

GOOD MEETINGS: BUSINESS AND WELL-BEING

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Politics in Community

We Refuse to Be Enemies

Every Politician Should Live in a Commune

Email, Politics, & Permaculture

Searching for Elephants in the Community Living Room



Fall 2008 • Issue #140
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SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living
The Handbook



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

-Kathy Goss, Journalist,
review for Amazon.com

SENIOR COHOUSING

A Community Approach to Independent Living - The Handbook

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

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

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

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

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

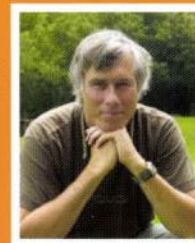
– Alice Jacobs Ed.D., MS;
Senior education and learning specialist

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

– Lisa Anthony,
Second Journey
secondjourney.org



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



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

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

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

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

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

or

Online at
www.cohousingco.com

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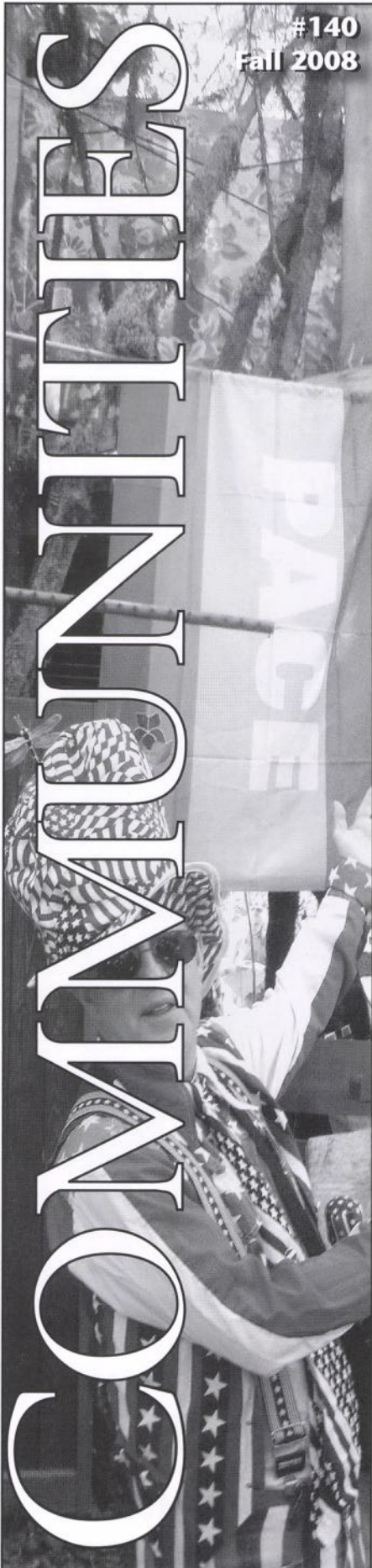
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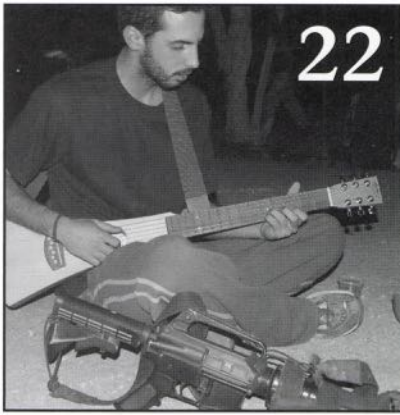
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#140
Fall 2008



LEILA DREGGER



ETHAN HUGHES

SPECIAL FEATURE

Politics in Community

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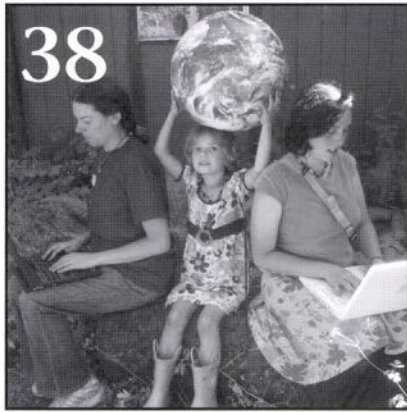
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COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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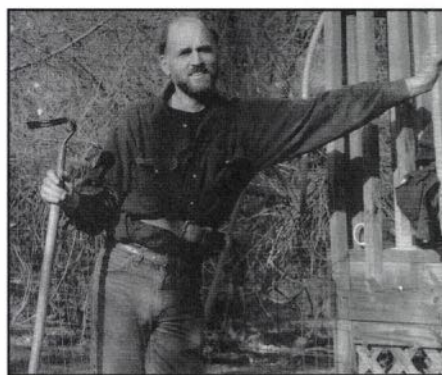
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LETTERS



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



More Memories of Geoph Kozeny

Dear *Communities*,

I had to check back through my own stash of *Communities* to find Geoph Kozeny's first appearance in the magazine, #47, February/March 1981. I'd met Geoph during my travels for *Communities* the summer before, while putting together a section on San Francisco Bay cooperatives, communes, and collectives.

Geoph's contribution was a piece on networking in the Bay area:

"The network is an organic collection of all those diverse groups which are aspiring to make our lives more satisfying and complete...women's, men's, and Third World groups, food conspiracies, alternative energy collectives. Not all of us live together, not all of us work together, no one is present at all gatherings. Yet in our differences we find a cohesiveness, faith in ourselves, and the desire to share it with others."

I was impressed from the beginning by Geoph's drive to completion.

Geoph not only could talk about networking, he helped me make connections that resulted in articles for the magazine. As we spent time together, I appreciated some of the personal struggles he'd faced in community and relationships, as well as the curiosity that allowed him to transcend them.

Geoph built a life as a chronicler of community in writing and video; a kind of participant/observer noting our idiosyncrasies and accomplishments. *Communities* and the communitarian movement were his vehicles and he honored the magazine, the movement, and himself by his commitment.

As he said at the end of that first of many essays, "The ultimate prize is to be able to live with lovers and friends, working and playing through all that life brings us."

Respectfully,

Paul Freundlich

Member/editor/publisher, *Communities* Publishing Cooperative, 1975-1985

Remembering Michael Black

Dear *Communities*,

I'd like to honor the passing of architect and cohousing advocate Michael Black, who died of a heart attack in March of this year.

Michael and his wife Alexandra Hart appear on the cover of the Fall '07 issue, "Is Beauty Important?" The photo was taken in the courtyard of the 29-unit Yulupa Cohousing in Santa Rosa, which Michael designed and where he and Alexandra lived after it was completed in 2005.

I met Michael on the cohousing bus tour of the four Durham/Carrboro cohousing communities at the 2006 National Cohousing Conference held in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

I visited Michael and Alexandra at Yulupa Cohousing later that year. I was blown away by how beautiful and unusual

looking the place was—it looks to me like a Star Trek set—and decided right then and there that *Communities* magazine ought to have an issue on beauty in community, with a story (a cover story perhaps?) on how Michael came to design Yulupa Cohousing. This came to pass, and the article, “When Adobe Pueblo Meets Star Trek,” was my all-time favorite article I ever wrote for *Communities*, and the Fall '07 issue on beauty in community, my all-time favorite issue.

Michael loved that article too, and loved the acknowledgment of his work in a community publication. So the article was meaningful to both of us, and it was a real pleasure to share in the celebration of beauty and accomplishment with someone I liked and admired so much.

Celebrating beauty and community is what Michael was always about, along with his deep commitment to spirituality. In the early 1980s he studied cohousing and cohousing-like settlements in Sweden, Denmark, and Holland. In the late 1980s he did slideshows of cohousing in Denmark, sometimes in collaboration with Chuck Durrett and Katie McCamant, right around the time their book *Cohousing* came out.

By 1986 Michael was intent on starting cohousing in Sonoma County. From 1987 to 1999 he and other core group members designed and built Two Acre Wood, a 14-unit community in Sebastopol, California. He was the architect for the 28-unit Valley Oaks Village cohousing community in Chico, California, which was completed in 1996.

At Two Acre Wood Michael worked as the architect for a group serving as its own developer. He experienced the pitfalls of being in a position of authority and having all the architect's responsibilities while later living there as a resident. (As many cohousing professionals can attest, living in a community they developed



or designed can be tough.) Michael was unable to design the community in a way that worked well for him, and believed there was a loss of design integrity and excellence when well-meaning but unskilled people made design decisions with little to no experience to back them up. After that experience he determined to find a developer to partner with so that he could create cohousing in which the developer could focus on finance, construction, and overall management; he could focus on design; and future residents, aided by Alexandra, could focus on bonding, connecting, and learning good group process. He believed that developing parallel tracks like this would save total costs for residents (it did), and provide what he considered better design.

He told me that only one-fifth of the people who move into a typical cohousing community have been in on the original design charrette process. So four-fifths of the residents don't have input into community design, but they buy in anyway. He did “design it and they will come,” and it worked.

Michael's next project was to work on what he called Aging-in-Place Cohousing. He hoped to develop this in Texas, but land there was becoming increasingly unavailable, so that project didn't happen.

Michael was very much looking forward to attending the June 2008 National Cohousing Conference in Boston, where he would have been a workshop presenter. It was my honor to speak briefly about Michael at that gathering.

Michael was really happy in his last years, and he and Alexandra loved living in the beauty of Yulupa. I consider it a privilege to have gotten to know him. He will certainly be missed.

Diana Leaf Christian

Former editor of *Communities* magazine (1993-2007), author of *Creating a Life Together* and *Finding Community*, and publisher of *Ecovillages*, an online newsletter (EcovillageNews.org)

Elders, Mentoring, and Ceremony

Dear *Communities*,

I currently live at Earthaven Eco-Village in North Carolina and do not use computers (at least not directly).

I'm trying to discover if there are other communities who are specifically working on creating a model of “intentional permaculture” that includes eldering/mentoring/initiation/etc.; what some might term a tribal/village society.

We have several generations of folks who live here from 92 to 4 years old, but the main groupings are late 50s to mid 60s and late 20s to late 40s. There are a few children (4 to 10 years old) and about 60 folks total.

I'm interested in the role of old women and old men in holding space for the community around issues of mentoring/ceremony/etc. I want a group of old folks (in my case, old women) who want to explore our sacred tasks in these areas given that many of us haven't come from traditions that we feel are sustainable.

Since I've wanted to be old all my life (I'm now 63), I'm interested in embracing my age with enthusiasm, and learning, with others, the best ways to bring ancient wisdoms to our intentional communities.

If you have any leads for me, please contact: Redmoon Song, 1041 Camp Elliott Rd., Black Mountain, NC 28711, 828-669-1792.

Redmoon Song

Black Mountain, North Carolina

P.S. Martin Prechtel in *Long Life, Honey in the Heart* continues to offer me a world of ideas/heart/mind-full-ness along these lines.

Theme for Our Next Issue

(*Communities* #141, Winter 2008):

Scarcity and Abundance

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 Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Lane, Dexter, OR 97431; 541-937-2567 x116; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@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, Advertising Manager, Magnolia Road, Sullivan MO 63080; 573-468-8822; ads@ic.org.

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.

Whole Foods: Half a Solution? The Convoluted Politics of Natural Grocering

Last spring I tagged along with my long-time Sandhill community mate Stan as he was driving to Warrenton for a board meeting of the Missouri Organic Association (MOA). Warrenton is about an hour west of St Louis, which means it's about three hours south of our farm in northeast Missouri. Always wanting to stretch our gasoline dollars as far as possible, we made four deliveries of Sandhill products along the way—sorghum to a grocery store in Quincy, honey to a buying club outside of Hannibal, sorghum to an orchard near War-

renton...and sorghum for the Whole Foods store in St Louis (for which we didn't have to do any extra driving, because there are two people from Whole Foods on the MOA board and they were happy to back haul the sorghum after the meeting).

I dropped Stan off at the meeting spot in Warrenton and drove into St Louis for a rendezvous with *Communities* magazine's new Business Manager, John Stroup. John just joined the staff at the beginning of the year and needed an orientation to FIC organizational structure and culture, our editorial policy, and the magazine's

history with advertising and distributors—in short, a 90-minute brain dump so that he'd feel more connected with both the people and his work. (Though I was away from home for 13 hours, that

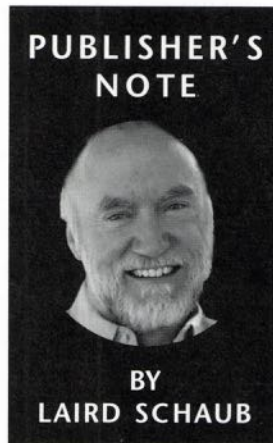
90-minute meeting was worth it—you can accomplish only so much with email and phone calls; occasionally you need to look the other person in the eyeballs to truly connect.)

In the discussion about advertising, John asked if he had license to expand the pool of folks he approached to purchase display ads. I gave him the green light, so long

as the product or service was a reasonable value fit with our readership (this assumes that we know what that is, which is a topic for another time). John tried: "How about Whole Foods?" I sighed and replied: "That's an excellent question."

•••

In the world of community living, there is a strong correlation between cooperation and sustainability. That is, almost all communities embrace both as core values. (I'm not saying that everyone means the same thing by this dual commitment, yet it's a useful lens through



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. He authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

which to see the issue I want to examine.) Starting with that premise, I want to focus on the complex relationship of Whole Foods—far and away the most successful retailer of natural foods in the US—to community and sustainability.

Communities is a niche publication with a relatively small circulation. While we'd much rather it reached more people, the reality is that most of our advertisers are intentional communities or are businesses that focus on them as a significant share of their market. That is not the case with Whole Foods, and I am writing about them to illuminate the issues

we wrestle with in considering advertising from a large corporation.

The Case in Favor of Whole Foods

A large part of this company's meteoric rise has been its attention to service and quality. It is a market maker in the field of organic foods, and its success has been a boon to organic farmers everywhere. This directly supports a more sustainable food chain.

As one small example of this, Sandhill Farm (where I live) has been selling organic sorghum in the St Louis area for 25 years and no one sells more of it today than Whole Foods. On the one hand, they have been savvy enough to understand and ride the wave of burgeoning demand for organic foods; on the other, they have consciously and demonstrably enhanced that demand, a phenomenon now so robust that even traditional food chains are installing organic sections.

(Historic aside: When Sandhill announced to our neighbors in 1975 that we'd be farming organically, we might as well have been from Mars. Everybody thought

it was strange and amusing. Today, with organic soybeans bringing in double the price of conventionally grown beans, no one is laughing. And we're no longer the only organic farm in the county. Within a single generation the farming world

has made a significant step in our direction. While Whole Foods has played no part in Japan's insatiable demand for organic soybeans—from whence the higher prices for US beans—they have nonetheless been an enthusiastic and effective amplifier of the organic drumbeat in this country.)

The St Louis store regularly offers vendors the chance to come in and offer taste tests of their product as part of consumer education. Within the last year they paired our sorghum up with a purveyor of homemade biscuits. After several hours of handing out samples of sorghum on hot biscuits, our sorghum started selling, well, like hot cakes.

In addition, Whole Foods stores have a major commitment to being in support of the communities where their stores are located. Once a month is Food Outreach Day, and 5 percent of that day's net sales are donated to a designated local nonprofit. Several months ago, MOA was that designee—receiving a much-needed \$4000 shot in the arm.

Finally, the Whole Foods personnel who serve on the MOA board are doing so with the full support and encouragement of their employer. Impressive.

The Case Against Whole Foods

One of the key elements of sustainability is economics, and there is ample evidence that robust local businesses are

Within the last year they paired our sorghum up with a purveyor of homemade biscuits. After several hours of handing out samples of sorghum on hot biscuits, our sorghum started selling, well, like hot cakes.

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www.kakwaecovillage.com

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the linchpins of resilient economies (see Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, Critchfield's *Villages*, or any of a number of books by Wendell Berry). For all of its enlightened generosity in support of local communities—which is a real thing—Whole Foods is a large company and the overwhelming flow of store profits is to corporate headquarters (Austin, TX) and shareholders, not to the local community.

While Whole Foods has certainly eaten into the market share of traditional grocers, it (and its previous major corporate competitor, Wild Oats, now merged with Whole Foods) has also been the Wal-Mart of the natural foods industry, regularly putting locally owned food co-ops out of business (just as Borders and Barnes & Noble have done with independent bookstores). While some of this may simply have been the result of Whole Foods offering superior products and services (and hence

the survivor of a fair competition), there is suspicion that at least some of the time Whole Foods has gone into locations expressly to put their competition out of business (by siting a store right next to a locally-owned operation and undercutting prices until the local store goes out of business). It is very hard to see this as a plus for sustainability. While Whole Foods is unquestionably providing opportunities for local employment, this is not at all the same as local ownership.

As an organic vendor—the kind of business Whole Foods says they have a

strong corporate commitment to supporting—Sandhill has struggled with bureaucratic red tape, the kind we rarely encounter when selling to locally-owned stores. On occasion we've been turned away when trying to make a delivery even though the store was open (because the Receiving hours are narrower than the customer hours). Last year I was directed by the Customer Service person

in the St Louis store to walk a quarter mile around to the back of the strip mall to hand two boxes of sorghum to someone in Receiving instead of walking 100 feet through the store to get to the same place. (Where was the commitment to service in that?)

After doing steady business with the Kansas City Whole Foods store for five years, we recently got "deleted" from their system (however that happens) and we've been asked to submit a sample of our product for consideration of reinstatement. Grr.

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The person in charge of approval had never heard of us and we had to go back to square one—kind of like a high stakes game of chutes and ladders. This would never have happened at a locally owned store. Size does make a difference.

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• • •

To Advertise or Not?

So what did I tell John, who was thinking about approaching Whole Foods to advertise in *Communities*? I told him it was controversial (for the reasons I've outlined) (continued on p. 76)



LESLIE MYKYTA

Notes from the New *Communities* Team



PAULA COHEN

The Butterfly Effect

If a butterfly flapping its wings in Tokyo can change the weather in Oregon, can a school librarian ordering a *Communities* subscription alter the course of someone's life?

In my case, I know that the answer is yes.

I first encountered *Communities* in my high school library in suburban New York in the late 1970s. I remember poring through its pages avidly, since it described ways of life and epitomized ways of looking at the world that both inspired and made sense to me. Its outlook and core values felt much more deeply aligned with my own ideals than did those of a dominant culture that emphasized personal gain, consumerism, separation from others, divorce from nature. Having been raised in an artistic, religious family that kept its own healthy distance from that culture, but now entering a phase of life in which to "make it" I apparently had to accept the assumptions of that competitive, disconnected world, I found comfort knowing that somewhere, people were living differently. I couldn't run off and join a community just then, but I filed away those dreams (and even the Federation of Egalitarian Communities brochure I had obtained, "Living the Dream") for a time when I might be able to.

A few years later, after a detour through conventional academia, I started to pursue that dream in earnest, joining a traveling, consensus-based environmental education school for my last two years of college, then living and working on a Native American reservation, completing a couple sustainability-skills apprenticeships, and

Can a school librarian ordering a COMMUNITIES subscription alter the course of someone's life?

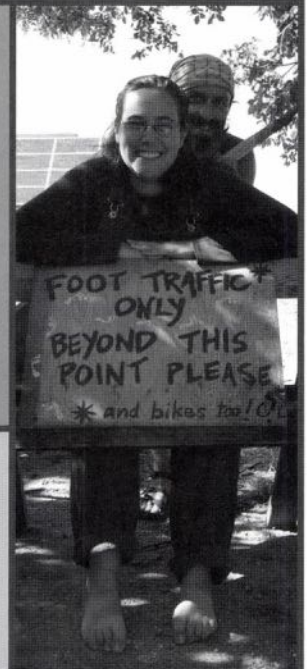
ending up in an actual, land-based intentional community in Oregon. That was 22 years ago. Since then, with the exception of a few years in "unintentional" communities (mostly on small-scale organic farms which had strong community-living elements), I've spent almost my entire adult life in intentional commu-

nity. For the past 11 years, that has been at Lost Valley Educational Center in Oregon. For eight of those, I edited *Talking Leaves* magazine, which finally ceased publication a few years ago. (I had also edited my former community's newsletter, helped out with the 1990/1991 *Communities Directory* while a member of Sandhill Farm, and published an organic gardening songbook.) For the entire time at Lost Valley, I've also been involved in coordinating our organic vegetable gardens, and over the last few years have developed our Nature Center trails, literature, and activities.

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As fulfilling as my work on the land is, the cessation of *Talking Leaves* left a gap that eventually begged to be filled. But I didn't want to edit just any publication. *Talking Leaves* had been "a journal of our evolving ecological culture," with a heavy emphasis on community and cooperation, produced at a human scale on laptop computers in a rural setting. It meshed almost seamlessly with—and reflected many aspects of—my community life and the sense of expansive connection that seems the inevitable result of doing enough gardening, botanizing, birding, and navigating the currents of human interaction within community.

For all of these reasons, the editor opening at *Communities* was a dream come true. I am excited to be renewing connections I've made over many years with others in the communities movement, as well as forging new ones. I'm especially happy about our new production team, which brings a strong set of skills, as well as energy, enthusiasm, and cooperative sensibility, to this project. I hope the results

One of our most important goals is to continue to break down the separation between our concepts of "in community" and "not in community"—because everyone, ultimately, is living in community.

will speak for themselves. We owe a large debt of gratitude to all those staff members who have come before us to keep *Communities* vital for so many years and bring it to this point. We are inheriting an excellent, highly relevant publication with just as much potential for further growth and evolution.

One of our most important goals is to continue to break down the separation between our concepts of "in community" and "not in community"—because everyone, ultimately, is living in community. Many different structures—not just formal intentional community—can encourage the emergence of a more cooperative, peaceful, human-scale, and nature-attuned world. We want *Communities* to be relevant not just to a few thousand, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of people, but to everyone sharing this planet. But we have no delusions of grandeur, and know that the world changes one community, one person, one simple action at a time. That's what "creating community where you are," an increasing emphasis in these pages, is really all about.

We hope you'll encourage many others you know to send in that subscription form (or subscribe at www.ic.org). The ripples may go further than you imagine.

Please enjoy this and future issues, and send us your ideas, submissions, feedback. Ultimately, *Communities* is not just a magazine—it, too, is a community. Together, we can help it thrive and serve not only its current "members" but some of the many people whom it has not yet reached. As someone it touched early on by virtue of one visionary librarian's deci-

sion, I am happy to be in a position to repay and pass on that favor, remembering that what seem like simple acts may have life-changing results. ✿

—Chris Roth


The Art (Direction) of Circumstance

Communities magazine first captured my heart in 2002 when an enterprising staffer sent a complimentary copy of #114 ("What Do Children Learn in Community?") to the offices of the alternative school my children attended at the time, Play Mountain Place (www.playmountain.org). It was a good match marketing-wise: this humanistic nursery and elementary school in urban Los Angeles, inspired by Summerhill and Carl Rogers, had been operating "outside the box" since 1949 as an early proponent of non-authoritarian language, conflict resolution, community decisions by consensus (oh, those loooong meetings!), and experiential, child-led curriculum ("Freedom, not License"). We parents discovered a sense of community and a wellspring of progressive thinking as we gathered each morning with our children at this little spunky school.

After that first encounter with *Communities* in the school office, I ordered some back issues via the website, and got on the FIC email loop, watching from afar the phenomenon of people leaving the grid and defining their realities by assembling into clusters of intentionality.

Although I've had a conventional, mainstream urban upbringing, from a young age I gravitated toward primitive and utopian themes, and found solace

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in nature. These interests continue to guide me as an adult—from explorations of Native American teachings to my husband's and my choice of alternative education for our children.

So when the Art Director position posted on the FIC eNews back in May, it just felt like a match. And so here I am—not yet living off the grid...but happy to be a part of the movement from my seat here, in front of my Mac, doing what I can to bring the text alive with graphics and layout, while learning about intentional community a little more up close and personal.

Workwise, I'm a self-taught desktop publishing person since the mid-'70s, drawn to all the aspects of putting out a publication that communicates with heart the mission of the group. I have spent time at various L.A. trade magazines and ad agencies, and was graced with a magnificently long freelance stint at Rhino Records.

During a recent getting-to-know-you email exchange with Chris, he shared that he was sitting outside on a Lost Valley nature trail composing emails on his laptop and getting nibbled by mosquitoes. By contrast, I was sitting in a concrete building, on a grid, in a sea of humanity spreading out hundreds of miles. Triggered by the irony of our two divergent lifestyles and our joined mission, it suddenly occurred to me that there may be strength in our dichotomy—that I may have been planted in this megalopolis simply to witness this pivotal time in humankind's development through the distinctly modern urban lens, as we (re)learn, as we must, to live in accord with Nature and one another.

I'm looking forward to building meaningful and beautiful magazines for you with the rest of the *Communities* team. ✨

—Ginny LeRossignol Blades

Coming next issue: notes from our new Business Manager, John Stroup.

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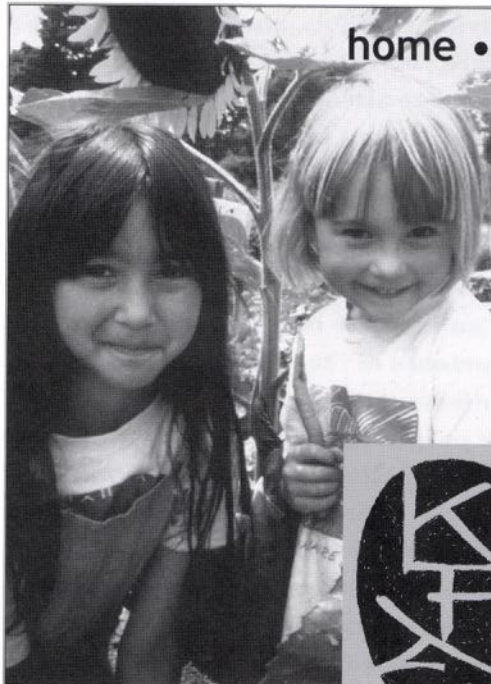
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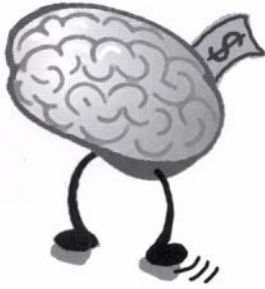
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Well-Being

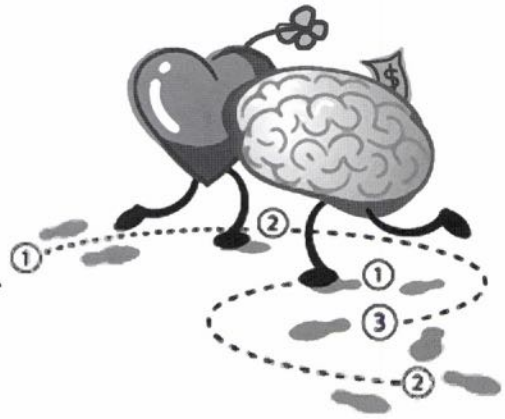
How do you suggest keeping business decision-making, on the one hand, and community well-being issues, on the other, both healthily separate and integrated?

Q Historically, our group has felt fairly unified in our core values. Our business discussions and decisions rested on certain basic assumptions and expectations, including the importance of respecting others, welcoming feedback, accepting personal responsibility for feelings and actions, avoiding blame, and—to the best of our abilities—communicating openly, nonviolently, and compassionately. We held both regular business meetings and regular well-being meetings, so that business discussions could flow more efficiently and interpersonal and emotional issues could have their own forum. This arrangement allowed us to “call vibes” during a business meeting and channel an obvious well-being issue into another setting, untangling it from the matter at hand; it also gave us circles in which we could focus exclusively on nurturing individual and group well-being, resolving conflicts, and becoming more connected as a community.

More recently, our group grew in size and it became more difficult for everyone to attend regular well-being circles. Some people tired of the structure, while others got intensively involved in a different well-being circle instead, separate from the whole community. We scheduled less-frequent community well-being circles, and attendance even at those slowly declined. Some newer arrivals turned out to be resistant to or rebellious about “dealing with feelings” and elected not to participate in well-being circles. Concurrently, there was an increase in focus on certain business issues, and more talk about the importance of “separating business and community.”

Unfortunately, “separating business and community” now seems to mean, for some people, that we each have a choice whether or not to deal with well-being issues or feelings when they impact business issues. Our old practice, with a balance of business and well-being circles, gave equal importance to the two areas, and included everyone in both. Now, it seems that well-being issues can affect our business circles more than they ever did before—through cynicism, unresolved interpersonal conflicts, and negativity—while some of the most outspoken people apparently do not share the core values and understandings that allowed us to deal with these issues in a separate well-being forum, in which they often resist or avoid participation.

How do you suggest keeping business decision-making, on the one hand, and community well-being issues, on the other, both healthily separate and integrated? How can our community return to better balance, more effective decision-making, and greater connection?



Tree Bressen responds:

I have to say, I feel for you and your community. This sounds like a tough one. While it might have been better if the group had done more effective membership screening up front or taken other steps to prevent the shift in core values, telling you

that probably doesn't feel like much help now. So what are your options? Because the group is not on board with what you are wanting to see happen, my response focuses on what you as one individual can attempt.

1. Do whatever you can to make whatever remains of the well-being forum keep healthy and happening. Put positive energy into it. Help make it a fulfilling experience for whoever is there. Good energy will make it attractive to others to join.

2. Assuming the sessions are flowing well, approach members who haven't been coming one-on-one to invite them to attend. Tell them you would love to see them there. If you can't make the approach without a judgmental tone, recruit someone else to have the conversation instead. Or split up the membership list, with each regular attendee committing to talk with a few other people who they have a good relationship with.

3. Be a role model yourself in how you relate with others. If you have a conflict with someone, don't wait for them to approach you (which they may never do), take the initiative to work it out.

4. When you notice emotions coming up at business meetings, you can help create safe space to bring them out, whether or not you are the official facilitator. Statements like, "Wait a moment, I'd like to hear more from Sam about why he supports the proposal," or "Jo, it sounds like your concerns are X, Y, & Z, is that right?" can potentially get at feelings without necessarily using explicitly emotional language. Because they are clearly based in an effort to be productive on the issues at hand, even people who are "anti-touchy-feely" are likely to respond well and appreciate these efforts.

*Be a role model
yourself in how you
relate with others.*

— Tree Bressen

5. Does your group do evaluations at the end of meetings? That might be an appropriate time to bring up observations of how conflicts are getting in the way of communication. Or if it's really obvious that this is happening in the middle of an agenda item, you might choose to be bold and call it in the moment. If you take that route, try to express yourself in a compassionate way if you can.

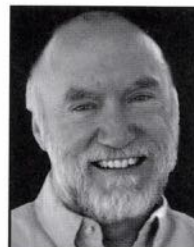
6. To the extent possible, avoid polarizing the issue. Find the part of yourself that appreciates an emphasis on task, and

express that to the more business-oriented members. Look for how you can be their ally. State things in terms they can relate to. For example, "I really think that in order to move forward effectively with this proposal, Wilma and McKenzie need to sit down and discuss the reasons for their differing viewpoints." (As opposed to something like, "The

bad vibes in here are driving me crazy—can't you two work out your stuff?")

7. Recruit more members who share values of communication, dealing with emotions, and personal growth. Over time you may be able to reverse the shift.

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant based in Eugene, Oregon, who works with intentional communities and other organizations on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers extensive free resources on consensus, facilitation, and more. (Tree uses a lower-case "i" in her articles as an expression of egalitarian values.)



Laird Schaub responds:

This is a great question, touching on a number of important topics.

First, what does it mean to be a member of the community? Apparently, at first there was a clear value around working through interpersonal tensions and then, for some reason, you ceased screening new members for a fit with that value. Unless that shift was consciously made, that's



a guaranteed train wreck. The old timers will lament the “heartless” newcomers, and the newbies will feel blindsided by the old fogies’ hidden agenda.

The solution to this is being as intentional as possible about matching prospective members with community values. If you intend that working through emotional issues is group work,

I am not a fan of automatically separating business and heart (isn't the new culture we're trying to create essentially about the sensitive integration of the two?)

— Laird Schaub

make sure incoming folks know what they’re signing up for (and have sufficient social skills to get the job done).

Second, I am not a fan of automatically separating business and heart (isn’t the new culture we’re trying to create essentially about the sensitive integration of the two?). Please don’t misread what I’ve just said. I am not saying it’s never appropriate to hold well-

being circles. Rather, I advocate the community choosing, case by case, whether to work emotions that surface in general meeting in the moment or in a different setting (which could include one-on-one with facilitation, a well-being meeting of the whole group, work with outside counseling—really anything that the participants are willing to try).

Sometimes productive work on a particular issue is simply not possible until and unless the distress arising in the examination is resolved first. In such situations, tabling the interpersonal work for the next well-being meeting effectively means that the topic is held hostage to the distress. It’s reasonable for the group to be able to ask if it can afford that. By extension, if the answer is “no,” then it needs to be possible to work tensions on the spot.

Digging deeper, this is not likely to succeed unless the group has a clear understanding of how to work constructively with emotions. The art here is understanding when distress has risen to the level that it’s starting to cause non-trivial distortion of information. It is highly helpful for the group to have an agreement about checking this out whenever it is perceived to be happening (I phrase it this way because people often project distress onto others by assuming, erroneously, that everyone evidences distress the same way)—even in business meetings.

The idea here is to acknowledge the distress for the purpose of addressing the distortion—not to “fix” someone, or heal them. This is a meeting (of caring people), not therapy. Done

well, the group need not be reactive to the fact that someone was reactive. They can simply validate what has occurred, counteract the tendency of distressed people to feel isolated and misunderstood, and return to the discussion of the issue. This last is key. It is the attempt to balance heart and business in the moment.

By assiduously separating business and heart into two different forums, it is predictable that you’ll get the result you’ve described: the “product” people will focus more on the business meetings, and the “process” people will attend more to the well-being sessions. Instead of enhancing integration, you’ll be inadvertently reinforcing the differences and accelerating a schism. In my book, offering “full-service” meetings where business and heart are both in play is the surest path to sound decisions and a cohesive group.

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



Beatrice Briggs responds:

“Business” and “well-being” are not two separate categories. Like thinking and feeling, they go together. Business decisions affect the lives of community members and vice versa. Efforts to suppress interpersonal conflicts and emotions in business meet-

ings and divert them to another forum are counter-productive, as this case shows. So the question becomes how to find more productive ways to integrate the information contained in emotional and interpersonal material into the “business” discussions—without turning the meetings into group therapy sessions. The best way I know to do this is to use Roger Schwarz’s “Ground Rules for Effective Groups”:

- 1) Test assumptions and inferences.
- 2) Share all relevant information.
- 3) Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean.
- 4) Explain your reasoning and intent.
- 5) Focus on interests, not positions.
- 6) Combine advocacy and inquiry.
- 7) Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements.
- 8) Discuss undiscussable issues.

9) Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed.

In order for these rules to work, they need to be applied in combination with the following core values:

- Valid information
- Free and informed choice
- Internal commitment
- Compassion.

In a community context, compassion is essential.

Group members need to

cultivate the ability to temporarily suspend judgment and really listen to what they are saying (and not saying) to each other, be concerned for each other and recognize each others' suffering. Business meetings are as good a place as any to put compassion to work.

Successfully applying these principles takes training and practice, as well as skillful facilitation. To get started, visit www.schwarzassociates.com, where you will find a lot of helpful articles and other information.

In short, my recommendation is to eliminate the practice of automatically sending emotional and interpersonal material to the "well-being ghetto." Both your business meetings and community life will benefit.

Beatrice Briggs is the founding director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Change (IIFAC), a Mexico-based consulting group that specializes in participatory processes. The author of the manual Introduction to Consensus and many articles about group dynamics, Beatrice travels around the world, giving workshops and providing facilitation services in both English and Spanish. Home is Ecovillage Huehucoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, where she has lived since 1998. bbriggs@iifac.org; www.iifac.org.

In a community context, compassion is essential.

— Beatrice Briggs



Caroline Estes responds:

There are a few parameters missing from this question, so I will make some assumptions and hope that it is helpful.

It is not unusual for communities that have been around for some time to become lax in their inquiry on new members. The passage of time often blurs the original commitment and intent of the forming individuals. It would seem that there has been a lack of understanding by some of

the newer members as to the basic values and commitments that the original members had.

The only "out" at this point seems to be a process of recommitment. That is not to say that some of the original values and processes may not have matured into other forms, other than those at the beginning. However, from my perspective, the balance that you put in place at the beginning seems very mature and important.

It is not clear to me if the incoming new members understood and accepted the original process. If they did not or were not informed, then it is important to return to the original meaning and organizational expectation of the founders.

As I said, I don't know under what circumstances you take new individuals, but it seems wise to be sure they understand the process they are accepting.

The larger the community gets without a clear understanding of the original purposes and values, the more diffused will be the acceptance of those purposes and values.

Native Americans hold with a basic number of 25 for a cohesive community. If you have gone beyond this number, it might be well to have separate circles to take care of emotional

and deeper issues of your community. It would seem that the situation you find yourself in cannot lead to cooperative harmony at present.

It may also be a situation in which you need to divide the community between a core group that holds to the original vision and a support group that is in general agreement but not interested in the process of the community. ❁

Caroline Estes, cofounder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon and Alpha Institute, which teaches consensus and offers facilitation services, has been teaching and facilitating consensus for more than 40 years. Caroline has taught consensus to most intentional-community-based facilitators in North America, and works with Hewlett-Packard, University of Massachusetts, the US Green Party, the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, and many other organizations. caroline@ic.org.

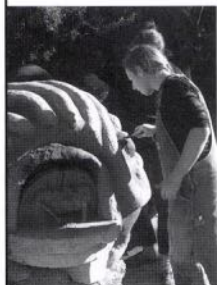
It is not unusual for communities that have been around for some time to become lax in their inquiry on new members. The passage of time often blurs the original commitment and intent of the forming individuals.

— Caroline Estes

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Triumphs and Struggles at Los Angeles Eco-Village

I (Ali) am currently sitting in the kitchen of my studio apartment in the Koreatown/Wilshire Center area of Los Angeles. As I write, I can hear helicopters overhead and cars speeding along Vermont Avenue—not the typical image that comes to mind when picturing life in an ecovillage.

Before I began living and working at Los Angeles Eco-Village (LAEV) in early 2008, my first-hand exposure to ecovillages was limited to rural communities. Yet I'm hardly a novice to the ecovillage movement, having spent the last three years visiting ecovillages worldwide and the last two working with NextGEN, the Next Generation of the Global Ecovillage Network.

Obviously, life in an urban setting is drastically different from life in a rural setting. In most rural ecovillages I've stayed at, my neighbors were my fellow community members, coworkers, and friends. The urban environment adds more layers of personal interaction.

As an urban ecovillager I interact with more people on a daily basis, simply by virtue of living in a city. I might see more people walking down a few crowded city streets on my way to buy groceries than I could in a week or even a month of living in a more isolated rural environment. But what stands out most to me is the increased interaction with city officials and local government.

All ecovillages and communities striving to live with less of an impact on the earth have to deal with bureaucracy. What community hasn't had to prove to some government official that composting toilets and earthen houses are not only environmentally friendly, but safe as well? At some point in their existence, most communities face issues related to zoning

regulations. But, as I've been learning at LAEV, the struggles over zoning and land use don't always have to do with land that they own.

LAEV has an inspiring record of working with local government to make the neighborhood more environmentally sustainable. Among its most visible accomplishments in this respect are the Bimini Slough Ecology Park and the Shared

Street Project.

The Bimini Slough Ecology Park runs the length of one city block along LAEV's south border. Eco-Villagers helped the Bresee Foundation—a neighborhood non-profit serving low-income youth and families—to get the 20,000 square foot street closed to traffic. In its place, the Bresee Foundation developed a park. The park features a day-lit streambed with native plants and trees that clean and absorb storm water, as well as a thick recycled tire floor on a children's play space and a teenage hang-out area made of local recycled concrete. Considering



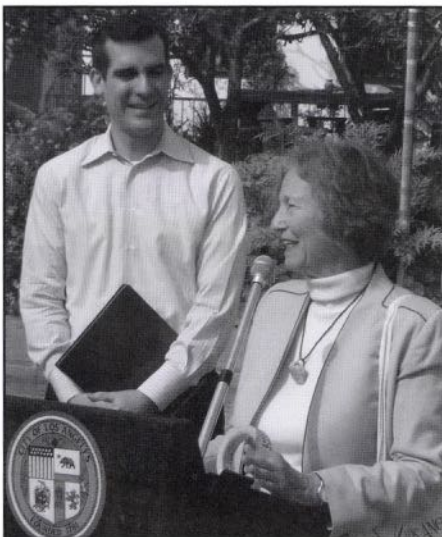


City Councilperson Eric Garcetti makes a public statement. L.A. Eco-Village is in the background.

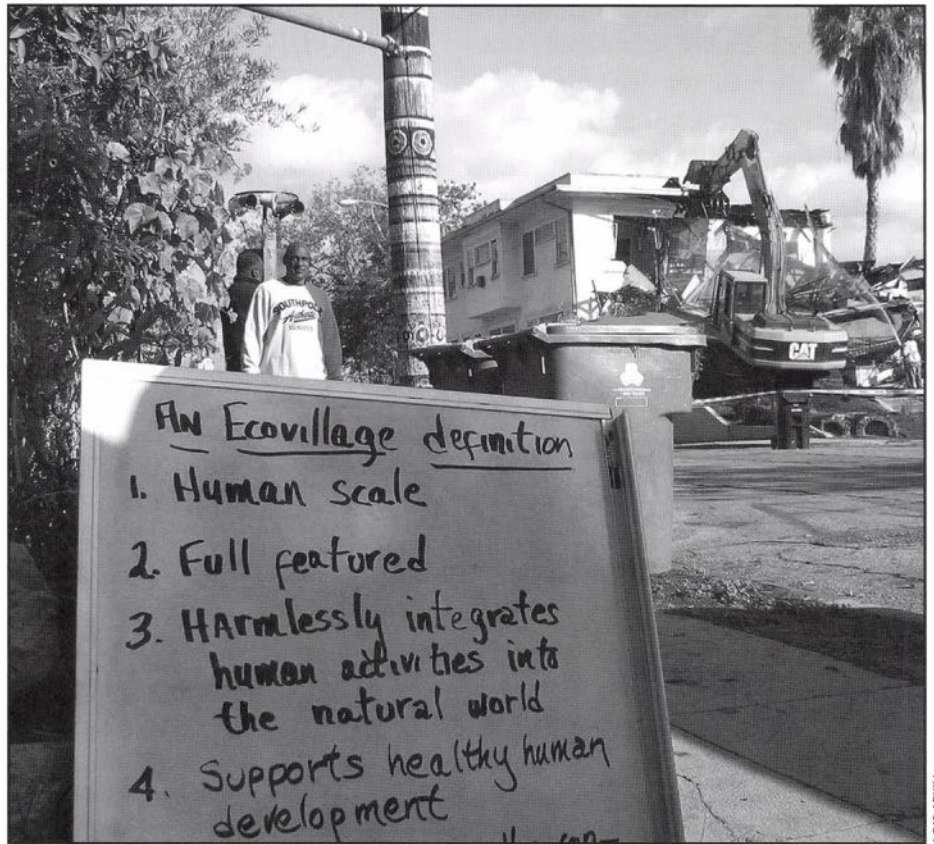
this was all done with public money, it's pretty impressive.

The Shared Street Project began in 1999 when, on behalf of the City of Los Angeles, Eco-Villager Joe Linton wrote a funding proposal to L.A.'s Metropolitan Transportation Authority for the creation of a demonstration shared street. The project aimed to make the street friendlier to pedestrians and encourage more neighbors to use the nearby subway and buses—to reduce auto use and auto dependency by widening the sidewalk and narrowing the street.

While the MTA approved the project for \$250,000 in 2000, it did not schedule



LAEV founder Lois Arkin at the podium flanked by City Councilperson Eric Garcetti at the Shared Street Project dedication of macadamia trees. LAEV community members advocated for food-bearing trees in the public medians.



Bittersweet victories: The Los Angeles Unified School District earmarked the property across the street from LAEV (and by chance, the founding location of the L.A. Eco-Village) as a future school parking lot. Although the land is already bulldozed, LAEV is still hoping to save it, to be used as a horticultural project for children.

the money to become available until 2007. When 2007 rolled around, many of the neighbors had changed, along with the projected costs. Several LAEV members worked with the City's Bureau of Street Services, neighbors, and our City Councilperson, Eric Garcetti, to plan a series of community workshops to re-plan the project to get everyone on the same page once again. Eco-Villagers advocated for permeable sidewalks and food

damia trees in the public median We all knew that, although in violation of established policy, this was the direction the City needed to move for our future food security. Now, as a result of all this public

Other public officials are beginning to tour regularly to see how they can use our example in their own jurisdictions.

advocacy work, rain-water permeates the sidewalks, replenishing our groundwater, and macadamia trees are starting to fruit and will soon provide nourishment for our community and our neighbors. Other public officials are beginning to tour regularly to

bearing trees in the public median, which would be still more costly to the City. Eco-Villager Lara Morrison researched potential new sources of public funding to make up for the projected shortfall. She did extensive research to help the city get comfortable with planting maca-

see how they can use our example in their own jurisdictions.

Unfortunately, engagement with city officials does not always involve such visually and ecologically exciting projects. In recent years LAEV has also struggled to save a major portion of the neighbor-

hood from threatened condemnation by the Los Angeles Unified School District for a large new school, the need for which was questionable. When I first learned about the opportunity to move to LAEV, I also learned of this struggle, which could have devastated the neighborhood with the elimination of almost 40 units of affordable housing.

The work Eco-Villagers and their neighbors engaged in during this struggle was complex, effective, and best described by Eco-Villager Lois Arkin, one of the key organizers during the struggle:

Lois Arkin:

It was hard for me (Lois) to gear up for this struggle. I had done it a few other times during my past 25-plus years in this neighborhood. But since arriving at old age—I'm nearly 72—this kind of a struggle takes a bit more psychological gearing up. The 35-member L.A. Eco-Village Intentional Community (LAEV-IC) makes decisions by consensus. And since the IC neighbors didn't have a clear consensus on moving full force forward, just a few of us, acting as individuals, did all the initial organizing. It meant putting most of our other priorities on hold. We continued to report on our progress and needs at our weekly community meetings, not only to provide transparency to our activities but because we wanted the LAEV-IC to come to a consensus to both support and engage in the struggle. That consensus would represent political power, as well as fresh energy and moral support for what was ultimately a David and Goliath battle.

Nonetheless, not having the Community's initial consensus actually worked in our favor. Time was of the essence, so the few of us acting as individuals were able to move quickly in a variety of ways without needing to check back with the Community for consensus. We were working on behalf of the whole neighborhood rather than just the Intentional Community. This enhanced our rela-

Skills and processes that many Eco-Villagers had learned in community played an important role in our success. Looking carefully at the issues of the different stakeholders, and working at dealing with the issues, rather than just attaching ourselves to a position, were key.

tionships enormously with neighbors on the threatened adjacent block, many of whom we had not even met before, but who had lived in the neighborhood for decades. Through the creation of these new relationships and working to save their housing, we were building trust, learning about their needs, resources, and issues, and developing the potential to more effectively introduce ecovillage-type activities on their block in the future.

Much to their credit, the LAEV-IC did eventually mobilize—and boldly—as the risk of losing much of the neighborhood's housing and the threat of quadrupling traffic on our already congested street

became increasingly obvious to them. Most importantly, they began to see that there was a viable alternative site for the school close by, one that would not take any housing and would improve a degraded area which was also a brownfield, significantly contaminated from prior industrial uses.

So, ultimately, even though there was never a formal LAEV-IC consensus, dozens rose to the occasion. Or I should say "occasions," since there were many. We searched for alternative sites. There was an endless need to get neighbors to sign hard copy petitions to the School Board members. Eco-Villager Michelle Wong



Perseverance pays: On the Shared Street Project, L.A. Eco-Villagers advocated for eco-savvy ideas like permeable sidewalks to help allow rainwater to replenish groundwater. Here, LAEV friend George Patton gives a demonstration.



LOIS ARMIN

An LAEV-generated proposal to L.A.'s Metropolitan Transportation Authority rallied for the creation of a demonstration shared street. The goal: to make the street friendlier to pedestrians by widening the sidewalks and narrowing the streets, and encouraging more neighbors to use the nearby subway and buses, thereby reducing auto use and auto dependency in the neighborhood. Above: Tea Party as traffic-calming device!

created an electronic petition that garnered nearly a thousand signatures from LAEV friends throughout the world (www.gopetition.com/petitions/la-eco-village).

Other neighbors attended meetings with high-ranking public officials whose support we needed. There was videotaping to do at the large District-sponsored public meetings, where we were able to get hundreds of people to show up. A prominent eminent domain attorney was retained on behalf of all the building owners who were at risk of having their properties condemned. Some of us did outreach to the media. Although these activities took a lot of energy, it is unlikely our success would have happened without this multi-dimensional approach.

Skills and processes that many Eco-Villagers had learned in community played an important role in our success as well. Looking carefully at the issues of the different stakeholders, and working at dealing with the issues, rather than just attaching ourselves to a position, were key in this regard. Most Eco-Villagers practiced non-

violent communication in their letters and public comments, in contrast to many others who used language that was adversarial and contentious. Eco-Villagers were clearly working toward win-win solutions for identifying a new school site, using language that was strong but not aggressive, and using the power of their collective presence as a political tool.

Ultimately, the success of our struggle was capped with our close and long-term working relationship with the city's Community Redevelopment Agency and our City Councilman. Because these folks also feel passionate about not destroying affordable housing, they were able to use the power of their offices and informal relationships to convince the School Board authorities to make an alternative site selection. Nonetheless, in local politics, the squeaky wheel with a good cause does get the grease. Without the public support that we were able to generate, our elected official would have found it difficult to justify the time and effort it took to save the housing.

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The “victory” was, nonetheless, bittersweet, and at the time of this writing may not be totally secure. Two issues came up: The School District’s Facilities Department is planning to plunk down a parking lot for 137 cars on the property they already own in the LAEV two-block neighborhood. What to do? Start the next chapter of our struggle or simply be grateful that it is not a school for 1000 kids? Well, some of us had another idea for how to use the nearly two-acre site within our immediate LAEV boundaries: a car-free mixed use development, featuring a year-round indoor swimming pool using the hot mineral springs 2000 feet below our street, creating an educational biological living machine, using the hot waters for geothermal heating in the neighborhood, and creating an edible landscape around a cohousing development that would be marketed as affordable housing for school staff from all the schools in the area. Various School Dis-

trict officials have expressed real interest in doing innovative joint use projects, so this one is not out of the realm of possibilities. See the concept proposal at www.laecovillage.org/conceptproposal/lausdcra.html. Stay tuned for more outcomes on that one.

The second piece of the bittersweet victory has to do with the alternative site selected by the School Board. That site, located primarily on District-owned property of an existing middle school adjacent to the LAEV neighborhood, will need significant remediation of soil contaminants. The school principal and several of the teachers, students, and parents are very upset at the disruption that will be caused by the construction and, more seriously, at the contaminated nature of the site. Others of us see this as an important opportunity to clean up the contamination and bring a currently blighted area back to life: an opportunity for another struggle that has enormous implications



Former 1988 presidential candidate Michael Dukakis visits with L.A. Eco-Villagers.

for the future of education in our intensely urban and toxic neighborhoods.

I and many other Eco-Villagers continue to see ourselves as helping our neighborhood and the city at large reinvent how we live in the city. And perhaps with a little breathing space here and there, it has finally sunk in for me that the struggles never really end. The challenge is to keep seeing the opportunities in the struggles—that’s what makes it really fun! ❁

Alison Rosenblatt lives at Los Angeles Eco-Village, where she is coordinating activities for the CRSP Institute for Urban Ecovillages. A former intern at Lost Valley Educational Center, she is also a founding member of NextGEN, the Next Generation of the Global Ecovillage Network. She represents NextGEN on the GEN board and is co-secretary of the Ecovillage Network of the Americas. She will enter the University of British Columbia’s Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education Masters program. She can be reached at alirosenblatt@gmail.com.

Lois Arkin is the Executive Director of the Cooperative Resources and Service Project (CRSP) Institute for Urban Ecovillages at Los Angeles Eco-Village, and is the Western US Ecovillage Network of the Americas Council Representative. She can be reached at crsp@igc.org. More information on L.A. Eco-Village is at www.laecovillage.org and www.urbansoil.net/wiki.cgi. Lois and Ali are the current editorial team for this Ecovillage Living Column.

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Ecovillage Network of Canada

Yes, we have polar bears in the far North. But we also have lots of black bears and our fair share of grizzlies in the valley where I live. Perhaps surprising is that most of Canada's population lives within 90 miles of the US border, along the famous 49th parallel. However, our numbers are about 33 million, while for comparison's sake California's are about 37 million. To really put this in perspective, the Canadian land mass is more than 23 times the size of California.

INTERNATIONAL ECOVILLAGES



BY
RUSS PURVIS

We are the second largest country in the world! Maybe our relatively small population explains why Canadians are so friendly and like to network?

In September of 2007 the Ecovillage Network of Canada (ENC) sent out a survey in an attempt to better understand the ecovillage/intentional community landscape in Canada. It was also used to determine if folks could imagine ENC continuing to serve a useful purpose. From a pool of about 100 ecovillages, intentional communities, and cohousing groups, approximately 20 percent responded. A summary of the results can be viewed at ecovillagenetworkcanada.ning.com.

Among the most telling of the survey results was the identification of our support base in the Provinces of British Columbia and Quebec. Not too surprisingly, the most common type of shared economic activity was organic farming. However, the most encouraging aspect of the survey was the report that ecovillages and intentional communities in Canada are much more sustainable than I expected. Between 34 percent and 65 percent of our respondents described their communities as self-sufficient

from resources within the community in areas including energy sources, food, work locations, and income. Happily, 88 percent saw continued value in ENC.

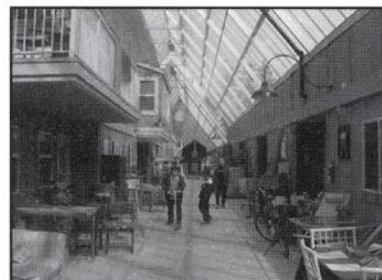
Cooperatives (from all business areas, not just agriculture) are supported at the federal level of government in Canada. Why is this important? The cooperative's signature aspects are member ownership and democratic control. In 2004, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) North American Conference in British Columbia featured one of Canada's premiere cooperative consultants, Marty Frost, as a keynote speaker. The cooperative busi-

(continued on p. 71)

The many faces of ENC: 1. Cranberry Commons, Burnaby, BC. 2. Windsong Atrium Street, Langley, BC. 3. Alpacas at Kakwa Ecovillage, McBride, BC. 4. Quayside Village, North Vancouver, BC. 5. A gathering of "Feasters" at Lightwork Ecovillage, Gambier Island, BC. 6. Roberts' Creek Cohousing, Robert's Creek, BC.



1



2



RUSS PURVIS

3



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5



6



WE REFUSE TO BE

Community Spirit

as an

ANTIDOTE to SEPARATION

By Leila Dregger

In 2005 and 2007, Sabine Lichtenfels, founder of the Tamera Peace Community in Portugal, led two peace pilgrimages through Israel and the West Bank. International peace workers walked together for four weeks through the divided Holy Land. They listened to the stories on both sides, became witnesses of the conflict on every imaginable level, meditated alongside the Wall, and shared their thoughts and feelings with the people. They carried with them a vision of healing: communal thinking and acting as an alternative to the prevailing principle of separation that dominates this land. Doors opened which for a long time had appeared to be closed. Visions developed. The pilgrimages became an example of political action totally imbued with the spirit of community. Out of this experience, a group came together to plan and prepare the next step: a Peace Research Village in the Middle East, a place where Israelis, Palestinians, and Internationals live together and develop peaceful solutions in practice.

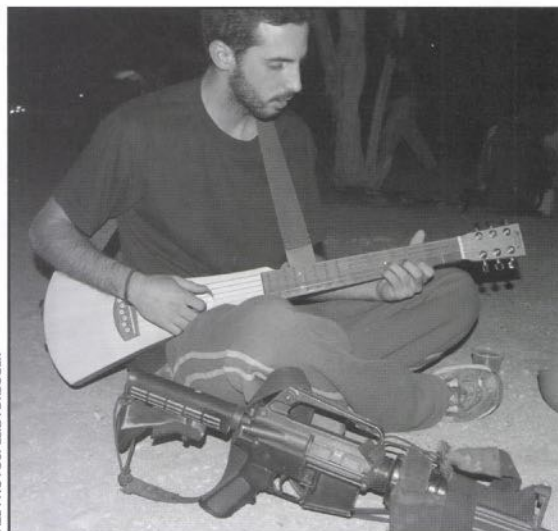
9TH October 2007: 89 people meet in Eilat to start their walk through Israel and the West Bank. They are peace workers from many parts of the world. Amongst them are Israelis and Palestinians, Germans, Swiss, Americans, and other nationals. Later two Colombians, members of the Peace Village San José de Apartadó, will join in—presently they are still being kept in the detention camp for suspicion of being illegal workers. The youngest (besides the baby, who is being carried the whole way) is

11, the oldest 61. Sabine Lichtenfels, leader of the pilgrimage, is a theologian, writer, and peace activist. Fifty-four years old, she is the co-founder of Tamera and one of the worldwide “1000 women for peace.”

General Experience

The pilgrimage takes us through Arabic and Jewish places. We meet peace workers from both sides. We speak with Israeli refuseniks and activists as well as Palestinian farmers, refugees, and politicians. We witness street fights and visit military camps in which teenagers are questioning the war. We visit refugee camps where people are living in indescribably cramped conditions, still dreaming of their villages and homes after up to 60 years of exile in the camps. We visit the ruins of Arabic villages, empty, with only the wind sweeping through. Wherever we go, we are wearing white scarves with the word “Grace” written on them. Sabine Lichtenfels chose the word Grace for the peace attitude that characterizes the pilgrimage: “GRACE brings along an obligation not to foment war but to end it, wherever you are.”

We sleep in the desert and in olive groves, in communal buildings of the PLO, in Israeli Kibbutzim, in a refugee camp, in Bedouin tents and in the houses of Palestinian clans. We help with the olive harvest, visit the Holocaust Museum, speak with young Hamas



ALL PHOTOS: LEILA DREGGER

TOP: From left, Sabine Lichtenfels, Benjamin von Mendelssohn, and Vera Kleinhammes, leaders of the pilgrimage.

LEFT: This Israeli soldier found our guitar more interesting than his gun.

RIGHT: We refuse to be enemies: New Bedouin friends join in the pilgrimage, side by side with Israeli and Palestinians.

ENEMIES

نرففمن ان تكون اعداء



We
Refuse
to be
Enemies

www.grace-pilgrimage.com



WE REFUSE TO BE ENEMIES...

fans in Palestine and with surviving victims of suicide attacks in Israel. In the end we meditate alongside the wall which seals off the occupied territories. We do this in silence in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem with a growing group for the last night of the pilgrimage.

We become witnesses of a conflict that takes place on every imaginable level.

We do not find an enemy.

We find only people...

People whose pain, anger, and fear are shared, and reflected in one another. We also find courage and the longing for peace in unexpected places. In the end a group of 168 will reach Jerusalem, after more than 300 km of walking by foot.

Start—and Peace Work with Ourselves

It is a chilly morning. We start to walk into the desert. The silence is amazing, once we have left the last streets of Eilat. An incredible landscape is waiting for us, something intermediate between the surface of the moon and a stone quarry, amazing red and yellow rocks standing on both sides of our path, and every now and then a tree with a million butterflies. At night, when we lie in our sleeping bags, an endless starry sky unfolds over our heads.

The first days are about connection with the spirit of the land and about building community spirit. We start every day at sunrise and walk in silence. Step by step we become witnesses of our inner thoughts and dialogues. When the heat comes, when we become exhausted, when we are angry about somebody, when we are afraid not to get enough to eat...all these are chances to do peace work with ourselves, and to replace the position of being a victim with the position of empowerment. Effective peace work is possible only when you have



faced your inner demons and know them well. In sharing groups we speak about our experiences.

One day—after walking for hours alongside a seemingly endless military training site—we enter the military camp spontaneously. Some of us speak with the soldiers and ask them why they are here, in the middle of nowhere.

“We have to be here to protect our families,” one of them says. Another: “I would love to join you.” “Imagine if this were not a military base but a peace research site, where peaceful techniques, ecology, and communication would be studied.” The eyes of the young soldiers shine with this vision.

Into the West Bank

We enter the West Bank “from the backyard,” through the desert. One does not even see the border here. First we approach Bedouin villages and become witnesses of real poverty. There is no electricity, and little water. Boys on donkeys and a young man on a camel accompany us and guide us to the village. Again we are hosted with open hearts and meet two societies: the women and the men.

It is the first time our children have met children who have so little: no toys, no new clothes, no sweets, and sometimes not even enough to eat. How to share with so many children what they have, without treating them with arrogance? After a wild play among them, one of the Bedouin kids takes away a torch, resulting in tears and cries and blaming. We realize how much the children reflect the conflict between rich and poor in the grown-up world.

THIS situation, however, could be solved: our kids are invited to join the extended family, they are given thousands of little gifts, and leave them the torch deliberately.

We come into the first Palestinian village in the West Bank. Most of the participating Israelis travel through occupied territory for the first time. Fear and absurd regulations have kept them from doing so up to this moment. For the first time they

TOP: Making friends at an Israeli checkpoint.

LEFT: Morning attunement in the desert at sunrise.

RIGHT: Group leaders Benjamin and Vera in Bethlehem with their son and youngest participant, Mante.



Community Spirit as an **ANTIDOTE** to **SEPARATION**

witness the "other side," expose themselves to the emotions that come up as they face the effects of the politics of their own government. Feelings of guilt, helplessness, despair, and anger mix with an almost panic-like fear.

Under the protection of the international group, they discover the human face of the enemy. Many moving scenes are happening.

"Welcome, welcome," says Yousran, our host in a Palestinian village. "Our house is your house."

"Thank you," I say. "This is Michal. She comes from Israel."

"Israel?"

There is a moment of paralysis.

Never before did Yousran meet an Israeli who is not wearing a uniform. Then her face twitches. "Welcome, welcome, this house is your house." A talk begins, a talk which neither of them has ever had before. Today Michal keeps in touch with Yousran and supports her financially so that her daughters can finish their studies.

Overcoming Separation

Israel-Palestine is a land where the principal of separation is stretched to its limits. Cultures, religions, and nationalities are divided. The walls of fear, ignorance, and anger seem impenetrable. The separation wall, 600 km long, cuts through the so-called Holy Land.

During our pilgrimage we are searching for the antidote to the virus of separation. In our daily sharing circle we are witnessing moving realisations and decisions, often pertaining to the smallest and most ordinary daily occurrences.

"You never look at me," says Mustafa to Daniel in the sharing circle. "You talk with everyone else except with me. Why is this so?" Daniel, an Israeli peace worker, realizes that he has grown up in a society which has taught him not to perceive Arabs as human beings. From then on the two of them had a lot to say to each other.

"I have never met people such as you," said one of our Palestinian guides. "You all look as if you were married to each other." In his culture, community exists only in terms of an extended family.

Soldiers stop us in an olive grove in the West Bank. They are Bedouins, i.e. Arab Israelis, who are posted to Palestine and are part of the occupying troops. Their task is to guard their brothers with whom they share the same faith. Bedouins, themselves a minority, are regarded as particularly hard people.

Sabine Lichtenfels asks them to let us carry on with our sharing circle without disturbance. What surprise! They ask to be permitted to join us. The apple goes around, passes from one to

the other. The one who holds it is to speak. The soldiers in uniform, with helmets and machine guns, are listening to our people who express their impressions and feelings. This seems an unusually interesting day to these occupying soldiers doing their service. They are not much older than our youngest participants and are visibly torn between duty and interest. When

the apple reaches them they put their guns down.

"You are doing the right thing," one of them says. "I would love to go along with you."

Another: "I do not believe in peace. Why not? If the children here are hungry I give them to eat. They take it, but when I turn around they throw stones at me. No, I do not believe in peace, because THEY do not want peace."

How often did we hear such words. Yes, we want peace but the others don't. Fayeze is a Palestinian farmer whose land was destroyed by Israelis.

For years he sat in jail. He guides us through the West Bank. When the apple reaches him he begins his unforgettable talk.

"Everything that has destroyed my life I see reflected in these uniforms. Not in you, but in the uniforms you are wearing. You are young. I can see in your eyes that you are not married yet. I feel

what your parents feel when you leave the house in the morning." At this moment he starts to cry vehemently. "Your parents are afraid, they are very much afraid that you might die.

"EVERYTHING that has destroyed my life
I see reflected in these uniforms.
Not in you, but in the uniforms you
are wearing. You are young.
I can see in your eyes that you are
not married yet. I feel what your
parents feel when you leave the house
in the morning."



(continued on p. 72)

A World of Possibility:

Communities & Global Transformation

ILLUSTRATIONS: ETHAN HUGHES



"When we dream alone it is just a dream, when we dream together it becomes reality" ~ unknown

By Ethan Hughes and Sarah Wilcox-Hughes

This article is based on a simple premise: What befalls one of us befalls all of us. Can we sit on our cob benches enjoying the beautiful views out our strawbale cabin windows if the world all around us is crumbling? What befalls industrial society befalls intentional communities, cohouses, spiritual centers, and ecovillages. Most of us communitarians are still highly dependent on mainstream society to meet our food, clothing, housing, communication, entertainment, and transportation needs.

In this time of needed change, does the communities movement have the capacity to transform the global economic- military-industrial complex? We are suggesting that the answer is yes, if the movement chooses to become socially and politically involved at a new level.

To ground this article in reality we will offer examples of two communities that demonstrate what a few passionate individuals can accomplish on a local and global level: the Ark of Lanza del Vasto, a 60-year-old community movement in France based on Gandhian nonviolence, and the Possibility Alliance, a one-year-old community in Missouri. We will also give a glimpse as to what society could look like if the communities movement, as a whole, joined in the ruckus! Let us begin this journey in France.

*A small body of determined spirits
fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission
can alter the course of history.*

~MAHATMA GANDHI

The Ark

In 2004, we found ourselves at La Borie Noble, a community of the Ark, a movement founded by Lanza del Vasto in 1948. Several things struck us as unique and radical in contrast to the dozens of communities we had lived in or visited in the United States and Canada.



*I believe in the
essential unity of
all that lives.
Therefore, I believe
that if one being rises,
the whole world rises
with that being,
and if one being falls,
the whole world falls
to that extent.*

~MAHATMA GANDHI



First of all, the community was far more physically sustainable and land-based than any community we had ever seen. La Borie grew three tons of wheat on site by horse power and made their clothing, pottery, furniture, and tools on site without the use of fossil fuel or electricity. There was no refrigeration; candles provided illumination; and the group had its own dairy, bakery, and hand-powered printing press.

The second thing that struck us was that far more political activism was happening at the Ark than we had ever seen before. One Ark member, Jean-Batiste, was facing 10 years in prison and a 200,000 euro fine for scything GMO crops with Jose Bové, the radical French farmer who "deconstructs" McDonald's whenever he has the opportunity. Their activism reached the front pages of major European newspapers and tens of thousands have rallied behind them. In our 15 months there, we were to re-evaluate what was possible for a single community to achieve.

During the Israel and Lebanon war in 2006, the Ark hosted over 40 Palestinian and Israeli youth for a 10-day reconciliation initiative. The war, the history, the tension, and the conflict were right in front of us, at a time when most Westerners kept a safe and passive distance from the issue, viewing it from the other side of a television, radio, or computer, or not at all. What if

PHOTO'S COURTESY OF THE POSSIBILITY ALLIANCE

the communities movement started to open its doors to those from war zones? What if we sat with inner city gangs, soldiers, and prisoners at our dinner table? With this level of interaction, the passive would become active. The "others" would become our friends as they did at the Ark during those 10 days.

The Ark also created a national organization in France to oppose nuclear power and weapons. What if every community headed up an internationally active organization? In 2007, they organized an international peace gathering in India on the 60th anniversary of Gandhi's death. Hundreds of groups from around the world came together to share strategies and to network.

That is only what is currently happening at the Ark. Over the years they have blocked the expansion of military bases on the Larzac Plateau (which involved over 100,000 people, making it one of the largest acts of nonviolent civil disobedience in French history) and they nonviolently overtook two nuclear power plants. They worked to end the practice of torture during the Algerian war and to end nuclear testing in the South Pacific. The Ark actually

perceived (and still perceives, to a large degree) its communities and their self-sufficient cooperative lifestyles not as ends in themselves, but rather as training grounds for Gandhian-style nonviolent peace forces that would change the political shape of France and Europe, leading their movements away from war and oppression toward peace, justice, and equality.

What we need is more people who specialize in the impossible.

~ THEODORE ROETHKE

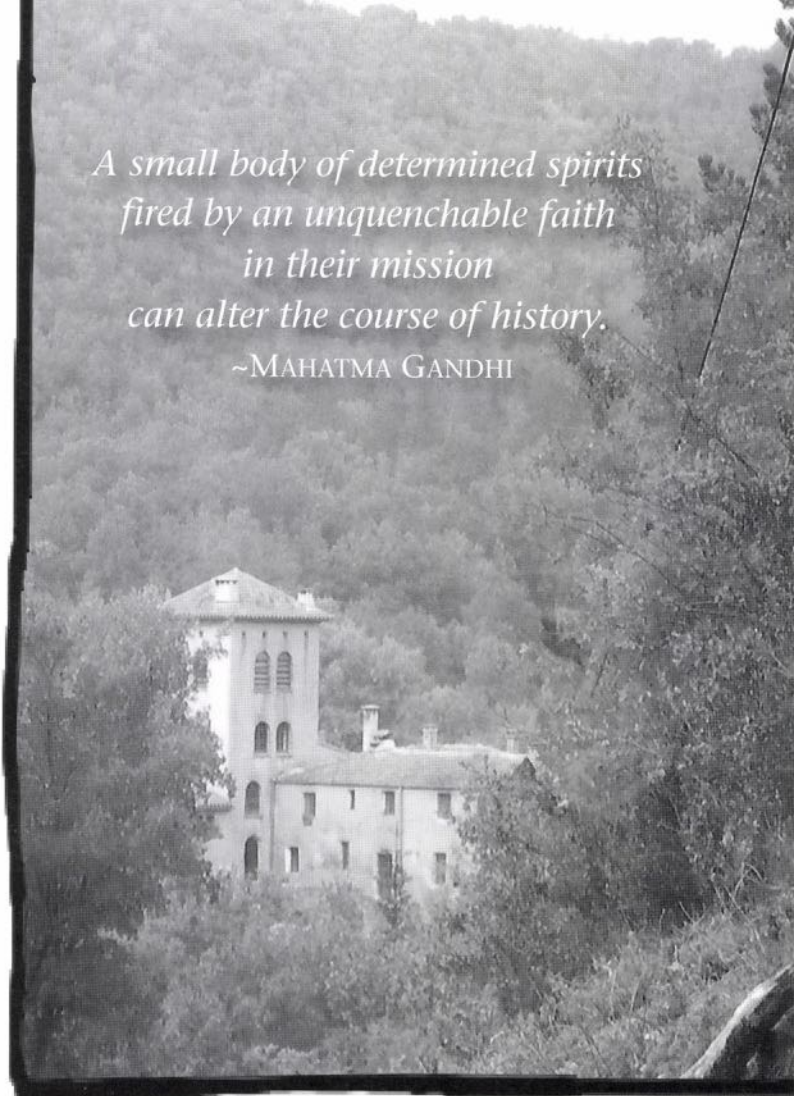
The Possibility Alliance

In April 2007, we returned to the US by bike, boat, and train to create a community in northeast Missouri with a spirit similar to that which we had experienced in France at the Ark.

(Ironically, since our visit there, internal politics have split La Borie Noble into smaller groups, with the minority, which had been holding the land-based, simplicity aspect of the project, leaving to start a new community. This fracture deepens our own commitment to keep both political activism and simplicity linked, and to do the inner work to transform internal politics into an opportunity for growth and insight).

*A small body of determined spirits
fired by an unquenchable faith
in their mission
can alter the course of history.*

~MAHATMA GANDHI



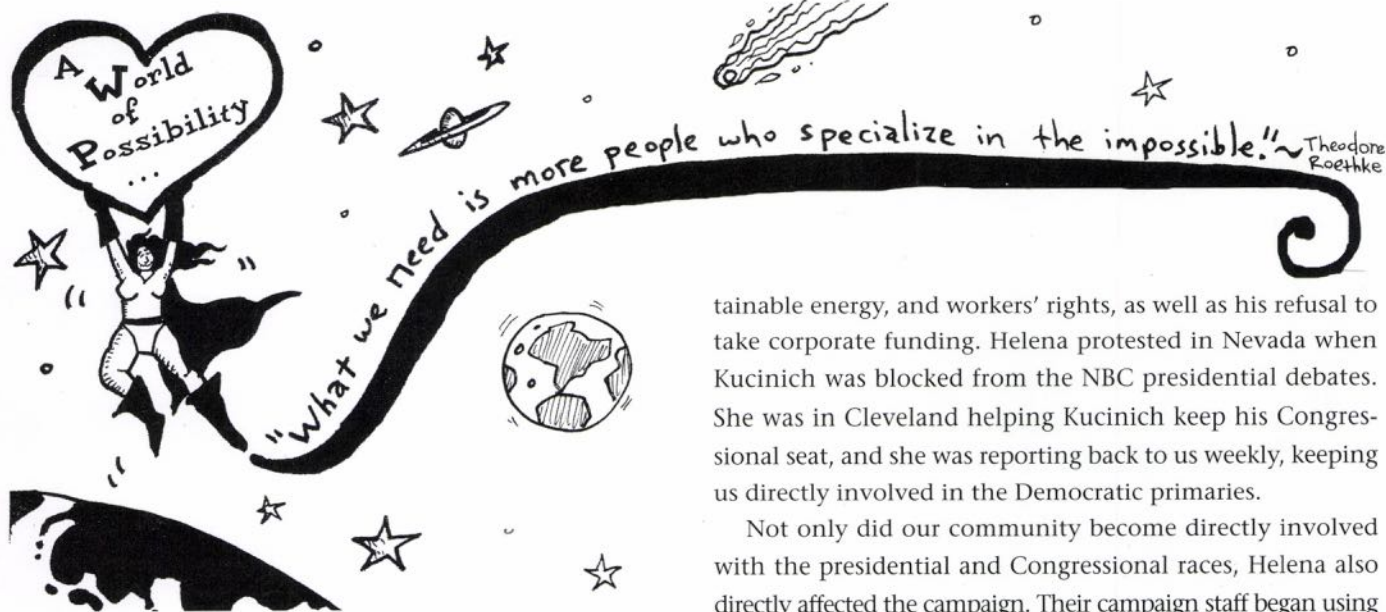
ABOVE: The rebuilt 400-year-old hamlet at the Ark of Lanza del Vasto, a 60-year-old community movement based on Gandhian nonviolence in La Borie Noble, France. The tower hosts the bell of mindfulness which rings throughout the day, inviting you into the present moment.

Our community and sanctuary have yet to be named, but we call the overarching organization the Possibility Alliance. Our community has three permanent on-site members plus our infant daughter, Etta Iris. However, we want to include our families and friends who have supported our efforts and made this experiment possible through love, encouragement, networking, financial contributions, and labor.



*When you come to
the edge of all that you know,
you must believe in one of two things—
there will be earth upon which to stand,
or you will be given wings.*

~ UNKNOWN



The mission statement of the Possibility Alliance is to work toward the upliftment of all beings, and awaken to our true nature, which we believe is love. See the sidebar on opposite page for The Possibility Alliance's five guiding principles.

*Whatever you can do, or dream you can,
begin it. Boldness has genius, power,
and magic in it.*

~GOETHE

As we share some of what our experiment has accomplished in one year with three adult members, please keep in mind that our project is bike-powered (car- and petroleum-free), human-to-human communication (computer-free), high on life (substance-free), candle-lit (electricity-free), and is day by day coming closer to the goal of 100% local food (where the small amount we do not produce will come from within 200 miles of the sanctuary). We have already hosted over 200 visitors and have offered several weeklong educational courses to both college and high school students. We supply this background in order to show what is possible with a very small group that is mostly unplugged from the industrial paradigm.

With love even the rocks shall open.

~HAZART INAYAT KAHN

During the first year of the project one of our members, Helena, spent two months volunteering with the Dennis Kucinich campaign for the presidency and for Congress. Our project supports his vision for a Department of Peace, sus-

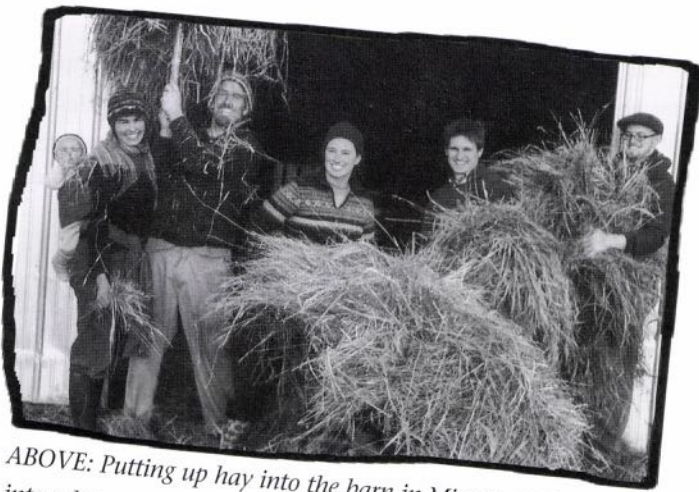
tainable energy, and workers' rights, as well as his refusal to take corporate funding. Helena protested in Nevada when Kucinich was blocked from the NBC presidential debates. She was in Cleveland helping Kucinich keep his Congressional seat, and she was reporting back to us weekly, keeping us directly involved in the Democratic primaries.

Not only did our community become directly involved with the presidential and Congressional races, Helena also directly affected the campaign. Their campaign staff began using the train for transport instead of flying, taking public buses instead of renting cars, and eating more local and organic foods. These ripples began with Helena's commitment to remain faithful to her lifestyle choices, and her willingness to invite others in to participate with her.

In our own state of Missouri, we have played a key role in starting a community bicycle co-op in our neighboring college town, Kirksville. We have also joined CAPE (Citizens Against Polluting the Environment), which led us to the Missouri Statehouse on a campaign to support local farmers' rights and to oppose the construction of CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations). We participated in Truman State University's symposiums for Peace Week and Earth Week, as well as a climate change sit-in. We led a bike awareness program at the public middle schools in the area. We served at Outreach Mission, a group providing free services



ABOVE: The Strawbale pick-up. (The local farmer was surprised and delighted to have his first bicycling client.) Lots of big trucks beeped and waved on the highway! (Missouri)



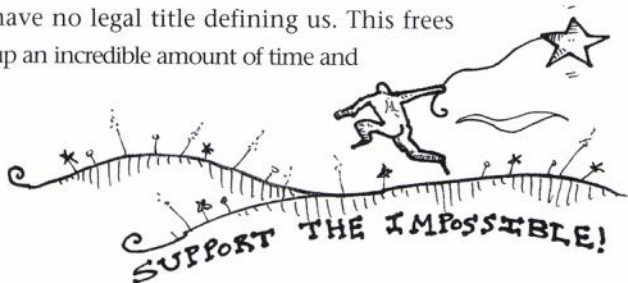
ABOVE: Putting up hay into the barn in Missouri (which turned into a hay wrestling match shortly after this photo was taken).



to the homeless, battered women, and victims of house fires. We joined and worked with FFLPP (Friends for La Plata Preservation), a group which restored the La Plata Amtrak Station and is working to create a cultural center in town. We participate monthly in Critical Mass, a bike ride that occurs in cities and towns around the world the last Friday of every month to promote bicycle rights and ecological awareness. On the local level, we helped a neighbor rebuild his house that burned down, hosted an Amish School on the land, moved an elderly woman to her new home, weeded a neighbor's garden, and continue doing other simple acts that build community.

Our activism also takes place on the land. All three members are war-tax resisters. We choose to live under the poverty line and not contribute finances to the industrial-military-economic complex. We open our doors to anyone at no cost. All are fed and sheltered here with nothing asked in return. All that we do off site, on behalf of the project, is volunteered free of charge. For example, Helena declined a paid position with the Kucinich campaign but chose to work as a volunteer.

We accept donations, but only when they are freely given from a place of gratitude. We believe it is a political act to remove ourselves from the free market (money) economy and to transform it into a gift economy. We give away 20% of all our donations to other projects and people we believe in within the local, state, national, and international arenas. We choose not to be a nonprofit organization and currently have no legal title defining us. This frees up an incredible amount of time and



The Possibility Alliance Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Possibility Alliance is to work toward the upliftment of all beings, and awaken to our true nature, which we believe is love. The five guiding principles that ground our mission are:

1. **Simplicity:** continually shrinking our ecological footprint and our needs—this includes striving to provide for our own food, clothing, and shelter through our own labor, and trading for or buying what we cannot yet provide for ourselves, as locally and mindfully produced as we can find
2. **Service:** outward service on the local, state, national, and international levels, helping individuals, organizations, ecological habitats, societies, and all life-forms in need
3. **Nonviolent social and political activism:** engagement in the world on behalf of peace, ecological sanity, and justice, even at the risk of imprisonment, physical harm, and suffering in general
4. **Inner work:** cleansing fear, hatred, impatience, judgment, and greed in ourselves through open communication, meditation, yoga, NVC (nonviolent communication), prayer, laughter, present moment awareness, etc.
5. **Celebration:** applying the above four principles in a spirit of joy and refusing to be motivated by guilt

Each member of the community spends a minimum of one month per year out in the world participating in social and political change. Each person chooses what s/he is passionate about on the local, state, national, or international level.

avoids weeks of paperwork. Through many generous donations, we recently paid off the 80-acre sanctuary (thanks, friends!).

The above is an incomplete list. Now imagine if all communities and ecovillages made outward

activism and service as common as consensus meetings, potlucks, and skinny dipping. There are over 10,000 communities, cohousing groups, ecovillages, spiritual centers, radical farms, and squats in the world—many listed and many under the radar. If the average membership per community is 10, then all of the sudden there is a very large group that could be mobilized for political and social activism.

We would guess that the following numbers are conservative estimates. If each community sent its members out in the world for one month doing service and/or activism of the individual's choice, that would be 100,000 people contributing 3,000,000 days a year toward social and political transformation.

Nonviolence is violated by holding on to what the world needs.

~MAHATMA GANDHI



A vision without a task is a dream. A task without a vision is drudgery. But a vision with a task can change the world.

~BLACK ELK

Can we find alternatives to staying within the walls of our communities as the food riots increase, the bombs keep falling, commodity prices soar, the prisons fill, the poverty gap rises, and ecosystems continue to be destroyed?



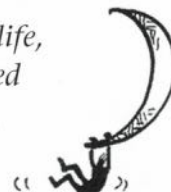
LEFT: Thirteen of the 56 superheroes who participated on the 2003 Arizona ride (more than the Avengers, Justice League, or the Fantastic Four!).

Our answer at the Possibility Alliance is "YES." We are aware that thousands of individuals from within communities are doing amazing work in the world. What we are proposing is a unified shift in the communities movement where all members would spend some time going out into the world to serve. In order to facilitate such service work, communities could support one another through trainings, skill sharing, financing, and networking. We are not suggesting forcing anyone to do anything, rather offering this idea as an invitation to action.

Can we afford to partially hide in our communities and ecovillages? Is the human world in desperate need? Is life as we know it—all life on this planet—at risk? Do the poor, sick, and disabled have a place at our table? How can members of mainstream society, many of whom are poor and marginalized, believe that the communities movement is a viable option if they are not included and supported?

*Whoever saves one life,
it is as if s/he saved
the entire world.*

~ TALMUD



The Haul of Justice

There is a final element to our experiment that we would like to share. The Possibility Alliance serves as the umbrella to and headquarters for an international bicycling service group known as the Haul of Justice. Over 500 people have dressed up as their own self-created superheroes, such as Compashman, Hugger-naut, Dr. Dharma, The Golden Rule, and Queen Bee.

They have collectively bicycled over 12,000 miles in 23 states, England, Ireland, British Columbia, Thailand, and Mexico, providing over 50,000 hours of community service. The group has also responded to national emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina, sending 40 superheroes to

Mississippi and Louisiana—some staying for up to three months in the disaster zone. All of these superheroes are volunteers, and the organization has no official status.

What if every community and ecovillage became the home base for and supported one service organization? This could mobilize millions more people in the communities movement. We are only three and we are doing it. What can an ecovillage of 20 or 40 do?

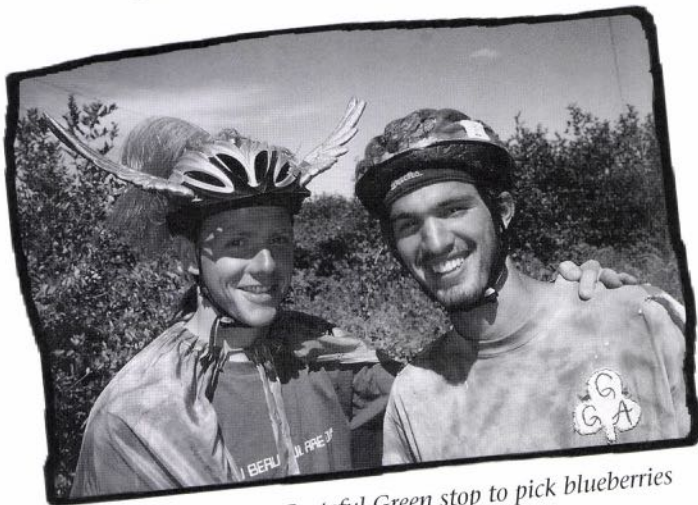


Gamble everything for love if you're a true human being.

~RUMI

Perhaps this article sounds like a challenge. We write it as a rallying cry to go deeper. The last surge of radicalism in the communities movement was in the early 1970s—the back-to-the-land movement influenced by people like Helen and Scott Nearing. Back then it was radical for professors to become homesteaders. It is not anymore. We believe we need to unify the communities movement and build stronger bridges to mainstream society.

We need direct contact with the disaster areas, inner cities, and war zones. Education, tours, magazines, and websites are useful, but should we be taking greater risks? Do we have the courage to eat with the poor, go to jail, visit the public schools, respond to emergencies, and use our privileges to serve the struggling billions of the world and aide the threatened habitats and species worldwide?



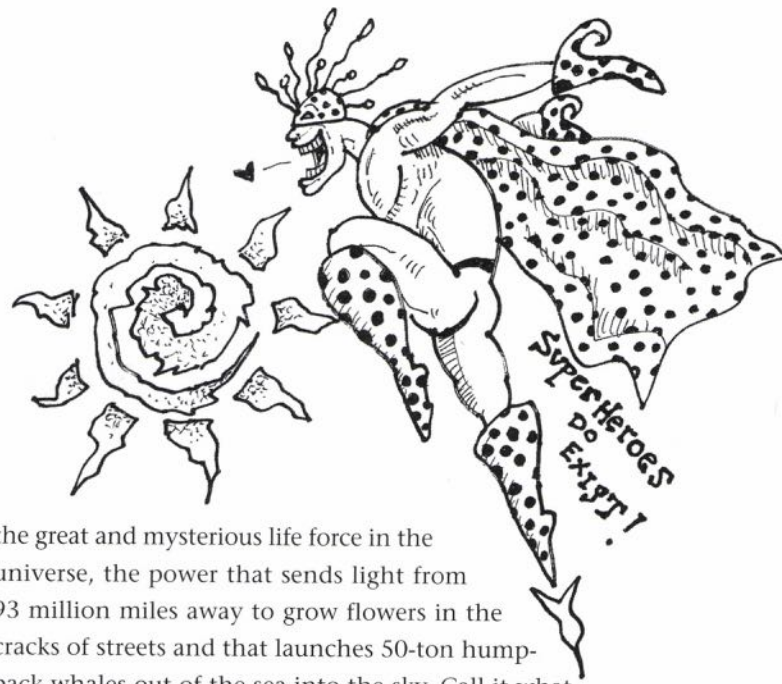
ABOVE: Oh-Boy and Grateful Green stop to pick blueberries on the Maine Superhero ride.



You say you can't create something original? Don't worry about it. Make a cup of clay so your brother and sister can drink.

~RUMI

We are a tiny one-year-old community, an experiment to see what opening ourselves to love and practicing nonviolence can do. We are imperfect. On many days we are filled with doubt, and fall short of our visions for ourselves and the world. Other days, we are frightened by our light and terrified about living the truth in our hearts. Our experiment, in the end, is not about us. It is about becoming vessels of something bigger—



the great and mysterious life force in the universe, the power that sends light from 93 million miles away to grow flowers in the cracks of streets and that launches 50-ton hump-back whales out of the sea into the sky. Call it what you like—Great Spirit, Love, the Tao, Buddha Nature, God, Goddess, the unmanifested—it does not matter. This incredible force is real. Tapping into even a tiny bit of this power has allowed us to achieve what we have so far. Trusting in life makes it easier to reduce our cravings for things and set aside some of our personal needs. We find that with so little, we are thriving and laughing often!



Statistically, the probability of any one of us being here is so small that you'd think the mere fact of existing would keep us all in a contented state of dazzlement and surprise.

~LEWIS THOMAS



It is a giant leap, we believe, for most of us to live in community after being raised in a nuclear family in a socially isolating society. We celebrate all that has been done by the communities movement

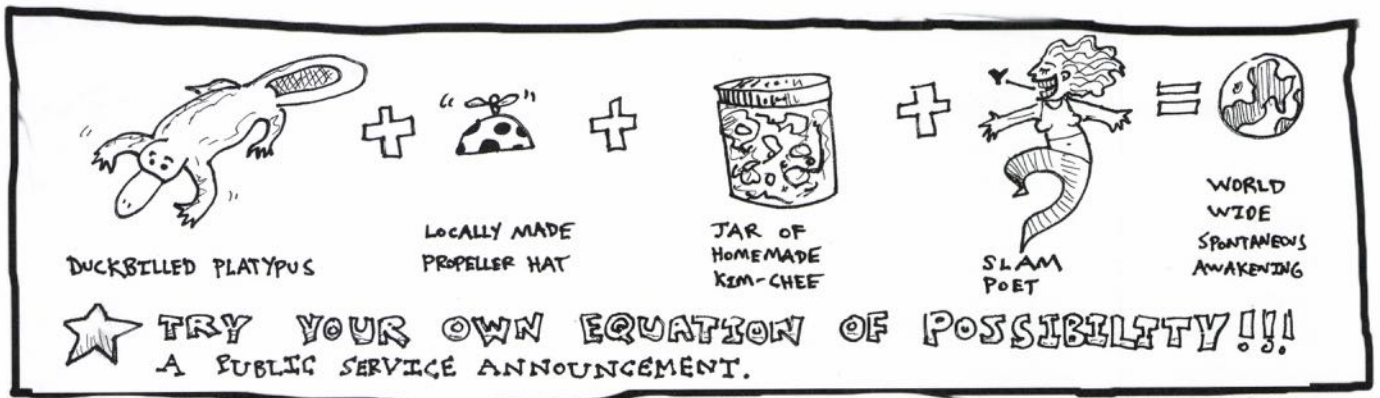
and all that is being done. The question remains...can we do more? Not motivated by guilt or anger, but motivated by love and inspiration? Can we do more while keeping

In dreams and in love there are no impossibilities.

~IANOS ARNAY



our inner peace and balance, enjoying this life and this beautiful world? We at the Possibility Alliance spend plenty of time making music, laughing, singing, weeping, climbing trees, romping about the woods, hooting, playing games, juggling,



face painting, lying in the grass, and dancing. Without all these things, what we are helping to create would be missing the foundation of love and joy upon which we base our work. We believe there is a great opportunity in this moment, a chance for all of us to support one another and live our wildest dreams. ✨

The superhero service bike ride will be crossing Missouri September 15 to October 15, 2008, starting at the Possibility Alliance's sanctuary. If you are interested in joining, please call the superhero hotline at 660-332-4094, or write us at the Possibility Alliance, 28408 Frontier Lane, La Plata, MO 63549.

The Possibility Alliance is interested in creating a network that links communities and ecovillages who are planning or involved in acts of social and political engagement. If you would like to be connected to such a network, please contact us.



Grinnell College students make their first butter during a weeklong local foods course at the Possibility Alliance.

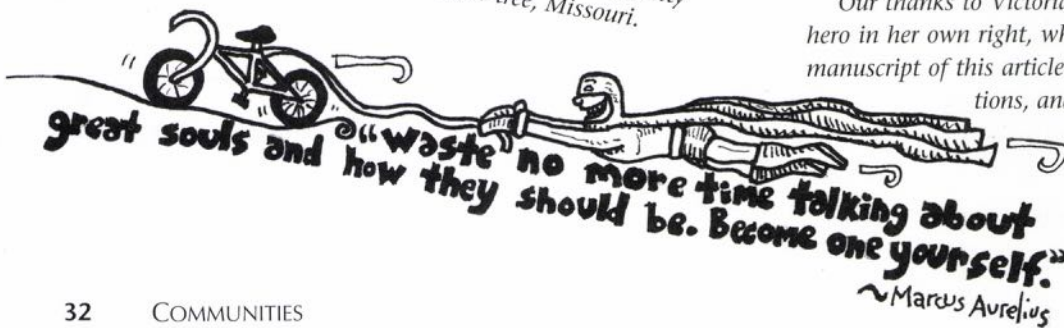


Sarah and Ethan give flying lessons to the youngest Possibility Alliance member, Etta Iris, by the old cedar tree, Missouri.

Ethan Hughes likes to dress up in costumes, draw cartoons, and is willing to do anything for his own and society's transformation. (He even dressed up as a giant penguin and jumped into a frozen lake.) He enjoys bicycles, beets, and reptile watching. He has been bitten by a moray eel, chased by a hippo, and clubbed at the WTO in Seattle. He has also rehabilitated orangutans (it's time) and climbed the world's highest active volcano.

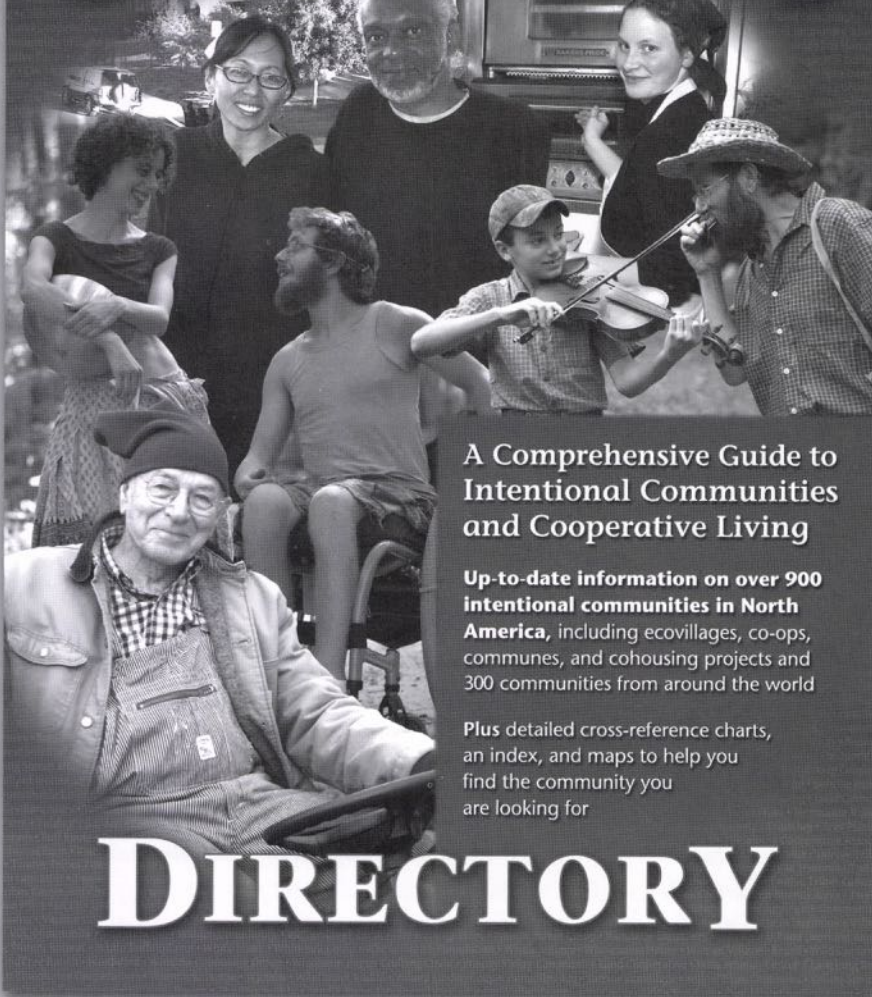
Sarah Wilcox-Hughes loves growing food and flowers, singing opera in rubber boots, and laughing at very high pitches. She enjoys making her own clothes, breastfeeding, and experimenting with goat cheese recipes. She has played fiddle in an Irish Jig Band, biked across Ireland dressed as a superhero, and swum with whale sharks.

Our thanks to Victoria Albright, Sarah's mom and a superhero in her own right, who converted the original handwritten manuscript of this article into digital form, contributed suggestions, and used her email account to help it see the light of day in Communities.



LATEST 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 updated through 2007 and based on the Online Communities Directory at directory.ic.org (see below).



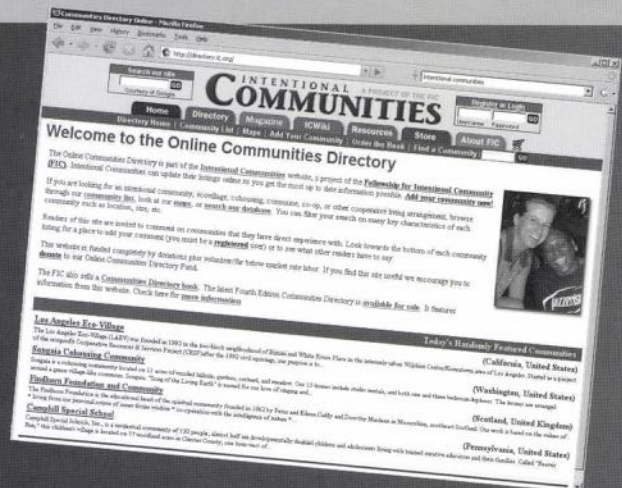
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Hey Communities! You can update your listing online at directory.ic.org. Our interface allows you to update all aspects of your community listing so seekers will get the most up-to-date information possible. Update your information today!



Living the Wild: Ecological Citizenship and the Audubon Expedition Institute

By Arin Trook



PAUCE DOUGHTY

September 1st, Denali State Park, Alaska:

Seventeen of us sit in silence in the alpine tundra of central Alaska's Kusugi ridge. It is sunset, or at least the tease of sunset that happens in the northern latitudes at this time of year. We look across the valley, over the braided glacial river into the heart of the Alaska Range. And it is here that we see, for the first time, Denali, the roof of the North American Continent, emerging from the cloud cover. The mountain is dressed in white, the long flow of glaciers, these rivers of ice that move with a geologic rhythm, tumbling in slow motion down to the Chitluna River to Cook Inlet to the Gulf of Alaska and the North Pacific Ocean.

In addition to the standard glaciology lesson that is often offered in outdoor education programs, the Audubon Expedition Institute students are exploring the lessons of the glacier along a different path. Drawing on hints from Rick Bass, Terry Tempest Williams, and other environmental-political writers, we recognize there is perhaps more to learn here than the difference between a lateral and terminal moraine. This glacier is a collection of individual, delicate snowflakes gathered together to create a force able to carve its own path through the highest mountains. Here is a change agent, the glacier, which moves on geologic time, that carries a vision over decades and centuries. And even this powerful force, we realize, is so incredibly vulnerable to the increasing fluctuations of our chaotic climate.

It is here, in contemplation of the glacier, that we learn what it means to be an ecological citizen. How do we, as a community of engaged citizens, learn to reflect the lessons of the glacier in our own lives? How do we learn to join our own delicate individual personalities together to create a collective social and political force strong enough to carve the social and political "mountains" around us? How do we learn to think and act with a vision over years and decades and centuries?

Community-Based Education and the Audubon Expedition Institute

The Audubon Expedition Institute (AEI) is a community-based experiential education program that is part of Lesley University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. The school offers a graduate program in Ecological Education and Leadership and an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies. Over the past 30 years, AEI has been utilizing intentional community learning as a vehicle for social, political, and cultural change. The student communities are self-governing, working through a modified consensus process to develop and implement our daily schedule, educational experiences, academic workshops, food purchasing and preparation systems. Over the course of months, students are asked to focus intensely on community living skills and systems. And yet "community studies" is not just a content area, it is the fundamental fabric of our educational program. We are not learning about community with an abstract objective lens, we are living our learning in our day to day activity, through the very structure of the school system.

Community Immersion in the Natural World

Our educational mission is to help foster conscious, active, and engaged ecological citizens capable of responding to current social and environmental crises with creative solutions. We try to widen our circle of identity, creating a community defined not just by the voices and needs of its human members, but an inclusion of the wide, wild world around us. One of the primary ways we accomplish this goal is through deep immersion in the natural world. As a community we live, study, wander, and wonder through the wild world around us. Our primary "classrooms, dormitories, and teachers" include the high alpine ecosystems of the North Cascades, the deep canyons of the Escalante River, the autumn rainbow of leaf color in the Adirondacks. But we also recognize wild beauty is only one expression of the "natural" world in a post-peak petroleum era. We also find ourselves wandering through the vast clear-cut forests of the Pacific Northwest, touring the damage of surface coal mines in central Alaska, or visiting the ominous atomic-bombed craters punctuating the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.

We also engage in political topics of study through a wide range of political and social perspectives. We sit down to talk with tree-sitters and clear-cut forestry engineers alike. We tour and talk with the operators of large-scale open pit coal mines as well as the small environmental office managers trying to shut down these same operations. There is a belief here that in any living system, greater diversity leads to greater health. And so we stretch ourselves to engage with as wide and diverse a perspective as possible.

TOP LEFT: On the AEI Bus (literally).

TOP RIGHT: Students in inclement weather during the Pacific Northwest Fall 2005 Semester.

ABOVE: Students from the Southwest Semester.



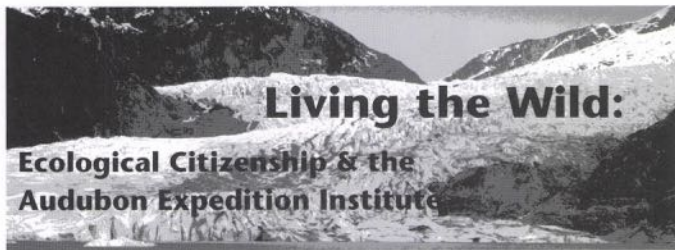
MAUREEN THOMPSON



PAIGE MANNING

This glacier is a collection of individual, delicate snowflakes gathered together to create a force able to carve its own path through the highest mountains. Here is a change agent, the glacier, which moves on geologic time, that carries a vision over decades and centuries. And even this powerful force, we realize, is so incredibly vulnerable to the increasing fluctuations of our chaotic climate.

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Alaska, Late September:

We are sitting around a dark and cold fire ring. We are still in Alaska, in late September, and it's bitterly cold. We have been sitting here as a community for an hour and a half, discussing the positive and negative aspects of actually igniting the wood that sits collected in a small, neat tower in front of us. In recent weeks we have been studying logging and deforestation issues, boreal forest ecology, and winter survival skills. All of these topics arise as this "heated" debate winds into the night. There is no leader here, and we must reach consensus before we can actually light the fire. This is one of the more painful aspects of living in a consensus-based community with an eco-political consciousness. Tempers rise, it seems as though there is no reasonable solution, and it begins to feel as though we have wasted hours of our lives in this conversation.

And then, above us in the night sky, the aurora borealis unfolds. It is an electric dancing of green and yellow light across the stars. The

colors weave and flow and pulse like a living being. One by one, each person around the dark fire pit starts to smile, giggle, then laugh uncontrollably. The beauty reminds us not to take ourselves too seriously in our quest for ecological citizenship.

Ecological Citizenship

One may wonder what constitutes the political nature of simply living outside in community. And yet, without fail, students emerge from these experiences with a fire and passion for political action and social activism. Experiencing not just the wild beauty, but also the open wounds of our landscape and culture weds an intellectual understanding to an emotional engagement. This combination of head-, heart-, and body-education seems to be a key to engaged political and social action, to the evolution of ecological citizens ready to discover and apply creative solutions to the many different environmental and social obstacles and opportunities we face.

As an educational institution, the political leaning of AEI is neither to the left nor the right, but rather forwards, towards ecological citizenship and a sustainable future. This is a complex area of political and social action. It includes the recognition that most every action in our 21st century culture is a political act—the food we eat, the bike we ride, the cell phone we carry—every action has a link to countless human and other-than-human



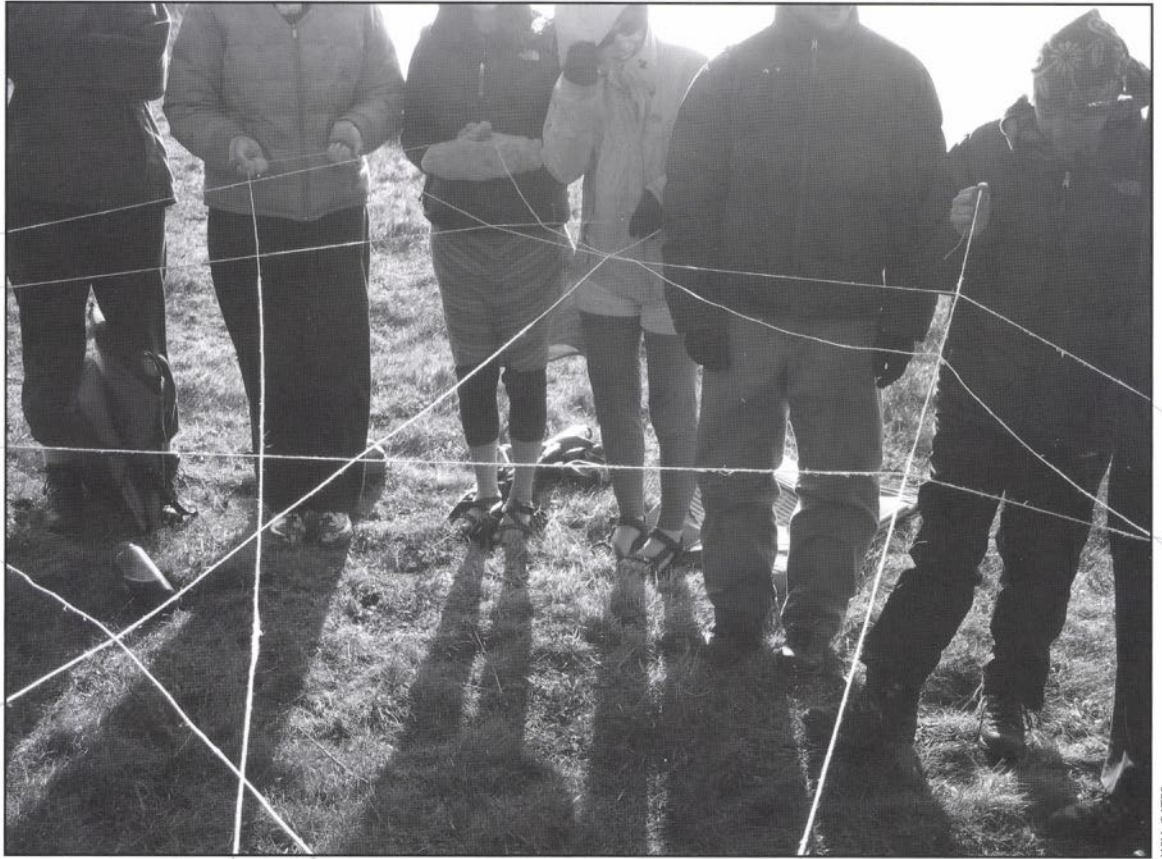
LEFT: AEI faculty Bruce Lindwall mapping a hiking route with students in the Adirondack Appalachian Summer Semester 2006. BELOW RIGHT: Outdoor learning.

WILL GATES



PAIGE DOUGHTY

RIGHT: An activity called the "web of life" which demonstrates experientially that we are all interconnected in some way. One person starts a ball of string by passing it across the circle. Each person keeps a section of string and continues passing the ball until everyone is holding a section of string. Then the facilitator starts having individuals drop their section of string. With one or two strings dropped, the web stays relatively intact. The more people drop their lines, the less stable the web becomes. This exercise was part of the end of semester Learning Celebration at the Pacific Northwest Fall 2007 Semester.



WILL GATES

elements in the world. Ecological citizenship is the radical and revolutionary action to just stay home, with community, family, the land, to wed soil and soul.

October 12th, Sooes Beach, Makah Indian Nation:

"Please step across the line if you identify as a woman." Three-quarters of our group walk across the line drawn in the beach sand and turn to meet the eyes of the five men in the community, standing still on the opposite side. We are on Sooes beach on the tip of Washington state's Olympic peninsula. It is a wild, gray and wet morning here along the edge of the Cascade region's temperate rain forest. We are exploring issues of cultural identity and personal privilege near the end of our week with the Makah community. AEI has been visiting

with this community for the past 10 years, and although we are always warmly welcomed here with salmon feasts and open doors, we are obviously white and wealthy outsiders in this Native American community.

"Please step across the line if you identify in any way as physically disabled." We are a diverse community on many levels. We are teachers and coal miners, ex-

Marines, trans-gendered teenagers, and black bloc activists. Five students and two faculty step forward in silence. We come from many different backgrounds, and yet we all hold a common vision of sustainable future, all hold a deep passion for the health of the wild world. And yet, we cannot help but recognize we are—like many in the environmentalist and communitarian movement—racially, socio-economically, and politically homogeneous.

"Please step across the line if you identify as white, Caucasian, or Euro-American." The entire group of 21 steps across the line, turns to face a very full and potent empty space on the beach. The tide is rising and we hear only the crashing waves.

Engaged Democracy and the Community

Through the co-creation of their own higher educational experience, students at AEI learn that they can and should be active social and political change agents. Although each student group is given an outline of travel itinerary and academic requirements, the actual educational experiences are developed collectively by the student community through a process of modified consensus. As students take control of the community's scheduling, academic requirements, and social facilitation, they find the power of collective leadership. It is an empowering experience for a group of adult students, for example, to use processes of consensus to collectively assign a group grade for a semester

(continued on p. 74)



Email, Politics, and Permaculture

with contributions from members of the Eugene Permaculture Guild listserv

The Eugene Permaculture Guild listserv, at groups.yahoo.com/group/epguild, is dedicated to announcements and discussion related to “sustainable living in and around the Eugene bioregion” of central western Oregon. On April 26-27, 2008, the following series of messages resulted from one member’s posting of a Sustainability Quiz. It illuminates not only local political issues, the interface of politics and ecology, and different fundamental political philosophies, but also the politics of talking about politics over email. In this case, the conversation is happening within a loose-knit community-of-interest: Eugene-area Permaculture enthusiasts, some of whom know one another personally and others of whom have never met. In the Eugene mayoral primary election mentioned below, neither progressive incumbent Kitty Piercy nor developer-backed former mayor Jim Torrey ended up receiving 50 percent of the vote on June 3, so their contest headed for a runoff on the November 2008 ballot.

Eugene Sustainability Quiz:

The City of Eugene’s official slogan is “the world’s greatest city of the arts and the outdoors” and the City government claims that Eugene is the greenest community in the country. This test highlights the difference between political rhetoric and practical reality. [The original quiz contained 38 questions; the following are a representative sampling. —Ed.]

What is the leading agricultural crop of Lane County, by acreage?

- grass seed for lawns and golf courses
- filberts
- organic vegetables
- wine grapes

How much food is stored in Eugene-Springfield area food warehouses?

- about three days’ worth
- couple weeks’ worth
- a year’s worth
- Eugene-Springfield is self-sufficient for food and doesn’t need food delivery trucks

What are the main drivers of the Eugene economy?

- lumber, plywood, the University of Oregon, real estate development, road construction, recreational vehicles
- organic food production, solar energy, green building, bicycle manufacturing

The City of Eugene has a “sustainability” initiative that states it seeks to change the way the city operates. How many building code changes have been implemented because of this initiative?

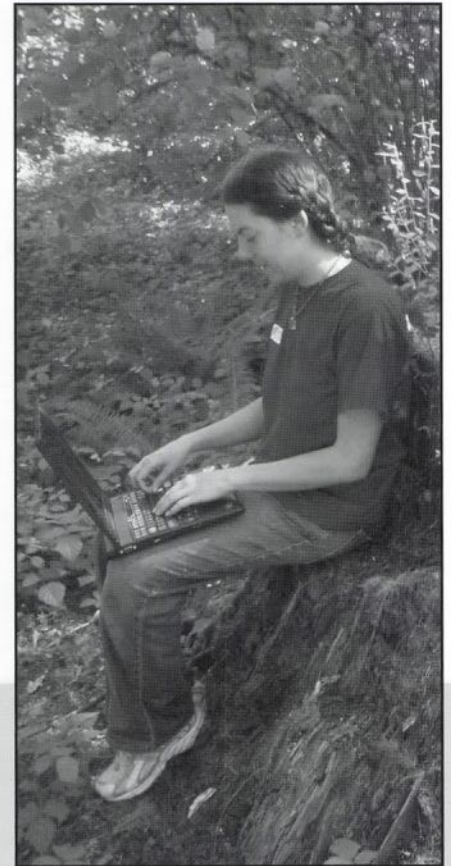
- zero
- one
- ten
- all of them

What is the top priority of Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB)?

- spending at least \$85,500,000 to relocate their maintenance yard to the West Eugene Wetlands so that they can privatize part of their riverfront property (currently in public ownership)
- building a solar panel factory in Eugene so the city can systematically install solar electric and hot water panels on every home and business
- improving fish habitat in the McKenzie River
- installing wind turbines on the Oregon coast to increase renewable energy generation

In November 2007, which politician was the swing vote at the Lane Council of Governments in favor of adoption of the Regional Transportation Plan, a long term budget for the Eugene-Springfield area that included \$817 million for more highway expansion?

- Kitty Piercy
- Jim Torrey
- Jennifer Solomon
- Bobby Green



PHOTOS: CHRIS ROTH

In January 2006, Mayor Piercy introduced Peak Oil expert Richard Heinberg at a large event at the Eugene Hilton. What policy initiative was prioritized by the Mayor shortly afterwards?

- building another parking garage downtown
- shifting funds for road expansion toward better bus service
- free bicycles for all City employees
- massive expansion of the City’s community garden programs for citizens who lack access to garden sites

How many west Eugene neighborhood organizations are part of Mayor Piercy’s West Eugene Collaborative?

- zero; none were invited to participate (more collaborators live east of Hendricks Park than west of Chambers Street)
- two: Churchill and Active Bethel Citizens
- four: Churchill, Active Bethel Citizens, Train-song, and Whiteaker Community Council
- all eight are participants, since the “Collaborative” wants a cross section of community opinion

Quiz prepared by Mark Robinowitz,
GreenwashEugene.com

Each answer is “a.”

Home	
Messages	
Members Only	
Post	
Files	
Photos	
Links	
Database	
Polls	
Members	
Calendar	
Promote	

Info Settings

Group Information

Members: 355
 Category: Cultures & Community
 Founded: Oct 6, 2004
 Language: English

Home

Activity within 7 days: 34 New Messages - New Questions

Description

Sustainable living in and around the Eugene bioregion.

Responses to the Sustainability Quiz:

So you think we should vote for Torrey? —Karen Stingle

I understand it's important to see things from a lot of different perspectives, but I don't think it's useful to constantly remind us of how useless it is to do anything, because it will never be good enough.

I've never been impressed with a mayor like I am with Kitty Piercy. I don't agree with her on everything, but she's made a commitment to represent all of us, and in order for her to do that, I have to give way on some of my personal issues so that others get things they need. It's the grown up thing to do.

It's a myth of the privileged that we can afford to have things exactly as we want them. Nope, Eugene isn't perfect, by anyone's standards. But if it's SO bad that you can't get anything you need here, and you think you're entitled to it, then go somewhere else. Get some perspective. Learn to compromise.

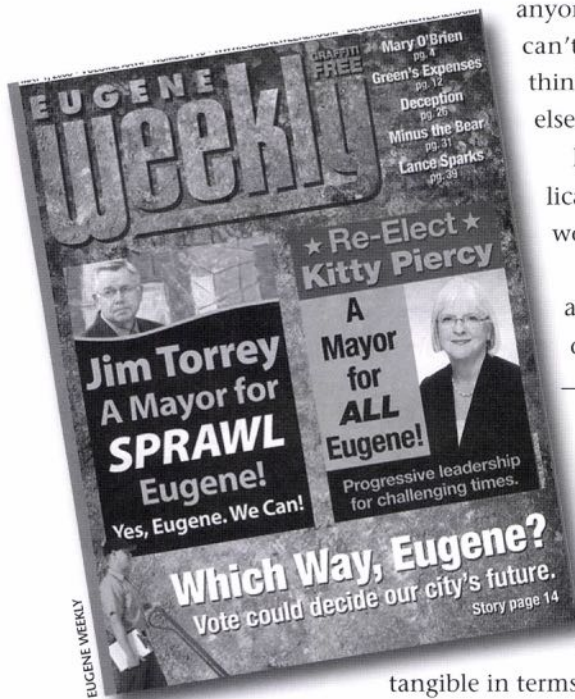
I certainly don't think Jim Torrey works for anyone but developers and Republican interests, but maybe undermining the progress Mayor Piercy has made so far works for you somehow. Maybe you're a mole for Torrey, I don't know.

There seems to be a few folks who might do better with getting out in the garden and turning some soil rather than spending long hours admonishing us all about our shortcomings. Somebody needs a hobby, I think. —Amber Lunch Dennis

It is simply not an exaggeration to say that we need a complete, bottom-to-top restructuring of human civilization and we need it now (ideally 20 years ago). Kitty Piercy knows that if she were to try to do 10 percent of what needs to be done, she would be absolutely crucified by the Chamber of Commerce types in town. That would mean no second term. So she has proceeded to do maybe two percent of what needs to be done. She's started the Sustainable Business Initiative and the Sustainability Commission—neither of which have produced anything tangible in terms of genuine, meaningful sustainability.

Given that the alternative to Kitty is the return of Torrey, it seems that the only option available is to wait for modern industrialized civilization to run itself off the edge of a cliff at which point the reality will be undeniable by politicians and the public alike, but at which point also, it will simply be too late.

No wonder I get so cynical of the political process. I contributed to Rob Handy's campaign [for Lane County Commissioner], but I don't know that he'll be any better than Kitty. —Rob Bolman



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Torrey would certainly insure that we would have to wait for that cliff hanger/fall. Every time I even see his picture or one of his election signs I feel as if the next breath might be my last. Sorry, I just had to say that out loud. It is terrifying to think of his return. —Linda Clark

Thank you, Amber.

As has been stated many times over the last several months, this forum was founded

for a sense of community and sharing of ideas. Not a massive complaint board. Please take that stuff to the blogs. Being well informed is a good thing. Never seeing anything but the negative and projecting it on everyone else is not.

For those that are so unhappy with everyone and everything, then get off your key board and go do something instead of complaining and spreading your misery. That does not create a positive force for change. And the reality is, you will never get everything you want, nor should you. And there is no way that if you did, anyone else would be happy with it.

We have a lot of people in this group doing positive work with a positive mind set. That is not stupidity or naivete. THAT is the way to get things done, not constantly tearing everything down.

Be happy that we finally have a spring day. Be happy you live in a country where you can express yourself even when you are skewering everyone. Be happy that you live where there actually are trees when you look outside. And be a positive force for change vs. bringing down others' energy and focus. I am so grateful that we have started back with the monthly meetings. Thanks to all of those putting in the effort.

Namaste, —Name Withheld

This is just a quick note to complain about the posts that complain about posts that complain about stuff. Oh, wait... —John Flannery

ditto... oh wait, oh, ditto.... —Stephanie Denby



Hallo Permies,
I don't always agree with Mark on fundamental issues, and I don't always agree with his tactics or strategies.

But I can't believe that people are jumping on him so hard for his "Quiz," as if pointing out the shortcomings of Eugene is the same as praising Torrey.

I know that our messed up electoral system, with its winner-take-all and lesser-of-two-evils crap, might make that kind of thinking seem natural. But if

someone can't complain about the state of permaculture in Eugene, on the freekin' Eugene Permaculture Guild listserv, then really, people, where are such complaints supposed to be aired?

Are folks on this list REALLY saying we all have to sing "Kumbaya" together, or shut up? Cuz that's what it sounds like...

Going back to the garden now; enjoy the sunshine. —Scott Miksch

Yeah, and the collapse of modern civilization needn't be seen as all gloom and no fun. I mean like it's really going to be exciting! And we WILL achieve sustainability—because to do anything less is unsustainable. What that sustainability ends up looking like is what this struggle is about. —Rob Bolman

An excellent compilation in a popular format of issues and attitudes which must be overcome in order to be sustainable. The addition of options for positive outcomes was a big plus. —David Hoffman

I learned some things from the quiz, and I also appreciated "the addition of options for positive outcomes." I'm glad the author took the time to write it and post it to the list.

Isn't there some irony in complaints about not keeping it (the list posts) positive, since complaints aren't really positive, either? —Steve Leppold ❁

The Eugene Permaculture Guild also has a website at www.eugenepermacultureguild.org.

Every Politician Should Live in a Commune

By Nick Licata



The PRAG House collective in Seattle, built 1907, and founded as a collective in 1972. This photo was taken in 1917.

Elected legislative bodies are un-intentional communities, whereas housing collectives and co-ops are intentional communities. Joining an elective body is like joining a club or community uninvited, and perhaps even unwanted—just the opposite of an intentional community, where people seek each other out and choose to live and support one another.

Nevertheless, after living in a collective for 25 years, I recommend that anyone joining a city council, state legislature, or Congress strongly consider living in an intentional community before entering the political fray.

Let me explain by way of example. I lived in the PRAG House collective in Seattle along with about a dozen others while I was both a citizen activist and an insurance broker. PRAG House was started by close friends of mine who had come together as graduate students in Sociology at the University of Washington to protest the Vietnam War in the early '70s.

In the depth of a recession, when urban planners feared that inner city neighborhoods would become slums, housing prices slumped. Taking advantage of capitalism's cyclical economic crash, my friends pooled their meager funds together and plunked down \$4000 to buy a 37-room mansion in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. I joined them as soon as my girlfriend and I returned from our \$5-a-day year abroad.

In the beginning we were a political collective in the fullest sense: we wanted to change the world by changing our environment and our lives. No processed foods entered the house, only one phone was allowed but no TV, we shared a '54 Ford Pickup for local trips and also to haul our 30-pound metal milk canisters in from some farm over an hour's drive each way come Sunday evening. We broke bread together, at first every day, then several days a week, and eventually once a week and

so on. For years we ate only home-baked, and at first we even tried to grind our own wheat.

And although we did not pool our incomes, we did institute a limited income-sharing scheme whereby a small percentage of each person's take-home pay was included in our monthly rent. The word rent itself is slightly misleading. After a couple of years, the house's value began to rise and those who had provided the down payment were moving on.

As a collective, we faced a problem: what do to with a valuable asset that was increasing in value. No one wanted absentee owners; it was anathema to our values. We couldn't agree on

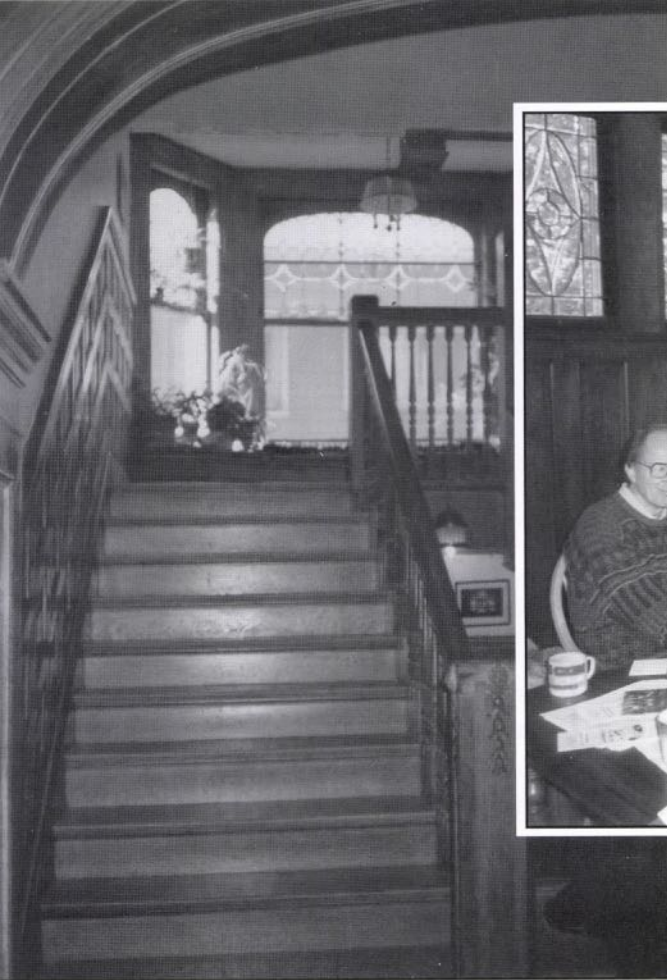
selling the house: how do you divide the amount by over two dozen people who had lived in the house over various periods of time and who had not all contributed equally to its operation? So we turned to the easiest solution: none of us would get the house and no one would ever get it. We placed it in a trust for perpetuity. In essence we rented the house from ourselves, since anyone living in the house helped operate the

trust and once you moved on, you were no longer part of the trust.

And so the collective, PRAG House, which began in the summer of '72, is still chugging along, albeit now with multiple TVs, computers, phones, and yes, even processed foods, although for the most part they are still organic. But the core principle of people choosing to live under one roof and to meet regularly to manage their collective environment remains the same.

This brings me back to politics, or more precisely the formal political structure of legislative bodies. Like PRAG House, they are a group of people living under the same roof for at least part of the day, meeting regularly to manage the collective environment of themselves and others who have elected them

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PHOTOS: NICK LICATA

ABOVE: Working out the details in the PRAG dining room at the quarterly Evergreen Land Trust meeting in the early '90s. Among the recognizable faces: Steen Halling, Holly O'Neill, and Geoff Kozeny, who was traveling through at the time. LEFT: Staircase from the foyer.

to this body. And while they do not choose each other to live under this common roof, they are forced, like those of us who lived in PRAG House, to arrange a common budget, manage resources, and make laws governing our social interactions.

Managing a collective's many functions can be practical training for a legislator, but that is only the beginning. At the core of living in a collective are interpersonal relations—these are also at the core of practicing politics. There are three lessons that I have carried over from my collective experience into the City Hall Council Chambers.

FIRST LESSON: Learn to expect the unexpected and accept it, don't fight it.

Once someone moved their possessions into PRAG House, they generally thought those things would be safe and last forever. Living in a collective is dynamic if not chaotic: things change. It may take someone a few months to a few years to learn this lesson. What has an esteemed value for someone may not have any value for another. The same is true in politics with regards to values.

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Let me illustrate. Once someone moved into PRAG House, which would take a unanimous vote, they would attend their first house meeting all bubbly and looking forward to a long harmonious future. There is nothing more poisonous to a happy life than false expectations. In order to douse such a

belief, we would ask them to go back to their room and bring down something special that they brought with them. After they returned with their precious object and talked about how important it was to them, it was handed to one of us. Holding the object high above our head, we then told them that we were now going to relieve them of the worry and

future pain of discovering that someone had broken it, by smashing it now on the floor. We actually never did, but they got the point: nothing is going to last forever, and especially in this house.

I have seen those entering politics with a sense that their precious values were sure to overcome the misguided beliefs of others. When that expectation is not met, many a cheery soul has turned bitter and cold from disappointment. I went through my test when I was first elected to the Seattle City Council. Flush from victory at the polls, I was determined to change

the world the following week, and what better cause to pursue than fighting the ruthless, cruel military dictatorship in Burma.

The Council had been approached before I was elected by activists to support a boycott of city contractors who were doing business in Burma. Nothing had happened. I arrived and announced that I would bring the issue forward through legislation. A few of the longer term Council Members smiled slightly as I explained my plan. It was now my moment to have my precious belief in international justice smashed on the floor. And it was. But I did not regret sharing it with the others. And I have since then shared other such values to see them also discarded. I have even learned to expect the unexpected victory. In any case, I have come to appreciate the experience and the pleasure of sharing my values and have released my sense of ownership of them. If others reject them, that is their decision not mine.

SECOND LESSON: The more room you make for others, the more room there will be for you.

At our weekly house meetings, the usual topics of who wasn't cleaning the kitchen, who was not doing house chores, and who was creating the most problems for others were the regular courses served at dinner. There were also proposals for doing new things, like holding a fundraiser for Central American refugees or saving a neighborhood tree from being cut down. More often than not, it was not the content of the discussion which created tensions, but the manner in which it was presented. Too often the most forceful speaker would dominate the discussion, but domination does not create acceptance. Resentments would grow, and ultimately the dominant personality would find him or herself vilified by others, if not openly, then behind his or her back.

From watching this pattern repeated, I found that if I wanted to get my way, I would offer a proposal and then step back to assess other house members' reactions. By encouraging others to speak and be heard, I could focus on

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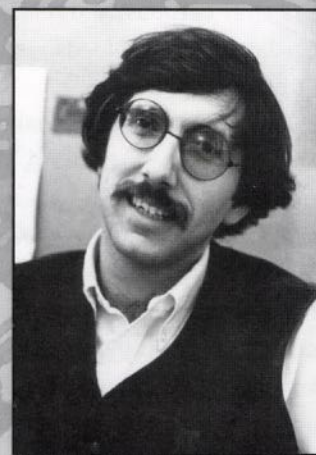
Running for Office from the Commune

By Nick Licata

I opened my morning paper anxious to read the first article on my race for a position on Seattle's City Council. I was living in PRAG House, an old mansion in the Capitol Hill neighborhood that a group of us had converted into a collective 25 years earlier.

Although I had not advertised living in a commune on my campaign literature, I did not hide from it either. In my interviews I explained that living in a co-op had taught me how to work with others in a collaborative manner. I then crossed my fingers and hoped that the reporter would not ask me about the name PRAG, which they inevitably did.

Yes I would tell reporters that the name PRAG was an acronym for Provisional Revolutionary Action Group. It came off the lips of one of the original members and did not stand for the People's Revolutionary



The early years: 1977.

Action Group, which lacked the subtle tongue-in-cheek humor expressed in the word "provisional." I would further explain that over time I think we had evolved more into something like Professionals Revolting Against Government; if they didn't laugh, that was a bad sign.

That morning over 150,000 readers learned about PRAG House, and I took a deep breath wondering how the residents of West Seattle and other less hip neighborhoods than Capitol Hill would react. How would the electorate respond to someone who was living in a commune? The pleasant surprise was that there was barely a yawn.

There may have been a number of people who responded negatively to me about my living situation, but I don't believe it was ever raised at a community meeting or political debate. Overall, I think that because I openly discussed it and pointed out the positive learning experience it provided me, living in a collective seemed like a reasonable housing alternative for anyone out there. ❀

content and not on bruised feelings. Or if someone was pushing something that I did not want, I would encourage others to speak up and express their opinions, whatever they might be. And if two others were fighting over an issue, I found it best to not take sides, but rather encourage participation by others to diffuse the conflict.

It is almost reflexive for politicians to think about how they are going to be perceived in the public media. When we run for election, we must get our name out. We must obtain name familiarity. The desire to be known is equated with power, since name recognition generally means more votes, as long as it's not based on criminal behavior. This orientation leads to wanting to grab the mic at events, to give longer speeches at meetings, to dominate debates on the dais. These are all behaviors that can easily overshadow other legislators, which feeds resentment and ultimately opposition.

Democracy is about making room for people to think and be heard. Whether a discussion takes place in a collective household or a city council, there needs to be room for it to take place. The more room there is, the greater the chance for common agreement. Dominant personalities do not like democracy because it favors the weak—not only because it allows them to speak, but because by definition there are more of them than those who are dominant.

LESSON THREE: Make allies, not enemies, by talking.

Taking the time to explain your intentions builds bridges; being silent about them builds walls. PRAG House, I'm sure, is no different from any other co-op or intentional community: unavoidable conflicts arise between house mates. There will be some folks who will never turn the TV off or close the entryway door quietly. In those instances, there may be no way other than a direct rebuking of their behavior. But more often than not, conflicts arose in PRAG House because of a difference in unspoken priorities. Talking openly about what you want avoids confusion and allows others to join you. Avoiding open discussions sows distrust in the community and reaps conflicts.

A classic example was how we treated our rural property. Shortly after buying the house, we came into possession of a 20-acre rural property which we tagged as Pragtree Farm. Our goal was to balance urban living with rural work by taking turns living at each property. The problem was that common goals were never agreed to. Everyone seemed to go about on some unspoken plan of their own. One batch of folks went out and planted strawberry fields, but they never tended them prop-

erly before returning to the city. The second seasonal shift came up and plowed the fields under, seeing that they were effectively abandoned. The result was zero production and a multitude of harvested bad will.

The City Council last year restricted a pot of money from being spent, in order to stop the Mayor from purchasing and installing some public safety cameras in three particular parks until the Council had reviewed and analyzed his request. The Mayor received complaints from some neighbors around one of those parks on Capitol Hill and, wanting to show that his office could respond, he installed some, drawing the funds from a pot of money that did not fall under the Council's restrictions. Although

he had not technically violated the agreement, by failing to discuss his decision to proceed with the cameras he violated the spirit of the Council's request and subsequently was accused of breaking their trust in him.

There is no meter on talk, but it does take nerve to speak up when you feel that others will react strongly. I have to keep reminding myself that talking openly and directly about my concerns, rather than being silent and just acting on them, is the only way to success. My experiences in PRAG House have shown

me that the way to make allies and not enemies on the Council is to sit across the table and tell my fellow Council Members what I think and not leave them guessing.

These three lessons come to mind when reflecting on my collective living experience as I wheel and deal with other elected officials. In both worlds it comes down not only to treating people as if they were part of my community, but discerning how to keep them in it as well. In community there is strength, whether it is in a co-op house or a legislative body. ❁

My experiences in PRAG House have shown me that the way to make allies and not enemies on the Council is to sit across the table and tell my fellow Council Members what I think and not leave them guessing.

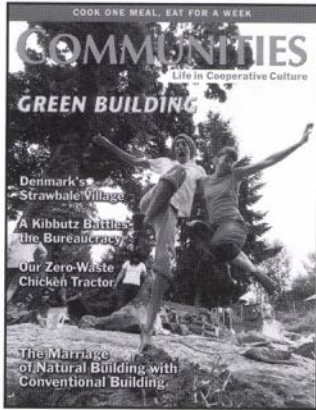


Nick Licata is a Seattle City Council Member currently serving his third four-year term, which he won in a city-wide election with over 77 percent of the vote. He lived in the PRAG House collective for 25 years and was president for eight years of the Evergreen Land Trust, which owns five urban and rural properties, each administered by a resident collective.

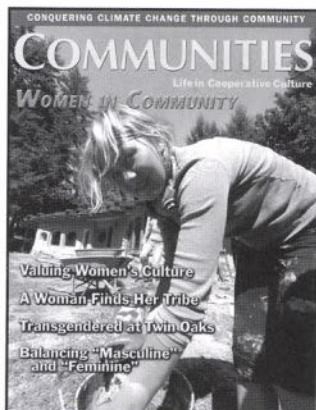
While on the Seattle City Council, he has chaired Committees dealing with parks, arts, police, fire, civil rights, and neighborhoods. He has also served as the vice-chair of the budget committee. Upon taking office in 1998, Nick instituted a poetry program for the Council, called Words' Worth, whereby curators select poets to read before each of Nick's official Council committee meetings. Nick has also started the Poet Populist program, the first poetry program in the US that invites citizens to elect their City's poet.

COMMUNITIES

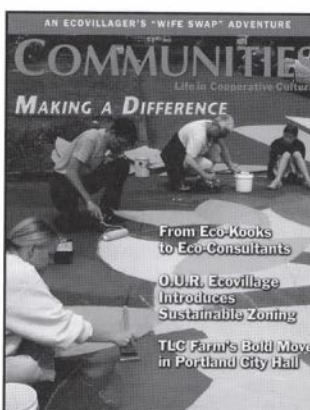
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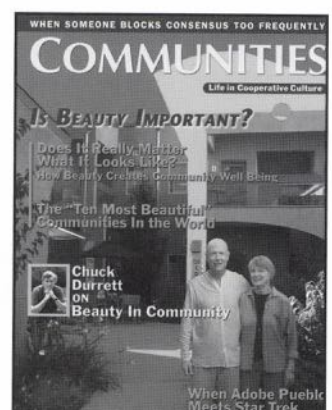
#139 Green Building
Building Connection through Natural Building and Community; The Marriage of Natural Building with Conventional Building; A Strawbale Village in Denmark; Micro-Infill Cohousing Without Cars; Zero-Waste Chicken Tractor; Battling the Bureaucracy in Israel. (Summer '08)



#138 Women in Community
Valuing a Culture of Women; From Intentional Community to Building a Tribe; What's Masculine, What's Feminine, and What Am I?; Transgendered at Twin Oaks; Journey Inn: Gleanings from the World of Women; Building a Business in Community. (Spring '08)



#137 Making a Difference
Can We Make a Difference?; When "No" is Just an Uneducated "Yes"; Let's Do Graywater First!; From Eco-Kooks to Eco-Consultants; Turning People on to Community; A "Wife Swapping" Adventure; Preventing "Tyranny of the Majority." (Winter '07)



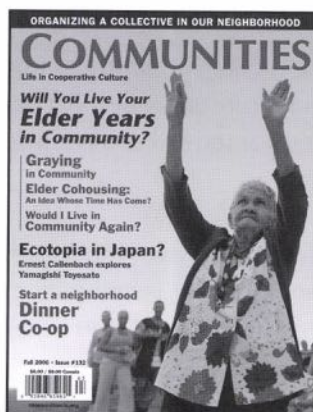
#136 Is Beauty Important?
Notes on Beauty in Community; Does it Really Matter What it Looks Like?; "Ten Most Beautiful" Communities in the World; When Adobe Pueblo Meets Star Trek; The Meandering Paths of Arcadia; When a Dollar is Worth More than 100 Cents. (Fall '07)

#135 What Do You Eat? Where Does it Come From?
Celebrating the Food Revolution; Making New Choices, Planting New Seeds; A New Root Cellar, Bulk Buying, and Two CSAs; Eating Local; Gardening in the Alentejo; Stocking our Community Pantry. (Summer '07)

#134 Temporary Community: What Do We Learn?
What Work Exchangers Say... About Us; Is Hosting Work Exchangers Worth It?; Hello, Goodbye; Lessons from a Community Internship; How I Learned to Hug a Windmill; I Slept and Dreamt that Life was Joy. (Spring '07)

#133 Helping Your Local Economy Thrive
How a Steady State Economy Can Change Our Lives; Recipe for Healthy Local Economies; How Ecovillages Can Grow Sustainable Local Economies; When We Should Use "Blocking Power"; Dilettante's Journey, Part II. (Winter '06)

#132 Will You Live Your Elder Years in Community?
Ernest Callenbach: "Ecotopia in Japan?"; Elder Cohousing—An Idea Whose Time Has Come?; Graying in Community; Rhizome Collective: Starting an Activist Urban Community; The Dilettante's Journey, Part I. (Fall '06)



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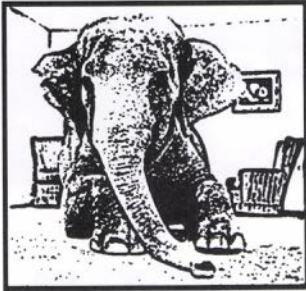
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#140



Searching for Republicans... and Other Elephants IN THE Community Living Room

By Chris Roth

In May 2008, in an attempt to elicit further perspectives for this issue of *Communities* and to get a sense of the range of ways that communities deal with politics, I conducted an informal survey of people closely involved with intentional communities, ecovillages, and cohousing communities. My survey was far from scientific or comprehensive: I interviewed two members of my home community, then emailed 12 optional questions to members of a few other local communities, to past *Communities* contributors, and to the Fellowship for Intentional Communities' internal email list, asking recipients to spread the survey further. While the roughly dozen respondents who answered by our deadline cannot be considered a statistically representative sampling of communitarians, they did hit upon some common themes, perhaps given added weight by the fact that many of them had "been around the block" in community. But even if each individual reflected only his or her own experience of politics in community, I found what each had to say fascinating. The respondents included:

DB— Dianne Brause, Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR

JF— Josh Fattal, Aprovecho, Cottage Grove, OR

LP— Lisa Poley, Shadowlake Village Cohousing, Blacksburg, VA

MB— Monty Berman, EcoVillage at Ithaca, NY

ML— Matthieu Lietaert, professor and writer on community, Italy

MT— Marc Tobin, Lost Valley Educational Center, Dexter, OR

NE— Name Withheld, cohousing community, northeastern US

NW— Name Withheld, small urban community, northwestern US

RB— Rob Bolman, Maitreya Ecovillage, Eugene, OR

RS— Ramon Sender, communal archivist/historian, former community member, CA

SE— Name Withheld, cohousing community, southeastern US

TB— Tree Bressen, group process facilitator, former community member, Eugene, OR

A late-arriving response from a member of a spiritual community (Celinas Ruth from the Global Communities Communications Alliance, AZ) matched some but not all of the patterns described below, and a response from an ex-member of another spiritual community represented a decidedly different outlook. Those two responses are examined at the end of this article. Meanwhile, here's what the secular communitarians had to say:

External vs. Internal Politics

Almost universally, the responses indicated a greater focus on internal politics than on external politics. To the question, "How much does your group discuss external politics?" most who answered directly responded with some variation of "seldom if ever," (**SE**) "very little," (**MB**) "we don't discuss external politics as a group," (**NE**) and "it's not a big part of our culture." (**DB**) One cohouser said "a fair amount," but even

that was qualified by "politics and 'issue' conversations are far less common than gardening, family, community, event, or community work focused conversations." (**LP**) When asked about the etiquette of discussing politics, one noted "it is not considered good etiquette to pressure neighbors into a particular political view—or into supporting a particular candidate—but some heated exchanges over issues or different opinions have been known to happen from time to time. Generally, people



A POLITICS IN COMMUNITY SURVEY

with widely divergent political views seem to be more likely to keep exchanges focused on 'safer' topics where disagreement is less likely." (LP) Another reported that "There is no political discussion on email because we all have different opinions...we neither want to defend them or start a big discussion for which there is no resolution." (NE) Yet another echoed that cautious approach to email: "Email has been the most difficult form of discussion here. People tend to feel affronted and attacked at a much higher rate through email than in interpersonal conversations. If we have a general rule of email etiquette now, it's 'Don't put inflammatory writing out over email, especially to the general list.'" (DB)

To the parallel question, "How much do you discuss internal politics as compared with external politics?" the answers were, predictably, "a lot," (SE) "more internal than external," (MB), and "much more. External politics, whether local or national, are more of a novelty discussion item, whereas I think people talk about internal politics just about every day." (MT) But one respondent did express a preference for discussing external politics over discussing "internal (community) politics—mostly because I really detest getting into gossip, and too often internal politics discussions seem to bleed over into gossip." (LP)

Political Activity/Inactivity

Asked if community members tend to get involved in external politics on the local, state, national, and/or international level, answers were more mixed, with a larger number reflecting political involvement closer to home: "Local politics sometimes, if it impacts our zoning issues or adjacent neighborhoods." (SE) "Some of us very much so, especially local."

ABOUT THE PHOTOS: The living room photos on pp. 47-51, as well as our cover image, were taken at Du-má community in Eugene, Oregon, where eight adults and two children share a collectively-owned home surrounded by vegetable and fruit plantings. Du-má's mission is to be of service to others as an inspirational model of living and working together to create social change and community. "Du-má" means "home" in the Kalapuyan (local Native American) language.



PHOTOS: CHRIS ROTH

(MB) "Voting is the most common way of participating—but also attendance at town council meetings on hot local issues, hosting candidates at community dinners, or serving on the town council or planning commission. We have a group that usually organizes activities around national elections, or joins in with larger campaign efforts, hosting call parties at the common house etc." (LP)

Several respondents indicated disappointment that community members were not more politically active. For example:

"I had been working on a local political campaign for several months—knocking on doors, registering voters, and making phone calls reminding them to vote. It was a tight race and every vote counted so I encouraged everyone in my community to vote early, gave them my recommendations on the slate of candidates, and even offered to take their ballots to the drop box. Half an hour before the polls closed, I noticed that a member of our community had his unopened ballot in his mailbox. I called him but couldn't reach him. Later he told me he had forgotten to vote. I was so discouraged—if I can't even get someone I live with and see every day to vote, how can I have hope that citizens in this country will ever reclaim democracy?" (NW)

Similarly, another observed, "In the European cohousing movement, I was actually pretty surprised to see that most cohousers I met were not involved in direct politics. By 'direct politics,' I mean what environmental or social activists could do on a regular basis. Most of the people I met have pretty conservative lives in a sense. However, they do politics 'indi-



SEARCHING FOR ELEPHANTS IN THE COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM:

rectly' because they are showing a new model to society at large." (ML)

Another offered a clue as to why communities might choose this kind of focus: "We live together on 40 acres. The natural thing for us to garner consensus around is caring for our land and caring for our community. It is harder to agree upon a cohesive way for our community to relate with society. For instance, what are the most effective actions to take to alter society's path of ecological and human degradation? It is a very political question: what do we do with the surrounding, overwhelmingly strong capitalist economy and military apparatus that is eager to degrade the entire world? The easiest answer (and most typical liberal response) is 'education!' When that education satisfies our mission

statement, our finances, our 'grantability,' it becomes all the more attractive. So, we have consensus on education as our primary function: we host residential courses and school field trips. Without a consensus on the tough political questions it is hard to go much further than agreeing on the land, the community, and 'education.'" (JF)

For some communitarians, the choice to focus internally rather than externally seemed to be a matter of scale and perceived effectiveness: "Even folks who do participate in voting and read some basic news on political issues have a certain sense of apathy about that scale and the way that money and corporate influence skew the system. They feel that part of the reason they're here is that this is the scale of community where it's realistic to really be participants. I think most of us care deeply what happens on the national political scene, but are frustrated about our ability to actually have our efforts make results—which is probably pretty common in mainstream America as well." (MT)

Political Diversity?

Asked to characterize the range of political opinions in their group, virtually all respondents indicated a left-of-center orientation: "left and inclusive," (JF) "progressive/mostly Democratic," (MB) "all within the liberal to progressive orientation," (NE) "lib-

eral leaning in general with a fair number of independents and political iconoclasts thrown in." (LP) "Some of us are rather traditional liberal/progressive political. Others are more like anarchists who don't even vote. We all get along and don't seem to fixate on these differences." (RB) "Probably 60 to 70 percent vote—almost all of those, from the center to the left of the political spectrum. For some the left goes pretty far out. The biggest disagreements were over whether to vote for Nader or Gore in 2000. Some don't vote no matter what." (DB) "We tend to attract people on the left end of the political spectrum. I'd guess that half of the people are Democrats, almost all of them by American standards liberal Democrats. The other half—or maybe less than half—fall into the category: 'the political system is so hopelessly

corrupt that I don't even want to vote. The Democrats are basically sellouts to big business. The Republicans are even worse, but I don't want to vote for either of them.' Some people in that category see being at a place like here as their political expression, as the best thing they can do politically as opposed to participating in the larger politics." (MT)

Asked what types of political viewpoints wouldn't "make it" in their groups, most sounded variations on a theme:

"Republicans; Bush." (SE)

"Socially just perspectives carry the weight here, so regressive ones wouldn't fly." (MB)

"To the best of my knowledge, we've never had a Republican here. Republicans wouldn't be able to deal with the unwashed hippie element of this place." (RB)

"I rarely if ever hear of any Republicans living in intentional community. I presume that, like people of color, they find their community through other means rather than living together. Churches, for example. And I think that community living doesn't fit their ideology nor culture." (TB)

"There's not a screening for people's external political beliefs, but there are all these agreements about how we do things in terms of our shared intention, and those have political implications. We have a mission statement around sustainability—people who disagreed with that would screen themselves out. Republicans have been generally anti-environment in their voting records, although it wouldn't have to be that way. If more conservatives were pro-environment, we might get more conservative people. But most environmentalists seem to identify as Democratic, Independent, Green, etc." (MT)

"We have a mission statement around sustainability—people who disagreed with that would screen themselves out."



A POLITICS IN COMMUNITY SURVEY

"We don't seem to attract right-wing people. Corporate America probably doesn't want to live with us. It's interesting to me that probably 60 to 70 percent of us have parents who are Republicans, staunchly voting in ways that we don't, or at least not actively aligned with us politically. Some of us are here because we grew up in pretty conservative situations and are reacting to that, wanting to make a difference in a different way." (DB)

"Not too many arch-conservatives have attempted to move in so far. They would definitely feel in the minority here." (LP)

Despite the leftist makeup of all of the respondents' communities, several noted that their communities were open to other political viewpoints, but not to those who tried to force those views, or any views, on others:

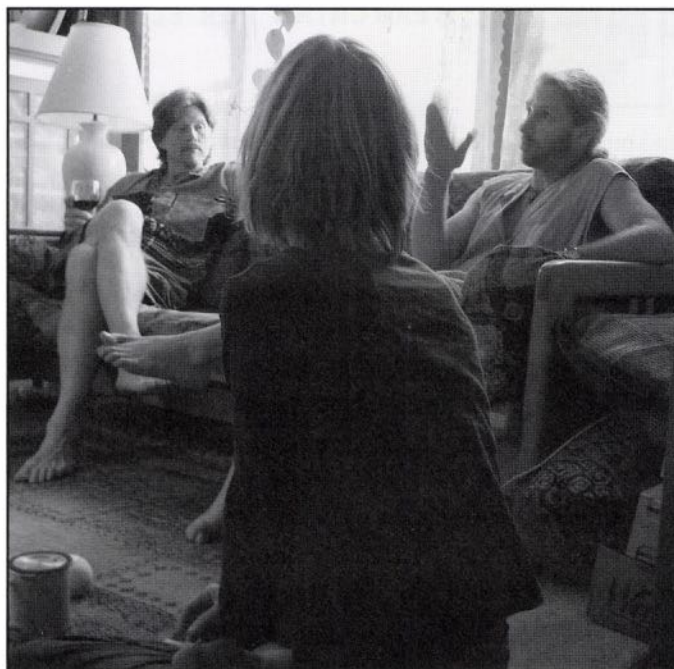
"My sense is that members of this community would extend acceptance [to right-wing people] on an interpersonal level—even if there was a wide divergence in political views. But I suspect that there would be pretty low receptivity (and maybe even outright hostility) to someone who was really conservative and also very in-your-face or proselytizing about their views. Actually, there would probably be hostility to a liberal doing this as well, even if there were basic agreement a priori." (LP)

"As long as people are generally willing to live and let live, we're pretty open to people. If, on either end of the spectrum or on any topic, someone is proselytizing and not wanting to listen to others' positions, it doesn't go over very well. We're very open to a variety of ideas, but not open to people who want to push those ideas onto someone else, even if they're similar to ours." (DB)

Internal Politics

In discussing the internal politics of their communities, many mentioned the important role of consensus in providing a positive alternative to larger-scale politics. A commitment to open communication seems to help too: "Traditionally we've dealt with internal politics fairly well. We have an ethic of dealing directly with people, and being honest; if we have something to say, of saying it to the person it concerns." (DB)

Direct involvement in community politics can reveal nuances and complexities often absent from larger-scale politics as experienced through (and simplified by) the mass media:



"When there's a tricky issue here, instead of being on the sidelines, watching two superstars battle it out, people are able to participate. A committee is created, the interested parties are encouraged to join the committee and figure out the tricky issue, and then once people are doing that, they see that it's really a lot more complex and most things can't be broken down into dichotomies. They realize how false it is to separate the world into dichotomies all the time." (MT)

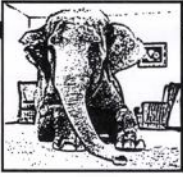
This seeing beyond dichotomies within issues can also allow community members to transcend "side-choosing" and "us vs. them" politics:

"There's no one here that I've always agreed with, and no one here that I've always disagreed with. It's always a combination. There are people with whom I'll tend to agree on spiritual issues, but tend to disagree on financial issues, for example. Because I am constantly finding myself agreeing with one person, then disagreeing with the same person on the next subject, this keeps me from picking sides. I wouldn't know whom to pick sides with; it is never that clear." (MT)

Cooperation and Competition

Asked to describe the roles of cooperation and competition in their groups' internal workings and decision-making processes, respondents expressed a range of viewpoints and feelings: "Decision by consensus; historically, one or two difficult people have used consensus to hold the group hostage. Decisions have taken literally two or five years to make. Serious factionalization has occurred. Some of those people are gone now,

"Not too many arch-conservatives have attempted to move in so far. They would definitely feel in the minority here."



SEARCHING FOR ELEPHANTS IN THE COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM:

and our consensus process has evolved, so we hope that problem is behind us.” (SE)

“I think there is a fierce shadow dynamic of competition in many community settings. Because according to our values we’re not supposed to be thinking or acting that way, we pretend that we (and our fellow communitarians) aren’t doing so, whereas really it’s happening all the time. I rarely hear anyone call a fellow community member on this attitude or behavior.” (TB)

“Much more focused on cooperation—but we are still learning how to do that well. Burnout and meeting fatigue seem to be a greater danger to good cooperation in our community than competition and competitive impulses.” (LP)

“Over the years we’ve been very good at not doing competition in terms of ‘I don’t like you and therefore I’m not going to vote for your idea.’ Each idea or topic is its own thing. When I bring up a topic, I don’t know that *x* voting block is going to be against me and *y* voting block is going to be for me. I trust that each individual will consider the merits of whatever we’re talking about, and come up with a decision—which I

think is quite magical, actually. We make our decisions in an open forum. For the most part even couples don’t always gang up on particular decisions.” (DB)

“Compared to mainstream America, we are very effective at being cooperative. I’m pretty amazed...it seems that every week there’s an issue where people are on very different sides, and then there’s a breakthrough and a win-win solution appears that makes all parties happy. Maybe because we select for people who believe in being cooperative, pretty much everyone here feels enjoyment when an impasse is resolved through some sort of win-



win; it doesn’t seem like lose-lose. In the external political world, I sense that it’s so competitive that people don’t even want a win-win solution; it might not even be perceived as possible. There’s so much of a mindset of win-lose, and there may be so many people with a vested interest in maintaining win-lose; their whole career as a political consultant relies on beating the other guy. For them, the victory isn’t as sweet if the other guy didn’t fall harder. I’m really glad that we’re not like that.

“I do need to say that there are some issues where I have seen us be unable to be cooperative. At times people’s personal agendas or beliefs or hangups or woundings keep them from taking a cooperative approach. We do have ego battles and competitions here, competitions for ideas and directions, and sometimes it feels a little much—but overall we seem to have a shared ethic that competitions and ego battles are not ideal, whereas I think in the mainstream mode they are just seen as the way things are done, and are rewarded.” (MT)

“I think there is a fierce shadow dynamic of competition in many community settings.”

Biggest Internal Political Issues

A question about groups’ biggest internal political issues, greatest generators of controversy, and the core issues behind these, yielded an array of responses:

“I could say dogs, but the dog in question was owned by one of the difficult people, so really it’s the personality not the dog. Participation, or the expectation that everyone should participate either with labor or money, caused a big rift. The biggest core issue, IMHO, is the lack of a mission statement that people are passionate about.” (SE)

“Pets. Kid issues. Different views about land stewardship, animals raised for food, pesticides, etc.” (LP)

“The biggest political issue for both communities I was part of ultimately came down to avoiding arrest by the various sweeps the county made, either ‘in hot pursuit’ or enforcing the permanent injunction that forbade anyone to remain on the land.” (RS)

“The core issue in my view is getting the group to move ahead and deal with, i.e., address and stay with, issues that some are resistant to, e.g. noise in the neighborhood (anything that might seem to restrict anyone’s ‘sacred’ rights to live and express themselves as they wish).” (MB)

“A big issue that I see is that some people want to try to keep new members to a certain caliber of health and functionality while others want to be more accepting of all who come here with the idea that we can heal whatever dysfunction may come with them.” (RB)

“We did have one person who was very political. He believed it was necessary in groups to slide decisions by because it was ‘in the best interests of the group.’ He would say ‘we agreed’ when the issue hadn’t even been discussed. In other instances, he

A POLITICS IN COMMUNITY SURVEY

just kept something quiet. He was in an officer position so he had access to financial information the group didn't have. Fortunately he moved, ostensibly to take a job elsewhere, but I think because the chickens were coming home to roost and he increasingly had too little influence. He was an older man with some stature in the larger community and had a 'silver tongue' so he was hard to pin down." (NE)

"For cohousing communities, setting work policy seems to be the biggest ongoing issue. Certainly it's the one I've been asked in to facilitate most frequently. It is a complex issue that brings up all of people's stuff around autonomy vs. community, form vs. formlessness, trust, and so on." (TB)

"Our biggest issues include someone being accepted into membership or being asked to leave the community; pets; job situations; food; financial decisions; visitor behavior and etiquette, especially when the visitor is connected to a member; emotional issues (for individuals, couples, groups), and how much space to give someone to go through a life process." (DB)

Other Thoughts

Respondents also offered additional observations:

"It's very politically incorrect here to attack someone personally for their beliefs or treat them with any emotional or verbal violence. People are expected to be respectful of each other even if they strongly disagree. If someone doesn't end up agreeing with that, it creates conflict—and over time either the person is asked to leave, or decides to leave." (DB)

"Living together helps people get to know each other in a way that makes them able to come to decisions better together. There is a level of cooperatively making decisions together that is really remarkable here." (MT)

"Throughout this last election cycle, various people have put up lawn signs for various candidates in front of our ecovillage. When I ran into the ideological 'leader' of the local anarchist movement, he immediately attacked me over it. Bottom line for me: If I'm gonna go off the edge of a cliff, I'd rather be going 40 MPH than 75 MPH." (RB)

"I feel that something really needed in the world right now is an evolution of consciousness toward a way of being in which, when you have a disagreement with someone, instead of just trying to fight for what you think is right, you actually transcend some of your ideas, change your ideas. The debate club approach in high school was really



frustrating for me, because in it you're rewarded for sticking to your point and conveying your point strongly, but there's no reward for changing your mind. If you change your mind, it is seen as a loss in a typical debate club. Most politicians go through something like debate training.

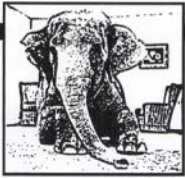
"I think that the consciousness we need now in the world is that changing your mind can be much more wise than just sticking to the point you came into the room with. Instead of seeing this as weakness, we can see it as a personal growth opportunity, and define ourselves as always growing and changing, and be happy to do that. We can thank others who help us in this, and say, 'I came in here totally disagreeing with you on this issue. I don't totally agree with you now, but I thank you for enlightening me on some of these subjects. I have changed.' I think it would be great if people did that more." (MT)



Spiritual Communities

Our two responses from members of spiritual communities reflected some perspectives different from those above, as well as some that were similar. Celinas Ruth from the Global Communities Communications Alliance characterized the range of political opinions in her group as "cohesive...our group has and is daily growing its common world view and vision for the future." She also described a wide array of political involvement, and observed, "Most

(continued on p. 62)



ELEPHANTS OF A DIFFERENT STRIPE

Politics at Twin Oaks: Distinguishing "Acceptable" from "Combustible"

By Valerie Renwick-Porter

Here at Twin Oaks, we generally consider ourselves beyond conventional conversation restraints; this becomes immediately obvious by listening to a mealtime discussion of the lurid details of gruesome symptoms related to the latest sickness going around.

When it comes to talking about politics, it becomes a little more complicated. There are certain topics that we can all discuss with ease and generally agree upon. However, somehow there are others that are more like opening a can of worms while walking through a field of landmines...

ACCEPTABLE: Global warming and polar icecap melt

MORE DELICATE: What temperature to set the communal hot-water heater, and the ecological implications of using ice-cubes

ACCEPTABLE: Obama versus Hillary

A BIT TRICKIER: Organic versus Local

ACCEPTABLE: Increasing water shortages and the evils of the bottled-water industry

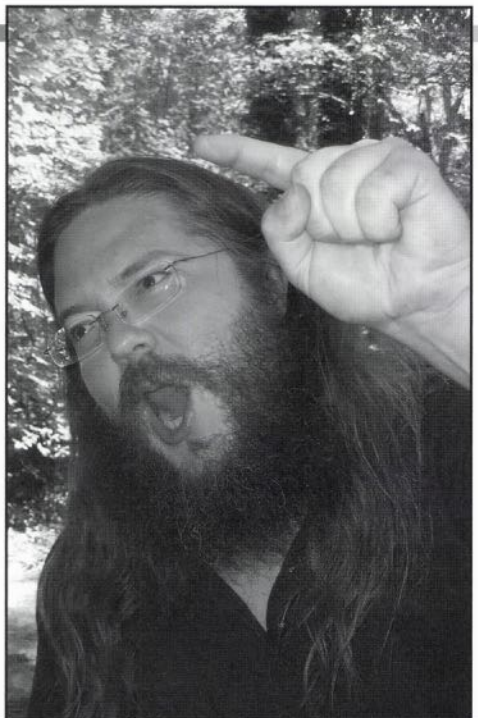
TREAD CAREFULLY: The fact that a certain commu-nard-who-shall-remain-nameless replaced the low-flow shower head with one that delivers the approximate force and volume-per-minute of Niagara Falls, without any process

ACCEPTABLE: The discriminatory aspects of impending US immigration policy

WALKING ON EGGSHELLS: Our membership process about whether to accept that controversial visitor from the last visitor period

ACCEPTABLE: Gay marriage

CALL IN THE PROCESS TEAM: Your lover announces a desire to form a polyamorous triad with that statuesque blonde who arrived as a new member last week... ❁



Valerie Renwick-Porter has weathered 16 years of politics at Twin Oaks community in Louisa, VA.

Thank you to Valerie and photographer Jay Paul (Woody) Kawatski and the enthusiastic thespians of Twin Oaks who so cheerfully staged these scenarios.

For more pictures, see page 62.

BLOGGING:

Pulling Proposals out of a Hat (or Some Orifice)

By Laird Schaub

In December 2007, Communities publisher Laird Schaub started a blog of "Commentary on Community and Consensus" at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com. As he explains, "For 20-plus years I've been a community networker and group process consultant. I believe that people today are starved for community—for a greater sense of belonging and connection—and I've dedicated my life to making available as widely as possible the tools and inspiration of cooperative living. I'm on the road half the time teaching groups consensus, meeting facilitation, and how to work with conflict. This blog is a collection of my observations and musings along the way." We asked Laird's permission to reprint his May 8, 2008 entry, which is particularly relevant to this issue's Politics theme as it plays itself out within groups.

This is the counterpart I promised to my May 4 posting on how to get the most out of plenary Discussions. After you've flushed out all the factors that the group agrees need to be taken into account (the main objective of the Discussion phase), then it's time to start crafting solutions. Often this step is begun by a committee, but sometimes the plenary is on a roll or there's time pressure encouraging the group to proceed with all deliberate speed. In any event, I will offer here four aids for efficient and energizing Proposal Generation:

1. An Atmosphere of Curiosity, not Embattlement

The key moment is when someone says something that differs substantially from what you're thinking. How do you respond? It will make an enormous difference if your initial reply is less like, "That won't work for me..." and more like "Wow, that's really different from what I was thinking. Tell me how you got there; maybe I'm missing something..."

In the former, you're assuming a fight. In the latter, you're wondering if your mind will be changed by new information or new insights. The trick is developing the mind set that different perspectives can be a strength—they let you see the problem more completely—rather than as an occasion for a battle.

In the mainstream culture, we learn to capitulate or fight in the face of differences; in cooperative culture we need to learn wonder in the presence of differences.

2. Stretching, not Pulling

As a practical matter, the initial responses to suggestions are crucial for setting the tone. If people can learn to begin with what they like about a suggestion (rather than with "But...") there will be a lot more flexibility (and hence, creativity) with which to reach the finish line. The image I offer here is how can everyone stretch to reach what others are offering, rather than how can you pull everyone toward your position. [Remember, the object here is not how well your initial suggestions hold up; it's how efficiently the group finds the best solution.]



LESLIE MYRITA

3. Bridging, not Advocacy

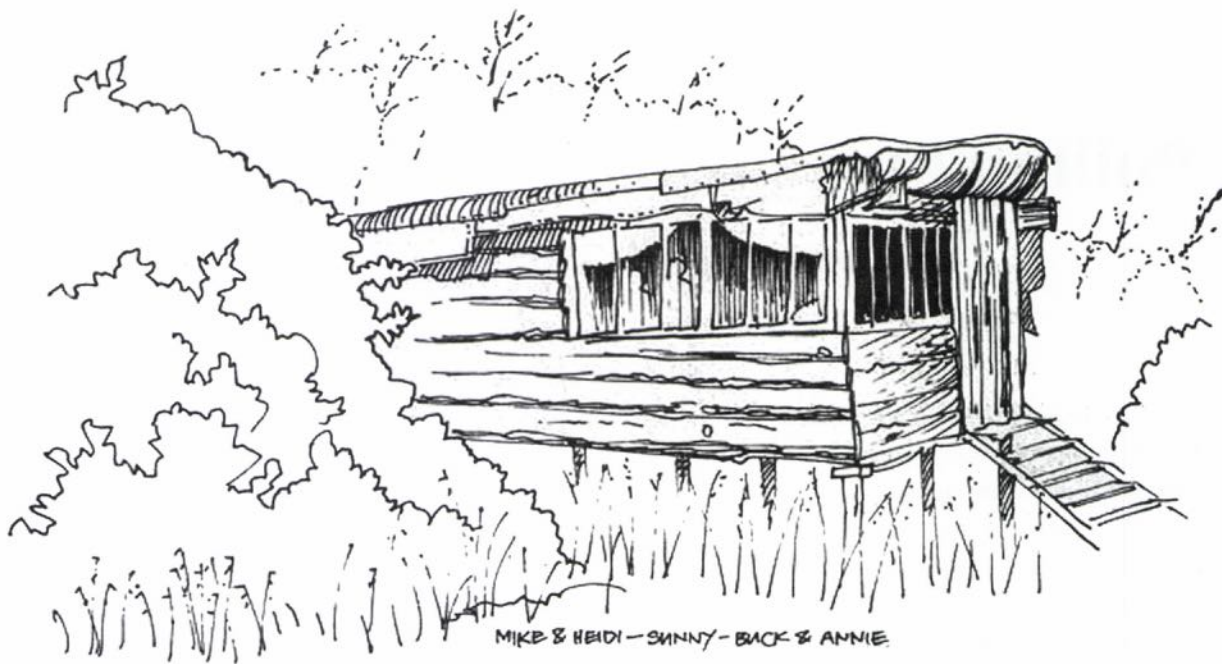
When facilitating Proposal Generation, insist (gently, yet firmly) that all suggestions be attempts to combine and balance what came out of the Discussion phase. Let's suppose that there are a list of factors labeled "x" and another list labeled "y," both of which need to be taken into account. What you don't want (now that you're in Proposal Generation) are statements in support of just "x" or just "y." Been there, done that.

So, when a person proposes something that appears to only address "x," a savvy facilitator will respond, "I get that your suggestion will satisfy 'x'; help me understand how it also satisfies 'y.'" Generating solid proposals is essentially about bridging all the factors; it is not about pushing until you get your way.

4. Build on Interests, Don't Get Stuck on Positions

For many, their nightmare dynamic (short of fulminating anger) is where the group is more or less evenly divided on some non-trivial issue: one side favors doing "Z," and the other side favors doing "not Z." That is, the positions are diametrically opposed and each side is fairly passionate about it. What to do?

(continued on p. 73)



“Who’s in charge?” If we had not needed to answer that question repeatedly for Sonoma County officials, it might have been possible NOT to reproduce the Straight World’s hierarchy, although Morningstar Ranch’s hierarchy was very fluid compared to straight society’s. Subgroups did form, such as “the wino camp” down by the front gate that we all were so grateful for, since previously they had been screaming and carrying on beside Lou Gottlieb’s cabin. The yogis remained around the barn, the good-time more transient types in the Upper House, and the heavy kitchen staff and organizers in the Lower. But the outside forces required an imposed structure instead of just waiting for one to grow itself naturally, as it did at Wheeler’s Ranch down the road. At Wheeler’s, a “Group Head” finally emerged that evolved beyond just having Bill Wheeler play cop whenever necessary. Brother Bill, by the way, poured himself heart and soul and inheritance into the community, and grew more in spirit and nobility than anyone throughout those years. I thank him for all he did from the bottom of my heart—and the same for Lou.

Admittedly, Lou finally tired of the “Who’s in Charge” role after having been fined 30 or more times (totaling over \$14,000) and finally jailed for not obeying

This article reflects the author’s experiences at two Open Land communities, Morningstar Ranch and Wheeler’s Ranch, starting in 1966 (see www.diggers.org/home_free.htm for a 25-chapter history, “Home Free Home”). The following is excerpted from a paper presented at the “West of Eden: Communes and Utopia in Northern California” conference, hosted by the Department of Geography and the Institute of International Studies at UC Berkeley, March 25, 2006, and now appearing in the author’s new book, A Planetary Sojourn (Calm Unity Press, San Francisco, CA, 2008).

the injunction forbidding anyone but himself to live at Morningstar. He tried to place his imported guru from India at the ranch “to chant the Bhagavad-Gita in impeccable Sanskrit and elevate the vibes.” However Chiranjiva, Shiva Incarnate, or “Father” as he was addressed by his devotees, preferred the pleasures of city living. “I did not come all the way from

India to shit in the woods!” he told us. “I could do that in my village!” He described our hippie rural life as “divine infantilism” and set up an urban headquarters in San Francisco.

Lou’s search for someone “higher than he was” to surrender to, as he put it, conjures something that Sociology calls “dominance ranking.” I have noticed



Thanksgiving, 1967. Photo was taken at Morningstar Ranch’s request by the Sonoma County Sheriff’s Department.

COURTESY OF SONOMA COUNTY SHERIFF’S DEPT.

Politics on Open Land

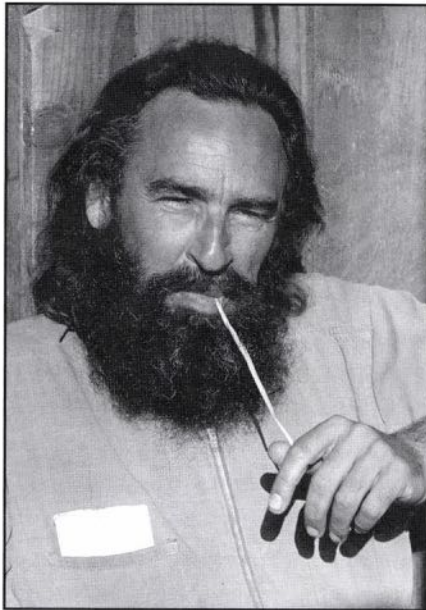


By Ramón Sender Barayón

that humans, along with other animals, tend to rank each other within social groups by using various sensory stimuli that include odor, pheromones, aura, height, carriage, sunny personality, and perhaps that vague term “charisma.” In Lou’s case, he ranked high as a consummate combination of professorial jokester and knife-sharp intellect that had survived a PhD at UC Berkeley.

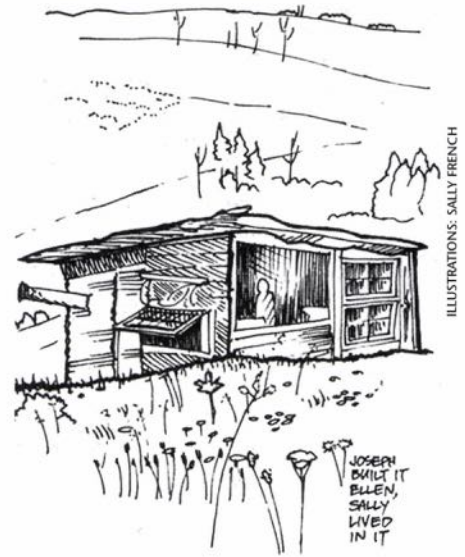
Actually, charisma is not really all that vague. Anyone who has ever been in Bill Clinton’s presence would agree he’s in the high charisma percentiles, while our current White House resident barely moves the shakti-meter’s needle. I would suggest that there’s an innate human tendency, when entering a gathering, for one’s senses to sweep the crowd and immediately create a rough hierarchy of “who’s doing what to whom,” a dominance ranking that continues to adjust as you sort people out. First impressions are a rough take from the amygdala, a tiny organ in the center of the brain that triggers the “fight or flight” reflex. Your impressions then are refined further by feedback mechanisms from various slower sensory inputs. “Oh! That’s a stick—not a snake! I don’t have to scream and run!”

I think human relationships tend to fall into archetypal structures depending



D.D. Lou Morningstar.

on the size of the group, the same way crystals do: four-sided, six or eight, or the classical twelve surrounding the Alpha, as described in the New Testament. Just how many human roles are there anyway? The boss, the consigliere or legal eagle, the padre or shaman, the jester, the bodyguard or bouncer, the Judas, the hit man. That’s seven so far. Then there’s the Romeo, the sleaze-bag, the schmiel and the schlmozzle, the wino, the hanger-on, the warrior, the thief, and the victim. Sixteen total, although I’m sure there are more. For our sisters, many of those men-



ILLUSTRATIONS: SALLY FRENCH

tioned have their female counterparts, and we also have of course the wife, the vamp, the fallen woman along the lines of Mary Magdalene, the brusque no-nonsense organizer, and the “other woman.” I’m sure we could think up many more, but at least these suffice to demonstrate the complexity of human interrelations, and at Morningstar they all thrived. Lou added more categories to the general list: the Basket Cases, the Impossible, the Super-Rappers, the Bush Rabbits (who scattered into the bushes when the cops arrived).

...

We all are tribals in our DNA. When we express our innate nature, tribe creates the village model embedded in our genes. Cities are “stacked” villages, some functional, some not. It takes a village to fulfill our humanity, even if that “village” is a semi-abstract corporate body or a dysfunctional community around a common interest, such as UC Berkeley.

I believe that each of us is here on earth to accomplish our own innate purpose, and I think that a low-demand communal lifestyle can help us discover what it is. Morningstar’s open-door and anarchistic lifestyle allowed new arrivals an opportunity to see themselves and their aspirations reflected back in the

Politics on Open Land



clear mirror it provided. Ultimately it seemed that Morningstar functioned as some sort of healing center, which perhaps could be ascribed to the fact, as we learned some years later (1971), that the ranch had been dedicated and named for The Virgin Mary even before Lou bought the place. That might account for the visions of the Divine Mother that were reported by various folks during the '60s. It seemed that many people discovered what innate task had brought them

planetside to accomplish, and this perhaps was the most healing aspect of Open Community.

Of course there were also Open Land failures. One guy seemed to come on the land at Wheeler's Ranch just to O.D. under the cross on the hill. Another guy, Oak Grove Ronald, was a kind of minor Charles Manson type who wanted to form a cult that would include a man and a woman from each sign of the zodiac. He used LSD to magnetize people into his orbit, and in 1972 made a power play to take over the ranch. One of the very few community meetings was held and an elder spokesperson elected to offer Ron a deal: the community would trade him and his people their schoolbus in return for the buildings they had constructed and their immediate departure. If they didn't leave, he could not guarantee their safety. Ron and his followers left shortly thereafter, to the immense relief of everyone.

The event served to demonstrate to everyone that they had the ability to self-govern and unite when necessary to accomplish a necessary task. I think it was a turning point in the Wheeler Ranch folks' feeling that they could succeed, and I do believe that Wheeler's would have evolved into a self-sustaining, viable village if the county had not destroyed the community. By then Morningstar's dwellings had been bulldozed at least three times, with Lou charged not only for the labor incurred but also fined almost \$15,000 on 30 or so separate contempt-of-court citations for not ordering hippies off the land.

The early '70s were depressing times, but when Jerry Brown became Governor of California, he at least was able to get Cabin Class structures added to the building code, which allowed each county to vote

whether or not to accept so-called "below-code" buildings that did not include indoor plumbing, electrical wiring in the walls, or a concrete pad insulating the inhabitants from the sweet touch of Mother Gaia.

Meanwhile, the county's threats forced us to organize into a corporation, and Bill's attorney recommended a church structure. He asked me to set down the belief system that I thought we had evolved, and with the help of others I wrote the Morningstar Faith articles. The attorney decided on the name Ahimsa Church, and part of its tenets expressed our need NOT to live on a concrete pad and NOT to use flush toilets. Bare earth floors and a post-hole digger with a roll of toilet paper on one handle were just fine, and squatting turned out to be a great hemorrhoids cure!

When people ask me what is necessary to start a rural open land commune, I reply, "First buy a cow, or preferably two. The cows will call the meetings twice a day because if you want fresh milk, you have to go to milking. That way no one

(continued on p. 76)



After the bulldozers.

Morning Star Faith



Thy Open Land Church

Thy 4 Missions of Planetary Purity

Open Earth. Open Air. Open Fire. Open Water

1. **Open Earth:** The opening of lands as sanctuaries for the One, naked, nameless and homeless. The purification of the land by replenishment of the soil, invisible land use, and Voluntary Primitivism. Welcoming the Divine Nature in our children.
2. **Open Air:** The opening of all communications channels, open airings, airways, airwaves. The purification of the air by planting groves and gardens. The Divine Wind of the Spirit speaks in the treetops. Listen!
3. **Open Fire:** Opening of all energies to all. No exclusive ownership of gas, electricity, coal, wood, money. The purification of life forces in the fire of worship. The open hearth. The opening of our bodies and hearts to the open solar fire.
4. **Open Water:** Open seas, oceans, rivers, streams and hot springs. We are water brothers with all life. Open emotions - express your feelings. The purification of water. Stop pollution.

From the Morningstar Manifesto.

Looking for the best books on community? Check out...

Community Bookshelf

At Community Bookshelf we know what it takes to create and sustain community and we want to provide you with the skills and information you need to make it happen for you. We hand-pick only the best books about community and community skills. Topics include:

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SomerVille Ecovillage, Australia



According to a recent item about SomerVille Ecovillage in a major newspaper, "This project will set a new benchmark for sustainability in Australia. There is nothing else like it." That's a big claim, but I wonder, is it true or just media hype?

It's a beautiful, warm winter's day as I drive an hour east from Perth, the capital of western Australia, turn off the paved road at the old Chidlow Hall, follow an ever-deteriorating gravel and sand road, and find myself in the middle of SomerVille Ecovillage. Or at least I find myself on the land where SomerVille Ecovillage will be built once all the planning requirements have been met.

I first met several of SomerVille Ecovillage's founders, and dreamers, in 2002 when I was in Perth on a Writer's Fellowship. We shared a meal that evening, people asked about my intentional community research, and I listened and tried to be helpful. But I wondered if this project would ever get off the ground, because some of those people (not the core group) seemed naïve about intentional community, with several adhering to ideas which would ensure that no community could form. One person wanted to live in the countryside—and would be willing to live in a community if absolutely necessary—but wasn't interested in community living as such.

I also remember another person at that meeting, Paul Moes, who had a more

sophisticated appreciation of what can make or break a community. As he and his partner, Mechtild, were about to go to Europe, I encouraged them to visit well-established intentional communities such as ZEGG, in Germany. This they did,

coming back with insights into what does and does not work in the real world of intentional communities rather than in the fantasy world of utopian dreaming.

And who should greet me today at SomerVille Ecovillage?—none other than Paul Moes. My hunch about SomerVille's prospects at that meeting five years back was

wrong. Although several people who were then involved have fallen by the wayside, Paul has become one of the key people helping the birthing process of SomerVille Ecovillage.

The core group, established by Robyn and Paul Antonelli in 2000, spent several years searching for the right block of land, large enough to allow for about 100 houses, close enough to Perth to allow commuting, if need be, and with soil, water and aspect suitable for Permaculture. They developed a complicated rating system whereby whenever they

WORLDWIDE
COMMUNITY



BY
BILL METCALF



THE STORY OF A YURT UNDER THE GUM TREES:

FROM TOP: Paul Moes, Mechtild, and Karen Moore supervising construction; The crew around the skylight; Lachie and Dante helping out; Supporting the infrastructure. RIGHT: Dharma and Lachie observe construction. OPPOSITE PAGE: The completed yurt from within.

They came back with insights into what does and does not work in the real world of intentional communities rather than in the fantasy world of utopian dreaming.

visited land for sale they would each, individually, rate it along several parameters, combine their ratings into a final score, and then compare that to the score they had given to other blocks. When they found this land, everyone was sure that this would be their home. They paid \$1,025,000 (\$US975,000), raising the money through personal loans, and established a holding company, Somerville Ecovillage Holdings Pty Ltd, into whose name the ownership was registered.

The core group then started negotiating with local and state government planning authorities to obtain permission to create Somerville Ecovillage. "Somerville," by the way, is the maiden name of Nancy Cable, from whom they purchased the land.

This property has 168 hectares (399 acres) with about 30 percent cleared and under cultivation, and the rest covered with scrubby trees, having been harvested of valuable timber. The land is relatively flat with ample ground water. It backs onto a nature reserve, and is close to the historic village of Chidlow Wells, with its lovely pub and shops, and from where there is infrequent public transport into the city. A primary school is within 2 kms (1.2 miles) and a high school within 7 kms (4 miles).

After receiving advice from sustainable community advisors such as Max Lindeggar, one of the creators of Crystal Waters, Australia's best known ecovillage, the group surveyed Somerville into



ALL PHOTOS: NEIL ROBERTSON

104 building sites, grouped into 10 hamlets around a community centre. Of these, 94 lots will be privately owned, with the final ten to be owned by the collective and rented out as "affordable housing." All hamlets will have car access from an outer ring road, the inner area being car-free. The house blocks range from 320 to 1970 square meters, and all are oriented northwards to catch the sun. Of their total land, about 10 percent will be

built on, with the rest being available for farming, recreation, and reforestation.

Several members, such as Dave Moore and Dominic Carlino, have experience in town planning, and this has helped during negotiations with their local government, Mundaring Shire. Because Somerville is the first ecovillage project of this scale in western Australia, there have been many legal and planning hurdles to clear. At one point, planning

SomerVille Ecovillage, Australia

approval was in doubt, so members appealed directly to State Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Ms. Alannah MacTiernan, who overrode the Planning Commission and helped SomerVille Ecovillage come into being.

The planning approval process has taken six years. To some members this has been an expensive and damaging delay, while others see this time as having helped them develop sustainable social and cultural structures. They are actively pursuing a triple bottom-line modus operandi, promoting and balancing social, environmental, and economic aspects.

Conditional subdivision approval has recently been received. After installing

roads and underground services, they expect to start building houses in early 2009. Electricity will be provided to all homes from an array of solar panels, households will collect rainwater in tanks, fibre-optic telephone and computer cables will connect houses, dry compost toilets

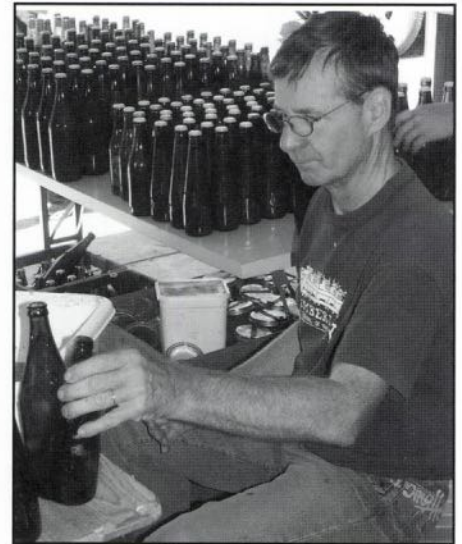
will be used, hot water will come from solar panels, and each hamlet will have an effluent-treatment system for grey water.

The land, for which they paid \$1,025,000 (\$US975,000) has recently been revalued at \$12,900,000 (\$US 12,250,000).

They have several mechanisms to promote open communication and personal growth, and to overcome, if not avoid, conflicts. For example, a member of Findhorn Foundation came to conduct workshops on active listening and there is a comprehensive conflict resolution process.

According to their website (www.somervilleecovillage.com.au) they are "a dynamic and vibrant community. We work together, invest together, celebrate together, produce food together, support each other and strive together for things that inspire and excite us....This has contributed to the evolution and formation of the SomerVille culture...founded on the idea of abundance and the understanding of the power of working together in cooperation and collaboration." Members see

The planning approval process has taken six years. To some members this has been an expensive and damaging delay, while others see this time as having helped them develop sustainable social and cultural structures.



themselves becoming "a living example of how individuals can make lasting change. How a community can flourish... How people of different backgrounds, ages, cultures can work together for a common benefit."

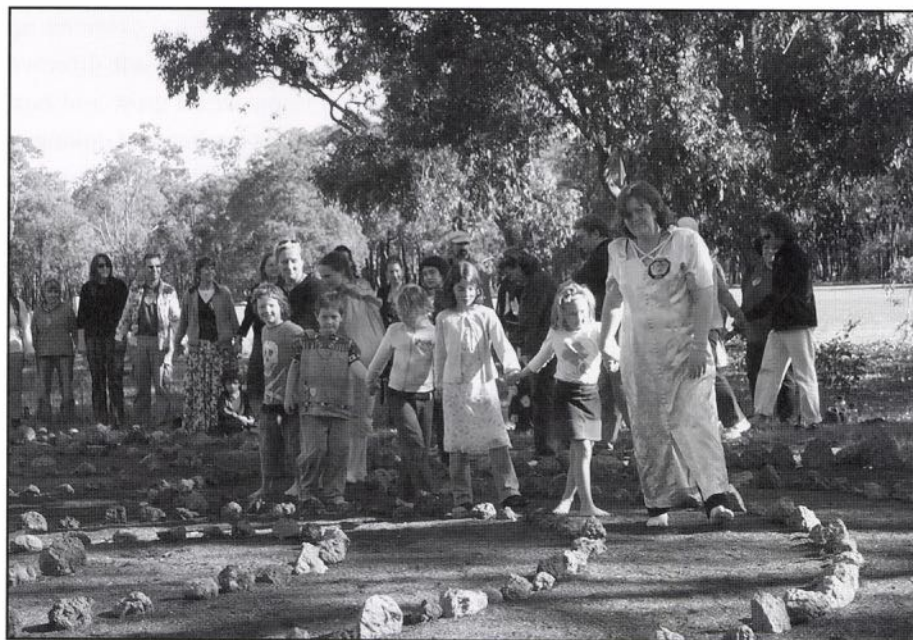
To join, a person comes to an Open Day and pays \$88 (\$US84) to join SomerVille's support group. They receive an "information package," giving the history of SomerVille Ecovillage, their collective aspirations, and their legal and financial processes including covenants banning pets, using inorganic chemicals, etc. After attending an orientation, a would-be member pays a deposit of \$25,000 (\$US23,700), this being down-payment for a house block, with the rest of the money due when titles become available, hopefully within a year. The final price



TOMATO SAUCE SEASON AT SOMERVILLE:
TOP RIGHT: Paul Moes preparing the bottles. ABOVE: Aaron shows off the completed product. RIGHT: Dominic Carlino, Fuchsia, and Vida enjoying tomato squashing.



Members see themselves becoming "a living example of how people of different backgrounds, ages, cultures can work together for a common benefit."



Carol leads the blessing of the labyrinth.

for each house-block will not be known until all infrastructure has been completed, but is expected to be between \$210,000 and \$300,000 (\$US200,000 to 285,000), depending on size and location. Karen Moore, a community pioneer, tells me "the money side of it has not been that important for people. The fact that people have been involved for the length of time they have, and have been prepared to put their money in without knowing what the final price will be, speaks volumes."

Using a "buddy system," new members are linked to an existing member who helps their integration. Members are expected to attend planning, work, and social sessions which are held on the land, and get to know who will become their neighbours. Fifty of the lots for sale are under contract. They have a built-in mechanism to discourage speculation and ensure that those who buy will build and live there.

There is no process by which a member can be rejected by the group, although Paul assures me that through their system "people have been selecting themselves." Frankly, I am doubtful, remembering the wise words of a communal elder who once told me that their expulsion provi-

sion had never been used—because the very existence of that mechanism had encouraged people to resolve problems before it got to that stage.

SomerVille members have established enterprises such as an ecovillage consultancy, a solar panel installation service, and a car-share business. They anticipate that a member will raise food, following Community Assisted Agriculture principles, on land leased from the collective. Several members hope to open an education and conference centre but that will depend on council approval. They strive to create "the opportunity for community members to work in areas they are passionate about and generate a good income." Meanwhile, their enterprises have already created about 25 jobs.

They anticipate a total population of about 300 people, believing this to be large enough to provide social and cultural diversity, and a market for their own businesses, but small enough that everyone can know everyone else. Their ages range from babies to an 80-year-old; the youngest person buying a lot is 19. They have a disproportionate number of single females over 50, but do not see this as a problem. They are looking into establishing their own cemetery.

SomerVille's governance is partially based on sociocracy, "a method of governing organizations...that produces more effective and harmonious decision-making. It ensures inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency while it increases productivity" (www.sociocracy.info). SomerVille has a Steering Team, consultation processes, and Community Elders. Members select Elders whose role is to help resolve personal and interpersonal problems. "To be chosen as an Elder...is a position of trust and respect. This...is a position of guidance and service to those that ask for it. Elders need not be an 'older person'; instead they are chosen for their 'wisdom.'"

As we share lunch, shaded by gum trees, Karen tells me why she is a member: "with peak oil, etc, we need to create more ecovillages where we are living sustainably—economically, socially, and environmentally. And where there is a future for the younger people so that they don't leave. To me it's just so bloody obvious! That's why I am involved in SomerVille Ecovillage."

Paul adds, "it's important to take responsibility for all the things I do in life, and at SomerVille I am supported in that

(continued on p. 75)

SURVEY

(continued from p. 51)

people vote and would probably support progressive humanitarian types of people. People are encouraged to vote and take part in the electoral process although we are quite aware the system is broken and not fixable without a spiritual solution." While her group gives a much larger role to hierarchical decision-making structures than any of the other groups surveyed (including a general willingness to put trust in "God" and in the group's leaders, who are seen as interpreting divine intent), she also struck some common chords.

"Viewpoints which support war, exploitation of people, maximization of profits, promotion of unsustainable corporate interests, or activities harmful to the environment anywhere in the world" would not make it in her group. "Life experiences are our laboratory. External politics come up at times. Our choice to live in this community is, in part, because of the external politics which failed us in our desire to serve and help bring change to the planet." Her communal

experience "of necessity has grown me up and faded away a lot of self-directed thoughts. I know we all grow and heal together and not separately. Looking at the world through our community's spiritually-directed eyes, we cannot see separations and compartmentalization of 'politics' away from daily living. We talk religion and politics in the same breath, since we do not separate the parts from the whole."

Our other response describing a spiritually-based community came from a disillusioned ex-member. She observed the group's betrayal of its founding spiritual principles and formation of a "State within a State" which oppresses its own members, "moving and working on the same principle as the big political platform they seem to want to break away from." The group "has done away with all the hard-fought for and difficultly-earned principles that made them different, that made them stand out as a radical movement who lived by what they said and believed." Contrary to their original commitments to stay free of electoral politics, "they vote and take part in elections, especially if they can profit by doing so,

in their regional areas and states or counties—anything to gain governmental influence on decisions to protect and expand their land and influence." Within the community, politics "are controlling the families, schools, and members, even more than could happen in any democratic or dictatorial country." Because it was not within the scope of this survey project to solicit additional responses from each community named, and because of the unflattering portrayal of this particular spiritual group, we have decided not to name either the respondent or this community in this article (although the respondent made it clear that we were free to do so). Instead, we present her story as yet another window into how "politics in community" can manifest.

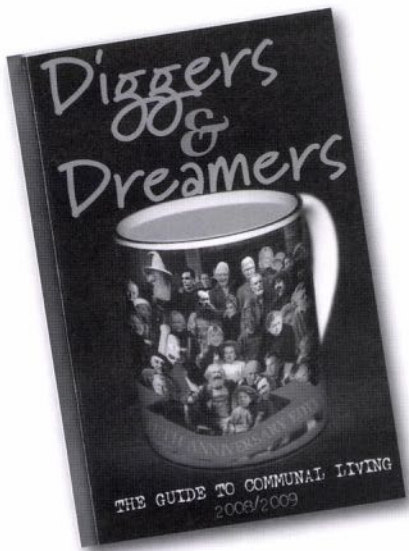
We welcome further insights and perspectives on these topics from readers, for possible future publication. Please let us hear from you! ❀

Chris Roth is new editor of Communities and a resident member of Lost Valley Educational Center (www.lostvalley.org) since 1997. Contact: editor@ic.org.



Finding no elephants in the living room, Twin Oakers search in the mail room and on the Opinions and Ideas board.

REVIEWS



***Diggers & Dreamers* 2008/09: The Guide to Communal Living**

Edited by Sarah Bunker, Chris Coates, and Jonathan How

**Diggers & Dreamers Publications,
England, 2008
Pb., 240 pp., \$29 US (£14.50 UK)
www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk**

Reviewed by Toby Champion

Until last year, when I moved from Brighton, England to Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, I was definitely amongst the “armchair communards” that Chris Coates, one of the editors of *Diggers & Dreamers (D&D)*, tells me have always been attracted to the book alongside its main audience. During my first summer holiday from university in 1989, I spent a few happy hours browsing the first edition’s listing of 100

or so British communities, dreaming that I might one day be living in a big old house in the country with a bunch of cool people, spending each perfect day gardening, making stuff out of wood, playing in a band, and working just a couple of hours a day to make a living.

Right now, though, I’m in the main audience: those who are either considering moving to community, or, like my family, are actively seeking one to join. Later this year we’ll visit a few communities in England, and start our research with this book.

Published every other year since 1987 by a “self-appointed-headless-elite-anarchist-editorial-collective,” *D&D* is a window into the British communities movement for the wider public, with the directory accompanied by articles offering analysis and personal perspectives. This 20th anniversary edition will be the last to include the printed directory, as the editors believe their website (www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk) will be better at providing up-to-date information. Their aim with the 2008/09 edition is to provide “a final printed snapshot of the communal living movement in the first decade of the 21st century.”

There’s not much overlap between *D&D*’s 94 entries and the 74 British entries in the *Communities Directory* published by FIC. Only 29 individual communities are listed in both. Coates tells me this is mostly because British communities don’t usually bother listing themselves in the *Directory* unless they’re specifically trying to reach a US audience. In Britain, he says, the *Directory* is often referred to as “the American directory.”

Between the glossy, full-color covers, *D&D* has a lovely informal, friendly feel. Each entry is about 300 words and often accompanied by pen-and-ink illustrations of the community’s buildings. There are photographs, too, but most are poorly reproduced. Very cute, hand-drawn icons

indicate the nature of the community and the resources available, and include whether there’s a substantial garden, wheelchair access, shared use of vehicles, easy access to public transport, eco-friendly sewage, onsite electricity generation, recycling, and broadband internet. There’s an icon for income-sharing communities and another for those that need capital from members.

All but a handful of the communities are open “in principle” to members: an indication of the general principle rather than the current status. As I write, the *D&D* website’s “Members Needed” section lists 10 communities looking for members. Taking a look at a few of these, there’s Bowden House—an “eco-hamlet” in Totnes, Devon, Stepping Stones Housing Co-operative—a 30-acre smallholding above the Wye Valley trying to grow to a stable, committed community of about 12 adults, Mornington Grove—a vegetarian, city community with an “indefinable”

ideological focus and “14 people in two semi-detached houses in a quiet East End street where playing kids outnumber cars.” If you can get yourself an \$800,000 mortgage you can buy a four-bedroom maisonette in Laughton Lodge, a 40-strong cohousing community in an hospital building in East Sussex with its own horse

*Chris Coates celebrates
the fact that the
movement has survived
the Thatcher and Blair
governments. The
number of communities
open to new members
has remained constant.*

club, radio station, artists’ studio, and workshops. And there’s Pennine Camp-hill Community in Yorkshire, an Anthroposophical charity that runs a college for students with learning disabilities.

Unlike this well-designed little book, the directory on the *D&D* website is very hard to use, and doesn’t work at all in Firefox on my PC, which is a pity considering that a third of European users use this open source browser. Still, most of the information is there, somewhere. Listings are available broken down by initial letter and by region, but that’s it. No map, no search, no filtering. I hope

that by the time the printed directory gets out of date in a year or two, the website will have been overhauled.

The first of the 14 articles that make up half the book, "Within these Communities," looks at the trends in communal living in Britain since the first edition was published. Chris Coates celebrates the fact that the movement has survived the Thatcher and Blair governments, and notes that the number of communities open to new members has remained constant at around 100. That's not to suggest that the movement isn't growing: Coates estimates there are currently around 23,000 people living some kind of communal lifestyle today, taking into account that "there is a clear trend over the years towards a much wider definition of what constitutes an intentional community." Looking back at the directory over the years, he says, "what starts off as a fairly coherent picture of recognizable variations of the 'classic' 1970s big house commune with a few new age spiritual communities thrown in, slowly expands to include urban housing co-ops with shared houses, a smattering of monastic centers, Camphill groups, older communal groups, low impact groups living in benders and yurts, and even the odd peace camp and monkey sanctuary, all choosing to self-define themselves as part of a loose communal living movement."

Simon Fairlie, rural land-reform campaigner and former co-editor of *The Ecologist* magazine, offers an upbeat look at "The future of Low Impact Development" (LID) in Britain, highlighting some



of the successful routes those interested in LIDs have found through Britain's conservative planning systems. Claiming that "the safest course of action is boldest," he suggests you buy some agricultural-price land close to a village, lodge a planning application for your "shining example of sustainability," and, if refused, move your portable wood-frame buildings onto the land, move in, and cross your fingers.

Australian sociologist and social historian Bill Metcalf asks why, with so many opportunities for cross-fertilization and knowledge-sharing between communities internationally, so many new communities are doomed to fail. Interested in forming an intentional community? "Don't do it!" he pleads. "By that I mean

that I discourage [those who ask me]...when there are almost certainly groups already in existence which have resolved many of the basic problems and who are looking for new members. I always advise would-be intentional community founders to spend several years living in a range of current communities, and read deeply of the history, psychology and sociology of communal life in order to educate themselves. Needless to say, few of these people follow my advice." Metcalf wonders whether "perhaps the nature of intentional community means that people are always having to reinvent the wheel, to always try new directions...and always reject the wisdom of the past as they try to create a new and better future."

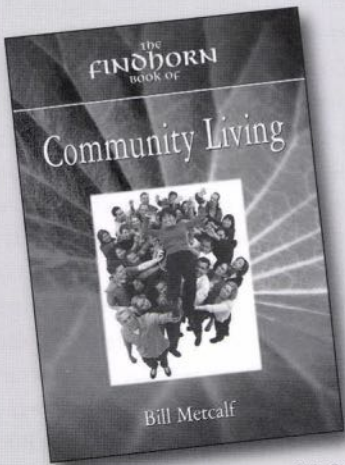
There's a nice two-page piece on the 20-year story of the Quaker Community in Bamford in the Peak District. Although I've visited the community several times, I've not read much about the history of the place. Now that I have my own experience living in community, and a more level head regarding communal living, the article gave me much to ponder.

I do hope the Diggers & Dreamers collective continues to publish similar articles somehow. Coates tells me they're considering starting a British equivalent of *Communities* magazine, which would be great.

Finally, if you are looking for a community in Britain, you should also look at the *europa* directory, a book on intentional communities and ecovillages in Europe. For details, see www.europa.de/englverzeichniss.html.

That comprehensive tome is known in Britain as "the German directory." Ho hum. ❀

Toby Champion moved in June 2007 from Brighton, England to Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Rutledge, Missouri, where he now lives with his wife Michelle Day and their son Adam. Toby makes his living as a freelance software developer. Though he has been involved in numerous collectively-run groups, this is his first try at living in community.



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GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE, Tubac, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Urantia and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 110 adults and children. International members. Global change work for Destiny Reservists in Divine Administration. God-centered community based on teachings of The URANTIA Book and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation. The Cosmic Family volumes, as received by Gabriel of Urantia. Organic gardens. Global Community Communications Schools, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Serious spiritual commitment required. *POB 4910, Tubac, AZ 85646; 520-603-9932; info@gccalliance.org; www.gccalliance.org; www.globalchangemusic.org; www.musiciansnet.org.*

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING, Bayfield, Colorado. Located in southwest Colorado, with easy access to the high peaks of the San Juan Mountains and the red rock canyons of Utah, we are a cohousing neighborhood with a deep sense of community. Built in 2000, we support a population of approximately 40 adults and 20 children in a cozy cluster of 24 homes nestled within 250 acres of pine forest and pastureland. We make decisions by consensus and value open and honest communication to accommodate the diverse needs, backgrounds and perspectives of our members. Find out more about Heartwood and available property: *www.heartwoodcohousing.com; info@heartwoodcohousing.com; 970-884-4055.*

LA'AKEA COMMUNITY, Pahoehoe, Big Island, Hawaii. Come swim in the ocean and drink coconuts with us on our 23 acre tropical

farm, practicing permaculture principles. We grow much of our food and host workshops and events. We are part of an island-wide movement to make the Big Island food self-sufficient. We use solar power and filtered rain water. We make decisions by consensus and practice non-violent communication. Seeking member-owners of all ages and family configurations to share our slice of paradise. *www.permaculture-hawaii.com; 808-443-4076, or write POB 1071, Pahoehoe, HI 96778.*

L'ARCHE GREATER VANCOUVER, Burnaby, British Columbia. We are people with and without developmental disabilities sharing life in a community founded in 1974 by Jean Vanier. We are 120 people including folks with disabilities living and working together in an urban setting between the mountains and the sea. We have seven households and two day programs and are involved in initiatives of welcome and outreach to the wider community. Our community is multicultural, multigenerational, ecumenical and inter-religious. We provide a stipend and health care coverage. For more information see *www.larchevancouver.org* or contact *mdavis@larchvancouver.org.*

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a small family of friends living together on an income-sharing organic farm. We value cooperation, initiative, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differences, making good ecological choices, and having fun with our friends. We've been at this for 33 years and continue to grow in our visions and our capability to realize them. Sound like home? *POB 155, Rutledge, MO 63563; visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org, 660-883-5543; www.sandhillfarm.org.*

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.*

TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. "Not the revolution, but you can see it from here." We are an income-sharing, non-violent, egalitarian community that's been living this lifestyle for 39 years. We would love to have you visit and right now, we're especially

looking for more women members, as well as people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. We can offer you: work in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of non-violence, feminism and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live an ecological and income-sharing lifestyle. For information: *Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126; twinoaks@ic.org; www.twinoaks.org.*

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.*

COMMUNITIES FORMING

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, http://www.EcoReality.org/Seeking_members.*

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*), farmers' markets and support of global community efforts. Carpentry, mechanical or agricultural experience a plus. Upcoming projects include construction of an additional 1,500 sq.ft. of living space. If interested, check out our web site at *www.ecofarmfl.org; 813-754-7374; or email ecofarmfl@yahoo.com.*

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 *bofies@taosnet.com or phone 505-776-2015.*

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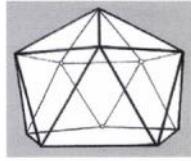
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SPIRIT SONG COMMUNITY, Pope Valley, California. Small developing community on 37 acres in the wilderness in Napa Country. Two miles up a dirt road. Looking for new members who are spiritually minded. We are off the grid and have organic gardens. Our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

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

TRUE NORTH, Canton, New York. Can't (or don't want to) afford \$250,000 cohousing units or \$50,000 ecovillage buy-ins? Looking for a small rural community with a goal of economic affordability as well as ecological sustainability? Into less sweat gardening in summer and more fun cross-country skiing in winter, and being in on the creative beginning of a community venture? Couple with 30 years of living in community and building/alternative energy skills seeks healthy, spiritual, emotionally mature, peak oil aware people, especially those with green building, organic gardening, permaculture, self-sufficiency, group process skills. We steward 35 acres (more can be bought) with fenced fields, decent soil, good firewood, farmhouse and new barn, creek, artesian spring, back road but only 6 miles from towns with four universities. Near Adirondack Park, St. Lawrence River, Ottawa. Made to order nearby Amish wood-sided, metal roof house shells with windows/doors to move onsite for \$4,000. Establishing campsite. Well-behaved dogs welcome. *peagreen@earthlink.net*, 315-386-2609.

THE VILLAGE ON SEWANEE CREEK, Tracy City, Tennessee. Seeking like-minded people as we build a sustainable community in Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau. Private, wooded or bluff view lots available. Ten-percent of purchase price, up to \$10,000, rebated for building with alternative energy. Community garden, rainwater retention system, outdoor amphitheater, 500-acre nature preserve, waterfalls, hiking trails, community activities. Gorgeous. Rural setting with easy access to city amenities. Education and cultural events nearby at ivy-league University of the South. See www.sewaneecreek.com. Contact *Grant* 931-442-1444.

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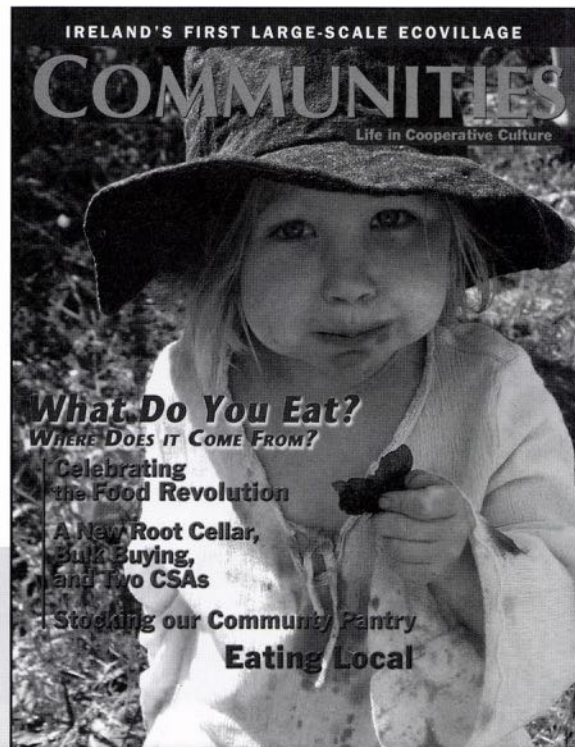
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If you are interested and would like to know more - please contact Sandra Mucci or Sharon Ballah, at info@camphill.on.ca or telephone 1-705-424-5363 ext 225.

upon 78.59 acres of forested hillside and bottom. See www.spectrumz.com/villa.

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

CONSULTANTS

FACILITATION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND CONSENSUS TRAINING. Are your meetings poorly attended, boring, or nonproductive? Could your group's communication skills and decision-making processes use a boost? Does your community need help processing a difficult, emotional, or contentious issue? Eris Weaver can help! 707-338-8589; eris@erisweaver.info; www.erisweaver.info.

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 of helpful articles, handouts and more—all free. Contact: *Tree Bressen, 541-343-3855; tree@ic.org; www.treegroup.info.*

INTERNS, RESIDENCIES

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, tempeh production, homestead maintenance and construction skills, consensus decision-making, group and interpersonal process. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for ten weeks or longer. More information about the Sandhill Farm Intentional Community and applying for an internship: 660-883-5543; interns@sandhillfarm.org; www.sandhillfarm.org.

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

WANT TO LIVE RENT FREE - anywhere in the world? There are empty homes in

every state and country, and property owners are looking for trustworthy people to live in them as caretakers and house-sitters! *The Caretaker Gazette* contains these property caretaking/house-sitting openings in all 50 states and foreign countries. Published since 1983, subscribers receive 1,000+ property caretaking opportunities each year, worldwide. Some of these openings also offer compensation in addition to free housing. Short, medium and long-term assignments in every issue. Subscriptions: \$29.95/yr. *The Caretaker Gazette*, 3 Estancia Lane, Boerne, TX 78006; 830-755-2300; www.caretaker.org; caretaker@caretaker.org.

PEOPLE LOOKING

SPIRITUAL SEEKER looking to find a well-developed community in a warm climate. I am a 53-year old, partly retired lesbian Buddhist. I have 30 years of experience in accounting and finance. *Mary, OakParkIllinois@yahoo.com.*

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

RESOURCES

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3-DAY MOUNTAIN TAOIST RETREAT, JAN. 15-18, 2009. SunDo breathing meditation and qi energy practice: Teachings on the Way preserved by the Mountain Hermits for thousands of years, now being offered to modern society through Master Hyunmoon Kim for personal healing and self-reliance, for strengthening our communities, and for the preservation of the Way for future generations. Don't miss this rare opportunity to begin Mountain Taoist training under the guidance of an authentic Teacher of the Way. Held at Glen Ivy Community & Retreat Center, Glen Ivy, CA (1.5 hours from Los Angeles). www.LifegateInstitute.org, 1-888-441-0489, x4, or www.Sundo.org

ECOVILLAGE NETWORK OF CANADA

(continued from p. 21)

ness model is known throughout the US, UK, and Western Europe in various forms, such as credit unions. Although corporations are by far the dominant business model, the case of Mondragón Cooperative Corporation of Spain, considered the world's largest worker cooperative with over 150 companies, helps prove the versatility of the co-op model. Many ecovillages in Canada have chosen this model in parallel with or in place of

a corporation. Whole Village, Eco-Reality, Kakwa Ecovillage, Yarrow Ecovillage, and O.U.R. Ecovillage each use the cooperative model as a tool to further their business models.

The Ecovillage Network of Canada is part of the ENA, Ecovillage Network of the Americas. With the resurgence of the movement across Canada and increased interest within the public sphere in all things related to sustainability, the ENC is in a unique position to offer leadership via example. The now famous 100-mile diet is a paean to localism. It was born in British Columbia. Ecovillages have

always been about the development of local food and local economies. As with many "green" concepts, the larger society is adopting or sees value within our basic ideals. We're now witnessing huge support for alternative/renewable energies and greater respect for the idea of the interrelatedness of the global ecosystem. The needed change is gathering momentum. This generation has an opportunity to make significant

strides. There are many types of ecovillages within the Global Village from the very rural to the ultra urban, and their increasing influence is being felt in Canada. In many cases it is the recognition that the minutiae within our everyday lives have the power to change the world. ❁

Russ Purvis, MSc Architecture, is founder of Kakwa Ecovillage Cooperative (www.kakwaecovillage.com) located in British Columbia, Canada. Currently he is Vice President of the Ecovillage Network of Canada (ecovillagenetworkcanada.ning.com)

As with many "green" concepts, the larger society is adopting or sees value within our basic ideals. We're now witnessing huge support for alternative/renewable energies and greater respect for the idea of the interrelatedness of the global ecosystem.

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WE REFUSE TO BE ENEMIES

(continued from p. 25)

They feel just as I do when I see my children. They are 15 and 17 and since our land has been destroyed the walls of their rooms are full of posters depicting suicide bombers. I am afraid that my children will one day take revenge on your children. We can stop it. Now. You say that you protect your brothers. I honour you for that. But I am your brother, too. You ought to protect me as well."

The soldiers are stunned. Never before have they heard the "enemy" talk like this. One of them gets up and brings him water. Fayez as well has never had the opportunity before to talk in such a way to soldiers.

In a Jewish Settlement

We also visit Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Settlers are the "bad people," we were warned by our Palestinian friends. Settlements, their access roads, and hundreds of checkpoints cutting through the entire West Bank, make it impossible for Palestinians to travel freely. Again we do not meet enemies, rather the opposite: it is like having a look into the mirror. What they have built up in the middle of the Middle East looks too much like any

European or US residential area for it to be ignored. To ignorantly shut oneself off from one's surroundings, to build a fortress, to overlook the neediness of the neighbours, to take from them land, rights, and mobility—well, to condemn this state of affairs is to condemn our European way of living. The only difference is that in Europe or the USA those who are exploited and shut out are farther away!

We hear stories of an almost child-like faith telling them that God wants to have them in this country. We see in them ignorance, self-justification, and a state of being strangers vis-à-vis the world—and also fear and confusion. But as they notice that we do not judge them but want to understand them, we also hear their questions and their wish for peace. Certainly these people are no enemies. The enemies are the ignorance and the indifference on both sides.

The virus of separation is rampant not only amongst Israelis and Palestinians. Everyone has the mirror held up to him a thousand times by the daily challenges of being together on this pilgrimage. In the words of Aida, one of our Bedouin Israelis: "I have fought so much. I have turned my life into a fortress against the truth. Incredible, how much I stand on the side

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International peace workers on a four-week pilgrimage through the Holy Land.

LEILA DREGGER

of war, although I have written peace on my banner."

We refuse to be enemies. What are the connotations this sentence has when projected on our own life—on our own love?

An older female participant, a real veteran of the peace movement, says: "This is the first time that I have been together with a group for this long without internal fighting breaking out."

Community proves to be a real antidote to the virus of separation. An atmosphere grows in which it is possible to truly look for and think about concrete solutions.

We have planted a seed of peace from which we hope peace will germinate.

For sure, the children will throw stones again when we leave. For sure, the soldiers will take some children to jail, and settlers will attack farmers or vice versa. In other words: many impulses and heart openings which we may have induced will die away again. But a vision has been created and a core group has committed itself to a Peace Research Village in the Middle East, for which concrete preparations are under way. ❀

The next Grace pilgrimage led by Sabine Lichtenfels will take place in Colombia in October 2008. Interested people please write to info@sos-sanjose.org or visit www.sos-sanjose.org. Sabine Lichtenfels wrote a book about her experience: GRACE—Pilgrimage for a Future without War (ISBN 978-3-927266-25-4).

For more information about the planned Peace Research Village in the Middle East, about the next pilgrimages, about Sabine Lichtenfels, or about Tamera, see www.sabine-lichtenfels.com, www.the-grace-foundation.org, www.grace-pilgrimage.com, www.tamera.org.

Leila Dregger is an independent journalist, teacher of peace journalism, and writer, born many years ago in Germany and now based in the community of Tamera in Portugal. Her main themes are nature, international and internal peace work, and healing in the relationship of women and men. Note: We preserve the spelling of our Commonwealth country authors.

PROPOSALS

(continued from p. 53)

There's generally a way out. Almost always, "Z" (or "not Z," if you prefer to look at this the other way around) is a conclusion, and not a fundamental value. The key to getting unstuck is peeling back the deadline positions to the underlying interests. Most times, each side is looking at the same problem through a different lens, each of which is a legitimate group value. So, for example, would it be that shocking if an analysis focused on affordability came to a completely different conclusion than one emphasizing environmental impact?

The good news is that affordability and environmental impact are not sworn enemies. By identifying these two as baseline interests you now have much more room to work with. Let go of Z and not-Z; focus instead on finding proposals that do a decent job of balancing these two interests. [Hint: in the end it may turn out that Z (or not-Z) is actually a good

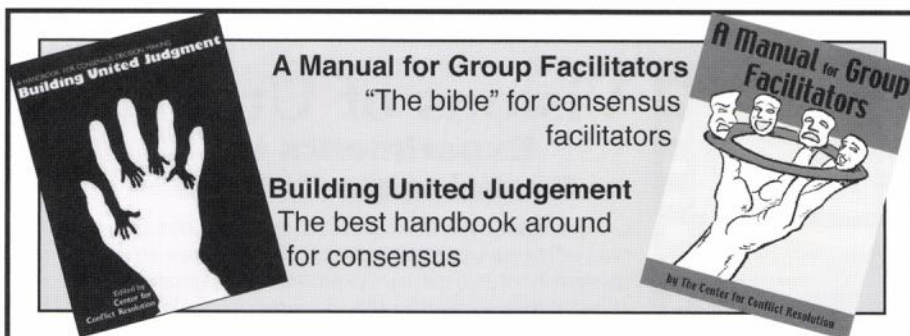
proposal; but the energy around it will be completely different because everyone has acknowledged and honored that both core interests need to be taken into account. People can be amazingly graceful about specifics if they feel that their core interests are fully understood and will be taken care of.] ❀

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LIVING THE WILD

(continued from p. 37)

of academic work. Living intensely with students outside, day and night, traditional faculty authority is minimized as true democratic education arises in the AEI student group.

As an experiential education program, we also minimize the divide between "school life" and "the real world." What we eat and where we buy our food, the books we read, the questions we ask of people we meet—all of these are opportunities to actively change the world around us. As an education program, we try to interweave academic work with political action. Student academic requirements have been met by writing articles on anti-corporate rule in hometown newspapers, eating a vegan diet for a semester, and creative sidewalk chalk art-education on climate change on the streets of downtown urban centers.

November 25th, Fort Collins, Colorado:

It is the day after Thanksgiving, the biggest shopping day of the year in North

America. One of our academic assignments this semester is a community activist project. After several long meetings, we have decided to stage an educational demonstration to support the reclamation of this day as "Buy Nothing Day." We have decided to post ourselves in front of a well-known outdoor gear store. We have consciously decided to recognize our own role in over-consumption through choosing to protest in front of a store most of us have shopped at. With small hand-painted signs and fliers we move through the parking lot, post ourselves in front of the doors.

Although we have a few good conversations with incoming shoppers, mostly we are underwhelmed by reactions. We are hassled, teased, and ignored by most. There is a 50-percent-off sale taking place, and we find several of our community members quickly inside the store buying needed water bottles, long underwear, even a backcountry espresso maker. We last about an hour and a half before we decide it is time to leave.

"Be the Change"

And the outcome of this social and educational experiment? Students (and fac-



PAIGE DOUGHTY

The What is Sustainable exercise: Taking learning out to the streets (and grocery stores) with the AEI Ravenwood Summer Sustainable Program.

ulty) step out into the world who are voting, who are vocal, thinking and acting with a creative community mind. Students are learning to "be the change they wish to see in the world." Recent graduates of AEI are now doing everything from running the international ecovillage education program for the Findhorn Foundation, to creating local urban farming and food networks in Portland, Oregon, to quietly working for social, political, and environmental change in their own local hometowns across the USA. We are a small school, working quietly and perhaps unnoticed on the edges of a manic American popular culture. And yet we are adding a bit more wood to the fire of cultural change.

Early December, The Lost Coast of California:

"But what if I want to just be a calculus teacher?" asks Martin, a graduate student from Boston. "What if I don't want to think any more about global warming, politically correct language, non-violent communication, deforestation, water privatization...what if I just want to have my own office, my own classroom, my own family. I never asked to have my eyes 'knocked wide open,' and now, what if I just want to go back to eating Big Macs, watching American Idol, and driving my Ford Explorer to Walmart? I'm sick of this hippie nature-bible-camp!"

As a devoted faculty member, I feel it is my responsibility to respond here, to explain that amongst the cultural and

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LIVING THE WILD

(continued from p. 74)

environmental weave of the 21st century, there is no such thing as “just a calculus teacher,” that every action, occupation, social interaction, every Happy Meal eaten or bicycle mile traveled, is a political act. I clear my throat, ready to wax philosophic in eloquent phrasing about social responsibility in these times of ecological crisis. But no words come. Like Martin, there are times where I am also sick of the eco-groovy-PC-liberal dogma, times that I want to eat tropical bananas in winter and drive four hours to the mountains for a ski-weekend. I realize I have no answer for Martin. As a teacher here, I can offer the questions, but we must each live into our own answers. ❁

Arin Trook is a professional educator weaving wild lands, creative art, deep community living, and social evolution. He is currently living in Sieben Linden Ecovillage in Germany.

SOMERVILLE ECOVILLAGE

(continued from p. 61)

endeavour in every possible way from personal growth to looking after the environment to living in harmony with one another. I feel excited and privileged to be part of Somerville, to be part of a new way of looking at life.”

Late afternoon, I leave Somerville Ecovillage and drive back to Perth, coping with rush-hour traffic, large trucks, and stressed-out fellow drivers. I wonder if Somerville Ecovillage would suit people like them—or only the highly aware, sophis-

ticated people I met today? Indeed, can such intentional communities ever suit more than a small minority? I am unsure. But when I think back to that group I met six years ago and see their dramatic progress, I realise that Somerville Ecovillage has the potential to become a great intentional community. ❁



NEIL ROBERTSON

Somerville community at the blessing of their new labyrinth.

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 Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, and a past president of ICSA. For more on Somerville Ecovillage, see www.somervilleecovillage.com.au. Note: We preserve the spelling of our Commonwealth country authors.



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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.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

(continued from p. 8)

lined). Because it involved a question of organizational values, I told him I couldn't make the call on my own and that FIC's Board of Directors would have to chew it over.

Still, I encouraged him to bring the idea forward and not shy away just because it was challenging (that's the Board's job after all). Over the years, we've learned that there's a strong relationship between our readership and the people who shop at natural food stores. In that regard, Whole Foods is a great fit. Yet we also believe there is a strong small-is-beautiful sentiment among our readership—

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people who will greet a Whole Foods ad with the same enthusiasm as opening a container of leftover egg salad that's been left in the sun for three days. So it's not obvious which way to go.

In June, at the FIC's organizational meetings in New Mexico, I diligently brought this issue up for Board consideration. Just as with John and me, the Board struggled as well. While we're always looking for additional advertising revenue, our main concern was the values match between Whole Foods and our readership. Though no match is perfect, was this one good enough?

Ultimately, we decided to ask for reader input. We invite you to visit communities.ic.org, click on the hyperlink for the Whole Foods poll, and give us your opinion. We'll conduct this poll through the end of the year and let you know what you tell us. If nothing else, we'll find out a bit more about who our readers are, as well something about who you think FIC is. And that's always a good idea. ✿

POLITICS ON OPEN LAND

(continued from p. 56)



can say, 'Hey, who d'you think you are calling a meeting, head honcho or sumthin'?' Cows have no guru aspirations. And while you're at it, you might as well evoke the ancient Vedic tradition and worship them. They're very sweet and benign goddesses."

All our experiments in dissolving traditional societal assumptions have been useful, even if only to discover certain innate truths about the human animal. And according to Erich Fromm, "[Isolation of the individual] brings on a sense of separation from others and from himself, a lack of joy and, finally, an indifference to life itself—his own life and that of others." Open Land community melts that lack. Open land opens hearts. ✿

Ramón Sender Barayón has lived in various intentional communities, including the Bruderhof (1950s) and its exact opposites, Morningstar and Wheeler's ranches (1960s-'70s). His books include the online history of both sixties communes (badabamama.com/HomeFree.html) and published titles: a Spanish Civil War family memoir (A Death In Zamora, 2003), collected essays and articles (A Planetary Sojourn, 2008), Being of the Sun co-authored with Alicia Bay Laurel (Harper & Row, 1973), The Morningstar Scrapbook (1976), and the novel Zero Weather (Family Publishing, 1980).

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KAT KINKADE
(continued from p. 79)



JOAN MAZZA

TOP: Kat in the office, 1973.

RIGHT: Kat on the day her rabbits arrived. She had hoped to breed rabbits in a warren next to her house in Mineral.



JOAN MAZZA

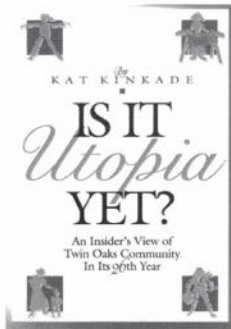
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An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community in its 26th Year
by Kat Kinkade

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

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KAT KINKADE

(continued from p. 80)

annual Twin Oaks Communities Conference, usually sneaking off for a couple hours Sunday morning. She'd receive visitors in her upholstered reclining chair, while I sat on the couch. During the course of the visit, one or more of her five cats might wander through the conversation and we'd touch on what we were reading, what we were thinking about, mutual acquaintances, community politics, and how our children were faring—roughly in that order.



DEREK BREEN

Ninety minutes would pass in a blink. Instead of Tuesdays with Morrie, these last handful of Augusts I had Sundays with Kat. It had become a precious ritual that has now, sadly, come to an end.

• • •

Kat had a sharp tongue and didn't suffer fools well; fortunately she was an equal opportunity lampooner and was willing to laugh at herself with the same gusto with which she skewered others. You needed to experience the needling in both directions to get the full picture of her wit, as well as her hunger for substance and appreciation for elegance.

• • •

Kat was a gifted writer, able to capture the essence of complex topics using straightforward language and crisp images that easily placed the reader in the narrative—she had that rare capacity to reach her audience both viscerally and cerebrally.

I recall walking with her at Twin Oaks in the spring of 1990, while the FIC was assembling the first edition of our *Communities Directory*. I told her we wanted an article that explained to prospectives how to think intelligently about visiting an intentional



TIM HICKMAN

community. Realizing instantly how valuable that would be, she got inspired. The next morning she handed me a polished article, so good that we kept it in print for ten years. The trick of getting her to write about something was capturing her imagination. Fortunately, it was a big target.

She authored *A Walden Two Experiment* in 1972, chronicling the first five years of Twin Oaks [a community inspired by behaviorist B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*], and later *Is It Utopia Yet?*, covering the same subject in 1994, 26 years into the experiment. They remain classics today, perhaps the best examples I know of attempts to give the lay person a realistic peek behind the curtain of mystery and excitement that is life in an intentional community. ❁



TIM HICKMAN

TOP LEFT: Kat cuddle.

TOP: Walt and Kat weave a hammock on a flimsy-looking early weaving jig in Central field while Rudy observes.

ABOVE: Kat and others harvesting corn from Central Field. The big White Oak at end of the Twin Oaks Road driveway is visible to the left. No apple orchard has yet been planted.

BELOW: First communities conference, held in the central field at Twin Oaks.



COURTESY OF RAY JESSE BLATT

Memories of Kat from Calliope Kurtz:

I read *Is It Utopia Yet?* multiple times. It's a beloved text, a page-turner.

Ostensibly the ultimate Twin Oaks insider, Kat delighted in debunking her own "utopia," simultaneously playing the role of a contrarian Twin Oaks outsider—the recalcitrant middle-aged woman who brought the microwave to the "ecovillage." However often she couldn't resist ridiculing New Agey hippie sensibilities, she always did so with literary wit—and a firm, pulsing heart.

It was her dialectical stance, ever questioning the status quo, even that of the world she engendered, that made Twin Oaks plausible—and desirable to me. If I thought "utopia" was but a merry troupe of chanting, dancing, hugging, hallucinating longhairs living on brown rice and sunbeams, I never would have bothered. It was Kat's grounded, grouchy persona that appealed to me.

As much as I'm down with smiles and good will to others, I'd never trust a "utopia" in which a person wasn't also free to frown a little on rainy days. That, at least narratively, was, I believe, Kat's greatest flourish. No behaviorist brainwashing here, Kat only took from Skinner the elements he cribbed from other socialist writers. Then she made it earth, water, fire, and critters. ✿



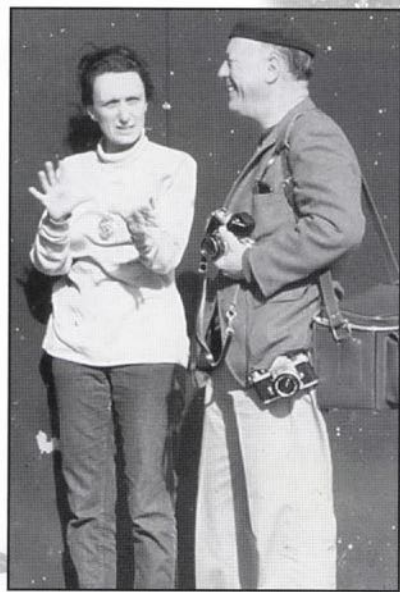
J.P. KAWATSKI

For more pictures of Kat, see page 77.

We Are Discovered By The Hippies

By Kat Kinkade

(Excerpt from issue #5 of *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, published in March of 1968, by Kat)



COURTESY OF RAY JESSE BLATT

Kat manages The Press: A New York Times reporter at Twin Oaks.

There is a sense in which Twin Oaks is entirely unique. It is the only community at present which deliberately takes Walden Two as a model. But there are people who consider Twin Oaks part of a national movement—a movement in the direction of small communities. On one side of us (ideologically) are the religious groups, such as the Society of Brothers or the Hutterites. Though our aims are widely divergent, we have in common with these communities our basic communal structure—a common treasury, communally organized work, common dining, etc. And on the other side of us are the hippie communes.

There is little written information on the hippie communes, and we have to rely on word of mouth, but we get the general picture that they, too, have something in common with us. This time the common ground is philosophical. The hippies, like us, believe that life should be full of joy and freedom and restricted as little as possible by conventional trivia. They differ from us in that they entirely reject structure. Their communes have no bylaws, no members in a legal sense, and no clear plans for their continuance. Then there is the obvious difference in our recreations: there are no drugs permitted at Twin Oaks.

Despite our difference, the hippies are interested in us. A few have already visited, and it is likely that warm weather will bring others. At first we looked on these visits with thinly veiled dismay, but time and experience are calming our worries. Hippies are, it turns out, only people. They are much like other visitors—a shade less formal than some. They want to know the same things—what are we? What do we do here? And, like other visitors, most of them give some thought to membership, ask themselves how they would fit in. Maybe they decide they don't want to give up drugs or that communal life isn't important enough to justify raising the entrance fee. If a hippie does join the community, what then? No problem. When he begins to wash dishes and split wood, we don't think of him as a hippie any more. He's just a member with long hair. ✿



COURTESY OF RAY JESSE BLATT

BACKGROUND: JAY P. KAWATSKI



In Memoriam: **Kat Kinkade** **1930-2008**

Kat Kinkade, community visionary and cofounder of three communities (Twin Oaks in Louisa, VA, East Wind in Tecumseh, MO, and Acorn in Louisa, VA), died peacefully in her room at Twin Oaks on Thursday, July 3, 2008, of complications related to bone cancer. She was buried in the graveyard at Twin Oaks the following day in a simple ceremony. Following are a few remembrances; for more tributes and photos, see katkinkade.ning.com.

Excerpts from Kat's obituary, written by her daughter, Josie Kinkade:

The early years at Twin Oaks were difficult but exciting. Kat believed in the idea of the community so strongly that she was not deterred by 25 cents a week spending money, having to take turns commuting to Richmond to find temporary work, or by folks who found the lifestyle too difficult and left.

She believed strongly in equality, and was careful to include others in setting up bylaws that would prevent any one person from telling others what to do. An incisive thinker, she "led through persuasion" and helped put in place systems that still help make Twin Oaks the success it is today.

• • •

An important part of Kat's life was music. She joined the Yanceyville Church, where she sang in the choir and wrote music, including parts of

an adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. She wrote a light-hearted play, "Utopia," for Twin Oaks based on show tunes from various musicals. For ten years she was involved in Sacred Harp music of early America, and composed several pieces in this genre as well.

• • •

At the age of 70, Kat decided she wanted to try living in a house of her own, something she had never had the opportunity to do. She moved into a tiny little house in Mineral, and enjoyed planting many beautiful flowers, rescuing five cats of her own, and bottle-feeding the occasional litter as a foster mom. Last December, when she became too weak to live on her own, Twin Oaks graciously took her back in and took care of her in a way that only the most attentive and loving of families would have done. When she passed away, her beloved cat Oolong was by her side. ❁

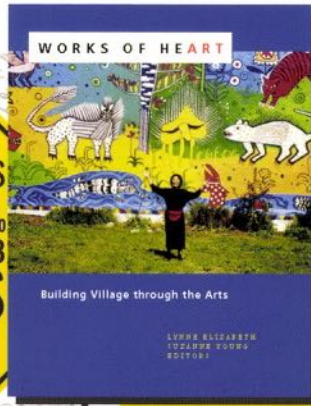
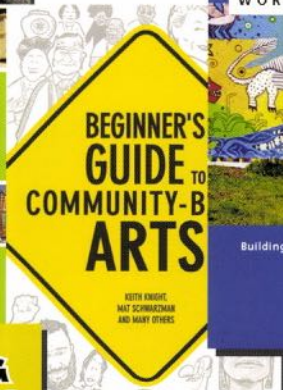
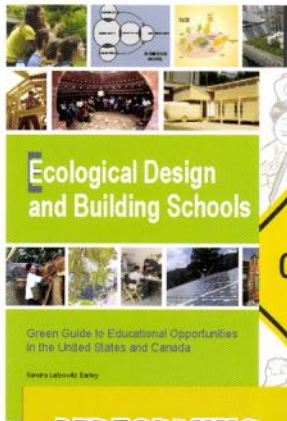
Excerpts from a blog entry by Laird Schaub:

I last saw Kat in August, at the cottage her daughter Josie had bought for her. In recent years it had become a ritual for me to come by for a visit during the

(continued on p. 78)



PHOTOS THIS PAGE: JAY P. KAWATSKI



books to build vibrant community

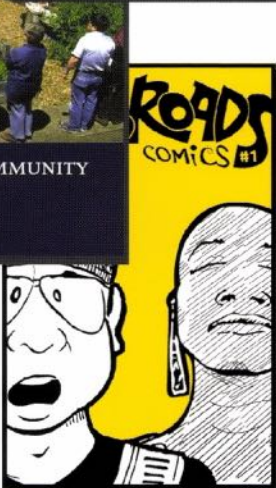
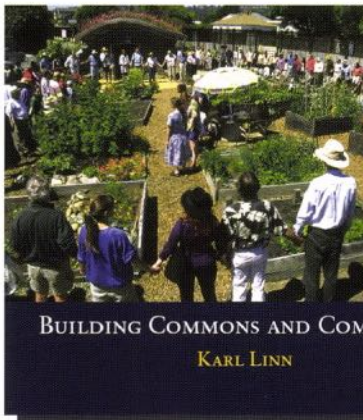
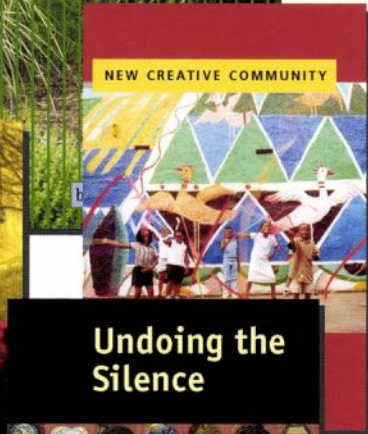
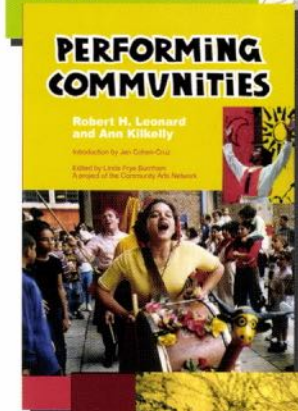
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