

COOK ONE MEAL AND EAT FOR A WEEK

# COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

## GREEN BUILDING

Denmark's  
Strawbale Village

A Kibbutz Battles  
the Bureaucracy

The Zero-Waste  
Chicken Tractor

The Marriage  
of Natural Building with  
Conventional Building

Summer 2008 • Issue #139

\$7.00 / \$8.00 Canada



communities.ic.org



## SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook

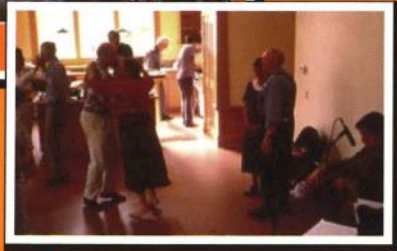


"At last, here is a guidebook to a new way of aging for older Americans ..."

-Kathy Goss, Journalist, review for Amazon.com

# SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook



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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

– Lisa Anthony,  
Second Journey  
secondjourney.org

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](http://www.cohousingco.com)

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

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



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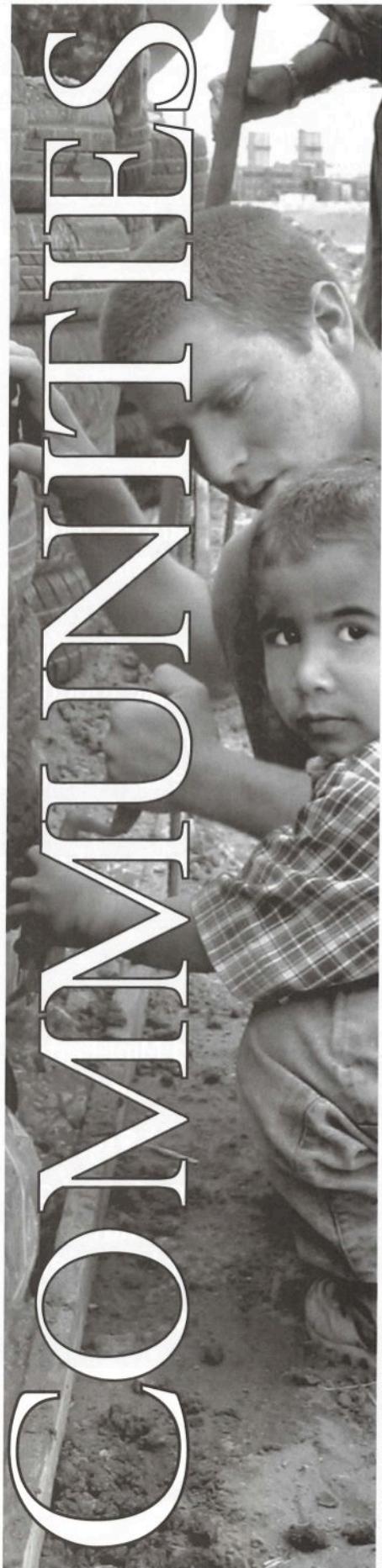
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- The Ultimate Challenge in Building Green—*Capra Carruba*

## 46 Our Zero-Waste Chicken Camper

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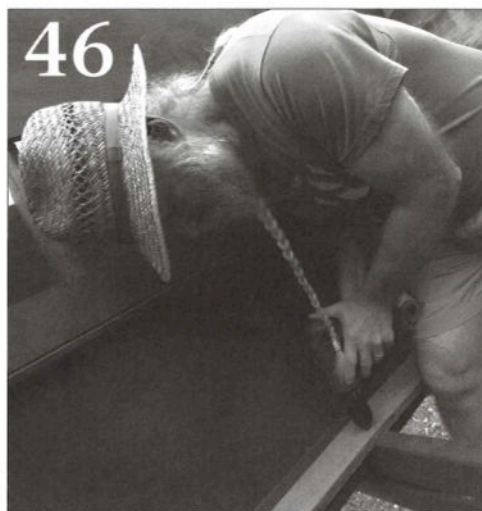
- The Center for Creative Ecology: Kibbutz Lotan's Educational Programs
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*Brandy Gallagher and Elke Cole.*





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Photo: *Jan Steinman*



# COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

## EDITOR

Alyson Ewald (*Red Earth Farms*)

## LAYOUT

Cynthia Lee Rose (*Earthaven*)

## PHOTO & ILLUSTRATIONS EDITOR

Ann-Marie Stillion

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Ann-Marie Stillion

Billie Miracle (*WomanShare*)

## PHOTOS

Birthe Andersen (*Fri og Fro*), Elke Cole (*O.U.R. Ecovillage*), Anne Frobeen, Mark Lakeman, Brent Levin (*Emerald Earth*), Bill Metcalf, Jennifer Morrell, Niels Peter Nielsen (*Fri og Fro*), Darius Richmond, Tom Robinson, John Schinnerer (*La'akea*), Eli Spevak, Jan Steinman (*EcoReality*), Mojohito Tchudi, Carol Wagner (*EcoReality*), Dona Willoughby (*La'akea*)

## COPYEDITING

Marie Marcella

## PROOFREADING

Molly Hatfield

## BUSINESS MANAGER

John Stroup

## OFFICE MANAGER

Tony Sirna (*Dancing Rabbit*)

## CIRCULATION MANAGER

McCune Porter (*Twin Oaks*)

## EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Deborah Altus

Laird Schaub (*Sandhill Farm*)

Tony Sirna (*Dancing Rabbit*)

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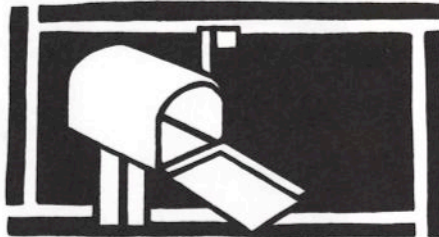
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# LETTERS



Send your comments to [editor@ic.org](mailto:editor@ic.org) or *Communities*, 81868 Lost Valley Ln. Dexter, OR 97431. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

## Enter a State of Grace

Dear *Communities*,

After keynote speaking on the State of Grace Document at the Women Living in Community Conference in Asheville, North Carolina, I was introduced to *Communities* magazine. I love what you're doing and thought it might be a marriage of two efforts to mention the State of Grace Document to your readers.

As you know, community living is an exciting, yet sometimes challenging, endeavor and the State of Grace Document is a tool that addresses how we can better build, sustain and transition our relationships within our communities. It is written by those in the relationship, whether between two people or an entire community, and is very personal and explicit. It takes into consideration each individual involved in the relationship, their personal preferences and expectations, and the nature of the relationship—be it between family members, roommates, colleagues, or communities.

These Documents are being used in many countries around the world and often replace or enhance legal contracts. People who are drawn to living in community often don't resonate with traditional legal contracts because they start with a premise of mistrust. The State of Grace Document helps you build a better foundation, and more importantly, it acts as a tool to help you return to a peaceful place if

the need arises. To download a sample Document or the tools to create your own, go to [www.stateofgracedocument.com](http://www.stateofgracedocument.com).

Maureen K. McCarthy  
Flat Rock, North Carolina

## Let's See Some Poetry

Dear Editor,

I read in the FIC eNews your request for suggestions of what to print on the last one or two pages of the magazine.

I would love to see this space devoted to poetry about community. Poetry is a wonderful way to express things that are difficult to express in more ordinary language. It's also suitable for reading out loud to a group—sharing poetry is a delightful community activity.

You could introduce your poetry page in the same issue as an article describing the uses of poetry in community—how it can be used for community bonding time and for expressing communal ideals—and encouraging your audience to submit poems.

Elizabeth Barrette  
Charleston, Illinois

Dear Elizabeth,

We've decided to put your suggestion into practice as a trial run with this issue.

Readers, have a look at the final pages of this magazine, which include poems by Kiesa Kay and Elizabeth herself, and let us know what you think by emailing [editor@ic.org](mailto:editor@ic.org).

If you'd prefer to see something else on the last pages, we'd love to hear your ideas.

-Editor

## Erratum

In "Turning People on to Community" (*Communities* #137), it was stated that Nancy Lanphear worked to oversee the Songaia Cohousing community food program. Nancy works as only one member of a committee called the Fabulous Food Folks. Nancy comments, "in terms of regional and local buying and the support of local farmers, Marilyn Hanna-Myrick is my mentor."



## Good to Go Though the Boat Has a Hole in It, We're Plenty See-worthy

It's once again time for our annual inspection, where we haul this magazine into dry dock and examine the numbers from stem to stern. While we called on exotic ports in 2007, delivered valuable cargo, and saw some breathtaking sights, we also ran into some rough weather and the good ship *Communities* ended the year with its operating budget nearly \$8000 below the water line—about the same as the year before. While that's not good news, we've completed some major overhauls and we're committed to keeping this boat in circulation for the immediate future.

Here are the highlights of our financial review. Our total expenses rose 5%, with 8% bumps in production labor and fulfillment expenses leading the way. On the income side, the gross totals (less earmarked donations) were up a modest 2%. While subscriptions rose a healthy 12% and newsstand sales were right behind at plus 10%, our overall

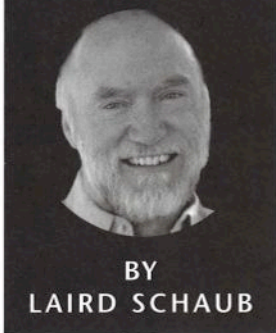
gains were suppressed by disappointing ad revenues, which inexplicably fell 12%. Turning this last number around will be John Stroup's first order of business (see below for an introduction to our new Business Manager).

### And When the Music Stops...

It was a big year for crew changes. In addition to three different people trying on the role of Photo Editor, far and away the biggest shift occurred in the fall, when Diana Christian stepped down as Editor after a 14-year run. Shortly after that, Patricia Greene announced that she'd be letting go of the Ad Manager role, after nearly a decade of keeping our sails filled with advertising revenue. Parke Burgess served in the freshly created role of Managing Editor for exactly one year—starting January 1 and retiring December 31.

Amidst all these personnel adjustments, we neared the end of two years of major funding support for effecting

### PUBLISHER'S NOTE



BY  
LAIRD SCHAUB

*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.*

## Kakwa Ecovillage

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**Communities Editorial Policy**

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

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

We do not intend to promote one kind of community over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related to the theme of community living, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community 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, 81868 Lost Valley Ln. Dexter, OR 97431; 541-937-2567, ext. 116; editor@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.

*John Stroup, Business Manager, jwstroup@ic.org; 573-468-8822; 10385 Magnolia Road, Sullivan, MO 63080.*

**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.

quality improvements. It was time for an evaluation of *Communities*, and we made that the main focus of our organizational meetings in Austin last October. It was time to assess what progress we'd made and to test our commitment to keeping the magazine afloat despite operating losses in fourteen of our sixteen years at the helm.

**Steady as She Goes**

The board considered four different scenarios: 1) closing it down; 2) operating it as an online publication only; 3) staying the course, with incremental

improvements as we could afford them; and 4) committing to a quantum jump in quality and scope, springboarding from the good things we've accomplished the last two years. (This scheme was predicated on the Hollywood concept that if we build it, they will come—meaning subscribers, newsstand sales, and advertisers.)

In the end it was an easy choice. We love the magazine and it fits well with our mission to deliver the tools and inspiration of cooperative living to the widest possible audience. Nobody wanted to cease publishing; we had no

*In the Interim...*

Summer is a time for building. Plants grow taller, animals fatten on the bounty, and people make shelters for themselves and their kin.

My family is no exception—our tiny new daughter is growing fast, and we're busily building a roof to cover her head. After two issues as Interim Editor for *Communities*, I'm stepping down to help my partner create a home and to care for little Cole, who was born as this issue was being laid out.

With gratitude for all I've learned, and apologies for any shortcomings, I place the Editor's reins in the capable hands of Chris Roth. May you continue to enjoy the ideas and images offered in these pages.

And happy building!

In community,

Alyson Ewald



*Cole Mazziotti is welcomed by her feline big brother and her mother Alyson, outgoing Interim Editor.*

MARK MAZZIOTTI



business model for how to succeed as an electronic publication (this may change in the coming years however, so we'll keep a weather eye out for a sea change on this); and we weren't prepared to take the plunge for the big-splash scenario. That left staying the course, and a renewed commitment to maintaining *Communities* as a print publication.

### Three Heads Are Better Than One

Building on the work begun in fall 2006 to redesign the magazine's management structure, the FIC Board blessed the concept of operating with a three-person Production Team—composed of the Editor, Art Director, and Business Manager. As of this writing, we have just announced that the Business Manager (which will include the portfolio that Patricia Greene held as Ad Manager) will be John Stroup of Sullivan, Missouri. By the time you're reading this, we will have also selected

the new Editor—replacing Interim Editor Alyson Ewald, who ably filled Diana's shoes by laboring right up until the birth of her first child—and our new Art Director (combining the jobs of Photo Editor and Layout Manager). You can look for profiles of the new Production Team in the fall issue of *Communities*.

This will be our first year under the new team and new management system. To help make the most of this initiative, we have recently been blessed with donor support to host a Production Team summit in both this year and next, so that they can have a face-to-face crew meeting and collaborate with key Board members and FIC staff to plot the magazine's future course. It is our hope that all this coordination will translate directly into the quality of the publication that docks in your mailbox every three months. We expect to be plenty "see-worthy," and we hope you'll agree.✿

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## COMMUNITIES Magazine 2007 Financial Statement

### Expenses

Printing	\$20,742
Office overhead	5,939
Production labor	34,090
Fulfillment	13,870
Office expenses	2,549
Travel	622
Marketing	2,403

**Total Expenses 80,215**

### Income

Subscriptions	\$30,789
Single issues	900
Back issues	3,617
Distributor sales	12,260
Advertising	13,931
Royalties	562
Donations	10,544

**Total Income 72,603**

**Net Profit (Loss)(\$7,612)**

### COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES:

#### Politics in Community — Fall 2008

Just in time for election season, this issue will explore how communities, cooperative groups, and their members relate to the subject of politics. We'll hear from communarians who have become involved in local, national, and international politics, as well as from those who have focused on improving internal community politics. We'll learn how cooperative movements and groups are contributing to political change and helping bring bioregionalism, ecology, new models of decision-making, and a focus on sustainability into the mainstream. We'll explore politics on a human scale, and how it may change the world. [communities@ic.org](mailto:communities@ic.org); 541-937-2567, ext. 116.



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[www.lukascommunity.org](http://www.lukascommunity.org)

## New Norcia Community

### Australia's Monastic Town

Vespers at New Norcia's Benedictine Monastery—the very words conjure up images of incense and chanting monks in some movie or novel set in the Middle Ages. Yet here I sit, listening as New Norcia's black-habited monks chant Psalm 112, “to the childless wife He gives a home and gladdens her heart with children,” followed by Psalm 113a, “the Lord will bless those who fear Him.” *Is this the 21st or 19th century?* I wonder. *Do people still think like this?* Then the monks chant Psalm 24, “O Lord ... do not remember the sins of my youth,” and I wonder, *If I have a quiet word with the Abbot, could they extend that to include the sins of my middle age?*

I had traveled 130 kilometres (80 miles) northeast of Perth, Western Australia, to visit New Norcia, a spiritually-oriented intentional community. At its core is the Benedictine Monastery, around

which reside about 40 lay people who work for and with the monastery. New Norcia has 15 monks, but only nine are present today, the others being away on mission work or in a nursing home. They own about 8,000 hectares (20,000 acres) of land, which they farm, producing wool, meat, olives, grapes, and grains.

Most monks are between 40 and 70 years old, but one novice is in his 30s, and Dom (Brother) Paulino Gutiérrez, who came to New Norcia as a young monk in 1928, is 97. The monks live in a beautiful, rambling old Monastery, capable of housing several times their number. Their heritage-listed,

Spanish-mission style buildings present an idiosyncratic sight in the Australian countryside.

New Norcia began in 1846 when two Benedictine monks arrived from Spain to work with local Aborigines, the Yuat people of the Nyoongar language group,

WORLDWIDE  
COMMUNITY



BY  
BILL METCALF

*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. He is a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland and a past president of the International Communal Studies Association. Note: We preserve the spelling of our Commonwealth country authors. New Norcia: [www.newnorcia.com](http://www.newnorcia.com).*



and to convert them to Christianity and European ways. The monks named their mission New Norcia, after Nursia (or Norcia) in Italy where St. Benedict was born in the fifth century.

New Norcia's early years were very difficult, with some Aborigines resisting these strange men coming into their midst, and some monks finding it hard to acclimatise. By 1859, however, New Norcia was large enough to be considered an intentional community, and was mostly independent of the local church hierarchy in its governance.

Rosendo Salvado, one of the two founders, learned the Nyoongar language and slowly earned the trust and friendship of the Yuat people. He opened

children who were not orphans were removed from their families by the Department of Native Welfare and placed in government institutions for education and assimilation. Some of these children were sent to church missions, including New Norcia, because it was felt to be in their best interest. While some Australians now regard this as a shameful part of our history, referring to these children as the Stolen Generation, others believe that New Norcia's Brothers and

Sisters did far more good than harm by accepting and caring for these children. This aspect of Australia's (and New Norcia's) history remains controversial, with films and books debating the motivation for, and effects of, these government policies.

Local Aborigines now work with New Norcia monks to promote understanding and reconciliation. New Norcia's recent nomination by the Australia Day Council for an award was

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***New Norcia community is a multi-million dollar enterprise, employing over 70 staff (mostly women).***

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a school for Aboriginal children and provided medical services, while he and his fellow monks developed a prosperous farm and built the monastic facilities we see today. When Rosendo Salvado died in 1900, New Norcia had about 50 monks and had become a major farming and trading centre.

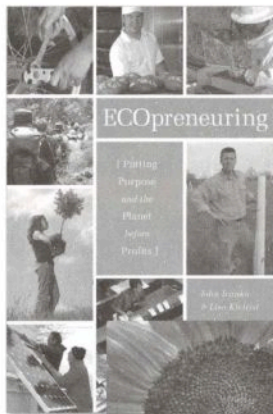
In the early 20th century, in addition to separate schools for Aboriginal girls and boys, the monks opened boarding schools for the children of the European settlers. Josephite Sisters came to teach and look after the European girls, and Marist Brothers the boys, making New Norcia a major educational centre.

As the twentieth century progressed, however, social norms and political realities changed. Some Aboriginal chil-



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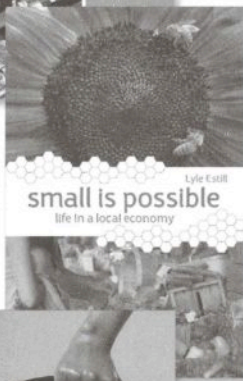
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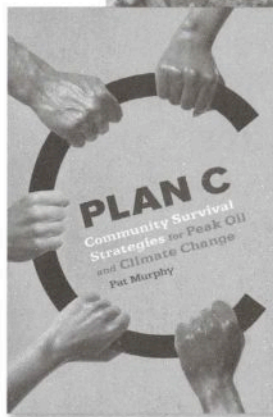
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supported by New Norcia Aboriginal Corporation because of their steps taken towards reconciliation.

Towards the end of the 20th century, New Norcia's boarding schools closed and the monastery shrank. This and other cultural changes led some monks to question not only the role of the monastery but also their own monastic profession. Dom Christopher, their Prior and Procurator, recalls having "250 people in the town one day and 50 people the next," and says, "our little world fell apart." They had to find a new purpose—almost like death and resurrection.

Fortunately, at about the same time, public interest in the monastery's heritage

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***"Our monastery  
provides time for silent,  
solitary prayer,  
and without that  
I couldn't live."***

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increased. New Norcia opened a Guest-house, an Education Centre, and a Museum and Art Gallery, offered daily tours, and sold their bread, olive oil, and wine to busloads of tourists. Not surprisingly, New Norcia's reincarnation as a major tourist destination has presented challenges. Dom Christopher sees it as "an organic development which respects our values," but admits, "it's not been easy; it's been a paradigm shift. This has been the third age for New Norcia."

Today, New Norcia community is a multi-million dollar enterprise, employing over 70 staff (mostly women) including farm workers, cooks, cleaners, tour guides, clerical and archival staff, and even a Town Manager and a Public Relations person, with a total weekly



wage bill of about \$50,000 (US\$43,000). Dom Christopher, the key person connecting New Norcia's spiritual and secular

larger New Norcia intentional community. I talk with several lay staff and find a range of perceptions and

spiritual ambience; some even become Oblates (lay Benedictine associates). Others are here merely because it's a job.

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## *Our duty is to be prayerful, happy, charitable monks, loving one another.*

---

sides, admits that business demands challenge the tranquillity he treasures.

The monks go out of their way to make me feel at home, inviting me to all seven daily prayers—starting with Vigils at 5:15 a.m. and finishing with Compline at 8:15 p.m.—and to dine with them. We are not allowed to speak during meals. The Abbot and Prior sit at the Head Table, other monks sit along the side tables facing inward, and guests such as myself sit, very self-consciously I must admit, in the middle. We each have a small bottle of red wine to drink for each midday and evening meal. During meals, one monk reads aloud from the Bible or another sacred text. Afterwards, we adjourn to their parlour for coffee and port.

Why do these men choose a monastic life? Dom Michael tells me, "We live in a monastic enclosure, essentially in silence, so that we monks are not distracted from prayer, which is our chief occupation." Their Abbot, Placid Spearritt, says, "Our monastery provides time for silent, solitary prayer, and without that I couldn't live."

The Monastery owns the land and all sixty-five buildings of New Norcia town—a licensed hotel, the little-used boarding schools, staff housing, offices, and farm buildings. The 75,000 tourists who visit New Norcia each year are taken on tours by lay staff. "Meet a Monk" sessions allow tourists to connect with the Monastery. New Norcia's own weekly newspaper, *The Chimes*, publishes "all the news that's fit to chant."

I begin to see that the Monastery, though central, is only a part of the

opinions about New Norcia. Some lay members have worked at New Norcia for much of their lives and value the

As in all complex intentional communities, there are social and cultural differences among members. One staff



*Dom Paulino has lived at New Norcia since 1928 and is still in charge of their olives and olive oil business.*



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member complains to me about “dys-functional elements” within the community, then emphasizes, “I also love and adore and am totally committed to this community and this way of life. There is a real heart and soul here. I struggle with the tension between my frustrations with it and my absolute love and commitment towards it. And I think that most of the monks would say the same thing.”

Joan, a resident who is also an Oblate, says, “As a woman it’s frustrating that just because I have certain chromosomes I can’t go into the refectory.” She finds, however, that at New Norcia, “We have the

eties arise about the future. I ask their 73-year-old Abbot what he expects for the future. “As Abbot, my primary responsibility is to the monks, but inevitably there is a secondary moral responsibility to our employees. New Norcia is a heritage site, and we have responsibilities for all these buildings. There is an inevitable tension between the contemplative life and running a business the size of New Norcia.” He pauses to reflect, then says, “Our duty is to be good monks, to be prayerful, happy, charitable monks, loving one another. I have a faith in God that He does not bring

## “Meet a Monk” sessions allow tourists to connect with the Monastery.

advantage of reading the gospel every day to remind us of a better way to deal with the crap that goes on in the world.” Another staff member explains that he “loves the contradictions of New Norcia; it’s like a complex social ecosystem.”

New Norcia, in many ways, reminds me of Findhorn Foundation in Scotland. Both have a spiritual, communal core whose members are totally dependent on the collective, surrounded by rings of supporters and employees. Both were founded by charismatic leaders, developed theocratic leadership, and now have more consensual governance; both are wealthy in assets but poor in income; both depend on income from those who come to visit, which presents a challenge to their core values; both are torn between professional business practices and a more spiritually-oriented lifestyle; and both communities have a great deal to teach those who seek to establish or maintain an intentional community.

At New Norcia, as in most intentional communities, questions and anxi-

about monasteries like this in order to let them die out.” Dom Christopher agrees: “We monks of New Norcia are not destined for extinction.”

I drink my last bottle of New Norcia wine, quaff my last New Norcia port with the monks, give Dom Michael a hug, then catch the bus home.

I feel blessed to have spent this time with spiritually-oriented people, both monks and lay workers. I have seen their love for their heritage, their coming to terms with Australia’s problematic history of relations between Europeans and Aborigines, and their determination to maintain and develop theist intentional community.

New Norcia community comprises honest and decent humans, both monks and lay-people—not saints, but real people, with foibles as well as halos. I had expected this article to be about the past, but New Norcia is much more about the present and the future. As my bus hurtles toward the bustling city of Perth, I vow to return one day.✿



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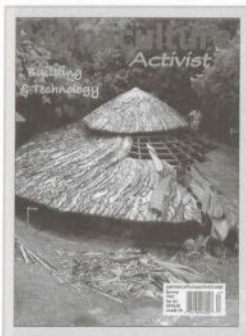


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## Fairies and Chainsaws

### Finding Balance in an Ecovillage

When I first began working at an ecovillage, I believed that it would be a quiet, peaceful place, rather like living on retreat. I sat beside the rushing creek to meditate, certain that I'd found the perfect spot for the contemplative serenity essential to peaceful living and writing: a supportive place for artistic, spiritual, creative work. Fairies seemed to glitter in the mist, fluttering just beyond my vision.

But it wasn't long before I began to hear chainsaws buzzing and trees crashing to earth. I was astounded at the cacophony assaulting my senses. My utopian visions of timeless tranquility dissolved then and there.

A well-muscled man in a sleeveless t-shirt walked by, carrying his weapon of tree death, and he heard my low gasp.

"People live here too," he said.

It embarrasses me now to admit that I thought he simply didn't understand how important it was to protect and preserve the woods. I didn't realize that I was looking at a seasoned village elder. This person, and many others wielding their chainsaws in

any ecovillage, needs firewood for heat and trees for building materials. I soon learned that we don't buy our lives from other people's labor, or buy our lumber from other people's woods. Living without the cold comforts of consumer culture means work, and plenty of it, as people create self-sustaining lives literally

from the ground up. Most ecovillagers have to work a job for cash, and often spend their spare time raising their kids instead of sending them to day care, cooking instead of going to restaurants, and building their own homes.

### MY TURN



BY  
KIESA KAY

*Kiesa Kay owns Oleander Cottage, a writing retreat in France: www.oleandercottage.com. She also teaches at the Forest Children's Program at Earthaven Ecovillage. Her published works include two educational anthologies, High IQ Kids and Uniquely Gifted; two poetry chapbooks, Caress: Poems for Lovers and Windstorm: Poems of Divorce; and one play, Thunder is the Mountain's Voice. She's currently working on a book about making the leap from suburbia into an intentional community.*



With all this noise and physical labor, how would I find the time and a peaceful place to write? Work often gets quieter after sundown, so I could write at night, but in an ecovillage, lighting means hydropower, solar power, candles, or batteries—which means that somebody has to think first, and well ahead of time, to get that light going. It's so much more complicated than flipping a little switch.

fewer obligations and distractions in an ecovillage, I've found more.

It has come down to this: a writer who needs the essential mental, spiritual, and emotional space for creative work simply can't squander time. For me, that means limiting the time spent in group processing or meetings, and paring down the non-writing aspects of life to the barest essentials: eating, making love, giving support to

where, including an ecovillage setting, is to acknowledge the intrinsic value of that work and the need for philosophical support for intellectual creativity. It may be difficult to convince ten people who've spent two months in hard, sweaty labor building a house that the person who writes a poem about that house also has been working, but a real community needs them all: the builders, the artists, and the writers.

---

## *How does my work benefit this community, when there's no tangible, immediate result?*

---

The bigger question facing me, though, was how a creative person could justify a life's work of writing, when other people have to labor physically so much and so hard to keep bread on the table—bread they make themselves. How does an artist justify using the hydropower without contributing to the labor for making the hydropower plant?

More specifically, I had to wrestle with an inner dilemma. How does my work benefit this community, when there's no tangible, immediate result? It can take years to write a meaningful book, and months before even a draft can be shared with anybody. In the meantime, there are chores to be done and bills to pay. Instead of finding

friends and family, teaching kids. It's a balancing act that has to include whole blocks, not slender slivers, of solitude.

The pressing desire for tangible results has to be replaced with a true appreciation for the ebb and flow of human thought and feeling. Being part of a community includes drum circles as well as work parties, potlucks as well as meetings. Pleasure, like poetry, is a necessity. We need firewood to warm our bodies, but poetry warms our souls. One need can't become the casualty of the other.

After all, people live here too.


The first and most important step of all in supporting creative work any-

Whatever you do, there's a community that needs you. Find it—or if you don't feel like looking for what someone else has made, find like-minded people with a balanced blend of life skills, and start building—but remember the need for drum parties and poetry circles. We aren't here to chop down trees and become grumbling curmudgeons. We're also here to dance, to sing, to celebrate each other.✿

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The number of green homes in the United States is growing. In Central Florida, including Brevard, Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia Counties, green events appear more frequently and green building is increasingly featured on home shows on TV. Florida-Central Cohousing is a regional resource group established to foster green communities, cohousing, and ecovillages in Central Florida.

Intentional communities, cohousing communities, and ecovillages have long been the incubators for, as well as heralds of, green building. Many and various communities exemplify a wide variety of green building features, as portrayed by Graham Meltzer in *Sustainable Community: Learning from the Cohousing Model*.

Central Florida strives to preserve precious environmental resources.

While regional growth plans call for increased density, they omit green initiatives and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Cohousing communities which are built from the ground up can serve as an affordable green model

for housing ourselves and improving the quality of our neighborhood and community life. Florida is recovering from a sagging housing market, while the future of green building is a shining beacon. Affordable green housing may particularly appeal to Florida's significant retirement population.

Green building trends in the marketplace often deliver production-built

green mansions with vaulted ceilings on large lots in predictable "golf communities," which provide for scarce interaction with one's neighbors. Contrast this with homes that are not only built green, but are also custom designed with ongoing resident input and over-



*Florida-Central Cohousing: The Heart of Florida's Green Initiative: A Regional Resource Group, fostering Green Communities, Cohousing & Ecovillages in Central Florida.*  
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sight in the planning and building process, always with an eco-friendly consciousness. Cohousers historically create the demand for particular green products, helping make them more affordable to others as well.

Florida-Central Cohousing has green design and construction resources, a cohousing planning group, and a site under consideration, with lots of benefits and possibilities. We envision a socio-cultural paradigm shift. Our region, our culture, and our planet stand in dire need of it. We can't do it alone. We're all in it together. Central Florida's future cohousers, communitarians, and ecovillage residents invite you to a shared cause.✿



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# THE QUEST FOR COMMUNITY

**A**s soon as i discovered my first intentional community at the age of nineteen, i knew i wanted to live that way. Sharing resources to lighten our load on the planet. Building a life together based on trust and cooperation instead of competition. Living out our ideals, right? My path was clear.

When i finished school, i set out with a sweetheart on what we called "The Quest for Community." We spent a year touring communities around the country, getting more clear with each visit on what we were looking for. Finally we settled down at Acorn Community in Virginia, a recent spin-off from the venerable Twin Oaks commune. It was the fall of 1994.

It was an exciting time to be at Acorn. The community doubled in population that fall, as a new residence was just on the edge of completion. The newcomers were full of verve and fresh ideas; old-timers wryly dubbed the season "the October Revolution," but supported us in trying things out. We had all the ups and downs of any group, and in the process created bonds that have kept many of us in contact with each other—even though no one who joined Acorn during that era remains there today.

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*i find myself in a grey zone between  
intentional community  
and a typical American lifestyle.*

---

I dove into community life full force, and furthermore, into the communities movement. Ira Wallace, already a long-time communitarian by then, mentored me into involvement with both the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) and the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC). My friends in college had kindly put up with years of me singing the praises of community life from the outside. Now i



JENNIFER MORRELL

## A PERSONAL JOURNEY INTO THE GREY ZONE

was a joyous zealot from the inside. At home i proudly ran our outreach programs, leading tours and corresponding with hundreds of potential visitors. Traveling to communities movement meetings, i used the opportunity to tell everyone i met on trains and buses about the virtues of both my community and intentional communities in general.

My identity was so tied up in being a member of Acorn that any question a stranger asked me naturally led down that road:

"Where do you live?"

"At a communal farm in Virginia."



"What kind of work do you do?"

"Oh, lots of different kinds. Mostly i run the outreach programs for the commune i live at."

"Do you have children?"

"I really enjoy community living because it gives me the opportunity to be around kids without taking on all the responsibility of having my own."

You get the idea.

Having my identity so wrapped up in my community home also meant that even when i wasn't feeling satisfied there anymore, it took a long time before i'd consider living anywhere else. But in the spring of 1999, i left Acorn to move in with a polyamorous family in a small town on the Oregon coast. We were in love, something i'd been sorely missing the last few years at Acorn, and it was a chance to pursue another long-held dream.

I had come to realize that who i was was more than my Acorn membership. I promised myself that i would never again allow any one facet of my identity to keep me from fully exploring life.

### From Acorn to Walnut

New relationships don't always work out, and a few short months later i was abruptly searching for a new home. I needed somewhere to go, fast. Having just moved all my stuff to Oregon, i couldn't see heading back east. There was an opening at an intentional community in Eugene, one that i had been impressed with back on the original "Quest for Community" road tour. A friend there helped clear the way, and i moved into Du-má, a group of people sharing a big, beautiful house, flourishing garden, common dinners, and clear values. After my bumpy try at life on the "outside," i felt so relieved to be back in community!

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*i promised myself that i would  
never again allow any one facet  
of my identity to keep me  
from fully exploring life.*

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After renting there for about a year, i left in the summer of 2000 to help found Walnut St. Co-op, in a lovely old home on the east side of town, with other folks who shared my passions for group process, facilitation, and social change. While dealing with significant turnover in the early years, we nevertheless managed to form a core group and, in 2003, buy our house from the resident who had bought it for us to begin with, starting our own community revolving loan fund for the purpose (see "Our Community Revolving Loan Fund" in *Communities #128, Fall 2005*).

In that intense year, when the fate of the home we loved rested upon the core group's ability to fulfill major legal and financial obligations (incorporation, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans and donations, and finding some insurance company that would sell property coverage to a co-op), i threw myself into the tasks of the community as much as i ever had at Acorn. I was utterly dedicated to the cause of ensuring our survival, even while working

*Opposite: Residents Alex, Tree, Erik, and Jen together in the heart of their shared house—the kitchen. Left: Tree's new home isn't officially a community, but it is enriched by the many friends who come to visit. Guest Chris Howell helps out by digging a garden bed.*



JENNIFER MORRELL



three other part-time jobs. My housemates (both then and later) would occasionally complain of my tendency to speak as if i had “the” truth, not recognizing that the same trait which understandably annoyed them—that of believing in my own truth and vision of our community so strongly—was also making it possible for me to raise thousands of dollars on our behalf, to put a vision into the world and

sibly accept the mind-boggling inefficiencies of cooking for just one or two people every single night? Instead, i find myself in a grey zone between intentional community and a typical American lifestyle.

As we started to think seriously about finding a new place to live, i lobbied Alex—unsuccessfully, as it turned out—to buy a parcel of land across the street from a cohousing

---

*For the first time in seven years, house meetings are no longer a weekly fixture on my calendar.*

---

make it real. We met our deadlines and made it through, and Walnut St. Co-op continues in Eugene today.

However . . . i’m not living there. As with leaving Acorn, it took months of consideration before i was willing to make the move, in 2007, from Walnut St. to a much more private life. Everyone who lived at Walnut in those months has their own story of what happened—but anyway, my partner Alex and i chose to leave. I was afraid i would feel lonely and isolated in mainstream life. And who could pos-

community that was just a few months shy of move-in. “Think of it!” i said. “We’ll have all the advantages of community life: built-in friends, someone to feed the cat while we’re away, and those all-important common dinners. Unlike the standard condo uniformity at most cohousing communities, you’ll be able to do whatever you want with the property, you can build and garden to your heart’s content. And with our extra land, we’ll be able to offer the cohousing residents benefits they can’t get at home, like



COURTESY OF WALNUT ST. CO-OP



additional space for storage or offices, or an invitation to kick back around a campfire.”

Unfortunately, the cohousing community i was so excited about co-locating with wasn't in Eugene. Having moved here a year and a half earlier to pursue a relationship with me, Alex was finally starting to feel settled, with friends and activities in the neighborhood and his brother's family across the street. He searched his soul, and with deep sincerity, told me he couldn't pull up stakes to start over again someplace else, no matter how attractive the opportunity.

Unhappy with the outcome, but committed to remaining together, i put it to him to help generate more options for us closer to home. Alex looked and looked and came up with a house three blocks from the co-op, for sale at an unusually low



JENNIFER MORRELL

price due to black mold infestation and other issues. With an odd layout upstairs that required walking through two bedrooms in order to get to the bathroom, it looked entirely unsuitable for community life to me, but all his instincts were telling him to go for it, and so, trusting him, i reluctantly went along.

### Is This Community or Not?

As i write this article, i sit at a desk in our new home, which i am pleased to report is now mold-free. (Alex basically tore out and rebuilt every part of the house that showed signs of infestation.) In

*Opposite: Walnut St. Co-op in 2007. Top left: Whenever the Orchard St. household is wondering whose fault something is, they spin the "Wheel of Blame." The group is convinced that every community needs one. Top right: The new house needs a lot of work. Here, Alex paints the front room.*



JENNIFER MORRELL

addition to Alex and me, his best friend Jen and her partner Erik live here, along with our four-legged companions. The other couple has the upstairs as bedroom and art studio, while Alex and i have a bedroom downstairs and, soon, a twenty foot yurt. We all share use of the living room, kitchen, and outdoors.

Unlike Walnut St., with its carefully constructed co-op ownership, Alex owns this house. The four of us have all been working hard fixing the place up. Lately i've been doing our food shopping, while another housemate tends the compost and gardens, another one has created an outdoor workshop area in the back, one person pays the bills, and so on: roles we've fallen into with little or no discussion. For the first time in seven years, house meetings are no longer a weekly fixture on my calendar—in fact, we haven't had *one*. However, we do have common dinners cooked by rotation,

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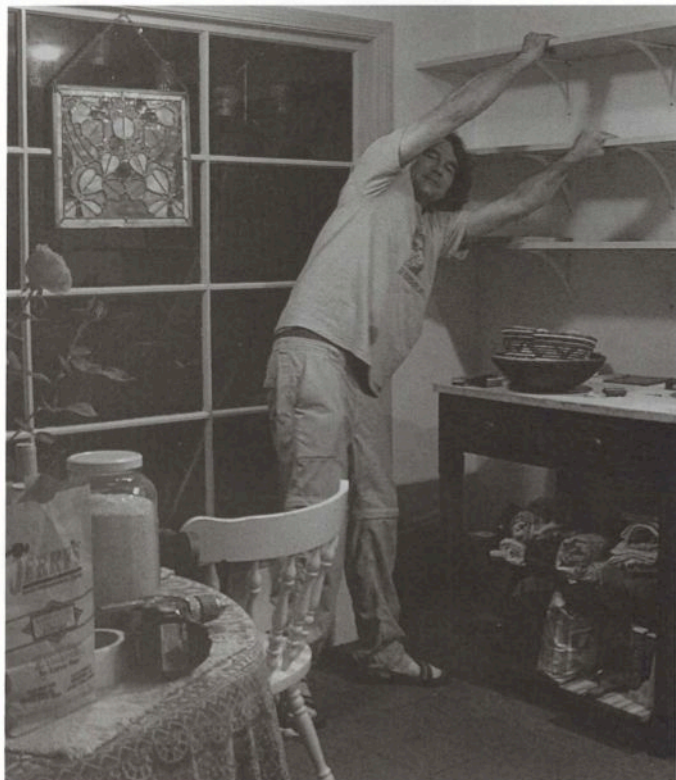
***Each individual has a lot of freedom here, yet we also try to check in with each other before doing something we think someone might not like.***

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four to five nights a week. Cobbling together various freelance activities, none of us have regular nine-to-five jobs, so we're around a lot. And we had an awfully nice solstice ceremony last week, just the four of us. Huh. Am i living in community or not?

Well, yes and no. The assumptions here are different. With Walnut St., as with Acorn, it was always our intention that the community would outlast my tenure or that of any other particular resident. This place, in contrast, is completely dependent on Alex's continued





JENNIFER MORRELL

Alex installs more shelves in the kitchen in order to hold all the bulk foods from the food co-op. Piece by piece, the building is converted from housing one person to four.

residency; it doesn't have an identity above and beyond his current ownership of the property. Since the four of us don't have meetings, we obviously haven't gone through the clarifying of common purpose that is strongly recommended by consultants (including me) to forming communities.

Because my three housemates don't have the long experience with alternative culture that i do, i can't presume that our values are the same regarding food choices, transportation, and other lifestyle traits. However, in order to save money, one car has already been sold. Since i'm the main food shopper, i focus on getting the bulk of our food from the local co-op plus a CSA farm. People have been willing to show videos in private rooms rather than the living room, which matters a lot to me. And in some areas, like humanure, others are ahead of me in knowledge or commitment.

Each individual has a lot of freedom here, yet we also try to check in with each other before doing something we think someone might not like. It's basically a much less formal lifestyle than i've been accustomed to. I love the mental space and energy that has been freed up by that, and the lower stress level. On the other hand, i sometimes feel frustrated or confused when things aren't going the way i want and there isn't a clear path to addressing it.

Our backgrounds are different, and we don't all know each other well yet. We have our tensions and awkward

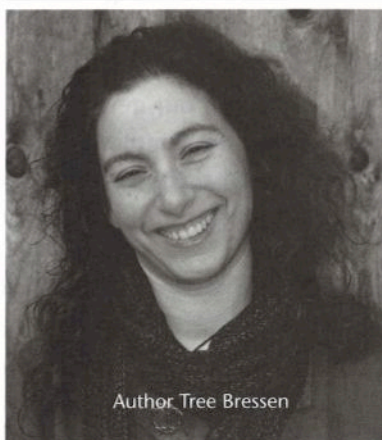
moments, results of shifting moods or misunderstandings or simple differences. In those times, i think each of us searches for a combination of internal groundedness and external tolerance. Hmm?... Maybe living here isn't as different as i thought?

After all, it's not like *any* intentional community is filled with people who are exactly alike, or understand each other perfectly. No matter how well-crafted the vision statement, there is always the possibility for different interpretations to arise—and given enough time, they probably will. While people applying for membership always emphasize how well they'll fit in with a community's existing values and how the group likes to run things, from what i've observed most applicants have gaps in honesty or self-awareness (or both) that end up significantly impacting the group later on.

At this household, i don't know whether to say that we have no membership process at all, or that we have a process more extensive than any of the communities i've lived at. What it comes down to is that we want to live with people who we already have an established friendship with, and who our instincts (along with a dose of common sense) tell us are a good match.

While right now our "membership" is limited to the four of us, we've also had another neighbor sharing dinners with us, and several friends who've slept on our floor for days or weeks at a time. Thus the isolation i feared doesn't seem to be coming to pass. We've also been intentional about inviting friends to join us for dinner, recognizing that social interaction isn't as built-in here as it is when a group is on the recognized community circuit.

For me, living in an informal group house of this sort is as much of an experiment as joining a commune might be for someone else. I don't know if this will settle into being a long-term situation for the four of us or not. I strive to remain open-minded and exploratory in my approach. I remember the commitment i made when i left Acorn, to let go of forms, to be open to emergence and the fullness of life's calling.✿



TOM ROBINSON

Author Tree Bressen

Tree Bressen works as a freelance facilitator and group process skills teacher for intentional communities and other organizations, mainly in the Cascadia bioregion. See [www.tree-group.info](http://www.tree-group.info). (Tree uses a lower-case "i" in her articles as an expression of egalitarian values.)



# Cook One Meal, Eat for a Week

When the Betz-Essinger family sits down for dinner in Birmingham, Alabama, it doesn't take the children long to identify the provenance of their meal. "Is this a Caroline?" they ask, "or a Leigh Fran?"

Caroline and Leigh Fran are not brands of frozen dinners—they are the two friends with whom Ruthann Betz-Essinger has shared the preparation of weeknight meals for more than a decade. Ruthann's children "know how each of us cooks," she laughs.

Through an arrangement known as "cooperative cooking," the friends each

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*In exchange for cooking one meal, each family gets three meals.*

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prepare a single, large meal that will feed all three families, and package it up. One share goes into their own refrigerators, and on Sundays, the women meet at Betz-Essinger's house to give each other the other two shares. So in exchange for cooking one meal, each family gets three meals—which, with leftovers, is often enough to provide dinner for every weeknight.

"When you get your sack, it's got everything in it, with directions about what to do, and how long it will take to cook or reheat," says Betz-Essinger.



ANN-MARIE STILLION





On busy weeknights, when Betz-Essinger gets home from work, she and her children open the refrigerator to find a “Caroline” or “Leigh Fran” meal already assembled. “It’s like eating at a restaurant every night,” says Betz-Essinger, “only you take whatever the chef is making.”

From college campuses to apartment buildings, and from suburban neighborhoods to cohousing communities, many busy people have found that cooking cooperatively, especially for the after-work dinners on weeknights, can save time and money, and deepen connections with family and community—all while supporting healthy, green food choices. Though cooking co-op arrangements vary, they all take advantage of the fact that cooking one meal for a

crowd, once a week, requires less money, less planning, and less time than cooking five to seven different meals for one’s own family. In the process, cooking co-ops also ensure food variety; minimize the temptation to go out to eat or purchase expensive, highly processed convenience or fast foods; share food traditions among members; and inspire participants to try out special recipes. And co-op cooking

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***Cooking cooperatively can  
save time and money  
and deepen connections with  
family and community—  
all while supporting healthy,  
green food choices.***

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## 3 WAYS TO COOK COLLABORATIVELY

**POTLUCKS:** Potluck meals are an easy way to have a large group gather for dinner, where everyone who attends brings a dish to share. Some communities establish a standing potluck night each week. Providing guidelines about what each person should bring can ensure better variety. There’s no need to RSVP for potlucks, because when people come with their own food, there’s always enough.

**DINNER GROUPS:** A group of households who plan to cook for each other in rotation, once a week or once a month. Generally dinner groups not only cook collaboratively but then gather to enjoy the meal together.

**“PICK-UP” COOKING CO-OPS:** Families—usually three to six households—make a single meal weekly for the whole group. Cooking co-ops generally pick up or drop off the food and then eat at home with their families.

can free up some room in your food budget to shift to greener food choices.

### **How It Works**

Cooking co-ops across the country have established a range of systems for sharing the cooking of family meals. A potluck group may ask participants to contribute a component of the meal each time, and then eat together on a specific day of every week or month.

A meal group may rotate the preparation of a meal among the participants, and gather regularly at the host’s home to eat together. The residents of the Eastern Village Cohousing community in Silver Spring, Maryland, do both. They begin the week with a standing Monday evening potluck, which anyone can join by bringing a dish to share. And they close out the weekend with a rotating Sunday meal group, in which each participant takes about two turns every three months to make dinner for twelve others.

As with Ruthann Betz-Essinger’s group, the members of a “pick-up” cooking co-op share cooking responsibilities but do the eating at home, with their own families.

In Bakersfield, California, Jan Limiero organizes ten friends once a month to each prepare one recipe, for ten families, that will freeze well; each family takes home a freezer’s worth of different meals ready to reheat and serve. In Occidental, California, six families stop by a member’s home from 6–7 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays to pick up a meal that one member has prepared for the others, according to the Sonoma County Independent. In Berkeley, California, Laila Ibrahim is one of six adults in three neighboring house-



holds who have each rotated cooking, six nights a week, for more than seven years. The family that cooks delivers a meal to each of the others by 6 p.m.

All three types of cooking co-ops have a wide range of policies about what participants make for dinner. Betz-Essinger's group in Alabama, self-identified "foodies," endeavor to rotate entrees every week, and to never repeat a recipe. The Berkeley co-op is free to cook anything, but always in a way that accommodates vegetarian families. The Bobolink co-op in Rutledge, Missouri, eats organic, local, and vegan. And most of the student-organized dining co-ops at Oberlin College come to consensus at the start of each semester about the sourcing of the food they will cook for each other.

### Benefits of Cooking Cooperatively

Co-op cooking saves time and money at every step: when planning and shopping, purchasing for a single meal in quantity is less complicated than purchasing for a week

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***On the Oberlin campus,  
students have found  
they can recoup more than  
\$2,000 a year by cooking  
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eating in the dining halls.***

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of different meals. It saves time in the evenings, when families don't have to cook after work and can instead spend more time talking to and enjoying each other. And it saves clean-up time, since the kitchen only gets really messy on the night when the meal is cooked there.

Co-op cooking also saves money. On the Oberlin campus, students have found they can recoup more than \$2,000 a year by cooking cooperatively rather than eating in the dining halls. Ruthann Betz-Essinger estimates that she



## CO-OP AMERICA RESOURCES FOR EATING GREEN

**H**ungry? Turn to Co-op America's resources to find food that's good for people and the planet:

- Read our guide to sustainable food choices, *Good Food: The Joy, Health, and Security of It*. Download free at: [www.coopamerica.org/PDF/CAQ60.pdf](http://www.coopamerica.org/PDF/CAQ60.pdf).
- Read our *Real Money* article on how to "Eat Less Meat & Cool the Planet,": [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/lessmeat.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/lessmeat.cfm).
- Turn to *Real Money* for selecting "Safe and Sustainable Seafood," available online at: [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/seafood.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/seafood.cfm).
- Allow *Real Money* to introduce you to the pleasures of organic beer and wine: [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/beerandwine.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/beerandwine.cfm).
- Turn to *Real Money* for an introduction to the impact you can make by purchasing Fair Trade Certified™ food products, including coffee, chocolate, bananas, and rice: [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/coffee.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/coffee.cfm), [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/chocolate.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/chocolate.cfm), [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/bananas.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/bananas.cfm), [www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/fairtraderice.cfm](http://www.coopamerica.org/pubs/realmoney/articles/fairtraderice.cfm).
- Discover the full breadth of the Fair Trade marketplace, including an expanding selection of Fair Trade foods, with Co-op America's *Guide to Fair Trade*. Free download from [www.fairtradeaction.org](http://www.fairtradeaction.org).
- Use the *National Green Pages™* to find green businesses that supply sustainable food products. Go to [www.greenpages.org](http://www.greenpages.org), and search the food categories for a taste of the green economy's bounty.



saves 25 percent at the supermarket compared to cooking all of her family's meals herself. And Amy Seiden at Bobolink says the members manage to eat a delicious lunch and dinner for just \$6 per person, per day. In addition to purchasing fewer ingredients, families in cooking co-ops can save money by purchasing food on sale or in bulk for the one meal they plan to make in quantity.

By rotating the planning of meals among a large group of households, each with their own favorite recipes and food traditions, cooking co-ops also enjoy a



much greater variety of food than isolated families cooking for themselves.

"We can't get into a rut, because we don't eat the same thing over and over again," says Betz-Essinger. "It was an amazing thing for our children. They were exposed to a huge variety of food that if I had been the only one cooking for them, they would never have tried."

Cooking co-ops help families save money and eat more healthfully in other ways: they eat fewer meals out, including fast food. Consequently, they'll save energy and resources, and reduce waste—no styrofoam take-out containers and foil wrappings, fewer car trips, and more room in their dinner menus for local, organic food.

## RECOMMENDED READS

**CO-OP CUISINE: FREEZER COOKING WITH FRIENDS**, by Jan Limiero (30 Day Gourmet, Inc., 2004). Dozens of freezer-friendly recipes. Download a free sample at [www.30daygourmet.com/Manuals/Co-op\\_Cuisine.asp](http://www.30daygourmet.com/Manuals/Co-op_Cuisine.asp).

**HOMEMADE TO GO: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CO-OP COOKING**, by Dee Sarton Bower & Mary Eileen Wells (Purrfect Publishing, 1997). Purchase it online at [coopamerica.books.welike.net/isbn/0965791394](http://coopamerica.books.welike.net/isbn/0965791394).

Co-op cooking builds community. Becca Rosen says her responsibilities as a student member of the Oberlin cooking co-ops built connections with more than just her meals: "I built my social life around food," she says. "I made my closest friends at Oberlin because we ended up cooking together."

Co-ops that dine together build connections over shared meals and lively group conversation, and celebrate diverse family food traditions through the dishes they serve to each other. Even a "pick-up" co-op builds long-term connections when neighbors pick up or drop off meals, often exchanging

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*If you cook cooperatively, then the savings on your food budget from buying in bulk can make it possible to green your remaining food purchases.*

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friendly greetings and checking in on each other in the process. All forms of cooperative cooking mean less time that each person spends cooking and cleaning up, and more time spent talking, laughing, and connecting over food with family and friends.

### Making It Easier to Eat Green

One of the best perks of co-op cooking is that the money you'll save can make it easier to afford to green your food choices.

"Cooking co-ops are a perfect example of the ways that greening a whole category of our purchasing can work," says Alisa Gravitz, Co-op America's executive director. "An organic, local apple may cost more than a conventionally grown apple, and Fair Trade Certified™ vanilla may still cost a little bit more than conventional vanilla. But if you cook cooperatively, then the savings on your food budget from buying in bulk can make it possible to green your remaining food purchases. By thinking about the whole category of food holistically, you can eat greener, healthier, more varied meals—at the same cost as your old way of eating."

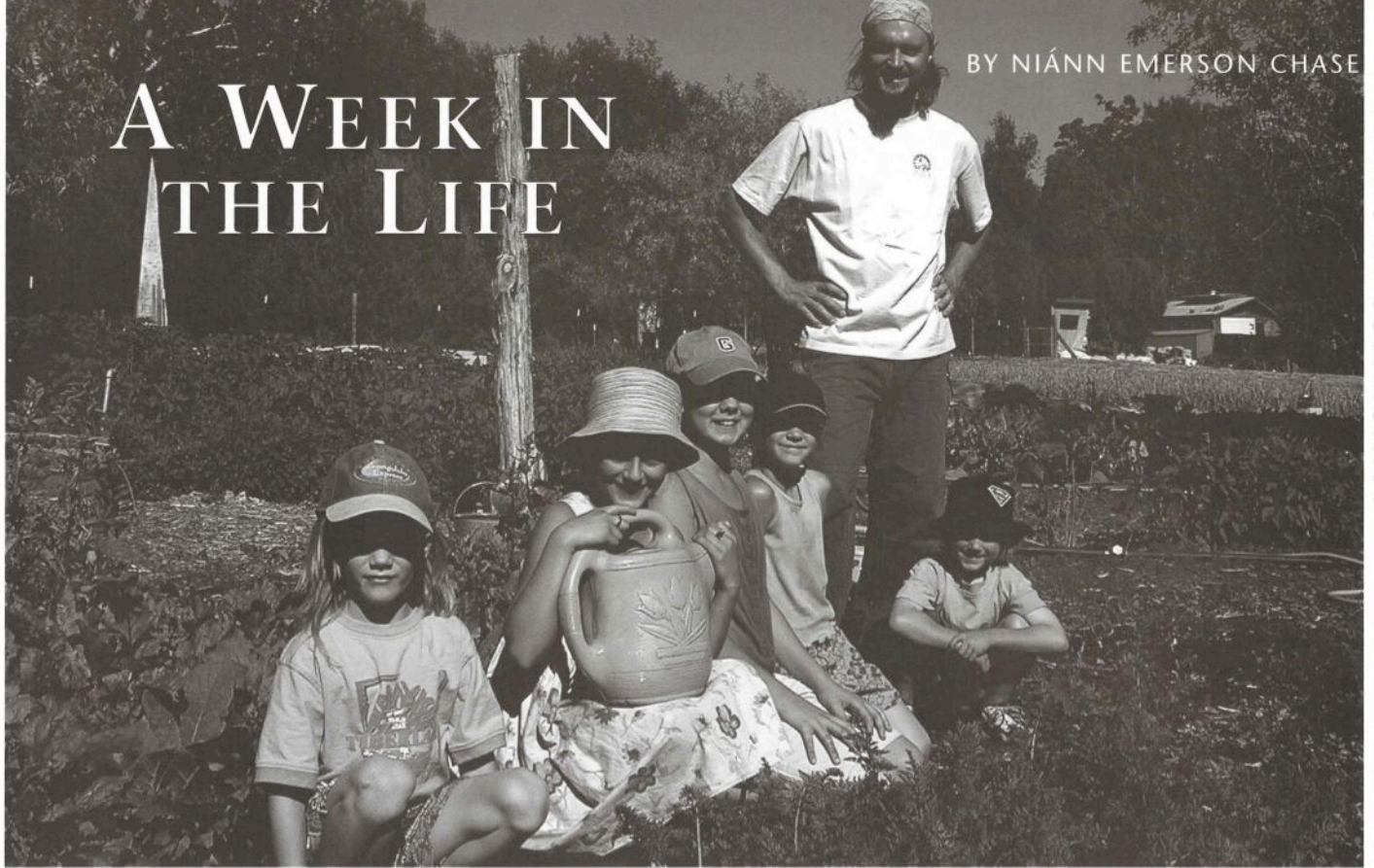
Some cooking co-ops, like the Bobolink and Oberlin co-ops, establish green guidelines about preparing local and organic foods, or emphasizing vegetarian and vegan menus.

Co-op cooking lends itself to making use of the bounty of seasonal vegetables or fruits that a farmers' market or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) box can offer. Making a large meal for a co-op crowd can help singles or small families put a box of CSA produce to good use before the next share arrives.

*(continued on p. 77)*



# A WEEK IN THE LIFE



Children receive hands-on organic gardening experience at Avalon Organic Gardens, Farm, and Ranch. (Left to right: Skyler, Ascendia, Annan, Ellanora, MasSa'Seen, Adams' Aon.)

## *Sustainable Living in an Intentional Community*

**N**ineteen years ago, Gabriel of Urantia and I founded an intentional community called Global Community Communications Alliance in Sedona, Arizona (now also located in Tumacácori, Arizona).

We are a dedicated group of more than 100 people from diverse national, cultural, and spiritual backgrounds who have strived to create and maintain a culture more sus-

proper regard for all living things and their place within the divine pattern.

Like the other intentional communities featured in this magazine, the one I live in holds "a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others." I would like to share with you a few experiences and thoughts of a typical summertime week in my own life.

At 5:30 one morning, I saw four mule deer—two does and two bucks with broad racks—munching the leaves off a willow tree in the backyard. It was our second meeting—they had graced my presence already on a recent

*Níánn Emerson Chase,  
co-founder of Global Community  
Communications Alliance.*




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***We make our share of mistakes, but  
we aren't afraid to acknowledge  
them and ask for forgiveness.***

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tainable than the one that dominates Western civilization and, increasingly, the rest of the world. For us, sustainability encompasses values, decisions, and actions that have a



**LIVING IN COMMUNITY** evening. Both times, at dawn and dusk, the quiet of the deer's gentle grazing was shattered by the loud engine of a pickup speeding down a lane nearby. I was acutely disappointed when they bounded off again, but I did enjoy having a brief morning visit with my neighbor, the driver of the pickup. He too was disappointed to have missed the deer, since he also appreciates the beauty of our natural habitat and wildlife. In our occasional over-the-fence visits, we share tidbits of information about our local habitat and others around the planet. What an interesting paradox we humans are: we love wildness, and yet we disrupt it with our noisy machines.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE



*Avalon Organic Gardens, Farm, and Ranch.*

Another early morning, as I sat under an ash tree enjoying the quiet and peace of my solitude, I welcomed the interruption of a black hawk's cry as he swooped down into the meadow for his daily morning hunt. I did not welcome the sudden barking of the dogs who belong to my neighbors, but I knew they wouldn't intrude any further than their

into her room, wanting to share my excitement over something I had read. That same day another friend apologized to me for his impatience and disrespect during our heated discussion of the Golden Rule last week. We make our share of mistakes, but we aren't afraid to acknowledge them and ask for forgiveness.

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***My friend told me afterwards that she had not felt so relaxed and nurtured since she was a child.***

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barks. I think the hawk knew that too, for he stayed. Actually, I like those dogs; they're very friendly and lovable, as are their human masters. Still, I can't help but think of Barbara Kingsolver's essay, "Setting Free the Crabs," where she describes the devastating impact domesticated animals have had on ecosystems.

One day this week, I became too defensive when a friend shared a concern with me, and I had to ask her forgiveness. The next day I said I was sorry to another person for being insensitive to her need for quiet time; I had barged

On five afternoons I went swimming, both for exercise and for a change of pace from working in my home office. Sometimes I swam in Oak Creek, other times in a pool at one of the community houses. Each time, I shared the creek or pool with others—my three teenage children, a 70-year-old woman, a new mother and her baby, or a group of six who live in one of the community homes. I never know whom I'm going to see, but it is always a pleasure to interact with fellow community members whom I may not have seen for a few days.



One morning I took an out-of-town friend to Avalon Gardens, our organic gardens and farm, where she met several community members harvesting organic fruits and vegetables. We relaxed on the deck overlooking the creek and basked in the cooling breeze under the cottonwood trees. We could hear the comforting farm sounds of peacocks, goats, hens, and roosters. I hadn't seen her for several years, so we spent about two hours catching up. She shared with me her struggles to compose a life that sustained her physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. We ate

Two evenings I had dinner at other people's homes. We sat around the table together, eating from the garden's cornucopia of gifts, laughing at the "human" things that come up in our daily lives, and shaking our heads in frustration and sadness over the stupidity and cruelty of current world issues.

One evening, on our way to a class where we study the philosophy and theology presented in *The URANTIA Book*, all four of us in the car saw a beautiful bobcat cross the road and meander down the hillside. I told them that from my window earlier I'd seen a coyote family—father, mother,

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*I recognized in each of the children a sense of confidence and self-respect that is a result of living in a supportive, loving, joyful environment.*

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lunch with the gardeners, enjoying the fruits of their hard work. In the afternoon my friend rested under the hands of one of our community's massage therapists. She told me afterwards that she had not felt so relaxed and nurtured since she was a child—her lifestyle was too fast-paced to take time for quiet, peaceful pastimes or long, meaningful talks with friends. Her "rest" was ordinarily in front of the television.

and baby—romping in the nearby field. We talked briefly about how we human beings encroach upon wildlife habitat as cities and towns continue to spread into the deserts, plateaus, and forests of this country.

In another class studying the Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation in *The Cosmic Family* volumes, I felt deeply moved by what several people shared about their own inner conflicts as they struggled to become better human beings.

In another group I experienced spiritual elation as I united with about 25 others in a prayer for peace and for inner stamina to continue being peaceful and compassionate beings.

One mid-morning while picking blackberries in the backyard, I thought of the migrant workers who spend their entire working careers bending over, squatting, and reaching, in all kinds of weather. I wondered about their quality of life, and contemplated the hard, back-breaking work that graces the produce departments of grocery stores all over this country.

*Alcyone, 19-year-old daughter of Niánn Emerson Chase.*



GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE



While cleaning up the kitchen one evening with one of my daughters, I listened to the joyful, can't-help-but-dance music of the South African band Ladysmith Black Mambazo, a group of activists for world peace and sustainability. I thought of other musicians who sing out for environmental responsibility, reconciliation, fair distribution of the world's resources, and justice for all of the sons and daughters of this earth.

One afternoon I attended a rehearsal for our community school's presentation at the annual Celebration of

of confidence and self-respect that is a result of living in a supportive, loving, joyful environment. It does indeed take a village to raise a child.

As I reflect back on my week's activities and interactions, I realize that sustainable living is artful living on all levels of reality. It continues to unfold through the choices we make, how we live, and how we relate to all around us. The Fifth Epochal Revelation says, "Health, sanity, and happiness are integrations of truth, beauty,

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*I realize that sustainable living is artful living on all levels of reality.*

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Education. This year, besides displaying their academic projects and preparing food for 150 community members and local guests, the children planned to perform song, dance, and poetry. As I watched the children—from toddlers to teens—sing, play musical instruments, dance, and recite their poetry, I felt an all-encompassing parental pride in the children's accomplishments. I considered them all my children, regardless of the fact that only three were my biological offspring. I recognized in each of them a sense

and goodness as they are blended in human experience. Such levels of efficient living come about through the unification of energy systems, idea systems, and spirit systems" (*The URANTIA Book*, p. 43).

Global Community Communications Alliance is now in the process of transplanting our community from Sedona to southern Arizona. There we are creating an ecovillage, fueled by decentralized, alternative energy and fed by Avalon Organic Gardens, Farm, and Ranch.

Our community is relocating to this much smaller and more rural area because we feel it is time to move to a place where we can become deeply involved with the restoration of one another's souls, with our neighbors, and with our environment. Tumacácori and Tubac, Arizona seem to be places where our evolving community and its alternative culture will thrive.✿

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*Níann Emerson Chase is an educator, spiritual teacher, counselor, and writer. Her articles have been published in New Thought Journal, Connecting Link, Communities, Quantum Thoughts, Inner Word and the Alternative Voice, of which she is the co-Executive Director. She is the Director of the Global Community Communications Schools for adults and children. Currently she resides in Sedona, Arizona.*



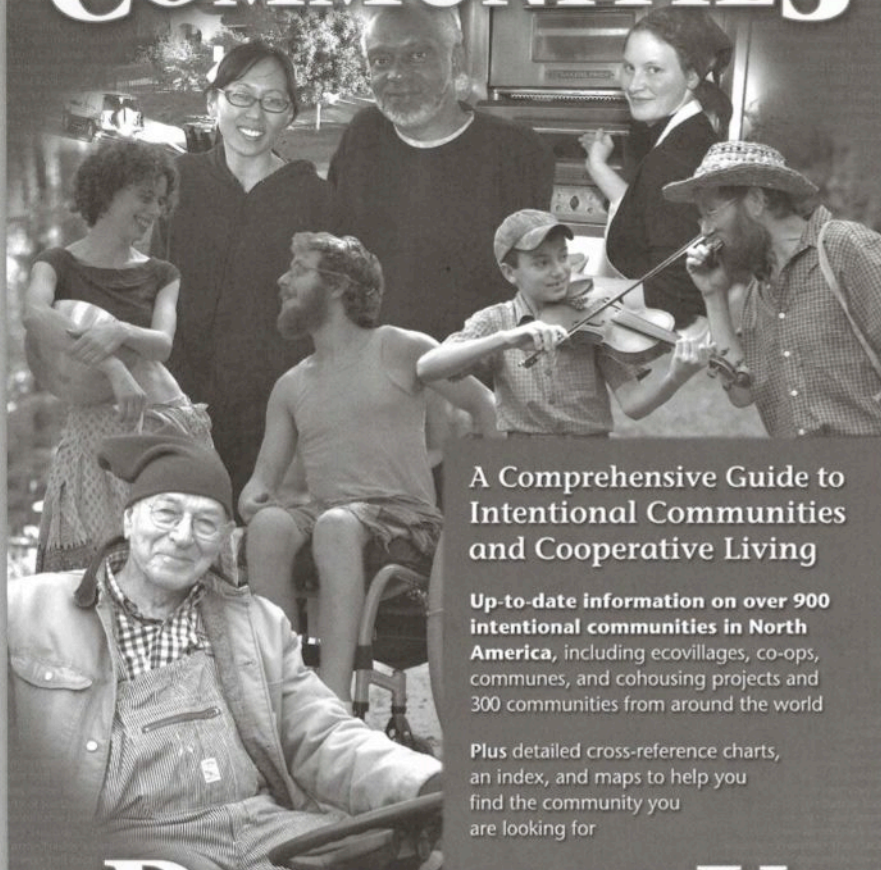
Cousin Kaileen teaching little Alavedin the essentials of horseback riding.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE



# NEW UPDATED EDITION

# COMMUNITIES



**A Comprehensive Guide to Intentional Communities and Cooperative Living**

**Up-to-date information on over 900 intentional communities in North America, including ecovillages, co-ops, communes, and cohousing projects and 300 communities from around the world**

**Plus detailed cross-reference charts, an index, and maps to help you find the community you are looking for**

# DIRECTORY

## 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](http://directory.ic.org) (see below).



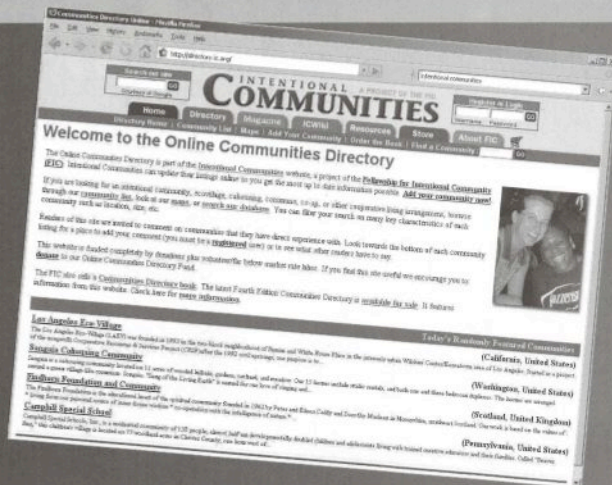
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# NATURAL BUILDING AND COMMUNITY

*TWO WAYS TO BUILD CONNECTION*



*“When we seek for connection, we restore the world to wholeness. Our seemingly separate lives become meaningful as we discover how truly necessary we are to each other.”*

– Margaret Wheatley

For the last fifteen years, most of my friends and peers have been natural builders and/or members of intentional communities. There’s a large overlap between the two groups; it’s rare to find someone in one circle who isn’t at least a bit familiar with and interested in the other. I think that’s because both the natural building movement

the gifts of your dotting Mother Earth and use the skill and muscle of your miraculous body to transform them into a place where your soul will be fed every day.

This kind of building practically *demand*s community. I’ve participated in the construction of scores of structures made of earth, straw, sticks, and stones, and seen or heard stories of hundreds more. Although there is an occasional solitary effort, hardly any of these buildings—even the very small ones—have involved fewer than dozens of people in the construction process.

Many parts of building a house are more easily and efficiently done by a group. I remember, for example, the day nine years ago when fifteen friends helped me lift the

## *How would you build a house if your primary concern was to create the most meaningful personal relationship with your home?*

and the communities movement are, at their roots, responses to the same set of basic human needs—core drives that are often left frustrated by the dominant culture.

How would you build a house if your primary concern was to create the most meaningful personal relationship with your home? Well, for starters you would do a lot of the work yourself, and not only by assembling components manufactured by unknown workers in a distant factory, from who-knows-what original materials. Think about it. The people with whom you relate most deeply are probably the ones whose journeys through birth and growth to the present moment you can trace most intimately. The same goes for your food, your clothing, your tools, and your building materials. So to build your house of connections, you start by walking into the woods and cutting down a tree, levering up a boulder and rolling it down the hill, digging a hole, filling it with water, and stomping in the mud. You receive

timber frame of my house into place, using ropes and pulleys, pick-poles and muscle. There was no way I could have done that by myself. Six weeks later, after being dipped in clay slip, the strawbales for my walls each weighed at least 120 pounds, and some of them had to be lifted fifteen feet



MOJIKITO TCHUDI

*Left: Timber frame ready for wood chip and clay infill. This is a great natural solution in forested areas with plentiful trees and clay but no local straw production. Right: Building an earthen oven at a workshop at the Solar Living Institute. Small projects like ovens and benches can be completed in a day and provide a functional work of art.*





MOJOHTO TCHUDI

## LEARNING NATURAL BUILDING IN COMMUNITY

**S**o you want to learn the ropes of natural building, and you also want to experience what life in an intentional community might be like. Here is a sampling of places that might be able to offer what you're looking for.

Caveat: there are many more options than what we've listed here—check out [events.ic.org](http://events.ic.org) for instance—but this should get you started.

**Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, Missouri**

[www.dancingrabbit.org](http://www.dancingrabbit.org)

**Earthaven, North Carolina**

[www.earthaven.org](http://www.earthaven.org)

**Emerald Earth, California**

[www.emeraldearth.org](http://www.emeraldearth.org)

**The Farm, Tennessee**

[www.thefarm.org](http://www.thefarm.org)

**Huehucoyotl, Tepoztlan, Mexico**

[www.huehucoyotl.net](http://www.huehucoyotl.net)

**The Lama Foundation, New Mexico**

[www.lamafoundation.org](http://www.lamafoundation.org)

**Lost Valley, Oregon**

[www.lostvalley.org](http://www.lostvalley.org)

**O.U.R. Ecovillage, British Columbia**

[www.ourecovillage.org](http://www.ourecovillage.org)

**Proyecto San Isidro, Tlascalala, Mexico**

[www.proyectosanisidro.com](http://www.proyectosanisidro.com)

**Sirius Community, Massachusetts**

[www.siriuscommunity.org](http://www.siriuscommunity.org)

**White Oak Farm and Education Center, Oregon**, [www.whiteoakfarmcsa.org](http://www.whiteoakfarmcsa.org)

The following year, Catherine Wanek offered to host a similar event at the Black Range Lodge in New Mexico. She changed the name to the Natural Building Colloquium because she wanted our techniques to be seen not as an “alternative” but as the natural way we humans have built throughout most of our history—and the way many people in less industrialized cultures still do. The event was a huge success, and the natural building movement had a name. Many of us stopped referring to ourselves as “cobbers” or “timber framers” or “strawbale builders” and instead began to call ourselves natural builders and to identify with both a large body of technical knowledge and a growing community. That community has continued to expand rapidly, from a few hundred dedicated enthusiasts fifteen years ago to hundreds of thousands today.

The Holy Grail of modern physics is a single unified theory incorporating mechanics, gravity, electromagnetism, and particle physics—fields that were previously seen as completely separate. In the same way, I expect that in the future the natural building movement and the communi-

### ONLINE RESOURCES

**Natural Building Network:**

[www.naturalbuildingnetwork.org](http://www.naturalbuildingnetwork.org)

[www.greenhomebuilding.com](http://www.greenhomebuilding.com)

**Solar Energy International:**

[solarenergy.org](http://solarenergy.org)

[strawbalecentral.com](http://strawbalecentral.com)

**U.S. Green Building Council:**

[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

ties movement will no longer be considered distinct. Just as the tapestry of natural building was woven together from many originally disparate threads, I see a new coalition emerging, perhaps also encompassing local food, “primitive” skills, permaculture, shamanism, and earth-based spirituality. What do these various pursuits have in common? They are all ways to ground our lives in relationship, meaning, and connection. If things go well, concepts like communities and natural building may lose their significance entirely; they will simply become, as they were in the past, parts of the way we humans live on planet Earth.✿

*Michael G. Smith lives at Emerald Earth Sanctuary in Northern California, where he is working to build connection into every aspect of his life. When not building, teaching, gardening, writing, or attending meetings, he enjoys gathering wild mushrooms and eating acorns. See [www.emeraldearth.org](http://www.emeraldearth.org) for upcoming workshops.*



# A STRAWBALE VILLAGE IN DENMARK

I went to Denmark last summer to meet the residents of one of the first “strawbale villages.” Lars Levin Andersen and Niels Nielsen, from Fri og Fro (“Free and Happy”), told me why their experience can be seen as “the new generation of the original cohousing movement that started 30 years ago in Denmark.”

**Matthieu: Where did your main inspiration come from?**

Niels: We were influenced by the Friland experience. Friland was started in 2000, also in Denmark—in Feldballe on Djursland. It contains thirteen households of 35 children and adults. Their original goals were to build houses using as many recycled materials as possible, and to create new ways of avoiding bank loans.

*Morten Hylleberg and Hanne Lerstrup Pedersen of the Fri og Fro community, in front of their earth-sheltered round strawbale house under construction.*

**Matthieu: What is the main philosophy behind Fri og Fro?**

Lars: We believe that sustainability must be found in everyday life. Sustainability means to us that future generations have the right to opportunities as good as our own, or better—not worse. This concept has become very popular in the media in the last two decades or so, but it often remains at the theoretical level. We wanted to try



*BUILDING  
THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL  
OF SUSTAINABILITY*



seriously to practice a sustainable way of living based on what the ecovillage movement and other kinds of communities have developed.

Sustainability can be symbolized by the image of a stool with three legs: the environmental, the financial, and the social. Our plan is to enable Fri og Fro to be a solid stool that can bear a lot.

debt-free and pollution-free, with sufficient daily free time and other “freedoms.” A viable society provides for responsible freedom for the individual as well as for the society, in the present and in the future.

*Fro* means “happy,” and it constantly reminds us to see things not as problems, but as challenges. There is nothing so difficult that we cannot learn from it. *Fro* reminds us to

***Sustainability can be symbolized by the image of a stool with three legs: the environmental, the financial, and the social.***

**Matthieu: Part of your philosophy is also reflected in your name, isn't it?**

Niels: “Fri og Fro” means “free and happy.” Maybe that sounds a little idealistic, but we think that utopias are crucial, as our inspiration to go on.

Our concept of freedom (*fri*) should not be mixed up with the current dominant concept of freedom: that anyone can do whatever they want without limits. In this sense of the word, one person's freedom can lead to another person's compulsion. There is consequently a power imbalance and the risk that some will be freer than others. In our view, freedom implies that by working together, members of a community create the context for a life that tends to be

listen, to be curious like children as much as possible, to search for better solutions, and to change our way of doing something when it generates conflicts or problems that we cannot handle within the community.

**Matthieu: Could you tell me more about that three-legged stool, sustainability? Let's start with the ecological leg.**

Lars: We want to make many different initiatives to reduce our use of natural and fossil resources. This will also mean considerably minimizing pollution. Therefore we try to use natural and local materials as much as possible—strawbale houses, mussel shells for insulation on the roof and in the ground, organic vegetable gardens, and our own water filtration system. Moreover, our heating structure is completely compatible with the environment, as it includes clean combustion in high-



BIRTHE ANDERSEN

*Left: Niels mounts an organic-shaped window (with an ordinary pane of rectangular insulating glass). Note the rio-net support on the inside, which provides for a more even strawbale wall and reinforces the clay plaster. Right: The Conch House is built of round beams, mini big bales, clay mortar, and sea grass on the roof by Poula-Line Schmidt.*



NIELS PETER NIELSEN



thermal-mass stoves, as well as solar and geothermal heat.

**Matthieu: And how does your community uphold the second leg, the social aspect of sustainability?**

Lars: The social aspect in Fri og Fro is the community spirit that we will be fostering all along our way. We have defined some basic commitments for members to respect.

The basic mandatory community task, apart from paying fees, is the maintenance of the common house, parking lot, and playground. We also have joint meetings, eat together several times a week, and share traditions, visits, workshops, lectures, parties, festivals, and other activities. We want to include the surrounding neighborhood in our initiatives too.

Community is also about helping each other. For instance, when one person is stuck for one reason or another, the community is there to help overcome the problems.

Finally, one of the fundamental aspects of community living is that everyone here is willing to learn how to handle conflicts in a constructive way and try to understand the opinion behind other people's comments.



*Jens Helt shows Niels how to throw lime plaster, giving the wall a professional touch.*

Denmark, and all over Europe. We think that the prices of homes have reached completely tragic levels due to speculation, and it is time to create a way to vote with our feet by walking out of this system. For this we need to find ways to drastically reduce the debt to banks that homeowners take on. A place to live should not be seen as a mere "consumer good," but as a right for citizens and a necessity.

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## ***We do not agree with those who say that environmental building methods are more expensive.***

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**Matthieu: What about the economic part of sustainability?**

Niels: The financial aspect is a fundamental part, too. Unfortunately, it is often not taken into consideration by communities in Europe. It therefore deserves special attention.

First, we do not agree with those who say that environmental building methods are more expensive. We have to get away from the idea of considering the environment as a cost for society. What is expensive to our wallet today might be cheaper for society at large tomorrow. We too often forget about that. We could even say that green building is a profitable financial investment, speaking in economic terms.

Second, we want to develop an alternative to the aggressive housing market mechanisms that are spreading in

**Matthieu: How do you manage to do this in practical terms?**

Niels: Our cooperative has put it clearly in its charter that the price of a house one buys here will remain at a relatively low level in comparison with future market prices. No one can come here with the intention of selling a house for profit later on. The potential future members of Fri og Fro will consequently get the same opportunities to have an affordable house. To give you a concrete example, the price of a home here costs a maximum of \$100,000, including common facilities and the shared land. This is a maximum expectation, and it is already several times less than the market price.



To do that, we decided to build our houses ourselves and to use natural materials whenever possible. We use simple building materials such as stone, shells, wood, and straw as the main components. We were inspired by the increasing growth of alternative ways of building, which have gained their footing in Denmark in the last ten years.

Actually, building with strawbales and clay is not new at all—these have been used in Europe since the end of

to experts. You need expertise for the main wood structure. But then the wall construction can be done with friends, acquaintances, and neighbors.

In fact, compared to industrial building sites, which are noisy, dangerous, and energy intensive, strawbale building is much more like an adventure playground for men and women, children and elders. I strongly recommend going to a workshop or two, or helping other people build their

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***Strawbale building is like an adventure playground for men and women, children and elders.***

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the 19th century. This method offers us the optimal result: you can build a big house or a small one, it is perfectly insulated, and on top of that, you can do much of the work yourself.

**Matthieu: What are the advantages of building your house yourself?**

Niels: You don't build it completely by yourself, of course, but one can say that strawbale houses are kind of "do-it-yourself" houses, accessible to many and not just

house, before starting your own. There are two reasons for this: you will learn skills, and you will enter a social network that will help you when you start the process yourself.

Many question the safety of strawbales; in fact, this scares many people. But although straw burns well when loose, it is practically impossible to burn when it is pressed tightly in a bale. Moreover, both sides of the wall are plastered with lime or clay mortar, which are actually excellent fire protection. Another common fear is that mice and rats will

make nests in the walls. Our experience shows that it isn't possible for these animals to live there because of the plaster.

**A Constructive Solution**

From my visit to Fri og Fro, I would conclude that it is definitely a place offering lots of energy and hope for the future. As this interview shows, the people living there aren't just constructing a village—they are also demonstrating a positive way to relate with the building materials one needs, and consequently with nature in a broad sense. What is amazing about all this is that they even manage to save money by finding a different solution from those advertised on the market. Living green is indeed not always more expensive. In that sense, Fri og Fro offers a real, constructive solution to the housing problems all across society.✿

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*Matthieu Lietaert is a university lecturer and an activist in the European cohousing movement. His award-winning documentary "Voices of Cohousing" is available at [notsocrazy.net](http://notsocrazy.net).*



NIELS PETER NIELSEN

*Top of the self-bearing beam construction on the Conch House, built by Morten and Hanne.*



# URBAN ECOVILLAGES

## MICRO-INFILL COHOUSING WITHOUT CARS

**Y**ou won't believe what is happening in Portland, Oregon, until you see it for yourself. As we recreate just about everything, the cultural revolution is proceeding at a fast clip. And the innovations in shared housing are only part of the excitement.

Compared to other cities in the US, Portland is now reported to have:

- The most bike lanes and bike commuters per capita
- The most healthful, locally-sourced food system
- The most courteous drivers
- The fastest-dropping rate of automobile use
- The most and best micro-breweries
- A burgeoning creative culture that features the most dynamic and innovative music scene
- The most green buildings
- The most natural building projects
- The most citizen-initiated dog parks

The secret of all this success is that it is generated locally, by groups and individuals who are committed to living within strong, dense neighborhoods—people who not only believe that they can change the world, but are actually *doing* it. One of the most inspiring of their creations is called Sabin Green. Named after its neighborhood, Sabin Green is an infill form of green cohousing that features four homes on two small shared lots. In this condominium-style legal configuration, each home is owned separately while the community piazza, cob



ELE SPEVAK

*The main entrance to Sabin Green is a pedestrian gateway that celebrates passage. Instead of using cars, Sabin Green residents typically get around town by bicycle or public transit.*

and straw-clay tea house, gardens, trees, paths, and trellised gateways are all owned in common.

Sabin Green is a demonstration of urban permaculture, a politically relevant way forward. It adds density to an existing neighborhood while also building a stronger community. It also doesn't provide for any off-street parking—and that doesn't bother the neighbors. This is because Portlanders continue to support their Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) as a strategy for both living lightly and preserving farmland. As a way of encouraging alternative forms of transportation, off-street parking is no longer required within 500 feet of mass transit streets.





MARK LAKEMAN

*All the paths, gardens, and gathering places in this "micro-village" are held in common. Arriving home via this common path, a resident may find friends relaxing on the community piazza.*

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***Sabin Green adds density  
to an existing  
neighborhood while also  
building a stronger  
community.***

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According to Christine Yun, project designer, "What Sabin Green does is demonstrate opportunities for small-scale infill within the UGB, which may be overlooked by a typical developer because of the scale. Such a strategy allows for a development which is sensitive to its context and maintains livability while increasing density."

Like many cohousing projects, this one features passive and active solar design, green roofs, increased thermal performance, non-toxic materials, and smaller units, which are more affordable while reducing space and energy use. There are also shared working areas, bike parking, fruit-bearing trees and other plants, composting, and gardens for vegetables and flowers. One of the most popular features of the homes is the integration of art in the buildings. For instance, when the sun sets, rays of light are cast through stained glass onto the highest gable of the largest house, creating a mystical effect that brings people out of their homes at the end of the day to watch.



But the most exciting aspect of the design is more subtle—it's the way the project brings people together socially. The porches of the homes are clustered so intimately around the community piazza that a whisper can be heard from one porch to another.

Yun says, "The most important cultural feature of the project is the shared communal space and amenities. In today's society the status quo is that everyone owns their

house in those ten days, with tons of people involved, and lots of them were kids. The level of excitement was over the top, with a constant stream of people who wanted to see what this little cohousing project was about. We had people from all over the city, and even dozens of Canadians who came down for the event."

David Sweet, one of the new residents, says, "The welcoming gate is so inviting that many curious people feel

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*The most exciting aspect of the design is subtle—it's the way the project brings people together socially.*

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own lawnmower, their own lawn tools, and their own shop-vac in their own garage, on a lot delineated from the neighbor's by a fence. An actual community is a social group of organisms with shared interests and goals. The sharing of resources is important to reducing consumption and the drain on our natural resources."

According to Lydia Doleman, natural building leader for the cob and straw-clay tea house, "Sabin Green was probably the most popular of the two dozen community project sites active during Portland's annual ten-day Village Building Convergence of 2007. We built a lot of this tea

free to walk right into the courtyard. That's just fine with us, because we want *everyone* to know about these ideas."

One of the most admired and respected ecological project leaders in Portland, Sabin Green developer Eli Spevak is in this for the cause. As a low-income housing activist for a decade and a founding supporter of Portland's Dignity Village, a highly innovative self-built community by and for homeless people, Spevak intends to provide interesting and healthy ways to dwell in community—while also living in the city.



MARK LAKEMAN

As in many villages, at the heart of Sabin Green is the community meeting house—in this case, a "tea house" made of cob and straw-clay. It is used for singing, reading, teaching, and snoozing.



Sabin Green's scale is an important aspect of the project to Spevak: "While my goal is to create new and more affordable ways to live in community, the only way to be truly affordable and green is to build small places."

*"The welcoming gate is so inviting that many curious people feel free to walk right into the courtyard."*

Project architect Patrick Donaldson observes that "the interest in Sabin Green has been remarkable. This amount of interest is very rewarding for



A bird's-eye view of Sabin Green—adding density through careful design and urban permaculture.

a project that is as vernacular as it is green. But really, that's the whole point: to belong in a place and to be a part of the Earth."\*

Mark Lakeman is a cofounder of the nonprofit City Repair Project in Portland, Oregon. A highly effective partnership model for change, City Repair has helped create more than 100 community organizations and gathering places in Portland alone. Mark is also a cofounder of Communitecture, an ecological design firm that supports the emergence of thriving communities through participatory design and co-creation processes.

# The Ultimate Challenge

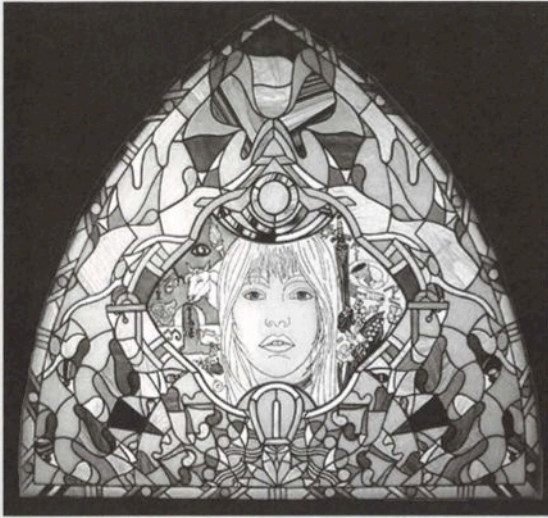
When it comes to building projects, communities frequently get bogged down by arguments over timelines, budget, methods, and materials. These are external factors that can be relatively easily managed. We have learned a lot in this regard here at Damanhur, and we would like to share with you what has worked for us.

The key to handling these practical issues is that any project involving extensive human resources and energy requires powerful motivation. For ecological or green building, you must have good reasons and communicate them clearly to all the stakeholders. The more advantages you can identify, the better. The more closely they are linked to fundamental values and interests of the community, the stronger they are as factors to consider. Here are the concepts that strengthened our internal motivation:

**1** Climate change is already affecting the sub-alpine region where our community is situated, rendering self-sufficiency in regard to water and energy an investment in our survival. In an ecosystem where low- or zero-impact is imperative, energy-saving techniques and non-toxic green building principles are the only possible responses.

**2** Another powerful motivation for green building is economic. The last house we built cost only 20% more than one built by conventional building methods would have, but we calculate that this will be recovered within a few years through energy savings. Such investments, financed by loans or mortgages, are unthinkable without long-term economic commitment by community members.





DAMANHUR

# in Building Green

**3** *We have reduced the excessive costs and lengthy time frames normally associated with green building by engaging the building sector to train our community members. This internal investment in the community's skill-set has, over the long term, granted us more control throughout the building process. We now have our own building company, renewable energy consultancy, professional plumbers, electricians, and architectural firm. The green building expertise developed through our internal projects has become an economic asset of our community, sought out throughout the country.*

**4** *What further motivates us is the concept of "exemplary mobilization": creating a model wherein passive houses and green building principles pay off. This will help these techniques to find their way into mainstream building, where large-scale implementation will begin to make a significant, global impact.*

In our experience, however, *social* factors may raise greater challenges than *practical* ones. Perhaps the human element poses the ultimate challenge.

Damanhur is exploring a green architecture of aesthetics. This goes beyond the limited scope of merely

using environmentally friendly materials. We are rethinking space, creating buildings that transmit knowledge and identity: a physical manifesto declaring who we are and where we are going as a people. Our last project presented the question: How do you build a community house with twenty bedrooms, ten bathrooms, and shared living spaces without designing military-style, utilitarian barracks? Our architects envisioned a house with meaning.

This vision challenged our brave technicians, who were asked to do things in new ways, requiring more time both in preparation and in manifestation. This presented the challenges of the human element—activating individual willingness to transform, to move toward consensus, to develop trust and to welcome diverse modes of perception. Managing this aspect is a delicate matter, requiring both solid negotiation skills and exciting objectives that elicit enthusiasm, without compromise or homogenization.

Our community is inclined toward research and experimentation, a culture that allows innovation to prevail over the inertia of sticking to known ways of building. This has been fundamental in the practical application of new approaches and materials.

In the end, what strikes everyone regarding the last house is the result. Aval is different and better than anyone expected. It has been awarded the "Green Home" flag by the Foundation for Environmental Education, and our architects are invited to towns nearby to present models of sustainable living in small village communities.

Ultimately, green building has the potential to develop both communities and individuals. It is fairly easy to find practical solutions for practical problems, yet much more challenging to motivate people beyond the known. But isn't it here, in the space of the not-yet-existing, where new meaning germinates?

*(I want to thank Sam Feinstein-Feit for his most precious editing support.)*

— Capra Carruba





JAN STEINMAN

# OUR ZERO-WASTE

*The chicken tractor at EcoReality in the “daytime” position. In the evening, after the chickens and rooster have huddled inside, ecovillagers simply raise the ramp to close the door and protect the poultry from predators.*

# CHICKEN CAMPER

**H**ow do you keep your chickens safe from predators, collect their eggs easily, and at the same time fertilize large areas? And how do you do this on a shoestring budget while conserving resources? To solve this problem, we turned to permaculture.

In permaculture, animals are valued for the many services they provide, instead of being used for a single purpose as they are in industrial farming. For example, in industrial farming, egg chickens are crowded into tiny cages, with a

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***Chicken tractors are generally built like mobile chicken coops without floors, allowing the chickens to happily scratch and dig the earth and eat pests, while their excrement increases soil fertility.***

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conveyer belt carrying feed past their heads, another belt under their egg-laying parts, and a third to carry off excrement. The excrement is viewed as “waste” by the industrial farmer, who often pays someone to take it away.

One of the goals of permaculture, on the other hand, is zero waste. We recognized that our chickens’ excrement was valuable fertilizer that we wanted to keep on our land. So we decided to build a “chicken tractor.” These contraptions are designed to make best use of all the chickens’ goods and services—not only eggs, but also cultivation, fertilizer, and pest control. Chicken tractors are generally built like mobile chicken coops without floors, allowing the chickens to happily scratch and dig the earth and eat pests while their excrement increases soil fertility. When the earth underneath has had enough fertilizer, the chicken tractor is moved to another location.



But such chicken tractors usually hold only a small number of chickens and are often not completely predator-proof. Or if they are bigger and sturdier, they are unwieldy to move. So we decided that instead of building a chicken tractor that ploughs the earth, we'd interpret "tractor" differently: something that easily moves chickens from place to place.

We wanted to get enough chickens to bring in some egg money, and making many small chicken tractors seemed like a waste of resources, when compared to making one large one.

So we wanted to build a big, easily-moved chicken coop with a porous floor to make cleaning easier and to get that lovely fertilizer back into the earth.

We fretted for a while over how to build such a thing and where we'd get the parts. Wheels and axles and hitches and such are expensive. Keeping our "zero waste" principle in mind, we wanted to use reclaimed materials if possible. But how could we find so many valuable pieces?

Then one day we were at the recycling depot and saw an old camping tent trailer. The top was long gone, but the bottom looked serviceable. Unfortunately, they wouldn't let us have it. So we put out on the grapevine that we were looking for such a thing, and within a few days, had *five offers!* It seems *everyone* has one of these things that they want to get rid of.

So we pulled one home, got rid of the canvas, cut out the decaying floor, and built nesting boxes to go on either end. It had two sheet-metal internal dividers that we pulled out—and that we might have just scrapped, but Carol brilliantly noticed that they were just the right size for roofs for the nesting boxes. She hammered one edge flat (which also made a reinforced point for attaching hinges) and we painted them with aluminum Rust-Oleum so the nesting boxes wouldn't get too hot.

Our neighbors, Dave and Sasha, had cut down some cedars and milled them on site to make a barn. They were going to burn all the slash and other waste, but we volunteered to "clean it up" for them. The smallest bits went into berms and the medium-sized bits got run through the wood chipper, but the largest pieces—the mill slabs that remain when a round tree is cut into rectangular lumber—make great siding when lapped.

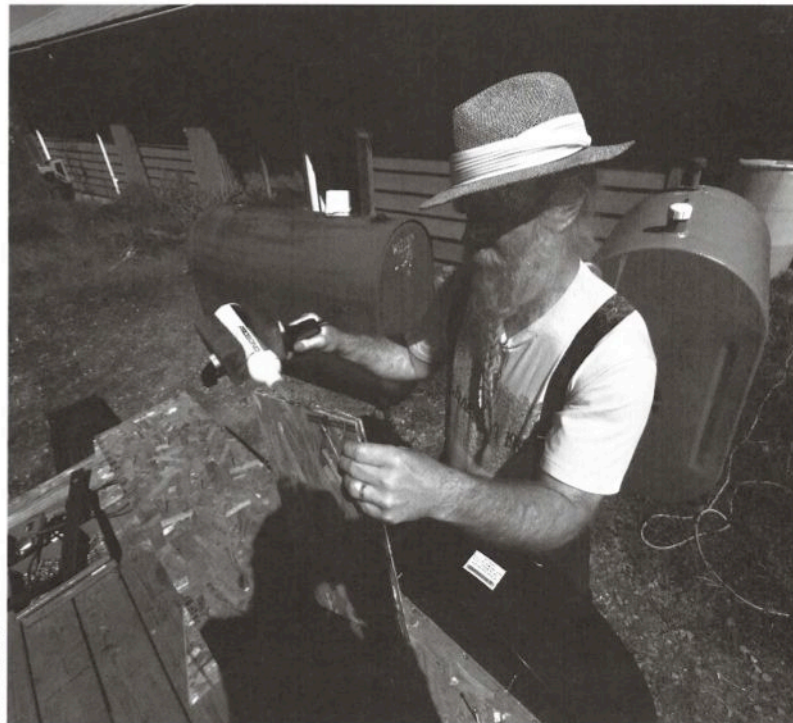
So Dave stripped the bark off and we screwed the mill slabs onto the chicken tractor as siding. The screws were

all driven from the inside, through drilled shank holes, so that they would draw the siding together and eliminate the worst gaps. (We call the remaining gaps ventilation.)

This results in a construction that is free, fairly weather-tight, ventilated, and not altogether displeasing to the eye—Abe Lincoln meets Bill Mollison. We mounted the slabs full-length, then used a demolition saber saw to sculpt the ends for some additional aesthetic appeal.

A couple of old cedar two-by-fours salvaged from a deck re-build made framing and bracing for the door, and we simply saber-sawed along the braces to cut a combination doorway-ramp into the side. We attached hinges to the metal frame and added some slats for a chicken ladder to complete the sides.

The floor was more of a challenge. The original floor had rotted out in places, but we only needed enough on the edge to attach furring strips to secure the mesh. To do so, however, we had to put some additional support in the floor because we could not find hardware cloth wide enough to cover the whole floor. So we added new supports run-



CAROL WAGNER

*Jan applies polyurethane glue to a nesting box divider. The glue is uncooperative, so a squeeze clamp makes an impromptu glue gun.*



# THE COST OF OUR CHICKEN TRACTOR



CAROL WAGNER

**W**e were fortunate to be able to build our chicken tractor with only a few common tools and with minimal expenses for materials. Here's what it took:

## Tools

- Circular saw with carbide blade for cutting out the floor and for starting cuts for the door
- Demolition saber saw with 12" demolition blade for sculpting the mill slab siding and cutting the door
- Table saw, with 24-tooth rip blade, for cutting nesting boxes and turning salvaged 2"x 4"s into lath and roosts
- Angle grinder with thin metal cutting disk for cutting the legs and screw ends
- Battery powered drill for driving screws
- Corded electric drill for pilot holes and extra power for holes in metal
- Pop rivet tool for attaching nesting box lids

## Materials and Costs

- One abandoned camping tent trailer with fiberglass top: *free!*
- Two 4'x8' sheets of Oriented Strand Board for nesting boxes: on hand (any wood sheet goods could be used)
- Mill slabs for siding: *free!*
- Six 4" T hinges, for nesting box lids: \$18
- Two 6" T hinges, for ramp/door: \$8
- 2.5" gold screws: *on hand*
- Pop rivets: *on hand*
- 12'x4" rubber pond liner, to weather-proof nesting box lids: *on hand*
- 15'x3' plastic hardware cloth, for floor: \$24
- Styrofoam packaging material, for wood finish: *free!*
- One half gallon Rust-Oleum rusty metal primer: *on hand*
- One half gallon Rust-Oleum white paint: *on hand*
- One gallon lacquer thinner: *half free, balance was \$12*

Total out-of-pocket cost: \$62!

- J. S.



ning down the center of the trailer. All it took was a few holes in the frame and some more screws supplemented with polyurethane glue.

We ripped parts of the original floor that were not rotten into twelve-centimeter (five-inch) strips and attached them to the edges of the frame. Then the hardware cloth was

brushed the trailer and coated it with Rust-Oleum primer—that ugly red/brown paint you often see peeking out from the fenders and wheel wells of older cars. Now we put two coats of white Rust-Oleum on top, to brighten it up a little. Both these paints had been purchased for a different pro-

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*The lacquer thinner let us “stack functions”—getting rid of the polystyrene without clogging a landfill and protecting our mill slabs at the same time.*

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attached to these edges via furring strips ripped from the same cedar decking we salvaged for other parts of the structure.

When you put a lot of effort into something, you don't really want it to rot away in the rain—at least not for a while. This means such a project isn't finished until it's finished. Before beginning construction, we had wire-

ject that had never happened, so they were essentially free since they were just sitting around unused.

Finishing the wood was a bit more contentious. We had some fine wood finishes sitting around, but we wanted to save those for things that we wanted to look really nice, like the unfinished cabinets and doors in the house.



*Mill slabs that would normally have been burned hold everything together on top of the camping trailer.*

JAN STEINMAN



This particular trailer happened to come with a half-gallon of lacquer thinner in a can, which we were surprised to discover after we got it home. If we had found it earlier, we probably would have politely removed it before transport—but it turned out to be a good thing that we hadn't.

You see, one inexhaustible non-renewable resource that is clogging landfills is Styrofoam. Very few recycling places will

It took the Styrofoam packing from a couple desktop computers and a few other electronic items to make a half-gallon of polystyrene lacquer. It soaked nicely into the dry yellow cedar mill slabs and quickly dried to a tough, plastic finish.

*(Be very careful when trying this! Lacquer thinner is toxic and extremely flammable. Do this in a well-ventilated area, and though it's fun and satisfying to watch the Styrofoam dis-*

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***A few of the hens helped Dave put the white topcoat on the metal parts.  
(We still call one of them Whitey.)***

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take the stuff, and most people either chuck it in the landfill or have a pile of it in their garage or basement—as we did. And it turns out that you can make a clear polystyrene wood finish simply by dissolving Styrofoam in lacquer thinner. The lacquer thinner let us “stack functions”—getting rid of the polystyrene without clogging a landfill and protecting our mill slabs at the same time.

solve, don't stand directly over your mixing container, or you'll breathe fumes and risk getting splashes on your skin and eyes. Avoid getting the preparation on skin, as it forms a tough, hard coating that is difficult to remove.)

We didn't quite have the whole thing finished when tragedy struck. The chickens had come suddenly via a free Craig's List offer, and we didn't have a proper coop to house them in



*Carol retrieves an egg from a nesting box. “The girls” (and Reggie, their rooster) love their new home.*

JAN STEINMAN



*Top: Jan applies polyurethane glue to a nesting box divider. Holes are pre-drilled in the oriented strand board, and screws hold everything together while the glue sets. Bottom: Carol flattens one edge of an internal divider from the camping trailer so hinges can be attached to make it the lid of a nesting box, one of which is on the right. A flatbed trailer makes a great outdoor work surface.*

while we built the chicken tractor. Carol and Dave had cobbled up a temporary but functional structure made from bits of old fencing, tarps, pond-liner, and an old chain-link gate. But that was no match for a hungry raccoon one night. He only got one hen, but that was enough to make us change our plans.

We'd been making steady progress on the chicken tractor; at the time of the attack, all the construction work was complete, but nothing had been painted. We had planned to paint it over the next several days before putting in the chickens.

But instead we moved them in the day after the raccoon's feast, fearing he'd be back for more. A few of the hens helped Dave put the white topcoat on the metal parts. (We still call one of them Whitey.)

Put to the test, the new "chicken camper" seems to function well. Although it has a proper hitch for moving with a tractor, Carol, Dave, and I were able to push it over to the west orchard manually—with only a little bit of sweating and swearing.

Typically, the hens spend the night closed up inside, safe from predators. Then we go out in the morning, roll it to a new location, and quickly raise a ring of chicken wire around it, using bamboo poles stuck in the ground. This is a lot less work than moving a half-dozen traditional chicken tractors. And the chickens love to go under it for shelter when it snows.

The chickens' egg yield has gone up somewhat since they moved into their new "camper." But more importantly, the nesting boxes have reduced their egg-eating down to a bare minimum. Our chickens seem to like their new digs.✿



CAROL WAGNER

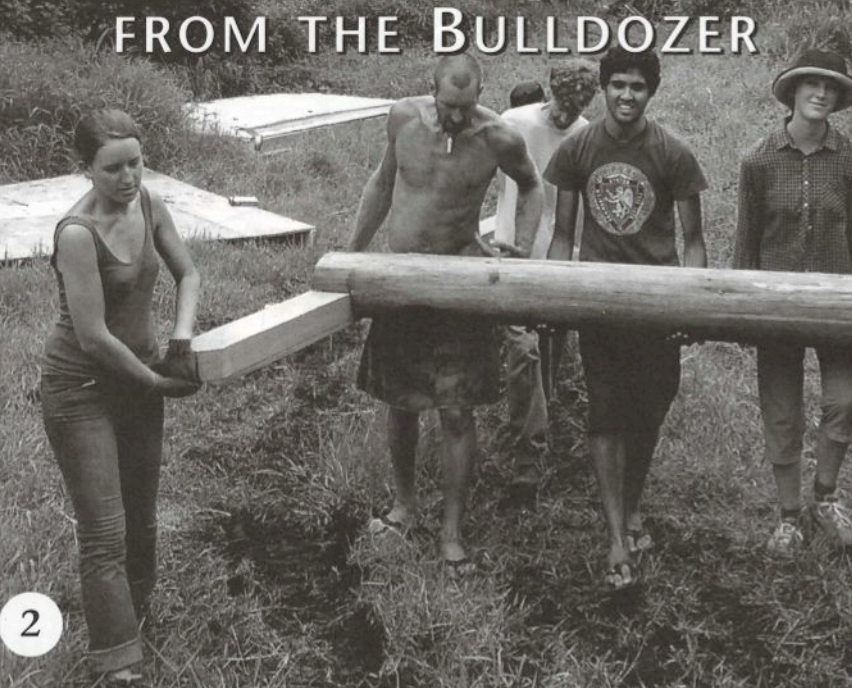


JAN STEINMAN

*Jan Steinman is co-founder of EcoReality, a forming ecovillage in the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia, Canada ([www.ecoreality.org](http://www.ecoreality.org)).*

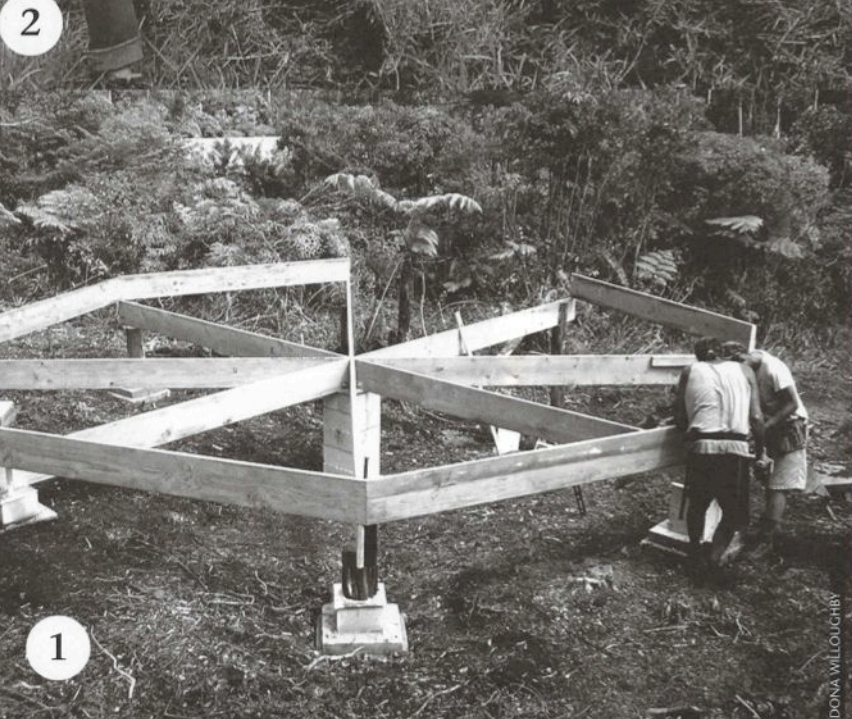


# HOW A HAWAI'I COMMUNITY RESCUED A MARIMBA STUDIO FROM THE BULLDOZER



JOHN SCHINNERER

BY JOHN SCHINNERER



DONA WILLOUGHBY

1: La'akea member Biko Long and former member Robert Silber build the floor framing on the site where the building will be reassembled. 2: Friends of the community help with the heavy lifting—here, carrying a post-and-beam assembly that supports the porch roof. (Biko, the “new” homeowner, is at right). 3: Community friends and volunteers reassemble a wall. 4: Biko reassembles his and Tracy's new home. 5: Almost there... 6: La'akea members Dona Willoughby, Judy Dolmatch, Tracy Matfin and Biko Long enjoy Tracy and Biko's newly repurposed home.

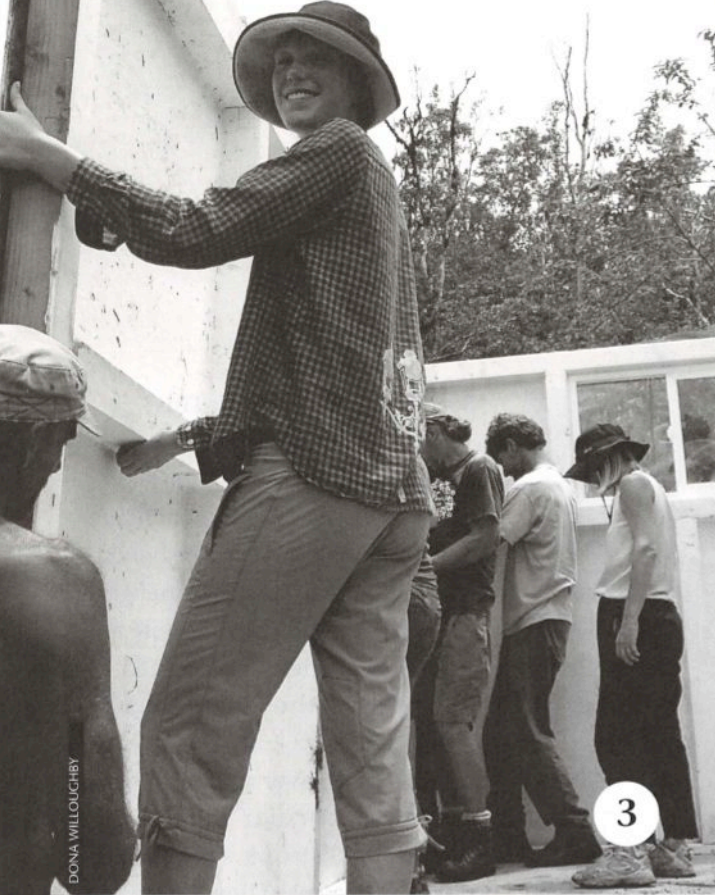
Tracy and Biko, members of La'akea Community on Hawai'i Island, recently acquired a “new” home. They bought a structure scheduled for demolition and—with community help—took it apart, moved it to La'akea, and put it back together.

“The original building was an octagonal marimba studio located five miles away,” relates Tracy. “The building was slated to be bulldozed. We offered the owners \$1,000 and were given the right to tear down the building.”

“Then we took apart the studio and moved the pieces on a flatbed truck—it took eight trips,” explains Biko. He estimates that dismantling the structure took about 70 person hours. As the structure came apart and was moved, the challenge became where to store the pieces and how to keep track of what went where. “We laid the pieces out all over the land near our access road, a couple hundred feet from the new floor platform,” says Biko. With the floor platform in place and the pieces of the structure scattered on the ground, “it looked like a hurricane had hit La'akea,” he adds.

“The walls were tricky. They definitely didn't go up as symmetrically as they came down,” remarks





DONNA WILLOUGHBY

Tracy. Once the walls were up, the roof went on in sections.

“We built braces to hold the pieces up until they could lean on each other,” she clarifies. (A similar method was used to take down the roof sections.) After the pieces of the octagonal structure were all back in place, finishing touches hid small gaps in the wall joints. Some additional windows, inside and outside trim, an expanded front porch, and fresh paint were added.

The “hard” costs for the project—including purchased wood, windows, fasteners and other building materials, and a small solar power system—totaled \$5,500. Estimated total cost including labor was around \$18,000.

“We think it would have been at least \$25,000, maybe even \$30,000, to build it new,” says Tracy. “The labor might have been less in building a new structure, but we would have chosen more sustainable materials and therefore materials costs might have been higher.” Tracy and Biko own the structure itself, and the community owns the land it sits on.

Biko explains, “As a community, we calculated the hard costs and agreed on amounts of compensated labor that the community members put in. Then Tracy and I agreed to pay that amount back to La’akea.” ❁



DONNA WILLOUGHBY



DONNA WILLOUGHBY



JOHN SCHINNERER



# Battling the Bureaucracy



## in Israel

*Kibbutz Lotan members join Green Apprenticeship students in plastering the strawbales surrounding the geodesic dome frame of their “dome-atories.” Here they are working on an entrance and storage extension.*

In Israel, anyone involved in natural building—the use of local and replenishable materials with low embodied energy and low technology—is regarded as eccentric. Although the government has recently come out with a “green building” code that has generated a great deal of enthusiasm among forward-looking architects, natural building is not yet on the radar screen.

So who builds “naturally” in Israel? Generally, it is the domain of a few adventurous souls living in outlying areas somewhat removed from bureaucratic observation, where enforcement is slack. Sometimes they succeed in wheedling approval from the building authority in their regional rural council. Alternatively, they simply build illegally. Kibbutz Lotan is the first organized community to lobby systematically for the inclusion of natural building in Israel’s building codes. Specifically, we’re seeking approval for strawbale building with earth plaster.

### So Why Are We Doing This?

First of all, as an intentional community, we believe in it. We are part of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). But let us be honest. Ideologically, there are those who are more committed and there are those who are less committed.

There are those who highly value Kibbutz Lotan’s vision of involving ever greater numbers (in particular the young) in our workshops and educational programs. They also point to the income from guided tours that emphasize our natural building projects.

On the other hand, there are those who do not appreciate the encroachment on our private space by (as they understand them) hordes of outsiders who come to visit the projects. They also claim that this type of tourism is not economically sound.

There is tension around the question of how much we should financially support our natural building projects. Kibbutz Lotan is not a wealthy community. We have not yet even reached the threshold where we need to pay income tax.

But we cannot grow as a community without additional housing. Our current population of 60 members and 60 children does not constitute, in our eyes, a critical mass. We *must* build—or stagnate socially, economically, and even ideologically. We cannot afford to pay contractors to build conventionally, or even to build “green.”



However, we are not isolated fringe individuals. We constitute a legally incorporated body, subject to the regulations governing Cooperative Societies in Israel. We are part of the real world. We need building permits. Buildings have to meet safety standards. Kibbutz Lotan sits in a valley along a major active geological fault line: the Syrian-African Rift System. The Arabian Tectonic Plate on the Eastern Jordanian side of the valley, five kilometers (3.1 miles) east of Lotan, moves north three millimeters to one centimeter every year. A construction engineer has to produce certification that our buildings are earthquake-proof. They also have to be fire-

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***Kibbutz Lotan is the first organized community to lobby systematically for the inclusion of natural building in Israel's building codes.***

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proof. Otherwise it is illegal to live in the houses. In addition, we could not insure them or their contents or get third person liability.

But in Israel this is only half the story. We have to fulfill all the above requirements, but the financing—including our own labor—is our own responsibility. If we wanted government loans or grants, our building methods would have to be officially recognized. But this is impossible; in Israel there are no building codes for natural building.

What's more, in Israel's convoluted bureaucracy, the right hand does not necessarily know what the left hand is doing. Two years ago, a



*Top: The third dome frame is constructed next to the second one, onto which the first courses of strawbales have been tied. The bales are pre-plastered on both the interior and exterior faces. Bottom: Green Apprenticeship participants construct the earthquake-resilient geodesic frame that carries the weight of strawbales and earth plaster.*





major incident with the Ministry of Tourism brought us face to face with this issue.

The officials of the Israel Tourist Development Corporation, a subsidiary of the Ministry, related enthusiastically to our natural building methods. They believed that our buildings constituted a potential tourist attraction. They offered to fund 80 percent of a \$250,000 project in order to upgrade Lotan's Center for Creative Ecology. On the planning board was a tourist reception center with tea house, composting toilets, and a small constructed wetland to recycle the greywater from the tourist area. The Ministry paid the architects to design the building and the composting toilets according to



*Top: Many lessons were learned during construction of the first three prototypes. The domes built in 2007, like the ones shown here, are hybrid geodesic domes with openings built in for windows and doors. The front extension will include shelves for storage. Bottom: Sheera and Ryan are Green Apprenticeship graduates who remained on Lotan to complete the dome that their group began to construct.*



principles of natural building that we laid down. Then they submitted the plans to the Ministry's building engineer. "Stop!" he told them. "The government cannot finance projects built by methods for which there is no building code."

The upshot was that the contractor hired by the Ministry had to build with conventional cinder blocks. He then

### The Test

"The longest journey begins with a single step." So we set off. One of our ecological volunteers spent a month downloading information regarding strawbale building tests and codes worldwide. We made a pilgrimage to the Israel Standards Institute in Tel Aviv. It took about half a year to

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## *The Ministry of Tourism paid the architects to design the building and the composting toilets according to principles of natural building that we laid down.*

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had to attach strawbales on the outside. After that, the contractor had to plaster both the concrete and the strawbales with layers of adobe. In other words, the contractor simply augmented conventional buildings with extra insulation. So we ended up with a complex that in many ways is not a "kosher" natural building—merely kosher *style*.

That was the proverbial "straw" that did it. We realized that we had to become proactive—as pioneers not only in the desert but also in the labyrinths of bureaucracy.

get all the relevant officials together in one room, and for them to agree to expedite fire-testing for adobe-plastered strawbales—at our expense. We were invited to the Institute to build a wall to be tested.

Not so simple. Kibbutz Lotan is five hours away from Tel Aviv. We had to supply all the materials to build the wall. Another "semi-legal" natural builder agreed to transport strawbales and adobe, hoping to benefit from the results of our work. We built a characteristic strawbale wall with 50-centimeter-wide wheat strawbales coated with five centimeters of earth

### THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE ECOLOGY



**Kibbutz  
Lotan's  
Educational  
Programs**

**T**he Green Apprenticeship (GA) is a ten-week, hands-on program that is held three times a year. The program teaches the fundamentals of natural building, utilizing adobe, strawbales, and waste materials. In addition, Kibbutz Lotan's organic garden serves as a facility for teaching sustainable gardening and principles of permaculture. The apprenticeship also incorporates

components of the Ecovillage Design curriculum being developed by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). The course is conducted in English.

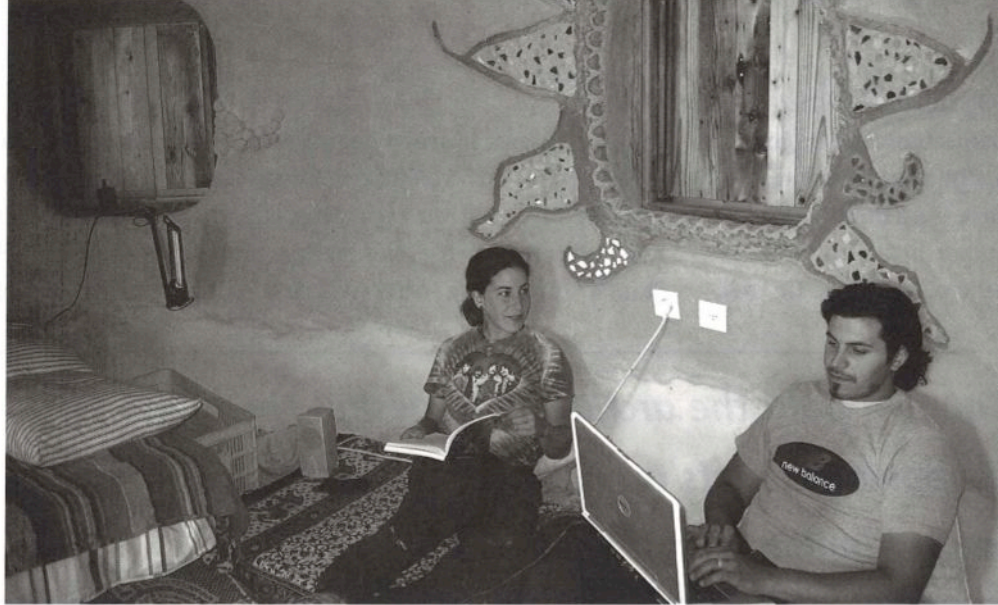
The weekend-long Earth Building Workshops are oriented to the Israeli public and conducted in Hebrew. Participants are requested to bring two pails of their local earth in order to learn how to formulate the right mix for earth plaster in their home location. Participants run the gamut of society and have included educators, artists, and even conventional builders. Many live in rural areas.

Special workshops are held for particular groups from both within Israel and abroad. We specialize in educational programs that enable Arab and Jewish youth to get to know each other on the basis of a common concern for the environment (see "Kibbutz Lotan: Teaching Natural Building to our Arab Neighbors," *Communities* #131, Summer 2006).

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*For further details visit [www.kibbutzlotan.com](http://www.kibbutzlotan.com) or contact us at: Center for Creative Ecology, Mark Naveh, Kibbutz Lotan, D.N. Chevel Eilot, ISRAEL 88855.*





*Sheera and Ryan relax in the dome they built and decorated. The domes recently received full permission for inhabitation, and the students in the spring 2008 semester were the first group to be housed in the dome-atories.*

plaster in order to conform with electrical wiring standards.

Still not so simple. All you natural builders know that you have to put about four layers of plaster on the strawbales. Each layer has to dry completely before you apply the next layer.

This meant a trip for each layer, four trips to Tel Aviv—and another final trip for the Test.

It was, indeed, a test by fire. Twelve hundred degrees centigrade for three hours... and virtually no heat passed through the wall. We had passed the first critical hurdle—for us and, theoretically, for all of Israel.

## ***Why Are We Doing This?*** **Our Responsibility to Nature** **A View from Kibbutz Lotan**

**F**rom the story of Creation, Judaism and Christianity have inherited contradictory traditions regarding humanity's relationship with the environment.

On the one hand:

"And God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, replenish the Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the Earth.'" (Genesis 1:28)

On the other hand: "And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to till it and keep (guard, protect) it." (Genesis 2:15)

Hence, some modern Jewish philosophers feel that there is a conflict built into the very essence of the human-nature relationship.

Kibbutz Lotan's orientation in relation to this conflict can be aptly summarized with the following Rabbinic Midrash (homily):

"At the time when the Divine created Adam, it took him around the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him, 'Look at my works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are! Everything that I have created, I created for you: take care that you do not damage and destroy My world, for if you damage it there is no-one to repair it afterwards.'" (Kohelet Rabba 7:13)

- M. L.

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***It took about half a year  
to get all the relevant  
officials together  
in one room.***

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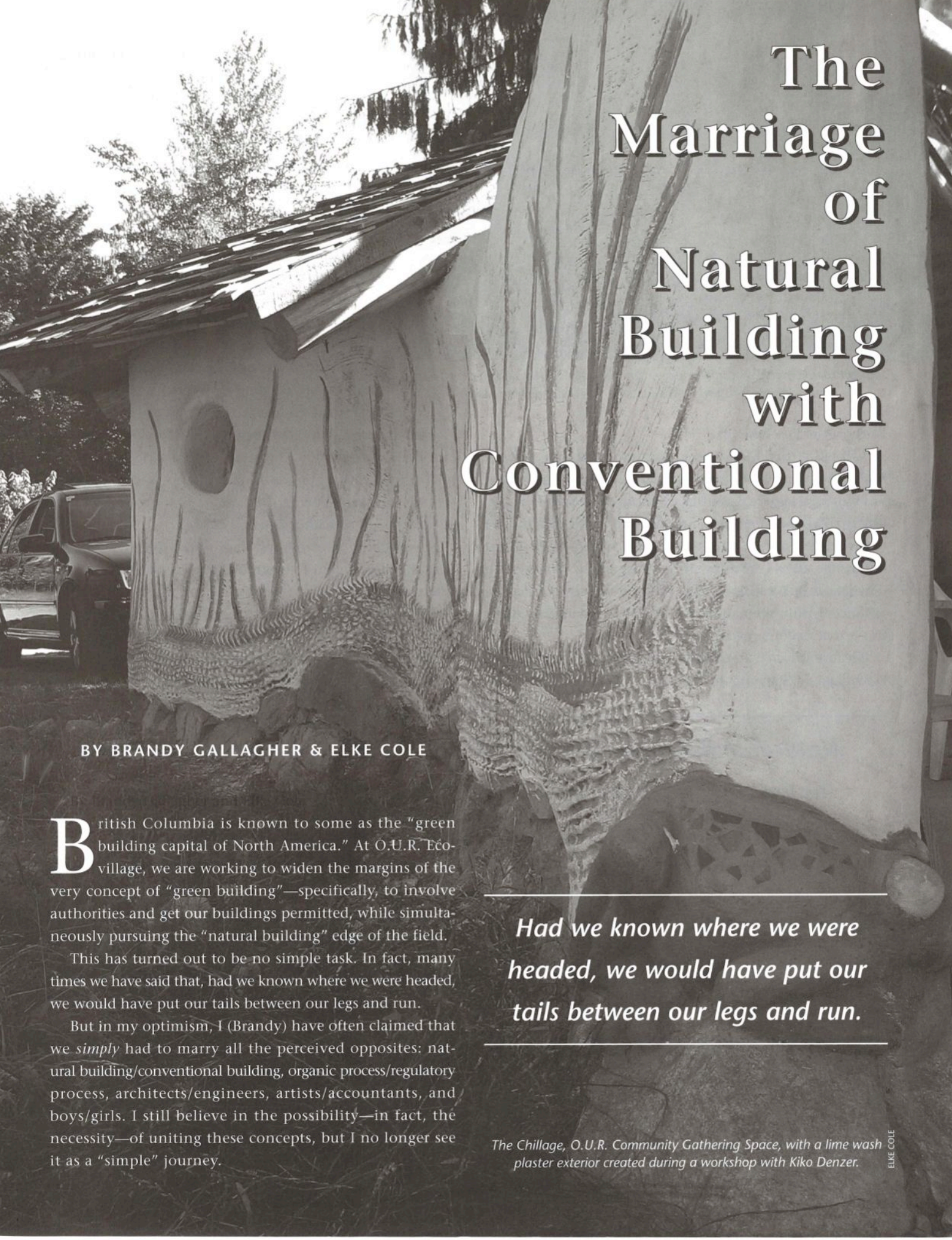
This was at least enough to convince the Building Department of the Regional Council to approve the neighborhood we are building for ecological students and volunteers—metal frame geodesic domes covered with strawbales and earth plaster. In addition, safety regulations mandate fire hydrants and smoke detectors as well as access for fire trucks.

And so our bureaucratic march goes on. If you have advice for us as we continue down this path, we would be very happy to hear it.♣

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*Michael Livni grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, where he received a degree in medicine. He has lived in Israel, on kibbutz, for 45 years. Since 1987, he has made his home on Kibbutz Lotan. He has worked in agriculture, informal education, and eco-tourism. Michael is also an active member of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA).*





# The Marriage of Natural Building with Conventional Building

BY BRANDY GALLAGHER & ELKE COLE

**B**ritish Columbia is known to some as the “green building capital of North America.” At O.U.R. Éco-village, we are working to widen the margins of the very concept of “green building”—specifically, to involve authorities and get our buildings permitted, while simultaneously pursuing the “natural building” edge of the field.

This has turned out to be no simple task. In fact, many times we have said that, had we known where we were headed, we would have put our tails between our legs and run.

But in my optimism, I (Brandy) have often claimed that we *simply* had to marry all the perceived opposites: natural building/conventional building, organic process/regulatory process, architects/engineers, artists/accountants, and boys/girls. I still believe in the possibility—in fact, the necessity—of uniting these concepts, but I no longer see it as a “simple” journey.

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*Had we known where we were headed, we would have put our tails between our legs and run.*

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*The Chillage, O.U.R. Community Gathering Space, with a lime wash plaster exterior created during a workshop with Kiko Denzer.*

ELKE COLE





JAN STEINMAN

*Holgar Laerad (right), natural building instructor at O.U.R. Ecovillage, explains to natural building students the work to be done on a new art studio.*

### Faith in the Possibilities

As I write this, I have spent the last week in a crisis of faith in humanity. My idealistic nature crashes hard when I run into the very realities that I have tried to outrun by getting involved with natural building and activism. Things I thought were possible are turning out to be—well—if not impossible, then very difficult. Yet it is only by having faith in what *can* be possible that we will ever achieve our desired advances within the natural building movement. So writing this article is good medicine for me.

Because this article is about what *is* possible. At O.U.R. Ecovillage, in Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, Canada,

For the past eight years now, O.U.R. Ecovillage, Cobworks Canada, and Elke Cole Design have worked with inspectors, engineers, and regulatory agencies in order to receive full permission for O.U.R. green building projects. These projects include strawbale, load-bearing cob, dry-stacked stone foundations, chip-and-slip wall systems, pond systems for wastewater, rainwater harvesting, and other previously unpermitted technologies.

The approval from these teams of building officials has made O.U.R. Ecovillage's 25-acre sustainable village a unique model for Canada. Recently we celebrated the final approvals and the completion of the development permit process for our nine-home "eco-housing cluster." We have pledged that this is to become a precedent-setting showcase for the country.

As we continue to build teams of building and land-use authorities, engineers, universities, building inspectors, health inspectors, conventional builders, other building schools, and homeowner-builders, a new groundswell of advocates and educators is being created.

Specifically, we are encouraging those in the "green building" movement to begin examining some of the ways that their materials and techniques are not so green after all. For example, our educational programs create dialogues about the embodied energy in building materials (the energy used to manufacture and transport the materials), the toxicity of many of their ingredients, and their effect on the

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***Natural building pushes the limits of our officials' knowledge, but as we educate them and team up with engineers, we find those who are willing to think creatively and run experiments with us.***

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we have tried to create new possibilities by merging much of the best from the worlds of natural building and conventional building—and we have achieved some gratifying accomplishments.

### O.U.R. Progress

Elke Cole and I have attempted to go where few others ever wanted to go before. First, in 1998, we organized small workshops and projects. Then we co-created the 2000 Natural Building Colloquium. Finally, we started a summer natural building school, audaciously inviting regulatory authorities along for the ride.

waste stream when they are no longer in use. We not only open their eyes to the many options of using more natural materials, but also involve them in discussions on advocacy, social economy, social justice, and ecological design.

### Brandy's Story: The People-Making Behind the Place-Making

Ever since the moment I met Elke, I have been imagining new possibilities in sustainable community building. I recognized that it takes a community to build a village—especially a village of natural buildings. I was not deterred by the hard work or the less-than-glamorous amount of mud and manure. And I became determined to marry all those



***The Us-vs-Them mentality is still deeply internalized in our culture, and we have a long road to walk as we heal from this and create a more cooperative society.***

perceived opposites—like natural building and conventional building—to arrive at a new, more integrated way of living and sheltering ourselves.

Inevitably, despite the attraction between those opposites, pushing them together has led to resistance and conflict. Differences can be the juice of life, and we know enough not to try to avoid them. But they drain us nonetheless.

In the average North American, there seems to be a deep-seated need to be “right,” to find the “right way” or the “right answers.” Yet the more I work within the field of natural building, the more right ways and right answers I see, and the less they appear to contradict each other. In fact, the “right way” often seems to be a combination of a variety of methods that at first appear to be in opposition.

But it can take time for people who think they are “right” to accept other possibilities. The Us-vs-Them mentality is still deeply internalized in our culture, and we have a long road to walk as we heal from this and create a more cooperative society.

I have come to realize that our real work—and the really hard work—is not so much the building of physical structures as the “invisible” building of social connections and cooperative structures. It’s the people-making behind the place-making.

This is a big job. It requires transforming our concept of conflict and differences until we can see them as natural, honest, and healthy. It means welcoming conflict onto the building site for its power to enhance and enrich our experience—and our dwellings.

At O.U.R. Ecovillage, we are willing to take this on as our next big work. As we go into a new season, we have faith that we can “build” a new cadre of committed, skilled, and focused natural builders.

Throughout North America, many of the first line of natural building teachers are moving on to new

aspects of their work. The time is ripe to nurture a new generation of builders who know how to find balance among the many ways of being “right,” who feel empowered to collaborate positively and productively with the many regulatory authorities, and who see this as their professional and personal development path.

**Elke’s Story: From Dream to Reality**

Building an ecovillage has some things in common with natural building. An ecovillage emerges from a dream of a simple life, a good life: growing one’s own food, living close to the land, and being part of natural rhythms.

Natural building stems from those same values: simplicity, small scale, and independence from complex, high-tech systems. The dream of a natural home leads us to gather stones for a foundation, mix cob for the walls, and add some windows to catch the sun. We shape the building to fit our bodies and our movements, and create places for special things inside our walls. Put a roof on, and there we have it. A dream home.



*Bird sculpture detailing in the Chillage.*

ELKE COLE



Except... here comes the wake-up call: The sun goes down at 4 p.m. in the winter and I'm not ready to go to bed then. So I want lights. And my computer is important to me. And in the morning I like to have toast and listen to music. Suddenly I'm no longer dreaming—I'm living in the stark reality of my desire for electricity, requiring the integration into my home of a quite complex, high-tech system indeed.

And there's another part of the dream that is difficult to bring into reality. Natural building encourages methods that are easy to learn and do not require many tools, enabling owners and friends to get together and build small, beautiful houses for each other without spending lots of money. The dream is to stay out of debt, which means being able to spend less time earning money and more time growing food and being with friends and family.

Yet in order to build legally, we must learn to work within building regulations and codes—or change the regulations

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*I have come to realize that our  
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of social connections  
and cooperative structures.*

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and codes from within. Natural building pushes the limits of our officials' knowledge, but as we educate them and team up with engineers, we find those who are willing to think creatively and run experiments with us. Suddenly we face testing, numbers, scores—and a much higher price tag on that simple, beautiful house. Add this to the high price of land (at least in our area), and it becomes nearly impossible to build even the simplest house without a mortgage.

Idealism is an important driving force towards change. We all know that change is very much needed, and a vision for that change is created by our dreams. Yet crossing over from dream to reality involves taking many steps—sometimes small steps one at a time, sometimes a huge leap of faith. By living in community, we can support each other in making these steps—and challenge each other to go a little further.

In community we have the opportunity to build private places smaller by sharing some facilities and services—simultaneously keeping individual costs down and reducing some kinds of complexity. We can help each other at the times when labour is called for. We can work out the regulatory approval process as a replicable model, simplifying the path for others both within and outside our community.

So hold onto that dream and let's see what we can do to together to bring reality closer to our dreams.

*A "rain chain" harvests water in front of an arched window at O.U.R. Ecovillage's Healing Sanctuary.*

ELKE COLE





## Faith in the Journey

Our crisis of faith has not stemmed from doubts that we can pull off a merger between natural building and conventional building. This lack of faith has been centred on a concern that many North Americans may not want to give up the mainstream values that are often expressed by conventional building.

Seeing high-end construction companies build huge “ecologically designed” houses for the rich and famous was not what we were aiming for when we began the work of transforming regulatory processes. Mainly we wanted to build credibility for natural building without losing the ideals of participatory design, cooperation, accounting for embodied energy, and affordability.

How can we ensure that these values are upheld? One way is to have building inspectors, engineers, and other professionals come into our ecovillage to teach and facilitate



Guillermo Maciel listens as Pascal Blanchard explains a wood and mud natural building technique.

Faith in this journey returns when we see these worlds actually beginning to merge, with conflict transforming into collaboration. We are committed to this journey because we believe it is vitally important to the future of the envi-

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***We are encouraging those in the “green building” movement to begin examining some of the ways that their materials and techniques are not so green after all.***

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our courses. For example, in our recent partnership program with a major Canadian university, we have not only an engineer teaching at our Natural Building Program, but also PhD engineering students working closely with O.U.R. builders to document the construction process. While doing so, our guests are compelled to examine some of the ways that our buildings and our cooperative lifestyle are linked.

Another way is to make sure that our rising standard of excellence in the natural building profession includes not just design and structural integrity, but also a high level of collegial support and cooperative learning connections—all operating within an overall model of social justice, healthy and affordable homes, and responsible place-making.

These steps help to lessen the gap between natural building and conventional building, while conveying to the latter some of the ideals that are central to the former.

ronment and humanity that we find a different way to build, live, and work together.✿

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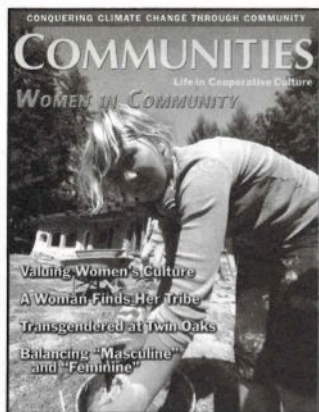
*Brandy Gallagher is one of the original founders and developers of O.U.R. Ecovillage and serves as the executive director of O.U.R. Community Association. Brandy's passion for community building comes from four decades of living in communal or cooperative settings. Her most recently published work is the documentary, “Creating TOPIA: The Journey of Developing a School of Sustainable Community Building.”*

*Elke Cole lives in Victoria and designs, builds, and teaches “houses that love you back.” Her work both at home and internationally has been groundbreaking in introducing natural building to a wide audience and into the permit process in BC. Please visit [www.elkecole.com](http://www.elkecole.com) to find out more. Note: We preserve the spelling of our Commonwealth country authors.*

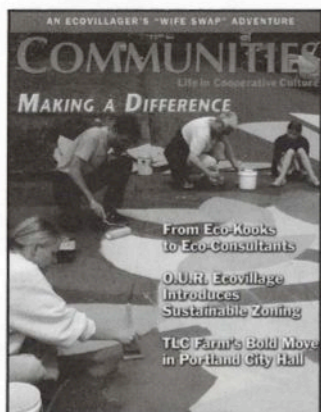


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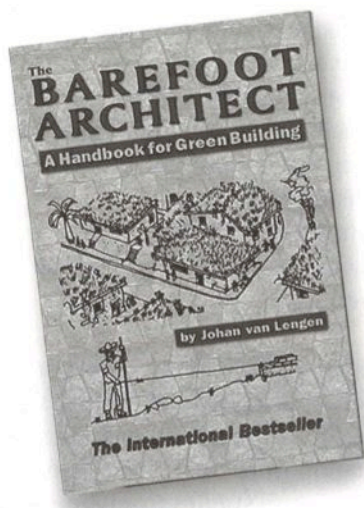
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#139



## REVIEWS



## ***The Barefoot Architect*** ***A Handbook for Green Building***

**By Johan van Lengen**

**Shelter Publications, 2008**  
**Pb, 705 pp., \$17.95**

*Reviewed by Mark Mazziotti*

"This book shows a bit of everything," writes Johan van Lengen in his introduction to *The Barefoot Architect*. And indeed it does. At 705 pages, it's about the size of an adobe brick. In it you'll find tips on everything from cooking your own lime to preventing scorpions from coming in the front door.

Van Lengen is a Dutchman who studied architecture in North America and then made his way to Brazil, where he and his wife Rose founded TIBÁ (Bio-Architecture and Intuitive Technology), an institute producing workshops, research, consulting, and publications on

alternative building and other eco-techniques. Different iterations of his book have existed in Spanish since 2004. This year it was published in English by Shelter, the group that gave us the book by the same name—a seminal volume of the alternative building movement—and its sequel *Homework*.

*The Barefoot Architect* is all about the drawings—there are over 1200 of them. It's a great book to flip through for ideas. In one four-page section alone you'll find illustrations for building a lathe, a wheelbarrow, a welder, and a ladder made from the stem of an agave flower. The drawings sometimes give you just enough information to understand that the thing should work, but that's more than you had before. And if it fits your bill to make a sink out of "seacrete" forms charged with electricity generated by a windmill made from car parts—now you know it's possible!

Make your own froe for splitting a log into shingles. Heat your house with tubes that run through your compost pile. Cover unsightly plastic-sheathed wires with split bamboo. Save space with staggered triangular stairs. These are just a small sample of the things you'll come across in *The Barefoot Architect*. And in addition to being a compendium of nifty ideas, it could be called a cousin to *A Pattern Language*—the legendary volume of building design and civic planning—in that it also takes on the layout of settlements and urban spaces.

Van Lengen is a master at breaking things down. He packs a lot of information into a few lines and words. This technique works well for the autodidact, but not necessarily for those looking for more detailed instructions. If there is an inconsistency in his method, it's that complex ideas sometimes get glossed over, while simple ones get treated more thoroughly. For example, earth floors are covered with a single drawing and a random formula that includes asphalt. Conversely, the section on leveling tools is spread over four pages.

*The Barefoot Architect* is oriented toward the southern hemisphere and will be most useful to builders in humid and dry tropics. These sections take up a sizable

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chunk of the book, while the temperate zone—blanketing most of us in North America—is covered in only 23 pages. That leaves a lot of pages, and in them van Lengen packs loads of ideas (many of them universal) on design, materials, construction, energy, water, and sanitation—all of it presented in his signature graphic style of distilling concepts into tasteful drawings that are instructive and fun to look at.

*Mark Mazziotti is a natural builder, graphic designer, and homesteader at Red Earth Farms in Rutledge, Missouri.*

## Online Communities Directory

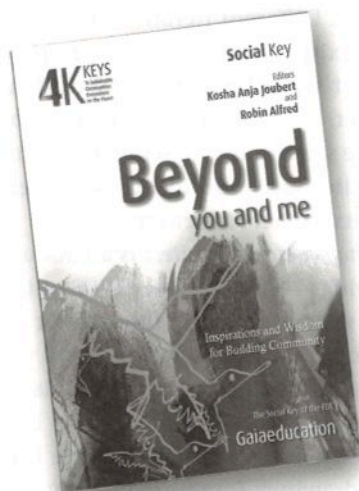
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## ***Beyond You and Me: Inspiration and Wisdom for Building Community***

**Edited by Kosha Anja Joubert and Robin Alfred**

**Gaia Education and Permanent Publications 2007**

**Pb, 284 pp. plus extensive bibliography, £19.95 or about \$39  
ISBN 978-1-85623-038-4**

*Reviewed by Alline Anderson*

When I learned that *Communities* was going to review *Beyond You and Me*, I arrived on the editor's doorstep and begged her for the opportunity to do the review. This is not because I consider myself to be a particularly insightful writer, although I strive to communicate the heart, soul, and guts of a book being reviewed. This was purely selfish. I simply wanted to get my hands on this book, to pore over chapter after chapter, and to soak up the wisdom in its pages.

I was not disappointed. The publisher's press release states, "*Beyond You and Me* is a practical anthology for anyone seeking to establish new group enterprises and ecovillages, rebuild existing fragmented villages and communities, and heal the wounds

of conflict and social division. It is for those seeking to live cooperatively and in peace with our fellow human beings and the Earth." It is all this and much, much more.

The editors and writers generously share their experience and their knowledge, hoping to inspire us and ease our way into building sustainable community wherever we are.

The book is arranged into five sections:

1. Building Community and Embracing Diversity
2. Communication Skills: Conflict, Facilitation, and Decision Making
3. Personal Empowerment and Leadership Skills
4. Health and Healing
5. Local, Bioregional, and Global Outreach

Each section contains short articles written by leaders in their fields, providing both practical knowledge and inspiration from the writer's own work. There are case studies from around the world, from diverse cultures that embrace diverse value systems, although the book is admittedly more focused on perspectives from "the North."

So much is covered, and covered thoughtfully. The voices expressed in

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***The voices expressed in Beyond You and Me are helpful, thought provoking, and honest.***

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*Beyond You and Me* are helpful, thought provoking, and honest. The dizzying array of talented authors includes Vandana Shiva, Marshall Rosenberg, Beatrice Briggs, Diana Leafe Christian, Wangari Maathai, Starhawk, Alberto Ruz Buenfil, Daniel Greenberg, and many, many others. We learn what has worked (and what hasn't) at the Ecovillage of Lebensgarten, Findhorn, Ecovillage at Ithaca,



Kitez Children's Community, Ecovillage of Sieben Linden, Earthaven, and other communities around the world. We gain insight into communication, leadership, rank and privilege, facilitation and other meeting skills, and healthy living.

There is something for everyone in this book. Most importantly, *Beyond You and Me* acknowledges that there is no one "right way" to do this work. One size does not fit all. Everybody is different. Every settlement will be different. The response to each situation will be different.

As I read this book, I found myself wishing that I could put my life on

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***We gain insight into communication, leadership, rank and privilege, facilitation and other meeting skills, and healthy living.***

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"pause/still" and soak up all that my fellow communitarians have to teach me. But since this is real life and not a *Twilight Zone* episode, I'll have to be content to go through *Beyond You and Me* again and again, choosing chapters that speak to my particular challenge of the day. I will gratefully accept the gifts given here, and use love and the wisdom of experience to guide me.✿

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*Alline Anderson has been a member of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage since 1999, and is currently building the Milkweed Mercantile, an Eco Inn/Organic Café/Green General Store. She can be reached at [alline@milkweedmercantile.com](mailto:alline@milkweedmercantile.com).*

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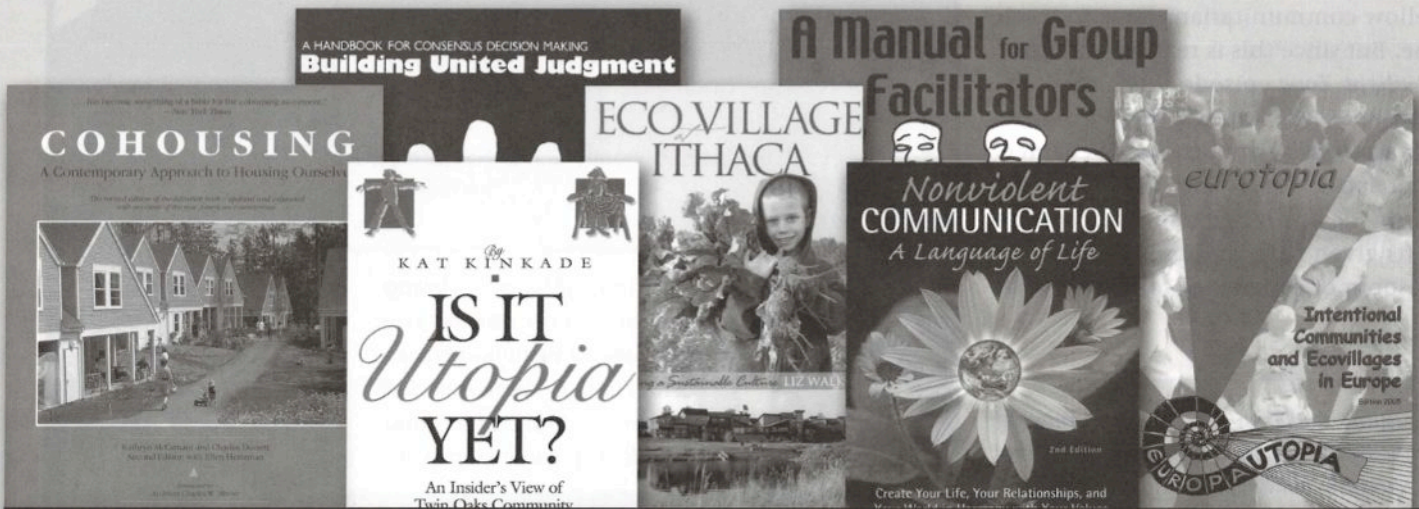
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# REACH

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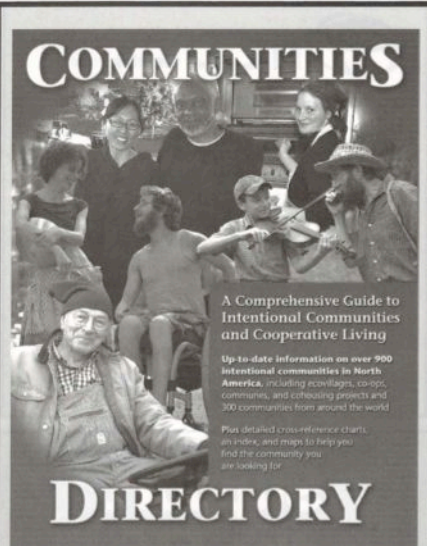
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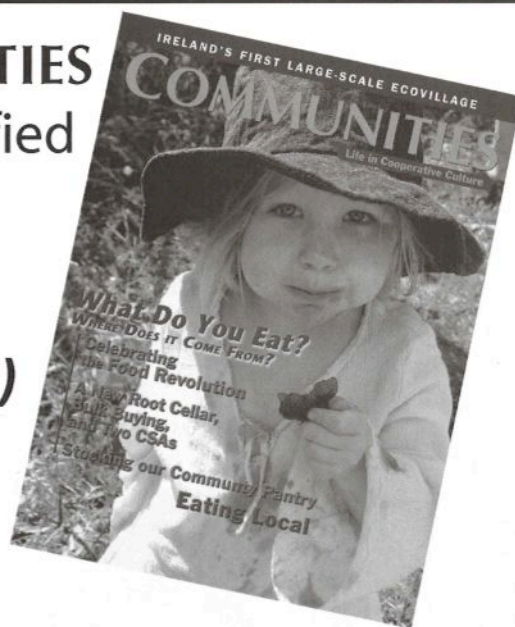
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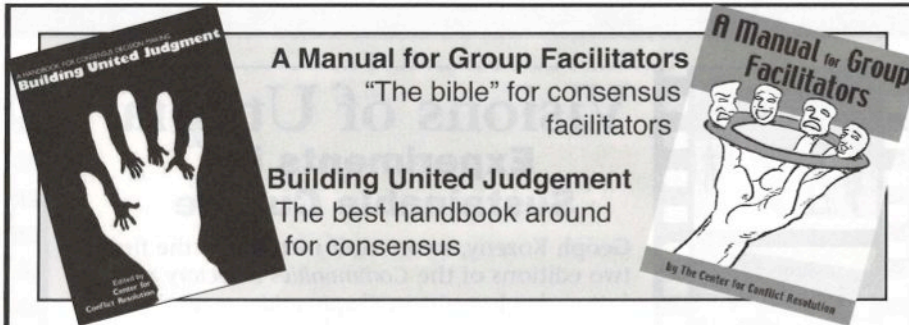




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**SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri.** We are a small family of friends living together on an income-sharing organic farm. We value cooperation, initiative, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differences, 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](mailto:visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org); 660-883-5543; [www.sandhillfarm.org](http://www.sandhillfarm.org).

**SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, Santa Rosa, California.** We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although centrally located near public transportation, we are in a secluded wooded area beside a creek on two acres of land. We share ownership of the entire property and pay monthly charges that cover the usual expenses of home ownership. We have kept our costs reasonable by sharing all of the responsibilities of our cooperative and much of its labor. All members serve on the Board of Directors and two committees oversee the welfare of the community. We enjoy a rich social life and a mutual concern for the natural environment. Contact: *Membership 707-575-8946.*



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Our aim is not only to help each other; we want to help more people discover the advantages of a communal alternative, and to promote the evolution of a more egalitarian world.





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**WHOLE VILLAGE, Near Toronto, Canada.** We are a small, well-established ecovillage community ready to expand. We live on a beautiful 190 acre biodynamic farm with poultry, dairy cows and Community Supported Agriculture, and are implementing a permaculture plan. Some of the farm is reserved as wild areas. We provide many volunteer and educational opportunities, but paid employment only for a farmer. We have designed and constructed a 15,000 square foot coop residence, which is eco-friendly, energy efficient and suited for community life. There is a balance between common and private areas. We follow a consensus decision method and place attention on community dynamics. We are open to diversity in ages, spiritual paths and family styles. We seek energetic, open-hearted people who want to work hard to help create community and live sustainably and self-sufficiently on the land. Apartments are available. *www.wholevillage.org; 20725 Shaws Creek Rd., Caledon, Ontario, L7K1L7, Canada. info@wholevillage.org.*

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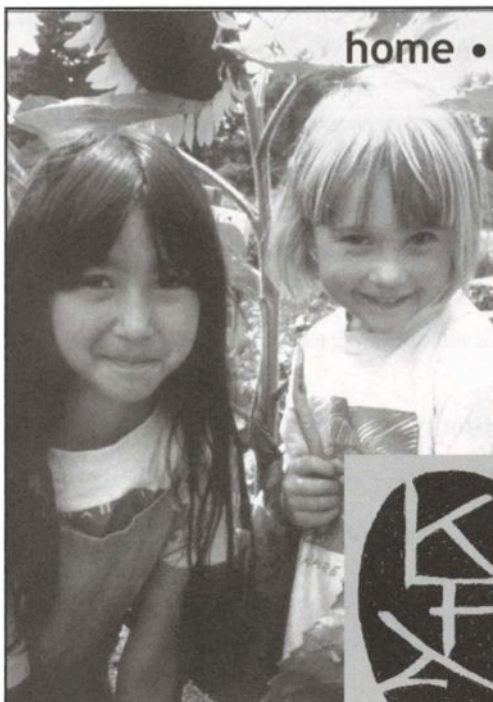


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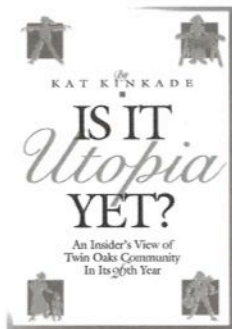


**ECO-FARM, Nr. Plant City, Florida.** We are an agricultural-based intentional community focused on sustainable living, farming, alternative energies (with an emphasis on solar), music, environmental issues, social justice and having fun. Community products include organic vegetables and eggs, ornamental trees, cane syrup, Tilapia and native plants. We also have mechanic and wood-working shops. Community outreach activities include a sustainable living program ([www.wmnf.org](http://www.wmnf.org)), farmers' markets and support of global community efforts. Carpentry, mechanical or agricultural experience a plus. Upcoming projects include construction of an additional 1,500 sf of living space. If interested, check out our web site at [www.ecofarmfl.org](http://www.ecofarmfl.org); 813-754-7374, or email [ecofarmfl@yahoo.com](mailto:ecofarmfl@yahoo.com).

**ECOREALITY CO-OP, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada.** EcoReality Co-op is purchasing 37 acres adjoining 63 acres of community farmland on Salt Spring Island in southwest British Columbia. The combined public/private property has 50+ acres of cleared, irrigated farmland (class-2 soils, zone 8-9), two streams, two ponds, and young forest, backed by public parkland. Members share two big houses as we build tightly-clustered natural homes. We seek new members who can contribute approximately half the value of a typical North American suburban house to their sustainable future in this project. Prospective members with outstanding skills who can contribute less are encouraged, as well. Contact: *Jan Steinman*, 250-635-2024, [www.EcoReality.org/Seeking\\_members](http://www.EcoReality.org/Seeking_members).

**NEW BUFFALO, Nr. Taos, New Mexico.** Co-investors wanted to create right livelihood at northern New Mexico cultural icon. The New Buffalo commune main adobe is now available as a healing/retreat/teaching center. Two additional adobes of the original compound await renovation and a newly built spacious shop/apartment invites committed stewardship. Two acres of farmland are being transformed into biointensive gardens and orchards. This gorgeous land and vibrant Hispanic, Pueblo and Anglo cultures attracted the cultural creatives of the 1960s and 70s and now nurtures a small group dedicated to simplicity, creating beauty and living our spiritual values. If you would like to join us in cocreating this oasis, please contact [bobfies@taosnet.com](mailto:bobfies@taosnet.com) or phone 505-776-2015.

**SPIRIT SONG 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.



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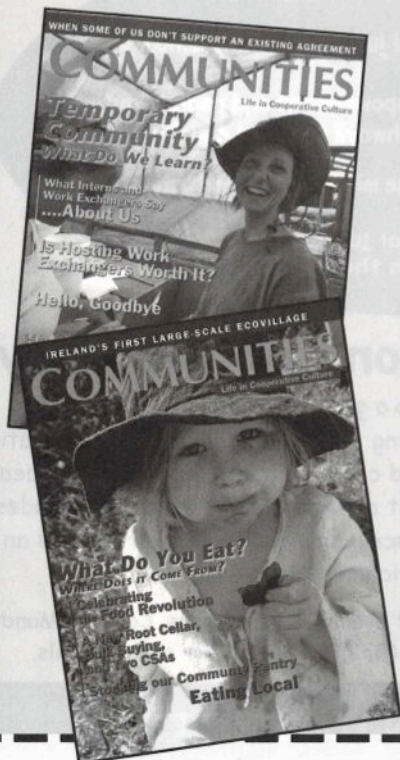
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**NESS COMMUNITY, Russell, New York.** Two cabins for sale. One 550 sf, well insulated, two story, post and beam saltbox. New windows, wood siding and paneling, tile kitchen/bath, sawdust toilet, south view over meadow, set up for ac/dc solar, gravity feed water system carried from well, \$12,000. Second, 360 sf, on woods site, two-story, new windows, woodstove, small kitchen, sawdust toilet, set up for solar, carry water from nearby well, \$3,000. Simple living, off grid, homesteading community on 100 acres. Walk in from parking lot on road (can drive when necessary). Canton-Potsdam area has strong alternative community, four universities. Patricia 315-386-2609.

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**GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES** available at Tree Bressen's website. Topics include consensus, facilitation, peace-making, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on. Dozens or helpful articles, handouts and more—all free. Contact: Tree Bressen, 541-343-3855; [tree@ic.org](mailto:tree@ic.org); [www.treegroup.info](http://www.treegroup.info).

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**SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri.** Internships in Sustainable Community Living. April 1 to November 1, 2008. If you love gardening and would like to gain experience in organic farming, food processing, temp 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: [interns@sandhillfarm.org](mailto:interns@sandhillfarm.org); [www.sandhillfarm.org](http://www.sandhillfarm.org). 660-883-5543.

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## COOK ONE MEAL, EAT FOR A WEEK

(continued from p. 26)

### Tips for Forming a Cooking Co-op

- Pick families who make it very easy to get the food to them, either through a common drop-off/pick-up point, or by forming a co-op with neighbors or coworkers. Set up delivery times that fit with everyone's schedule.

- Find people whose families are similar sizes, because it makes portioning easier.

- Find people with similar food tastes and practices.

- Establish clear guidelines for what the group expects each member to make when it's his/her turn. A planning calendar can help to ensure a variety of foods.

- Find people who are prepared to accept and eat whatever is served, but are also willing to share honest feedback. "We might send a note with a meal we've made, saying, 'This is hideous. I won't ever make it again,'" laughs Betz-Essinger. "And sometimes I'll get calls that say, 'That wasn't so bad.' But sometimes they'll call and say, 'You're right. Don't ever make that again.'"

- Package foods in containers that can be frozen, reheated, and then reused, such as Pyrex baking dishes. Secondhand stores such as Goodwill can be an inexpensive way to acquire additional containers.✻

*Joelle Novey is an associate editor at Co-op America and lives with her partner Ethan Merlin at Eastern Village Cohousing in Silver Spring, Maryland. She is a founder of Tikkun Leil Shabbat, a social-justice-themed Jewish congregation in Washington DC, and is working with Jews United for Justice ([www.jufj.org](http://www.jufj.org)) on a guide to greener purchasing for bar/bat mitzvah celebrations and Jewish weddings.*

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# Mellow Springs

A poem by Kiesa Kay

Photo-illustration  
by Ann-Marie Stillion

Blessed be the hands that built this house,  
the fine, strong fingers of a carpenter.

Blessed be the mind that designed this space,  
the wild imagination of a dreamer.

Blessed be the heart that chose this spot  
among oaks, rhododendrons, laurels.

As my lover lowers his mouth to mine,

I see his reflection in our skylight.

A silver waterfall glimmers through one window

of our knotty pine nest. A plump squirrel

stretches and leaps to the bird feeder,

sending the black-capped chickadee

and tufted titmouse flying.

Our nest, their nests, home in nature.

Well-rooted, we belong here, in these woods.

Blessed be.



# Patchwork

A poem by Elizabeth Barrette

Photo-illustration by Ann-Marie Stillion

**Friendship is quilting your life into mine:**

**One square for memory, one square for trust.**

**Cutting and piecing, we choose our design:**

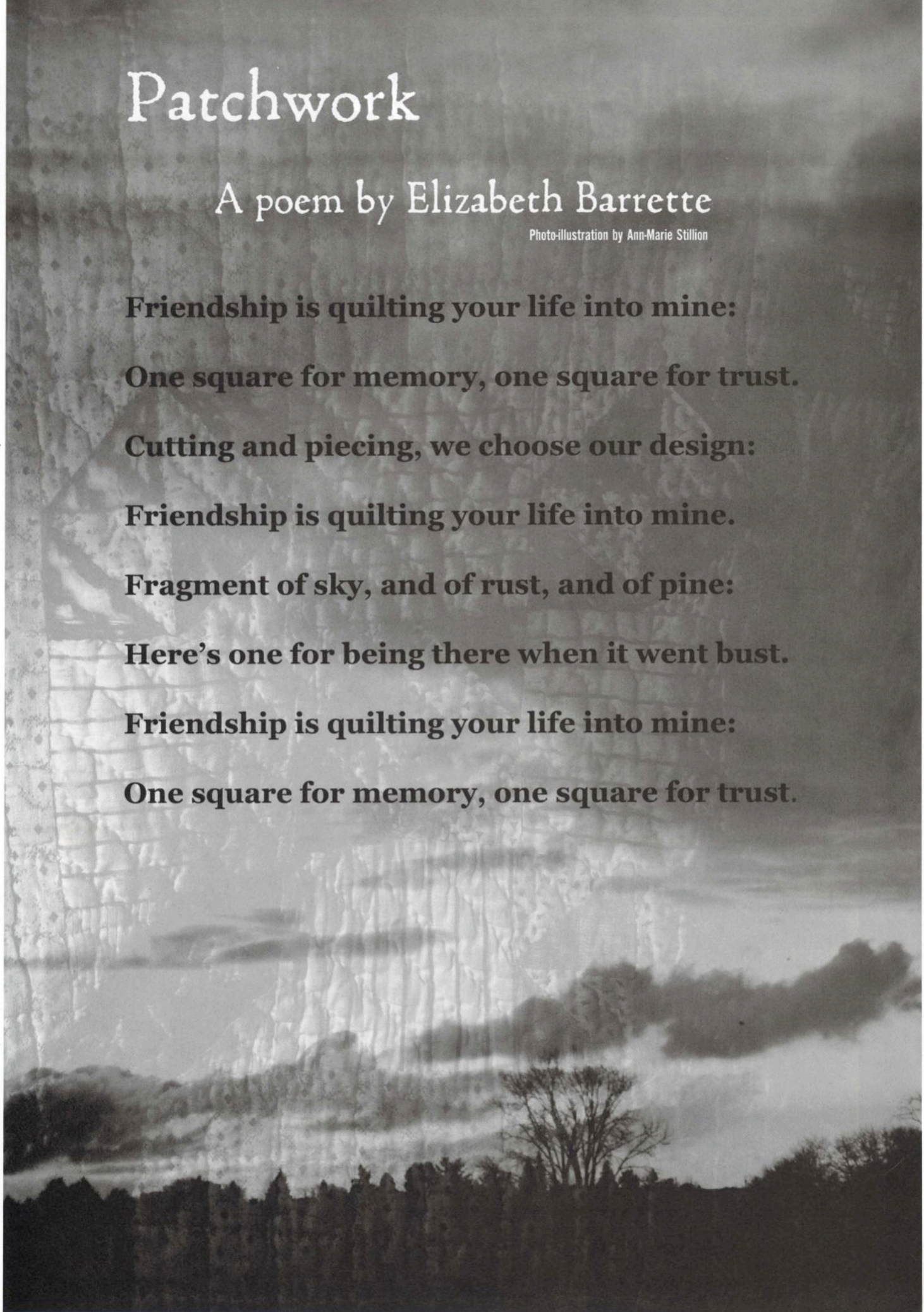
**Friendship is quilting your life into mine.**

**Fragment of sky, and of rust, and of pine:**

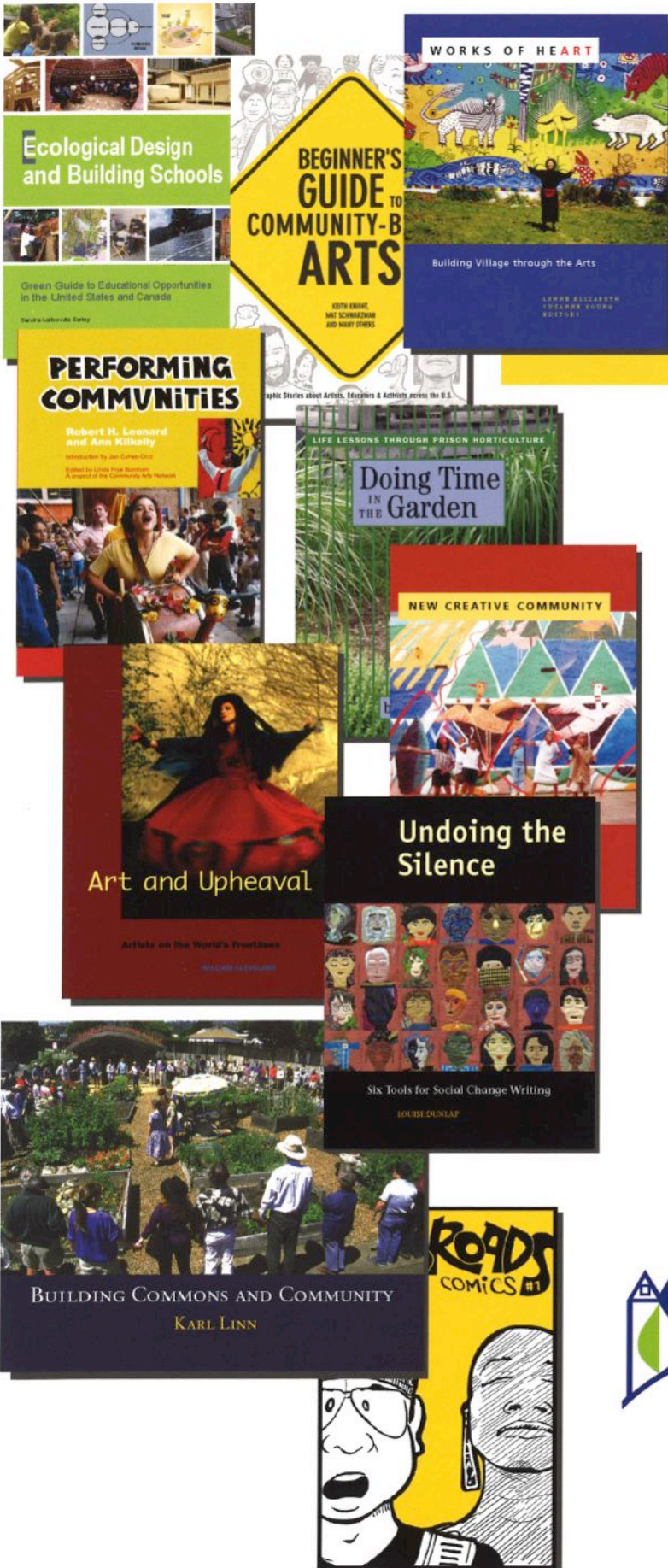
**Here's one for being there when it went bust.**

**Friendship is quilting your life into mine:**

**One square for memory, one square for trust.**







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