you have Internet access.

The "Ten Most Beautiful"

And now, the "Ten Most Beautiful Communities in the World," chosen by the number of nominations received from respondents of our eclectic poll. The total number of nominations received is noted next to each community's name. Three received five nominations each and three got three nominations each, so these communities are tied for "fourth place" and "sixth place," respectively.

Drum roll, please.

1. **Federation of Damanhur**, Valchiusella Valley, Italy, (*11*).
2. **Torii Superiore**, Ventimiglia, Italy, (*10*).
3. **Findhorn Foundation**, Forres, Scotland, (*8*).
4. **Huehuecoyotl**, Teplotzlán, Mexico, (*5*).
5. **Auroville**, Pondicherry, India, (*5*).
6. **Sieben Linden**, Poppau, Germany, (*5*).
7. **Lebensgarten**, Steyerberg, Germany, (*4*).
8. **IPEC (Institute for Permaculture and Ecovillage in the Cerrado)**, Pirenopolis, Brazil, (*3*).
9. **Tamera Healing Biotope 1**, Colos, Portugal (*3*).
10. **Earthaven**, North Carolina, US, (*3*).



DAMANHUR

DAMANHUR

(top) Detail of painted houses, Damanhur, Italy. (bottom) One of the underground temples in the Temples of Humankind, Damanhur.

ALBERT BATES

ALBERT BATES

(above) Torri Superiore Ecovillage, Ventimiglia, Italy. (left) At Torri Superiore in Italy. (below) At the ecovillage, Findhorn Foundation, northern Scotland.

FINDHORN FOUNDATION

1. ***Federation of Damanhur***, Valchiusella Valley, northern Italy. At this 32-year-old spiritual community in the foothills of the Italian Alps, 1,000 members live in various large group households throughout the valley, operate more than 80 community-based businesses, run their own schools, print a daily newspaper, and use their own alternative currency, the *Credito*. You'll find art and beauty on the outside walls of group houses, with their brightly painted scenes of giant flowers, animals, bugs, or underwater seascapes; in large and small sculptures on homes, community buildings, and scattered throughout the grounds; and in their spectacular underground temples, "The Temples of Humanity," characterized by mosaics, frescoes, sculpture, and lighted overhead domes of stained glass. *www.damanhur.org*.

2. ***Torri Superiore***, Ventimiglia, Italy. Since 1989 a group of ecological activists have been restoring the ruins of a 14th-century stone village and its steeply terraced hillside above a river and waterfalls in the mountains behind the Italian Riviera. They have regenerated the depleted soil and planted grapevines, olive groves, fruit trees, and vegetables, and restored the village, stone by stone. Now, with stairways, arches, narrow passageways, and 160 rooms completed, and sustainable agriculture on every terrace, Torri Superiore has become a renowned ecotourism destination, with a guest house, restaurant, and an educational center offering permaculture training. *www.torri-superiore.org*.

3. ***Findhorn Foundation***, Forres, Scotland. Specifically, Findhorn's ecovillage neighborhood, which was nominated by one respondent because of its "wonderful range of architecture," includes natural buildings, some with living roofs, and round redwood houses made out of gigantic recycled whiskey barrels. The Living Machine is a large greenhouse containing a series of tanks with freshwater plants and animals; graywater enters one end of the greenhouse, and at the other end comes out clean enough to drink. Findhorn residents participate in various owner co-ops: a CSA farm, wind generators, a woodlot for firewood, a dairy co-op, and the Phoenix, a store selling food grown or raised locally or onsite, and arts and crafts items made by Findhorn members, and they bank at their onsite credit union and use the Eko, their community currency. *www.findhorn.org*.

4. ***Huehuecoyotl***, Teplotzlán, Mexico. One respondent nominated this community for its setting "in the spectacular mountains of the Tepozteco, its waterfall, the variety of architectural styles, and the great community building." Huehuecoyotl ("very old coyote") is home to Mexican, European, and South and North American artists, per-

formers, and ecological activists who've built adobe or wooden homes with red-tile roofs and a community building with a complex roof, large arched windows, and colorful Mezo-American-themed frescoes, murals, and mosaics. *www.huehuecoyotl.net.*

5. ***Auroville***, Pondicherry, India. In this renowned spiritual community founded in the late 1960s by Sri Aurobindo, 1,700 people from countries all over the world live in various neighborhoods and villages, including the "French village," the "American village," and villages of Indian devotees of Sri Aurobindo, as well as traditional Tamil Nadu villages. Auroville is especially famous for its Matri Mandir, a spherical temple covered with overlapping gold and enamel circles and visible for miles, and for its acclaimed reforestation project, in which community members planted millions of trees in the community and the surrounding area, transforming an arid, eroding plain into a lush forest again. One respondent nominated Auroville for "its Matri Mandir, science center, dining hall, and plant nurseries—all so well thought-out." *www.auroville.org.*

6. **Sieben Linden**, Poppau, Germany. Several neighborhoods make up this ecovillage project, including Club 99, a neighborhood whose residents farm with draft horses and construct buildings by hand rather than with power tools. Sieben Linden's beautiful two-story community building is the largest strawbale building in Europe. *www.siebenlinden.de.*

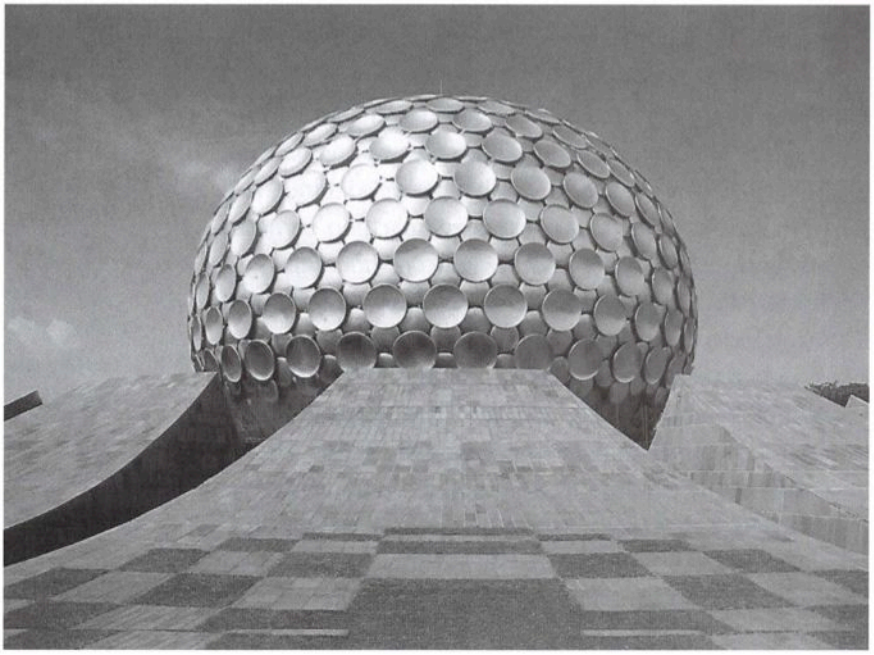
7. ***Lebensgarten***, Steyerberg, Germany. At 21-year-old Lebensgarten ("living garden"), ecological activists retrofitted a former munitions factory into one of Europe's first ecovillages, with attractive passive-solar wooden homes with red roofs and two-story attached solar greenhouses. *www.lebensgarten.de.*

8. ***IPEC (Institute of Permaculture and Ecovillage in the Cerrado)***, Pirenopolis, Brazil. IPEC is located in the Amazon rainforest, and almost every aspect of the built environment—water tanks, children's playground, patio of permanent outdoor musical instruments, and curvilinear cob buildings with round windows—are colorfully decorated with frescoes and tiles and a description of how it works. Described by one respondent as "simply fantastic" and "like a Permaculture Disneyland," IPEC was the site of the May, 2007, International Permaculture Gathering. *www.ecocentro.org.*

SVANTE VANBART

The community building at Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage, Tepotzlán, Mexico.

9. ***Tamera Healing Biotope 1***, Colos, Portugal. Large, white, tent-like structures and vegetable gardens are set amidst eucalyptus and cork oak woodlands in the dry, sunny Alentejo region of Portugal. Tamera's projects include international peace work with Palestinians and Israelis, including an annual peace camp for youth; A Summer University program with international participants and instructors; leading-edge solar technology; and the design of low-impact, energy efficient settlements. *www.tamera.org.*



MARTI MUELLER

The spherical Mantri Mandir temple at Auroville, Pondicherry, India.

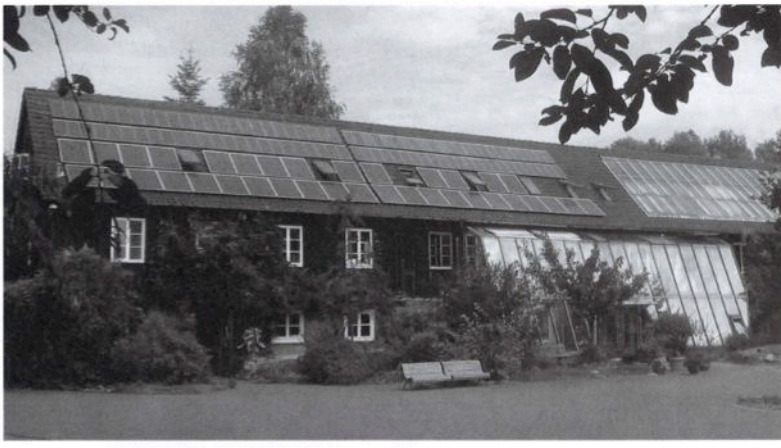
Our Blue Ribbon Panel

Our widely-traveled correspondents are:

- **Albert Bates** is cofounder and former board member of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and one of GEN's representatives to the United Nations. He is also founder of Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA), board member of the International Communal Studies Association, and founder and director of the Ecovillage Training Center at The Farm community in Tennessee. *www.thefarm.org*.
- **Alberto Ruz** is cofounder of Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage in Mexico, and founder and director La Caravana (The Rainbow Caravan of Peace), which has traveled throughout Latin America for the last ten years teaching community and sustainability skills. *www.lacaravana.org*.
- **Bill Metcalf**, PhD., a semi-retired professor of environmental science at Griffith University in Brisbane, is author of nine books on community, including *The Findhorn Book of Community Living; Shared Visions, Shared Lives*; and *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality*. He is a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, former president of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA), and author of the "Community Living Worldwide" column in *Communities* magazine.
- **Jonathan Dawson** is President of Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), co-director with Ina Meyer-Stoll of GEN-Europe, consultant on sustainable economics and expert on ecovillages in Africa, and author of *Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability*. He lives at Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, where he teaches "Applied Sustainability" in Living Routes' semester courses at Findhorn.
- **Chuck Durrett** is an award-winning architect who, with his wife, architect Katie McCamant, brought the cohousing concept to North America with their 1988 book, *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. He is also author of *Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living – The Handbook*. Through his and Katie's design firm, McCamant & Durrett Architects, they have designed more than 40 cohousing communities in North America. He lives at Nevada City Cohousing in California. *www.mccamant-durrett.com*.
- **Daniel Greenberg**, Ph.D., is founder and director of Living Routes, which partners with the University of Massachusetts-Amherst to offer education programs in ecovillages worldwide. He lives at Sirius Community in Massachusetts. *www.livingroutes.org*.
- **Declan Kennedy**, Founding Chairman of Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), is an architect, professor of urban design, and permaculture teacher and designer who has visited ecovillages and permaculture sites worldwide. In 1985 he co-founded and now lives in Lebensgarten Ecovillage in Germany, where he works for Gaia University as Chairman of its International Advisory Board. *www.declan.de*.
- **Hildur Jackson**, with her husband Ross Jackson, cofounded the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and Gaia Trust, which funded the creation of the first book in English on ecovillages, Robert and Diane Gilman's *Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities* (1990). She has been active in the Danish cohousing movement since the early 1970s, and in the Danish ecovillage movement, and GEN-Europe. She is editor, with Karen Svensson, of *Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People*, which features many of the communities noted in this article. She lives in Denmark. *www.gaia.org; www.gaiaeducation.org*.
- **Ina Meyer-Stoll** is a longtime ecovillage activist in Europe and, with Jonathan Dawson, is co-director of Global Ecovillage Network-Europe. She lives at ZEGG Community in Germany. *www.gen-europe.org*.

- **Joani Blank**, active since the mid-nineties in the cohousing movement both nationally and in the San Francisco Bay area, has visited over 60 cohousing communities in the US and Canada. She is Tours Coordinator for the Cohousing Association of the US, served on its Board for eight years, and coordinated its 2006 national conference in North Carolina. Joani lives at Swan's Market Cohousing in Oakland. *www.cohousing.org.*
- **Liora Adler** is a longtime activist in the Global Ecovillage Network, co-founder and member of Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage, and co-founder with Alberto Ruz of La Caravana (the Rainbow Caravan of Peace). She is also cofounder with Andy Langford of Gaia University, offering courses in ecovillages and permaculture projects worldwide. *www.gaiauniversity.org.*
- **Max Lindegger**, a permaculture designer, is cofounder and codesigner of Crystal Waters Ecovillage in Australia, where he lives, and director of GEN-Oceania/Asia (GENOA). Through his design firm, EcoLogical Solutions, he teaches permaculture and ecovillage design and consults for ecovillage clients in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and the Pacific. *genoa.ecovillage.org*; *www.ecologicalsolutions.net.*
- **May East**, a sustainability educator originally from Brazil, long-time member of both Findhorn Foundation in Scotland and Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), and a GEN representative to the United Nations, has worked with many communities in South American countries.
- **Raines Cohen** is a board member of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), and former board member of the Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US). He is a regional organizer for the Northern California Cohousing organization, and a Certified Facilitator of Senior Cohousing. He was a cofounder of Swan's Market Cohousing in Oakland, California, and now lives in Berkeley Cohousing, in Berkeley, California. *www.raines.com.*
- **Tree Bressen**, a former board member of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) and former executive secretary of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC), is a process and facilitation consultant and consensus trainer for communities across the United States. She has lived at Acorn in Virginia and Walnut Street Co-op in Eugene, Oregon. *www.treegroup.info.*

—D.C.



DECLAN KENNEDY

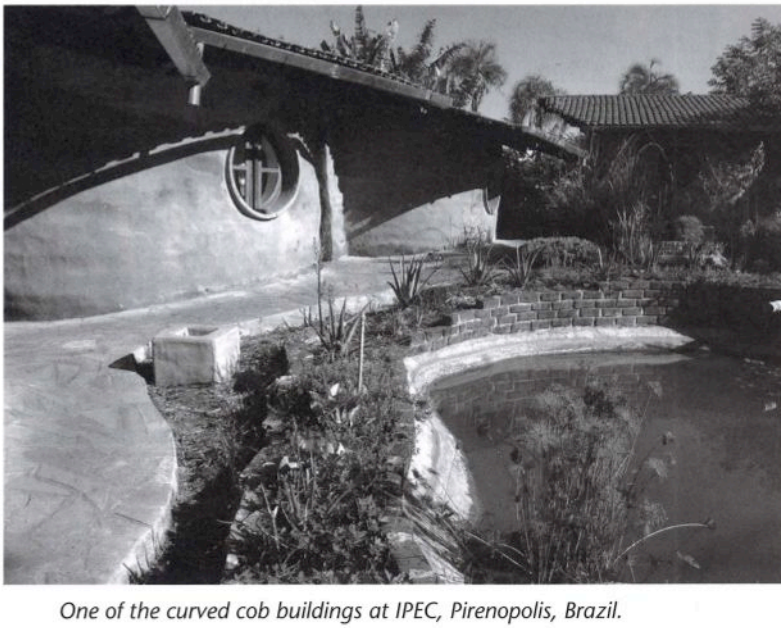
Factory buildings turned into ecological housing at Lebensgarten Ecovillage, Steyerberg, Germany.

10. ***Earthaven***, Black Mountain, North Carolina, US. Set in three converging stream valleys in a forest in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Earthaven is characterized by colorful earth-plastered dwellings in shades of apricot, deep rose, or pale yellow, with green or red metal roofs for water catchment. Individual community members operate a permaculture plant nursery, an organic herbal products business, an off-grid home construction business, a trout pond operation, and a small biodynamic CSA garden. *www.earthaven.org.*

The following communities received two nominations each:

Tlholego, Rustenberg, South Africa. Meaning "creation from nature" in the Tswana language, Tlholego is an educational center and ecovillage with traditional African grass-roofed huts and domed earthen buildings, where ecological activists teach sustainable farming and other aspects of sustainable living to South Africans and others in an economically depressed rural area. *www.sustainablefutures.com.*

(continued on p. 75)



ALBERT BATES

One of the curved cob buildings at IPEC, Pirenopolis, Brazil.

GIOVANNI CIARLO

WE WALK IN BEAUTY

Huehuecoyotl's ten-sided community building, characterized by arched windows and a mural depicting the ancient peoples of Mexico, serves as a combination kitchen/dining room, theater, music room, and arts and crafts studio.

La ecología es arte (ecology is art) is the phrase our group of ecological activists, visual artists, performers, and theater people adopted when we founded Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage in Mexico in 1982. We took this notion of art and community from the surrealist artists of the early 20th century, and applied it to our communal lifestyle. Valuing the beauty in nature and in each individual, we set out to create art out of our very own lives, because, when we were young revolutionaries in the 1960s, we believed we could shape the world we live in by paying attention to the flowers in the fields and the colors we wore. We saw ourselves as characters in a play; we wanted to know who we were and live it to the fullest. We approached designing our ecovillage as if we were building a set for one of our theater productions.

In ecovillages and other intentional communities, there are limitless opportunities to live in beauty and be surrounded by it. At Huehuecoyotl, for example, our houses are artistic works created by our imaginations and our hands. We often create our houses of materials we can sculpt and shape as we wish—stone, mud, wood, and glass. We even use cement in sculptural ways. Nearly every house has a stained glass window. We break the linear design of contemporary architecture by finding ways to use circles, rounded corners, and multisided dwellings. The walls on the inside of our ten-sided common house are painted with murals of the mythology of the ancient people of central Mexico, to remind us of the beauty they worshiped in their legends and regional symbolism. In our gardens, we have a spiral herb garden; in open spaces we have labyrinths. Our oldest tree is our guardian, the forests are our cathedrals, our *temazcal* (sweat lodge hut) is a womb, and the waterfall and caves are sacred places of spiritual powers, light and dark. In our hearts we are warriors and caretakers. In our spirit we

We approached designing our ecovillage as if we were building a set for one of our theater productions.

GIOVANNI CIARLO

Community residences are generally two-story, with wooden or stucco exteriors, red tile roofs and at least one stained glass window.

SVANTE VANBART

Community members enjoy their mountainous location, with ancient trees and a waterfall.

are the shamans and healers of our world. All these characters play in our story, because they serve as metaphors of what we are when we see the beauty around us.

Another value that we demonstrate at Huehuecoyotl is the beauty of "small." It is much more efficient to build only the necessary space for private use and share larger spaces for communal use. This creates all kinds of "beautiful" relationships among the people, who have plenty of opportunity for social interaction, balanced with a small private home where they can retreat when the work becomes difficult and distractions abound. Thus our cob and strawbale houses are typically much smaller than those made of other materials. Building a cob or strawbale house is an act of creation and very labor-intensive.

Both graywater treatment systems and energy-efficient waterless (composting) toilets save space and produce a smaller environmental footprint. "Small *is* beautiful," E.F. Schumacher reminded us, especially when small spaces are centered on a common vision of a beautiful world. Of course, "big" can be just as beautiful if it harmonizes with the environment. And "beautiful" people create more beauty around them; they smile more, and are always glad to share whatever they have with you.

CHARLY RAINER EHRENPREIS

Rituals are important at Huehuecoyotl.

We also experience beauty through the nicely-pruned fruit trees in our orchards, the robust vegetables in our gardens, the wandering trails that connect all of our spaces, our farm animals and wild-species friends, the songs and laughter of neighbors gathering, and children playing together like a great big family, with so many relations inside and outside their circle.

Our built environment—the designed space we live in—is a reflection of the beauty we see around us, but the world we create in community is like a mosaic made up of all the multiple pieces we bring to it. You cannot see the whole by looking only at the pieces, yet when you see the whole, the pieces are perfectly blended together. That is beauty. Community is a system: a balanced formula of aesthetic images distributed throughout, as if distributed through a kind of "community DNA."

Beauty, balance, order, and harmony: these are the essence of a healthy lifestyle and worldview, from my perspective. The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) recognizes that art is one of the main pillars of community sustainability. Beauty inspires and fulfills our need for an uplifting, inspiring environment. Beauty is a powerful glue for community members to create an identity together; one that is uniquely theirs.

People in the Navajo nation wake up every morning and offer a prayer that they may "walk in beauty." Likewise, in order for us to build communities that are beautiful, we must walk in beauty, and create beauty all around us.❁

Beauty before me I walk,
Beauty behind me I walk,
Beauty above me I walk,
Beauty below me I walk,
Beauty all around me I walk.
In beauty all is made whole.
In beauty all is restored.
—Navajo prayer

Giovanni Ciarlo, a cofounder of Huehuecoyotyl Ecovillage in Morelos, Mexico, is a board member of GEN and Council member of the Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA). He was born in Italy, grew up in Venezuela, and now lives at both Huehuecoyotl and his family home in Connecticut. He is working on an M.A. in Sustainable Communities and Socially Responsible Businesses at Goddard College. giovanni@ecovillage.org; www.huehuecoyotl.net.

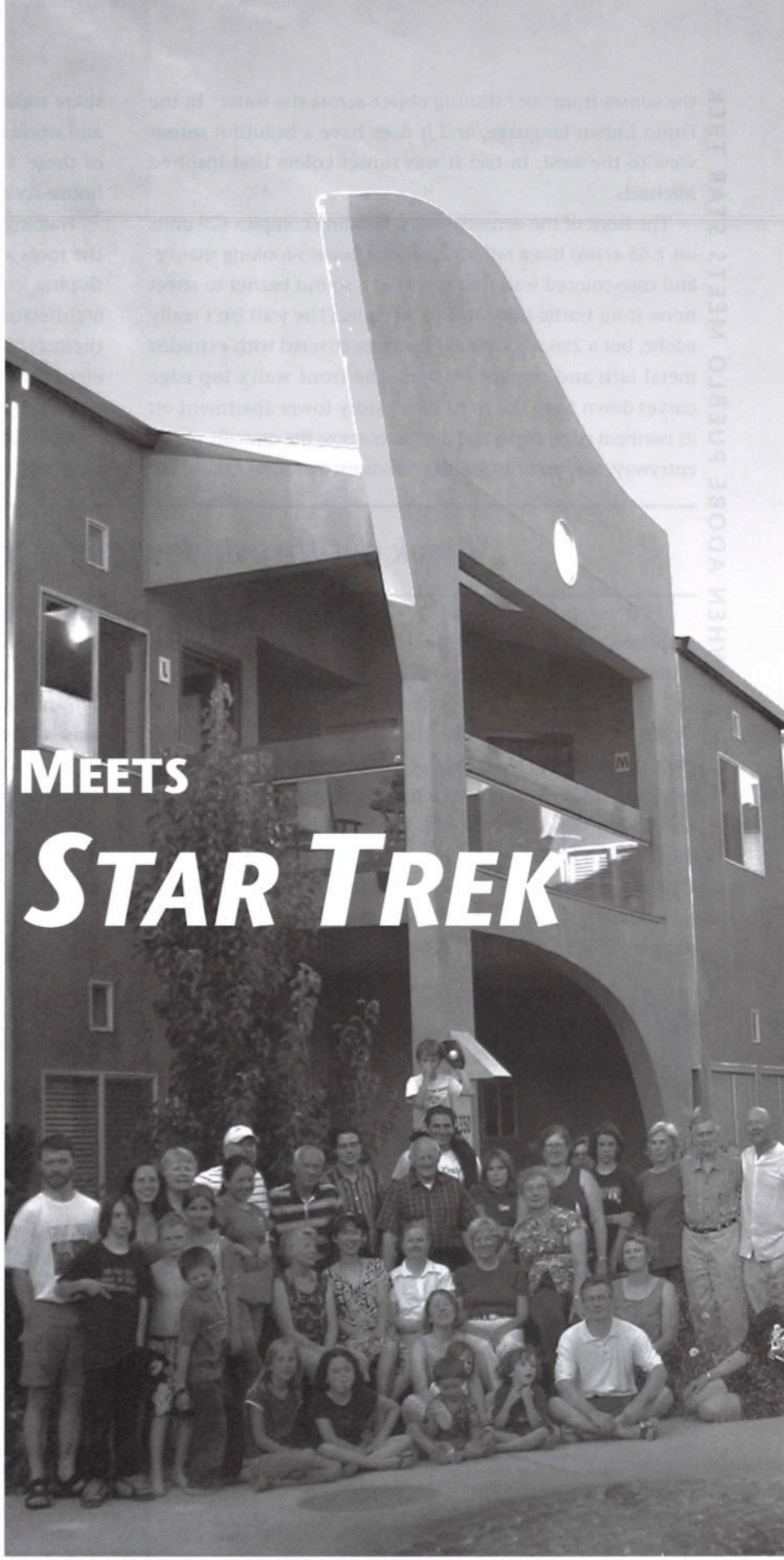
When Adobe Pueblo Meets Star Trek

BY DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN

Last summer I visited my friends Alexandra Hart and Michael Black at Yulupa Cohousing in Santa Rosa, California. Michael was the architect and co-founder with Alexandra of this unique cohousing community, one of the most beautiful and unusual communities I've ever seen. Imagine a courtyard surrounded by close-set, 2-story buildings

I could imagine the Enterprise crew beamed down and blending with the residents.

that look like they're made of gigantic, malleable play-dough in warm and inviting colors—mauve, dusty rose, and apricot. Curved walls and curved rooflines flow everywhere, as well as circles, arches, and part-arches. It looked to me like an adobe pueblo crossed with alien-planet architecture from *Star Trek*. I could easily imagine the Enterprise crew beamed down and blending with the residents, careful not to violate the Prime Directive. The cohousing community is on Yulupa Avenue, which means "place to view



YULUPA COHOUSING

Residents of Yulupa Cohousing in Santa Rosa, California like their whimsical architecture. "I look out the window and smile," says resident Alexandra Hart.

the sunset from" or "shining object across the water" in the Pomo Indian language, and it does have a beautiful sunset view to the west. In fact it was sunset colors that inspired Michael.

The front of the densely settled building complex (29 units on 1.65 acres) has a tall, thick adobe pueblo-looking mauve- and rose-colored wall that serves as a sound barrier to street noise from traffic-busy Yulupa Avenue. (The wall isn't really adobe, but a 2x6 stud-framed structure covered with extruded metal lath and cement plaster.) The front wall's top edge curves down from the front of a 3-story tower apartment on its northern edge, slopes and undulates across the centrally placed entryway, and past the group's one-story common house. I'm surprised there aren't accidents out on Yulupa Avenue as motorists slow down and gawk in astonishment.

The tiny, central, common green forms a long, slender rectangle, with a small lawn near the common house and a single path between the buildings. A 6-foot-high water fountain sprays up from the center of a slightly shallow round depression which the path encircles. Yulupa's kids love to play in the fountain in hot weather!

Ground floor units are accessible directly from the courtyard. Units on second floors are accessed by stairwells with stairs covered in teal-colored rubber. These second-floor units share wide-roofed entryway balconies with safety glass sides and wood beam railings: Alexandra and Michael live in one of these. On the opposite side of the courtyard are townhouse-style units, with balcony patios on the second floor.

Framing most unit entries and supporting the balconies and the roofs above are 2-story high mauve and rose walls with sloping, curving tops and outer edges. Michael told me the architectural term for these is "entry pieces" (I thought of them as "flanges"). They each have circular, two-foot diameter frosted glass windows at the second-story level.

See what I mean? Star Trek.

I was agog during my whole visit, peering and gazing at every view and vista, trying to absorb and appreciate every detail.

"I look out the window and it makes me smile."

The rows of units are all of a piece yet still look and feel different from one another. The colors and shadows change continually as the sun moves across the sky, and your visual sense of the place also changes and shifts in color and shape as you move through the courtyard. Your eye never gets bored, never knows quite what to expect. In the back of my mind I was subtly aware that I couldn't quite grok how the community site plan for the buildings was laid out, though actually it's 4 buildings enclosing a courtyard. Every moment was a surprise; at every new step I'd experience something unexpected. Usually, with straight rows of rectangular buildings on a grid pattern, your mind "gets it" in an instant and is instantly bored with it as well.

MICHAEL BLACK

Two rows of 2-story buildings face each other across the central courtyard.

Yulupa Cohousing was certainly not developed and built like most cohousing communities. Michael didn't use the "Danish model," where the future residents serve as their own developers, or the developer-partner "streamlined" model, where the future residents partner with an experienced developer. Rather, he used the developer-driven model, where a developer finances and manages the design and construction. Michael was the founder and architect and Jim Allen, a friend from his drumming circle who is a professional developer, became the project's developer. So Michael had the freedom to design the community with as much innovation and whimsy as he wanted as long as Jim and the bank concurred. Michael took faith in one idea: "If you design it to make people smile, they will come." And they did.

KAI GELPHMAN

Like communitarians everywhere, Yulupa residents love to visit outside in the sunshine.

Michael caught flak from at least one major player in the cohousing movement for not having the future residents give input to the design several times throughout the design process. If they had, most likely they would, as in most forming cohousing communities, change various aspects of the design, perhaps several times. This is what usually happens in the Danish and streamlined models.

But Michael's reasons for designing the community without resident input seem logical to me. Most cohousing core groups experience significant turnover from the early forming community stages until move-in; it's not the same group even a few months later. You know how you can't step in the same stream twice? Maybe only a fourth or fifth of the people who give their input during the architectural programming (when the design factors are determined and approved) are the people who actually end up living there. The other three-fourths to five-sixths never have any input into the design at all, but become perfectly fine cohousing residents nevertheless. Michael sees the model he used as being more efficient, saving future residents both time and money. He told me that involvement in the design and construction takes most of the energy of a forming community in the Danish and streamlined models. In this style, however, the community uses its time to learn skills and organize their future life together, resulting in a functioning community before move-in. Another benefit he sees is that conflicts can be avoided that often occur when future residents are significantly involved in the design, construction, and financing of the project.

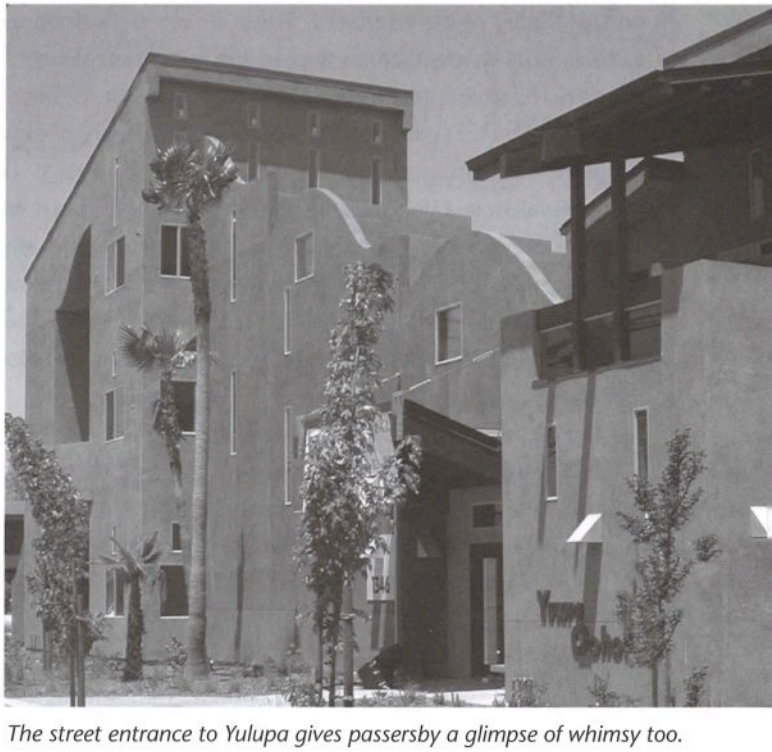
Your eye never gets bored, never knows quite what to expect.

As people were buying units, meeting each other, and forming the cohousing core group, Alexandra led them in workshops on consensus, facilitation, and various process and communication skills. People who bought into Yulupa Cohousing loved how the place looked and how the units were designed. Anyone who didn't like it just didn't join.

From what I could tell in my brief visit, which included having dinner with Michael and Alexandra in Yulupa's common house one evening and talking with various other residents, people seem to enjoy living there. Alexandra tells me that people comment on how much they like living in a place which is so much fun to look at ("I look out the window and it makes me smile"). One woman told her that when they get into tense places in meetings, they just have to look outside and see how wonderful their community is, and they can feel like everything's fine: they get to live *here*.

I'd love to be surrounded by beauty like this every day, and I envied Yulupa residents a physical environment that seemed nurturing to the eye and soul. What if we all lived in communities like this? Would it lighten our hearts and gladden our meetings? Lower our conflicts and heighten our sense of connection? I think it would.❁

Diana Leafe Christian is editor of Communities *magazine and author of* Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community, *and* Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities. *She lives at Earthaven Ecovillage in North Carolina.*



MITCHELL JOHNSON

The street entrance to Yulupa gives passersby a glimpse of whimsy too.

The Design Process at Yulupa

Space: The entries into the courtyard, the common house and the units were all designed to manipulate the perception of space. This is done by compressing and expanding spaces either by utilizing the distance between walls and/or ceiling heights. This provides spatial interest. It offers the comfort of more intimate spaces and some spatial excitement by the use of high ceilings. The high ceilings are most often sources of clerestory light—high windows used as a source of natural light and ventilation.

Curved walls: We are located in an urban area. Not much in the neighborhood other than its plants offers much respite from the wide swaths of asphalt and the mostly uninteresting architecture. As a response to this local environment, I introduced walls with curved upper edges that serve as sound walls and entry pieces. The curves create curved shadows on other walls and on the "floor" of the courtyard. These curves were designed to be sensual elements that softened the environment here.

Colors: The colors of the building are mostly "in-between colors," colors that change with the changing quality of exterior light—for instance, the red in the mauve color may be more prevalent in a bright sunny day whereas the blue in it will be more prevalent in a cloudy day. On dark cloudy days, the apricot color appears brighter, sunnier. The colors change more frequently during the sunrises and sunsets, since they are colors found in our local sunsets. Each building uses the colors in a slightly different arrangement.

Angles: Not all of the buildings on the site are parallel to each other. The south building and part of the west building are set on a different axis than the other buildings. The aesthetic impact of this use of angles is largely felt while moving through the courtyard especially when focusing on the "entry pieces" of the south building.

Windows: The exterior walls are pierced with many small openings and windows. These provide a changing pattern of interior light as well as providing patterns of light during the evening at the exterior of the structures. The round windows on the entry pieces often cast a circle of light onto the surfaces of other walls.

Fountain: The fountain had four original purposes: the first is aesthetic, the second is for the sound-masking of the street noise, the third is to give a sense of cooling on hot days, and the fourth is to provide a play space for the children. The community has provided another function: ceremonial. We have had several rituals around the fountain, and its design of spiraling river rocks and perforations for drainage in the base of the fountain adds beauty to the ceremony.

Design patterns: The division of the curved entry pieces into areas of color was carefully done, as were the patterns created by the large and small windows. These entry pieces create rhythms, as do the "flying buttresses" bracing the sound wall.

Proportions: The slope of the roofs, the height of the buildings, the shape and height of the windows, the shape of the fireplace, the height of its mantle, the height of the chair rail in the multi-purpose room: all of these affect one's perception of the architecture. If it is too vertical, the relationship to human scale is diminished. If it is too horizontal, the viewer could feel compressed.

The element of surprise: Special views and special surprises were part of the design from the beginning. A very simple building has few surprises. The movement of people through the site and buildings was considered from the beginning. A special view awaits the perceiver at almost every turn.

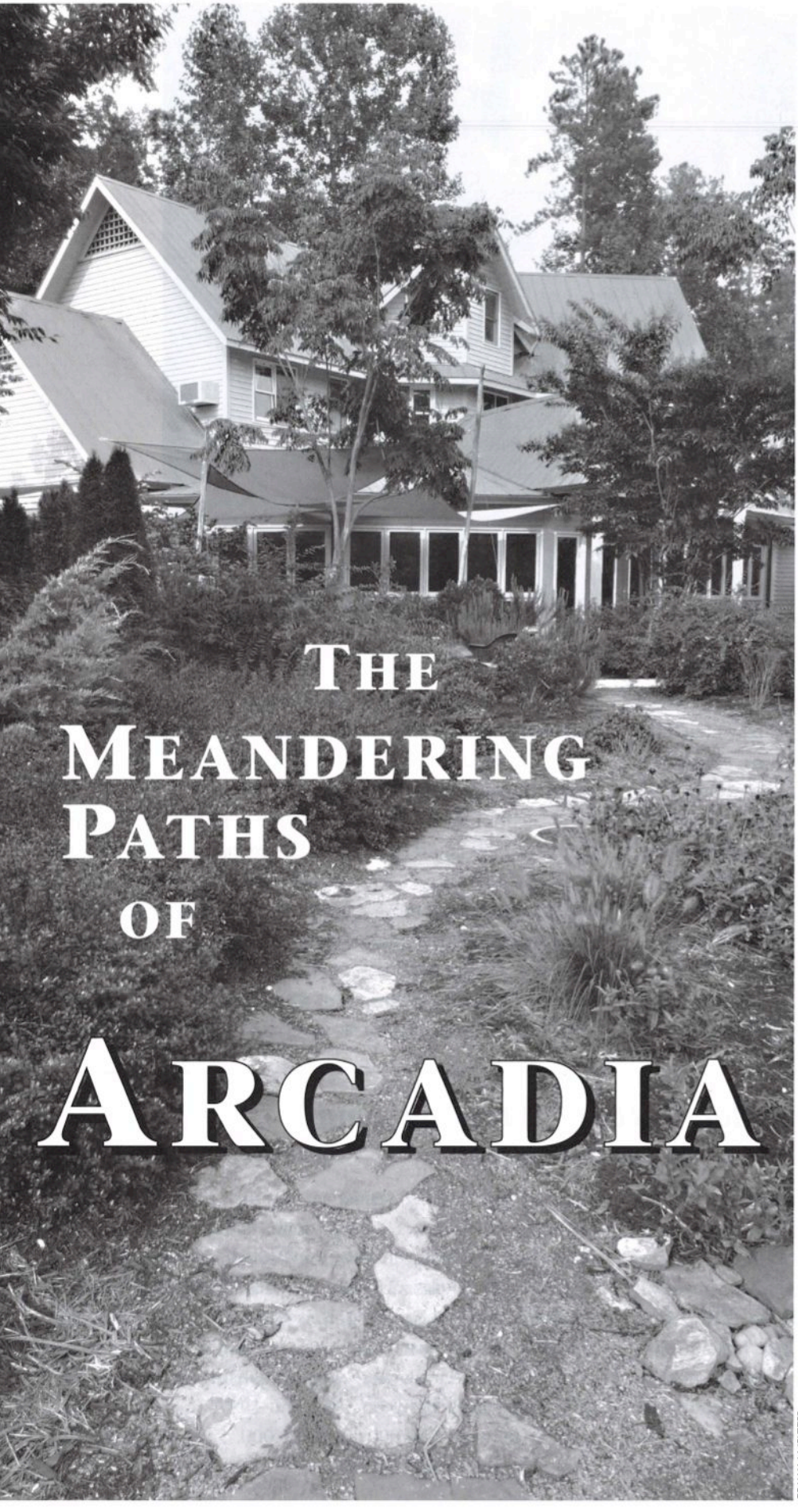
Getting approval for the design: I remember the day we went before the Design Review Board. I sat there realizing the design might be controversial. First a local architect on the Board came out and said, "Well, it's not what I would have done, but I kind of like it." Then another said, "Well, it's not what I would have done, but the planning is excellent and very humanely conceived." Later, the head of the board said, "This project not only addresses social issues, its unique design is lyrical, even musical!" Then the last fellow said, "Well, I very much like it. And I think that this kind of innovative architecture is exactly what we need … ." I couldn't believe it. We got the whole project approved, just as we designed it.❁

—Michael Black

Michael Black is an an award-winning architect who has designed residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal buildings, including three cohousing communities in California: Yulupa in Santa Rosa, Two Acre Wood in Sebastopol, and Valley Oaks Village in Chico.

BY ALEX DANIELL

The Meandering Paths of Arcadia



GRAHAM MELTZER

I've visited a lot of cohousing communities over the past two years, accompanying my partner who leads process and communication workshops. But nothing prepared me for eight-year-old Arcadia Cohousing in the small North Carolina city of Carrboro (called the "Paris of the Piedmont" because of its many artists and writers), which I visited on the bus tour of the National Cohousing Conference held in North Carolina last year. In Arcadia, 33 individual homes or duplex or triplex units and a common house are clustered on 5 acres of a 16-acre site with woods, fields, pond, and garden.

"Arcadia" refers to an imagined rural paradise in Greek, Roman, and Renaissance literature. And this particular Arcadia blew my mind—it was quite obvious that the place was well-named, and beauty in the built environment was important to these folks!

Most cohousing communities I've seen consist of standard housing units arranged in two-story townhouse-style duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and so on. Even when painted with slightly different, coordinated colors, these are basically neighborhoods where everything looks alike. There's more variety when the community is comprised of detached single-family homes or when the group lives in retrofitted existing buildings. However, usually you can tell at a glance that the place is cohousing, with every building cut from the same cloth.

But Arcadia looks and feels like a well-cared-for 19th-century village.

Arcadia is characterized by many meandering paths like this one, leading to the large common house.

DAVID SWANSON

The author was also charmed by Arcadia's many gates, arches, and vine-covered trellises.

Every house seems unique. The detached one and two-story houses and triplex units—in shades of yellow, pale blue, dark blue, soft green, dark red, golden cream—are set amidst meandering paths and alleyways, with overhanging trees and front-yard gardens. You see a kaleidoscope of sloping low roofs, peaked tall roofs, second-floor balconies, wrap-around porches, picket fences, garden gates, inviting benches, vine-covered archways, and overgrown trellises leading to woodsheds and back-door gardens.

It's all held together with a continuity of style, an architectural language taken from Carrboro's vernacular buildings: textile mill workers' homes in the 19th- and early 20th-centuries. Although the sizes, shapes, and colors of each home are quite different, the clapboard or board-and-batten exterior walls, barn red metal roofs, eave and trim details, and the same proportions of the casement windows appear on every dwelling. So among the meandering paths the eye is charmed by variety as well as by the subtle hint of connection. Though predominantly the creation of one person, Arcadia was designed in such a way that the neighborhood looks like a village that grew of its own accord over time. As one wanders around, seeing varied front yards plush with giant perennials and small trees, a porch rising up high on stuccoed pillars, a home set back among the bushes, it all just seems to make sense. And so different from every other cohousing community I'd seen.

This cohousing community is an example of how future communities should be designed, in my opinion. The houses are really just a step back a couple of generations to a time when homes were more modest than they are today, only these have the latest energy-saving technologies. All are passive-solar custom homes, some with solar hot water, some with photovoltaic systems, most with gardens. Most of the the individual units are modest, as small as 800 square feet, in both attached and detached residences. But the units are spaciously laid out, with kitchens, dining rooms, living rooms, and sunrooms that flow into each other, and bedrooms and utility rooms off to the sides. Angles vary, stairs and walls afford privacy between rooms, and rooms have generous windows. And the quality is higher and the costs lower than the homes of several generations ago, because these were all constructed around the same time. Built between 1994 and 1997, they sold at the time for between $90,000 and $200,000. The current market value is more than twice that.

This particular "Arcadia" blew my mind.

What most amazes me is how spacious the neighborhood feels, even with 33 houses clustered on only 5 acres, especially in a building climate where cookie-cutter housing must deliver maximum square feet, usually with minimum beauty. But Arcadia shows we can build densely in a way that seems spacious, and build efficiently in a way that seems organic.

As a builder and building renovator myself, I was intrigued: who designed this place? So I arranged to meet Arcadia's architect and founder, Giles Blunden. He turned out to be a tall, unassuming 64-year-old Australian who managed the project and designed two-thirds of the houses. I met him in the 800-square-foot off-grid house he shares with his wife Ginger. His house is the essence of simplicity—a Zen-like space.

DAVID SWANSON

Like other Arcadia buildings, the community's common house looks like it's part of an old-time village, but is only eight years old.

I learned that he drew inspiration for Arcadia from the broad roofed farm houses of Australia as well as the eclectic charm of small French and English villages. A master of collaborative design with other building and landscape architects, Giles appears to have a deep understanding of both human nature and of nature itself. He is a master of overseeing the natural interaction of human and natural forces so that they interact in ways that complement each other, and both move toward his vision of the completed project.

The Japanese have a way of building stone paths by first placing stones of importance in spots where the stones naturally need to be. Then they fill in the spaces in between the first stones with other paving stones. The idea is that the stones seem to "know" how to connect the whole, of their own accord.

DAVID SWANSON

Most homes have well-developed front-yard gardens with overhanging trees.

During the building of Arcadia, which obviously involved many complex issues, Giles liked to return to his small home and spend the evening with a pile of stones in his backyard, building a pathway to his woodshed. In homage to the unseen hand, it could be said that this woodshed pathway built itself. And in a way, Arcadia "built itself" too.

Giles began by creating architectural guidelines that resulted in continuity through a common architectural language, which helped keep construction costs relatively low. He set limitations in lot configurations around the winding paths, and this

relationships. Looking for mid-50's and 60's, non-smokers, healthy, financially secure. Must be experienced with harmonious, cooperative, consensus groups. After a six-month guest membership, members will buy a share of ownership if they choose to stay. We are part of a larger mixed-age eclectic community with community building, swimming pool, organic garden, trails and adjoining 46-acre spiritual retreat center. Contact *Anthony or Ann, 828-497-7102; or email: annariel@dnet.net*

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE, Tubac, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Urantia and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 110 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 Urantia. Organic gardens. Global Community Communications Schools, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Serious spiritual commitment required. *POB 4910, Tubac, AZ 85646; 520-603-9932; info@gccalliance.org; www.gccalliance.org; www.globalchangemusic.org; www.musiciansnjet.org*

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 at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977; rsffoffice@fellowship-community.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, initiative, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differences, making good

ecological choices, and having fun with our friends. We've been at this for 33 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*

TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. "Not the revolution, but you can see it from here." We are an income-sharing, non-violent, egalitarian community that's been living this lifestyle for 39 years. We would love to have you visit and right now, we're especially looking for more women members, as well as people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. We can offer you: work in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of non-violence, feminism and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live an ecological and income- sharing lifestyle. For information: *Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126; twinoaks@ic.org; www.twinoaks.org*

COMMUNITIES FORMING

ECO-FARM, Plant City, Florida. We are a family farm near Tampa, Florida working to create a sustainable, farm-based intentional community. 55 acres surrounded by ponds. One solar house with large community kitchen, laundry, large private room available; also two livable older trailers. Our interests are: sustainable living, alternative energies, drumming, environ-mental issues, farming, social justice. We farm vegetables and ornamental trees, and also have a small farm mechanic shop in which community members participate. If interested, check out our web site at *www.ecofarmfl.org 813-754-7374, ecofarmfl@yahoo.com*

FARM-BASED SMALL COMMUNITY, Outside Kansas City. Yes, Dorothy, even in Kansas! Seek sustainability, grow organic food, chickens. Have LLC and non-profit, small retreat center under Unity Church. Want to move off-grid and build alternative structures. Rehabbed 100-year-old barn is meeting space. *www.lightcenter.info; 785-255-4583.*

FARMSTEADING COMMUNITY, North Carolina. Argosy Farm, a secular, low-impact, back-to-the-land lifestyle within a supportive community environment, emphasizing natural building, organic food production, alternative energy, affordability. We're looking for skilled, physically, mentally and financially capable pioneers to help make this project a reality. *www.argosyfarm.com*

NANJEMOY COMMUNITY, Nanjemoy, Maryland. Community forming in southern Maryland on 50 acres of forested land on the beautiful Nanjemoy Creek. We seek to provide a healthy

prosperous home for members to be at peace with nature and provide service to the greater community in which we live. We practice democratic decision-making, economic sharing, non-violence, simple living and cooperation. Seeking housemates/members who are inspired by healthy, low-impact lifestyles, community service and group living. Children, families, single folks, pets...all are welcome at this time. If interested contact: *Robyn or Danielle, 301-246-4883; dadarolli@yahoo.com*

POPE VALLEY COMMUNITY, Pope Valley, California. Small developing community on 37 acres in the wilderness in Napa Country, two miles up a dirt road. Looking for new members who are spiritually minded. We are off the grid and have organic gardens. Our land is mainly forest. Visitors welcome. Contact Rory Skuce, 707-965-3994

TERRASANTE DESERT COMMUNITY, Tucson, Arizona. Looking for resourceful people who want to build community on 160 acres of vegetated Sonoran desert surrounded by State land trust. Explorations in alternative building, solar energy, permaculture, natural healing, quiet living, artistic endeavors. Abundant well water, good neighbors, mountain vistas, awesome sunsets. *Contact Bruce at 520-403-8430 or email: scher@ancientimages.com*

COMMUNITY HOUSES AND PROPERTY

GREAT OAK COHOUSING, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Lovely two-bedroom townhouse bordering meadow in very family friendly community. Light-filled with excellent natural ventilation, low energy costs and full basement (unfinished) with egress window. Upgrades include: air conditioning, Trex deck, attic fan, oak floors in bedrooms, bamboo and slate floors on first floor, custom window shades, maple cabinetry, Corian sink and countertops, Energy Star appliances. Asking $244,000 with built-out one-car garage; $231,500 w/o garage. See more at *www.gocoho.org or call Melissa Maurer at 734-276-1438 or email: Melissa@gocoho.org*

GREENWOOD FOREST, Mountain View, Missouri. 5-acre parcel with small house and storage shed in 1000-acre land trust community in beautiful Ozark mountains. Borders National scenic riverway. Ecological covenant to protect the forest, 15-20 families. House is wood frame, well insulated, wired for solar, finished outside and partially finished inside. Has bathroom and full stand-up loft. $42,000. *willowm@cybermesa.com*

GREENWOOD FOREST, Mountain View, Missouri. We have to leave our recently completed 1440 sq. ft. home on 20 acres due to unforeseen circumstances. House sits on cleared lot amidst old growth oak forest.

Parcel is privately deeded and is part of a 1000-acre community. Land is protected by covenants meant to preserve the forest and ensure a high quality of life. Adjacent to the gorgeous Jack's Fork National Scenic River. Independent living with great neighbors. Perfect for bird watching, canoeing, etc. Taxes about $40/yr. plus $200/yr. association fee. $127,900. *www.ozarkcountryhome.com*

NESS COMMUNITY, Russell, New York. Two cabins for sale. One a well-insulated, sunny, 550sf post and beam 1.5 story saltbox. New windows, south view over meadow, Adirondack siding, wood-paneled, tile kitchen/bath, sawdust toilet, gravity feed water system carried from well,rainwater collection w/outdoor shower. $15,000; Second cabin 360 sf on woods site, has woodstove, small kitchen, sawdust toilet, carry water from nearby well, second floor bedroom/study, $3,000. Simple living, off-grid homesteading on 100 acres forest and field on river. Walk in from parking lot on road (can drive when necessary). Canton-Potsdam area has strong alternative and Amish communities, four universities, close to Ottawa, Lake Ontario and Adirondack Park. *Patricia 315-386-2609; peagreen@earthlink.net*

UNION ACRES, Whittier, North Carolina. 2.1 acre wooded lot for sale, $26,000. Near Smokey Mountain National Park. Underground power, small creek frontage, southeast exposure and views. Enjoy seven acres of common land, community center and pool. Environmentally aware neighbors and covenants. *www.unionacres.org; Caroline 828-497-4964.*

UNION ACRES, Whittier, North Carolina. Shelter for barter/rent at homestead in exchange for help with organic gardens, goat herd and painting chores. Utilities not included. Call or email *Caroline 828-497-4964 ccarrstar@verizon.net*

VILLAGE OF HARMONY, New Mexico. Mini homesteads, 1-10 acres, high desert, private, no zoning, owner financing. *villageofharmony.blogspot.com/ 505-307-0005, 505-379-6208.*

CONSULTANTS

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

SACRED ARCHITECTURE'S HARMONIZING INFLUENCES. Buildings can generate vibrant, life supporting influences. Visit: *www.vastu-design.com.*

INTERNS, RESIDENCIES

CARROLL COUNTY, GEORGIA. Interns and/or potential farm community members wanted to work on organic farm. Developing a sustainable and diverse farm community including vegetables, fruit, small livestock and people. Currently have a vegetable garden, 140 blueberry bushes, 24 muscadine vines and assorted fruit trees. House is Energy Star passive solar dwelling with a gray water system and composting toilet. In-person trial visit to enable both parties to see if it's a good mix. Those interested please contact *Myra at 770-258-3344 or 404-895-7057.*

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Community Living. April 1 to November 1, 2007. If you love gardening and would like to gain experience in organic farming, food processing, tempeh production, homestead maintenance and construction skills, consensus decision-making, group and interpersonal process. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for ten weeks or longer. More information about the Sandhill Farm Intentional Community and applying for an internship: *660-883-5543; interns@sandhill-farm.org; www.sandhillfarm.org*

INTERNS WANTED IN ONTARIO, CANADA. Looking for serious-minded interns for training and education in all building trades, including carpentry (inside work as well as framing), plumbing, electric, tile laying, etc. Also work in the woods trail-cutting, lumbering, milling of lumber on portable sawmill. Participants will be able to build their own homes with the knowledge received, but must be willing to work (40 hours+ a week) and learn. No day dreamers! Our setting on 70 acres of land two

hours east of Toronto in a rural secluded area. We only take two interns at a time, you live in our family-type setting. Main business is a 27 bed retirement home. Must be comfortable living with old folks. Duration recommended 2-6 months. Free room and board and $420 Canadian a month. *Call Ralph at 613-475-4846 or gandrmgt@xplornet.com*

PEOPLE LOOKING

ENVIRONMENTALIST, 62, seeks community. My biggest problem is security. I was politically active, but am now retired. I don't drive for many reasons. I like walking, bikes, buses. I want to sell my house and buy or build a house in a community where I can live out my retirement years in peace and quiet. *303-455-7287.*

HERMIT IN HOLLYWOOD, CA with over 20 years living in Catholic Worker communities with the homeless and people with AIDS, seeks people on a deeply spiritual journey interested in community. *Dave 323-460-4071.*

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

WHY PAY RENT OR MAKE MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, when you can live rent free? The Caretaker Gazette contains property caretaking/housesitting openings, advice and information for property caretakers, housesitters and landowners. Published since 1983. Subscribers receive 800+ property caretaking opportunities each year, worldwide. Some estate management positions start at $50,000/yr., plus benefits. Subscriptions: $29/yr. *The Caretaker Gazette, POB 4005, Bergheim, TX 78004; http://www.caretaker.org*

RESOURCES

FEDERATION OF EGALITARIAN COMMUNITIES (FEC). LIVE YOUR VALUES, LEARN NEW SKILLS. For 25 years, the FEC has welcomed new members to our groups based on cooperation, ecology, fairness, and nonviolence. No joining fees required, just a willingness to join in the work. We share income from a variety of cottage industries. For more information: *www.thefec.org; fec@ic.org; 417-679-4682; or send $3 to FEC, HC-3, Box 3370-CM00, Tecumseh, MO 65760.*

TRAVELS WITH ZEPHYR

(continued from p. 32)

rubber gloves, apron, and boots, I helped season, weigh, and seal packages of tofu. On another occasion, up at the warehouse, I was a part of an assembly line packing tofu packages into boxes, which were then stacked on palletts for shipment.

Twin Oaker Coyote presented the labor oreo in a playfully rebellious style, describing the community's labor-credit system, which was inspired by B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist novel, *Walden Two*. The community's three planners and its many area managers determine how much work needs to be done in the community businesses (hammock-making, tofu-making, and book indexing) to generate X amount of income, as well as the work needed to run the community itself, in gardening and the dairy (they grow and raise 50 percent of their own food!), the kitchen, the laundry, cleaning shifts, automotive repair, childcare, and so on. They then set an hours-per-week work quota for each member: currently it's 42. Members fill out weekly labor sheets for their work requests and preferences: both the weekly quotas and people's requests are taken into account when their weekly worksheets are scheduled. The people scheduling the work try to accommodate as many requests as possible, but everyone is required to work one kitchen clean-up shift a week, like it or not. If a member isn't scheduled for the full work quota, then it's his or her responsibility to find extra work. Work credits can be bartered among members for personal services or can be accrued to purchase hammocks or go on vacation.

In separate oreos, Sky and Pam informed us how Twin Oaks governs itself through its Planner-Manager system. While the full community is the final arbiter of any disputes, Twin Oaks operates with three Planners who act as an executive committee. Managers run spe-

cific areas of the community—the hammock shop, tofu hut, auto repair shop, kitchen, garden, and so on. Similarly-themed work areas are grouped together in Councils (for example, the Agriculture Council has one representative each from the Garden, Orchard, Bees, and Farm areas). Managers report to Councils who in turn report to the Planners, and the Planners oversee the broadest level of communal decision-making. Policies are decided by community input via meetings and written public opinions, with the Planners making the final decision based upon that input. As an income-sharing community, Twin Oaks is part of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC), communities that value nonviolence, egalitarianism, and participatory decision-making. Their frugal living, equal incomes, and 501(d) tax status (in which every member shares a single income tax form) allows every member to be just below the poverty line in the eyes of the government, which qualifies them for free or subsidized health coverage from the State of Virginia.

By the end of my service I had finally learned how to pull productively on an udder.

Because I'm interested in how each community deals with interpersonal problems, I asked about conflict resolution. Twin Oaks has a Process Team to help members resolve their conflicts, through effective third-party mediation, face-to-face communication, and support groups. Occasionally, for a big enough disturbance, a community-wide feedback session is scheduled. Opinions are aired and perspectives are shared. If follow-up is necessary, then a contract between the individual and the community may be designed. In extremely rare situations, if the contract is repeatedly broken, the offender is asked to leave, although this has happened only a handful of times in the community's 40-year history. Twin Oaker Sky provided some insights by pointing out what he considered the three main sources of conflict for any community: 1) different senses of obligation and responsibility to the policies and agreements; 2) different priorities and values; and 3) different communication styles, e.g., in-your-face-screaming vs. tactful-

but-firm, etc. He also observed that feedback is just information; his suggestion was to ignore the mode of communication, and instead absorb and process the information. I have also noticed two other tricky issues as sources of conflict in communities: resentment against slackers and enmity between ex-lovers.

Twin Oaks has an impressive work ethic. While I was there, a 3-day power outage caused by a Valentine's Day snowstorm poignantly displayed their work ethic as well as community solidarity. Whenever and wherever possible, work continued. The prime example of solidarity was at the dairy barn, where the machines were disabled and lots of people were needed to milk ten cows by hand twice a day. Though volunteers came in an ebb and flow, the procession was always steady enough to get the job done. Most of the time there was one person per udder. I volunteered a couple of times, and by the end of my service I had finally learned how to pull productively on an udder.

And Twin Oaks' party culture was epitomized by Validation Day, a holiday they created to replace Valentine's Day. Instead of glorifying romance and family connections, they honor agape, wherein everyone and everything is loved. This year the celebration included a Getting Real game, a giant Twister game, and a cabaret where couples playfully sang love duets. I found very endearing their ritual of giving individual appreciation cards instead of valentines. Afterwards there was a dance, a rocking extravaganza replete with kissing booths. Everyone was decked out in a variety of costumes: classy, exotic (and sometimes erotic). Some were in masks, others in lingerie from Victoria's Secret. I donned my tie-dye T-shirt and beret and boogied the night away. I had fun swing-dancing with Valerie, and though couples danced together, mostly everyone danced with everyone else, moving around like some amorphous multi-person organism. I thoroughly enjoyed this bit of Mardi Gras revelry in the boonies of Virginia!

I thoroughly enjoyed this bit of Mardi Gras revelry in the boonies of Virginia.

In fact, I thoroughly enjoyed both visits, though each community had different economic systems and strengths.

Earthaven seemed to focus on alternative energy and natural/green building, while Twin Oaks seemed to focus on income-sharing and food self-sufficiency. I thank them both for their hospitality.

In Part Three I'll describe my visits to three closely affiliated communities in Missouri: Dancing Rabbit, Sandhill Farm, and Red Earth Farms.❁

Zephyr Twombly is a former high school history teacher who is fascinated by all forms of spirituality and creative expression. He enjoys writing and playing music and hopes that artists worldwide can inspire and transform our consumerist culture into a more sustainable one.

DOES IT REALLY MATTER WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE?

(continued from p. 43)

can match and nothing can work too well, because that would be too 'professional.' While this aesthetic can come across as creative, anti-consumerist, and perhaps even empowering, it can also be viewed as chaotic and amateurish."

Is It Economical? Ecological?

Some communities may want to be more beautiful, for example, but are faced with the reality of working with inherited buildings far from most people's liking and sometimes a bit too far gone to truly dress up much.

"Living in 'legacy' structures that do not truly represent the aesthetic values of this community is difficult," observes J. Brush of Cedar Moon. "Challenges like use of space and keeping the kitchen clean are exacerbated by design choices and aesthetics we would not have made. But in those situations we make the best of it and our community soul is calmer and wiser."

Sometimes going that extra step and making a resource or piece of infra-structure pleasing to the eye simply costs too much or demands too much time. "We started off putting ecological considerations first," notes Kosha Joubert of Ecovillage Sieben Linden in Poppau, Germany. "If, by chance, the most feasible solution with the lowest ecological footprint was also beautiful, we were delighted, but this was often not the case."

"Sometimes pressing issues take over—the need to conserve water, electric power, auto fuel—and these take precedence in discussion and action," comment Adele and Eugene Jaroslaw of Westwood Cohousing.

"With limited resources, we still struggle about when to prioritize beauty and when other things," says Hank Obermayer at Mariposa Grove.

Jaya Helin of Ananda agrees that the basic issue of resources sometimes must dictate priorities. "We may all agree that beauty is a good thing, but how do we implement this and how much time, money, and energy should we invest in aesthetics when so many other needs must be addressed?" he asks. "I think we have all faced this."

But he adds that Ananda communities are still focusing on aesthetics more and more—when the situation allows. "In the early years of each Ananda community, when projects by necessity demanded low cost, our emphasis was upon cleanliness, removal of disorder, restoration, and lots of new paint. As time passed to allow new construction, improved landscapes or remodeling, aesthetics became a component of our desires."

"I guess I'm one of those artists in the community who thinks that no matter what the cost, safety, or other factors," asserts Elana Kann at Westwood, "there's always a way to bring a sense of beauty into the design, as well as being sensitive to other considerations."

A Distraction?

Still others feel that even if resources abound, getting too caught up in aesthetics may only prove to be an unhealthy distraction from more pressing issues.

"TEN MOST BEAUTIFUL" COMMUNITIES IN THE WORLD

although some do not have photos or an English-language option. Because our readers may be less familiar with communities in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, we've described these briefly.

Asia, Africa, and the Middle East:

DUS, Bangladesh. Nominated as a wonderful example of a full-featured traditional village whose residents use permaculture practices and which appears to be economically viable. (no website found) ***Moshav Yodfat***, Galilee, Israel. Nominated for its "incredible landscape and because it's a mystic place of ancient history," with a mountaintop setting and view of the Galilee Valley, 100-year-old olive trees, organic orchards and flower gardens, and stone homes and Beduoin tents. (no website found). ***Wongsanit Ashram***, Ongkharak, Thailand. An intentional community and ashram in the Southeast Asian rainforest with traditional bamboo and thatched-roofed buildings dedicated to simple living, social justice, and spiritual practice: *sulaksivaraksa.org/web/network24.php; www.wongsanit-ashram.org*. **Yoff**, Senegal. Site of the Third International Eco-City Conference in 1996, Yoff is a 600-year-old traditional fishing village with a highly cohesive social and cultural structure: *www.rosneath.com.au/ipc6/ch06/mack2/index.html*.

South America:

ABRA 144. *(Aldeia Bioregional Amazonica)*, Amazonas State, Brazil. *abra144.org;* ***Eco Truly Ashram***, near Lima, Peru: *www.vrindavan.org/trulys*; ***Lothlorien***, Vale do Capão, Bahia, Brazil: *www.lothlorien.org*; ***Terra Mirim***, Simoes Filho, Bahia, Brazil: *homepage.mac.com/prematara/Brazil/PhotoAlbum120*; ***TIBA (Tecnologia Intuitiva e Bio-Arquitetura)***, Bom Jardim, Brazil: *www.caferomano.org/qualivida; www.tiba.org/br.*

Australia and New Zealand:

Awaawaroa Bay Ecovillage, Weiheke Island, New Zealand: *www.awaawaroa.org*; ***Bundagen Co-operative***, New South Wales, Australia *(no website found)*; ***Dharmananda***, New South Wales, Australia (no website found); ***Earthsong Ecovillage***, Auckland, New Zealand: *www.earthsong.org.nz*; ***Kookaburra Park Eco-Village***, Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia: *kookaburra.eco-village.com.au*; ***Tui Land Trust***, Wainui Bay, Aotearoa, New Zealand: *tuitrust.org.nz.*

Europe:

Bakken Cohousing, Humelebaek, Denmark: *www.schemataworkshop.com (click "Bakken")*; ***Camphill Botton Village***, North Yorkshire, England: *www.camphill.org.uk/botton.htm*; ***Comune de Bagnaia***, Tuscany, Italy: *www.ecovillaggi.it/rive/bagnaia/informazioni*; ***Christiania***, Copenhagen, Denmark: *www.christiania.org*; ***Ecovillage Eva Lanxmeer***, Culembourg, Netherlands: *www.vibavereniging.nl/detail_page*; ***Ecovillage Gaensebdorf***, Vienna, Austria (no website found); ***Hertha Ecovillage***, Herskind, Denmark: *losnet.dk/fotos_from_hertha*; ***Munksoegaard***, Roskilde, Denmark: *www.munksoegaard.dk*; ***Snabegaard Cohousing/Vrads Sande Ashram***, Jutland, Denmark: *www.vrads.dk/vradssande.htm*; ***Svanholm***, Horns Herred, Denmark: *svanholm.dk*; ***Vauban Eco-Community,*** Freiburg, Germany: *(no website found)*; ***ZEGG***, Belzig, Germany: *www.zegg.de.*

North America

Arcosanti, central Arizona: *www.arcosanti.org*; ***Christ's Church of the***

Golden Rule, Willits, California *(no website found)*; ***Du-Ma***, Eugene, Oregon: *www.efn.org/~dlamp*; ***Earth-Art Village***, Crestone, Colorado: *www.earthart.org*; ***Greenfield Ranch***, Mendocino County, California: *greenfieldranch.org*; ***Krutsio***, Ensenada, Mexico: *(no website found)*; ***Monan's Rill***, Santa Rosa, California: *(no website found)*.

Cohousing Communities in North America

Hearthstone Village in Denver (*denvercohousing.com*) was mentioned the most, with three nominations. Three other communities were nominated twice: ***Quayside Village***, Vancouver, British Columbia: *quaysidevillage.googlepages.com*; ***Tierra Nueva***, Oceano, California: *home.pacbell.net/tncohol*; and ***Berkeley Cohousing***, Berkeley, California: *housing.barringtoncollective.org/Berkeley*.

The following cohousing communities received one nomination each: ***Arcadia***, Carrboro, North Carolina, *blundenstudio.com*; ***Bellingham Cohousing***, Happy Valley, Washington, *bellinghamcohousing.org*; ***Prairie Sky Cohousing Cooperative***, Calgary, Alberta, *prairiesky.ab.ca*; ***Cantine's Island***, Saugerties, New York, *cantinesisland.home.att.net*; ***Cobb Hill***, Hartland, Vermont, *www.cobbhill.org*; ***Doyle Street***, Emeryville, California, *emeryville-cohousing.org*; ***East Lake Village***, Decatur, Georgia, *eastlakecommons.org*; ***Frog Song***, Cotati, California, *cotaticohousing.org*; ***Island Cohousing***, West Tisbury, Massachusetts, *icoho.org*; ***Jackson Place***, Seattle, Washington, *seattlecohousing.org*; ***Marsh Commons***, Arcata, California, *www.marshcommons.org*; ***Muir Commons***, Davis, California, *www.muircommons.org*; ***Nevada City Cohousing***, Nevada City, California, *www.nccoho.org*; ***Pacifica***, Carrboro, North Carolina, *pacifica.cohonc.org*; ***Pioneer Valley***, Amherst, Massachusetts, *cohousing.com*; ***Pleasant Hill Cohousing***, Pleasant Hill, California, *phch.org*; ***Puget Ridge***, Seattle, Washington, *scn.org/pugetridgecohousing*; ***Sharingwood***, Snohomish, Washington, *sharingwood.org*; ***Silver Sage***, Boulder, Colorado, *silversagevillage.com*; ***Songaia***, Bothel, Washington, *www.songaia.com*; ***Swan's Market***, Oakland, California, *swansway.com*; ***Trillium Hollow***, Portland, Oregon, *trillium-hollow.org*; ***Two Echo***, Brunswick, Maine, *two-echo.org*; ***Vashon Island***, Vashon, Washington, *vashoncohousing.org*; ***Windsong***, Langley, British Columbia, *windsong.bc.ca*.

And that's our poll, folks. We hope you enjoyed it.❁

Diana Leafe Christian is editor of Communities *magazine.*

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PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

(continued from p. 80)

(a place) and instead emphasize the interactive activity of being "in community" or the relationship inherent in the verb "commune": *To share one's intimate thoughts or feelings with someone, especially when the exchange is on a spiritual level.* And that brings me back to my personal story.

My entire adult life, I've always enjoyed connecting with people at a level that goes deeper than what's ordinary. I always enjoy some small talk and learning about family members and accomplishments, but what really captures my interest is the conversations that explore undelying beliefs and values, people's priorities, and identifying where they find passion in life. I suppose I do a pretty good job of being open-minded and nonjudgmental, because this exploration seems to work with people from all walks of my life: hometown friends, college buddies, coworkers, social activists, and scores of people in the communities I visit.

Since my cancer diagnosis, what has been remarkable about my interactions with family and friends is the quality and depth of our exchanges. I'm hearing much deeper and heartfelt appreciations and affirmations than I've ever experienced before, and it's helping me better understand how I come across to others and how they have felt served or nurtured by my work or by their experience of our connection. This outpouring of love is now regularly bringing tears of joy to my eyes.

This realization also reminds me of my first ten years working with the FIC, starting in 1988. Back then, we "regulars" had very intimate feedback and sharing circles that seemed to knit us tightly together as a geographically dispersed community of communitarian activists. My sense is that our feeling of unity and magic has dissipated considerably since we dropped those sharing rituals and lost some of our sense of intimacy and connectedness. Over the years other things have changed as well, so there may have been other influences—but the decrease in intimacy is the primary difference that stands out for me.

The lesson here for communities, I hope, is to make it a priority to find ways for members to reflect and share deeply with each other so that the magical connecting glue of community has a real chance to take hold. As a culture we seem much better at sharing criticisms (which can be valuable!) than appreciations, so we need to develop norms and rituals that shift the balance in the direction of connection and intimacy. One of the most healing affirmations anywhere is "I love you, dear friend." Say it, say it often, and mean it. Spreading love is how we can heal our selves, our communities, and the planet.❁

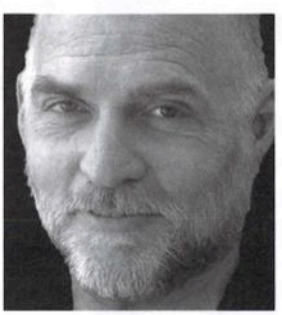
Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 34 years, and has been on the road for 19 years visiting communities—asking about their visions and realities, taking photos, and in general exploring what makes them tick. He provides all sorts of resources about intentional communities in an effort to convey the vision and passion that drives the movement, and he loves to tell stories about lessons learned and what works. He aspires to heal soon so he can get back on the road to share more of his unique and inspiring experiences with the world.

Community, Love, and Healing

In late June I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, the ultimate confirmation coming via a rather invasive abdominal biopsy surgery from which I have nearly fully recovered at this point.

And what a shock to my reality! It's certainly provided new motivation to look more deeply into where I find meaning in life, and to reassess my plans and priorities.

I am very happy to report that an unexpected side benefit of the surgery has been that the surgeon shifted a few things around so that my entrails can work more smoothly, and (apparently) as a result, I have been virtually pain-free since the surgery. I am now on a basic macrobiotic diet, pursuing a modest exercise program, and exploring all sorts of alternative therapies. So far the parts seem to be fitting together rather nicely. I am getting stronger and gaining my appetite every day, and am looking forward to gaining back some of the 35 pounds I lost over the past few months. Although mainstream medical statistics say that 98 percent of the folks diagnosed with pancreatic cancer are gone within a year, I look forward to being among the other 2 percent and, ever the overachiever, I aspire to enjoy the experience of becoming an inspiring example of a contemporary medical miracle. In the meantime I'm also getting lots of help wrapping up many loose ends, writing my will, and getting things in order, "just in case." I'm also deeply grateful for the bounty of blessings and inspiring adventures that I've enjoyed my entire life.



BY GEOPH KOZENY

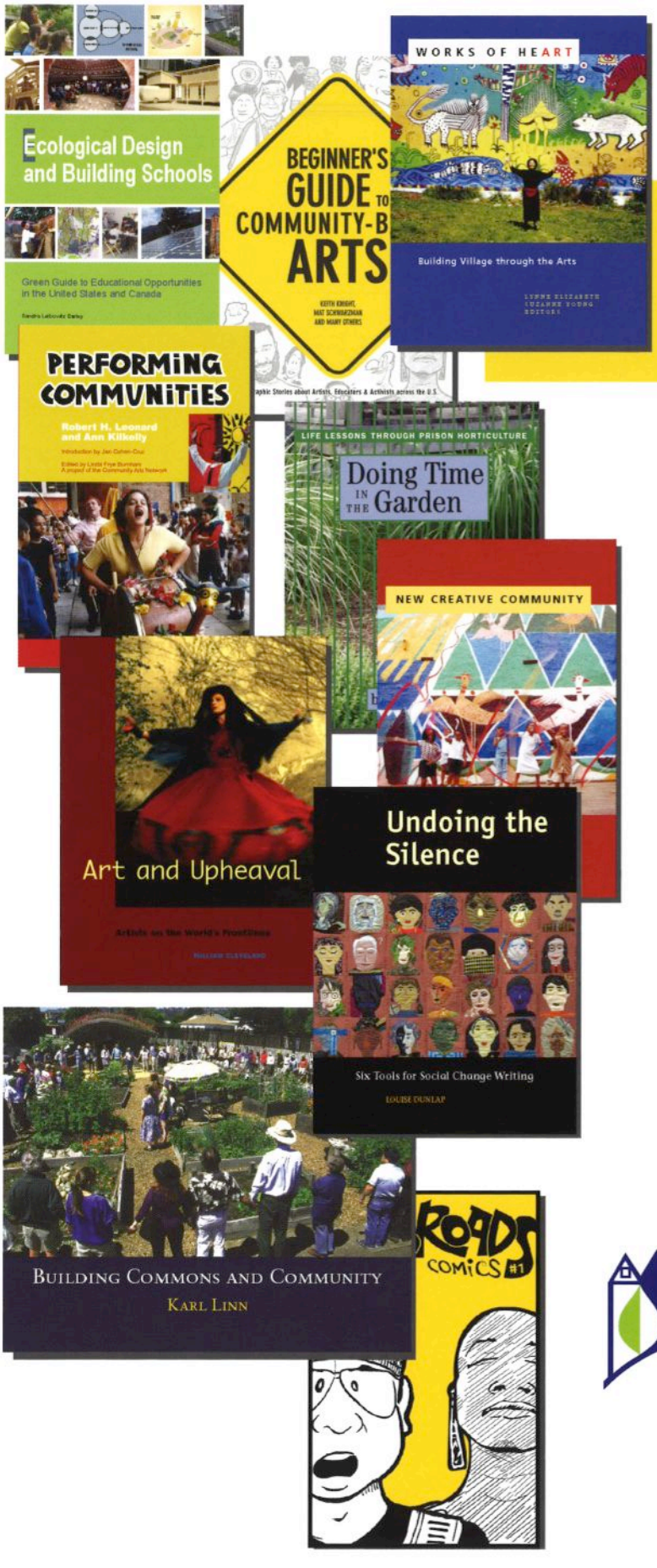
I aspire to become an inspiring example of a contemporary medical miracle.

My doctors are thoroughly impressed with my incision's healing and somewhat puzzled by my total lack of pain and my rapidly growing energy levels and appetite. I think the combination of my strong vision and will—plus (especially) being bombarded by the loving thoughts and prayers from literally hundreds of kind, loving folks—is something about which they understand very little. I feel truly blessed and awed by the outpouring of love and care and support that has manifested in my life these past few weeks, and to me that really highlights the absolute best thing about intentional community living: consciously cultivating deep and connected relationships.

In my first video, I made a statement about how to evaluate the success of a community: *There are two simple questions to check for what matters most. Do the members whole-heartedly believe in the system they're using, and are they participating with enthusiasm? No amount of theory, dogma, or peer pressure can substitute for clarity of vision, open mindedness, good communication, the spirit of cooperation, common sense, and plain old hard work.*

I still think that's good advice, although I left out a critically important piece. Without having solid and deep interpersonal connections underlying it all, the experience of community would be greatly diminished. It's useful to think less of "community" as a noun

(continued on p. 79)



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