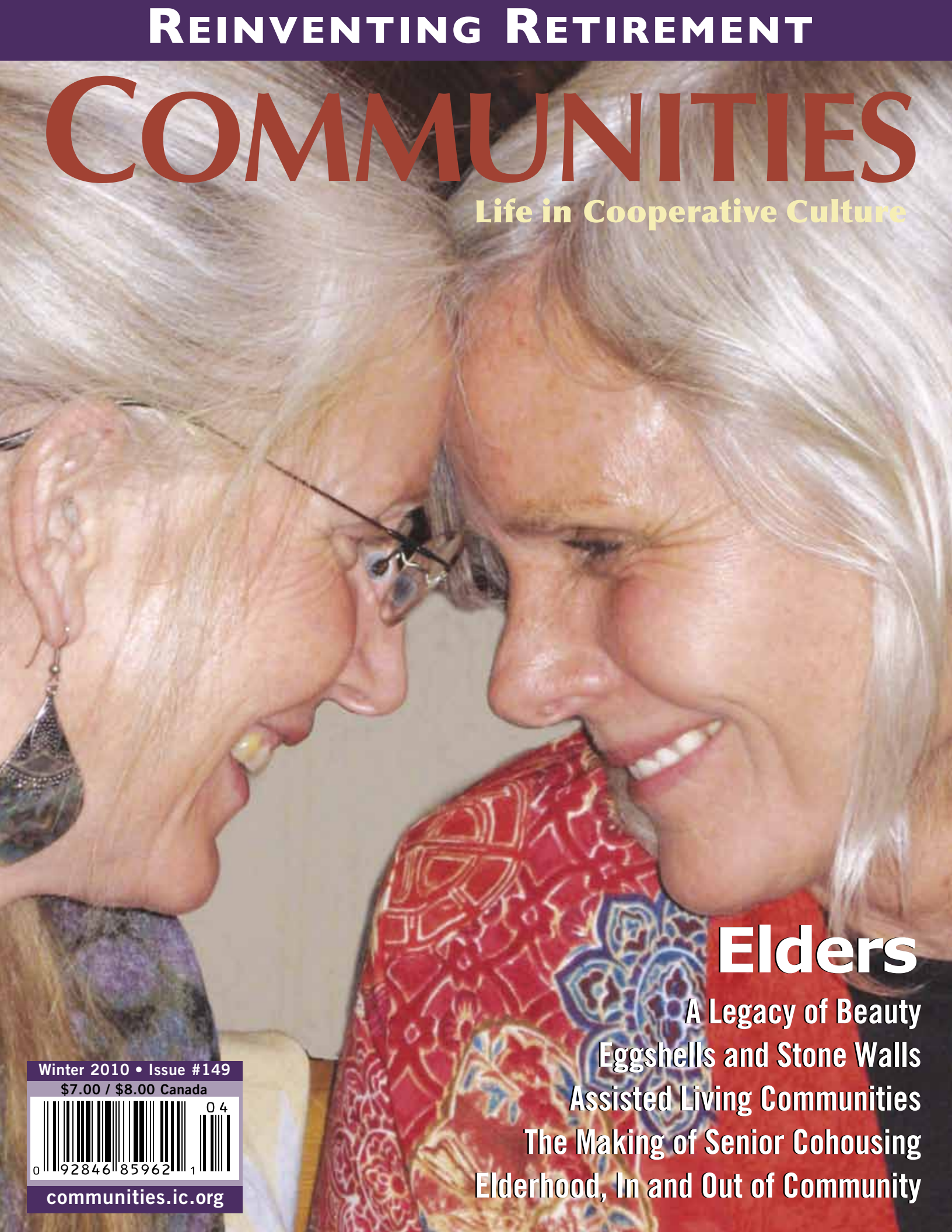


REINVENTING RETIREMENT

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture



Elders

**A Legacy of Beauty
Eggshells and Stone Walls
Assisted Living Communities
The Making of Senior Cohousing
Elderhood, In and Out of Community**

Winter 2010 • Issue #149

\$7.00 / \$8.00 Canada



communities.ic.org



YURTS



Room in the Round



When you raise your Rainier Yurt, you can count on superior craftsmanship, easy installation and excellent customer service at a fraction of the cost, to you and the environment, of a traditional home.

Call today for a free brochure 800.869.7162
Since 1896 | www.RainierYurts.com

Tools for the Journey

Partner with America's cohousing leaders.



CONSULTING SERVICES

As pioneers in America's cohousing movement, Wonderland Hill and CoHousing Partners are uniquely positioned to provide you with the right tools to create a cohousing community that truly thrives.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Our team can help you throughout the processes of finance, design and construction to create an attractive and functional neighborhood.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PRACTICES

Our real-world experience in community and building can help you fulfill the promise of cohousing by creating a community of cooperation and interaction.

Make a difference with your cohousing community. To learn more about our consulting services, contact Jim Leach at 303.449.3232 or jim@whdc.com.



www.whdc.com www.cohousingpartners.com



Yulia Z.



Photo courtesy of Dianne G. Brause



Photo courtesy of Victoria Albright

Elders

15 **Getting Elder All the Time** Chris Roth

Community can be balm for the discomforts of aging, just as elders' wisdom and caring can soothe the growing pains of youth.

16 **It Takes a Community to Grow an Elder** Rebecca Dale

After confronting an identity crisis worthy of adolescence, a 65-year-old finds a new home in community and discovers that elderhood is a blessing, not a curse.

18 **Elderhood, In and Out of Community** Dianne G. Brause

A disenchanted community founder leaves her group, and finds that her rural hometown farming community and international travel and service better match her vision of honorable elderhood.

- **Further Thoughts on a Community's Changes**

24 **On Becoming Elders** Arjuna da Silva

For many baby boomers, taking on the mantle of eldership means transforming the sometimes rambunctious, in-your-face, empowerment-obsessed energy they worked so hard to sustain.

- **Generational Crossroads**

27 **And I Listen:** **Staying connected and building trust when adult children choose the "alternative" lifestyle of living in community** Victoria Albright

Howling, shouting, cries of despair, and The Pierced One greet a parent on her first visit to her daughter's adopted community. Luckily, through lots of talking and listening, things improve.

32 **Remembering Jane Owen: New Harmony's Joyful Elder** Nancy Roth

In reviving and restoring the site of two historical intentional communities, a town's benefactor revitalized its sense of present-day community as she continued to dream, create, grow, and give.

34 **Snapshots of Elders...** **The Beauty and Bounty of Aging Within Community** Niánn Emerson Chase

In a community in Arizona, several dozen valued and active elders enrich the lives of others and are themselves enriched.

Photo courtesy of Blue Evening Star



Photo courtesy of Suzanne Marriott



**40 The Elder and the Community:
Perspectives from São Paulo**
Beatriz Vera Pozzi Redko

A Brazilian elder challenges prejudice as she commits herself to education, service, sustainability, and community.

42 Four Steps to an Elder's Throne
Understanding R Israel, M. Ed.

A Native American and intentional community elder celebrates her role and shares some tips.

43 Kronus and Crone
Isis Aquarian

Embodying the third and final stages of the God and Goddess Trinity, Elders are the caretakers of invaluable wisdom.

44 Aging in Community
Raines Cohen

From senior cohousing and village networks to elders' guilds and more, a broad movement offers alternatives to the aging-industrial complex.

- Definition of an Elder; Elders' Guild

**46 The Making of Senior Cohousing:
The Story of Wolf Creek Lodge**
Suzanne Marriott

A senior cohousing group progresses from idea to reality, with a full range of setbacks, successes, and lessons along the way.

52 Reinventing Retirement and Assisted Living Communities
Jennifer Munns Burnham (JaFoo)

For many aging baby boomers seeking alternatives to living alone or in quasi-institutional residences, cooperative culture will be an imperative.

54 Green Houses: Providing Humane Care for Elders
Deborah Altus

An alternative to conventional nursing facilities offers personalized schedules, a home-like environment, and a holistic approach to aging.

- A Songaian Perspective on Long-Term Care

VOICES

4 REMEMBRANCES
Remembering Fred Lanphear;
Remembering Margo Adair

6 PUBLISHER'S NOTE
The Passing of a Gentle
Warrior for Peace
Laird Schaub

10 COOPERATIVE GROUP SOLUTIONS
Eggshells and Stone Walls
Tree Bressen, Beatrice Briggs,
Laird Schaub

57 COMMUNITY LIVING WORLDWIDE
Mish'ol: An Urban Kibbutz
Bill Metcalf

60 REVIEWS
The View from #410;
Days of Fire and Glory;
An Unconventional Journey
Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig

64 GROUP PROCESS
Six Traps: How Good
Meetings Go Bad
Beatrice Briggs

65 GROUP PROCESS
Poor Minutes Lead to Wasted Hours:
Keys to Effective Notetaking
Laird Schaub

80 CREATING COOPERATIVE CULTURE
Tamar Friedner: Leaving a
Legacy of Beauty

CONNECTING

67 REACH

ON THE COVER

A Sacred Moment
Between Friends.
Beaming mutual
respect and
affection, elders
Marayeh and Ionia
of Global
Community
Communications
Alliance share a
smile at a women's
gathering.



Photo by DesManae DellErba

EDITOR

Chris Roth (*Sandhill Farm, Dancing Rabbit*)

ART DIRECTOR

Yulia Zarubina-Brill

BUSINESS MANAGER

Tanya Carwyn (*Earthaven*)

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Tanya Carwyn (*Earthaven*)

OFFICE MANAGER

Tony Sirna (*Dancing Rabbit*)

CIRCULATION MANAGER

McCune Porter (*Twin Oaks*)

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Deborah Altus

Marty Klaif (*Shannon Farm*)

Tony Sirna (*Dancing Rabbit*)

COMMUNITIES (ISSN 0199-9346) is published quarterly by the Fellowship for Intentional Community at RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563. Periodicals postage paid at Rutledge MO and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to **COMMUNITIES**, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$24 US, \$29 Canada, \$31 outside US/Canada for four issues via periodical/surface mail. Single copies are \$7 US, \$8 Canada, \$9 outside US/Canada. All payments in US dollars. Available from **COMMUNITIES**, 138 Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093; order@ic.org, or order online at store.ic.org.

BACK ISSUES: RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563; 800-995-8342.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Chris Roth, Editor, **COMMUNITIES**, RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 660-883-5545; editor@ic.org.

© 2010 by Fellowship for Intentional Community. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Opinions expressed by authors and correspondents are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

FELLOWSHIP FOR INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY: RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563; 660-883-5545; www.ic.org.

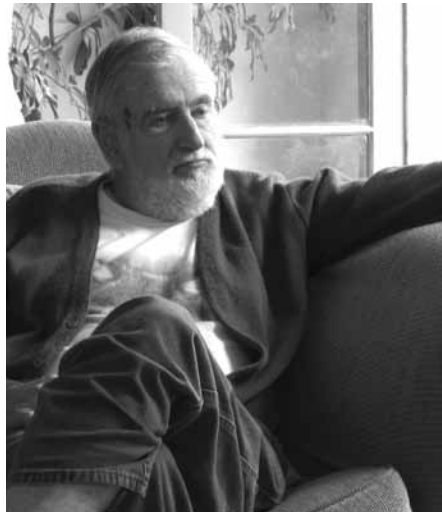
REPRINT PERMISSION: Community groups may reprint with permission. Please contact **COMMUNITIES**, RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge Mo 63563; 660-883-5545; editor@ic.org.

ADVERTISING: Tanya Carwyn, Business Manager, 7 Hut Terrace, Black Mountain NC 28711; 828-669-0997; ads@ic.org.

WEBSITE: communities.ic.org.

This magazine printed on recycled paper, using soy-based inks, at Allen Press in Lawrence, Kansas, USA.

REMEMBRANCES



Remembering Fred Lanphear

Fred Orville Lanphear, an important contributor to the communities movement and cofounder of Songaia Cohousing Community (Songaia.com), died on September 9, 2010 at the age of 74. Fred passed surrounded by his loving family, including Nancy Lanphear, his wife of 51 years, his three children, and most of his grandchildren. Earlier in the evening, his Songaia neighbors sang with and for him. We sang four of his favorite songs including Simple Gifts and Song of the Soul. This blend of family and community was core to Fred's way of being in the world.

Fred's life was one of quiet accomplishment. He was a doer, a hands-on greener of the earth, a student and teacher of spirit, and a builder of community. His leadership was expressed through collaboration—he helped gather people into groups and empowered them to tell good stories, make good symbols, and sing good songs. Throughout the last stage of his life, he accepted and embraced his final journey. He shifted into an inspiring life of being; he helped others face mortality as they participated and supported his gradual transformation to spirit.

Fred's tireless devotion to the Songaia community began with the first articulation of its vision in 1990. His organizing skills served the evolving community well during its 10-year journey to construction in 2000. As the 13 Songaia families moved in, his nurturing support continued the development of a strong community culture with frequent gatherings over common meals, celebrations of the earth, circles, singing, and many events—both internal and outward-facing. His most visible contributions are the landscape and garden designs that enhance the natural beauty of the Songaia land. In recent years, Fred and Nancy invested in Songaia's expansion as we acquired two adjoining properties, allowing additional families to join the community.

Many of those in the intentional communities movement came to know Fred through his volunteer work in national, regional, and local groups. Fred served on the board of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) from 2003-2009. He cofounded the Northwest Intentional Communities Association, which has hosted regular community gatherings in the Pacific Northwest since 1992. He also attended and presented at National Cohousing Conferences. At the 2009 Conference, he was honored with the first FIC Geoph Kozeny Communitarian Award, which is given to someone whose life's work has promoted community.

Fred served many as a role model and mentor. People felt good when they were around Fred and he enjoyed their company. His work was play and his play was work. Many at Songaia lived with Fred for many years and witnessed his growth into an Earth Elder, a role he helped define and embraced fully as he shared his love of the Earth and told its story in the context of the universe.

Until his 72nd year, he was a tireless worker. He thoroughly enjoyed garden work, carpentry, and designing landscapes. Although he was a professor of horticulture at Purdue University in his 30s, he was "Farmer Fred" to his fellow Songaians, especially the children.

Fred's passing was expected because he lived with ALS for about three years. He

REMEMBRANCES

faced this devastating disease with grace and good spirit. His community-based approach to ALS had a strong positive impact on the people around him. Shortly after his diagnosis, he invited Songaia members to be part of his final adventure. He was not asking for help, he was inviting others to participate in his journey to the degree that it felt right to them. The community whole-heartedly responded to Fred's invitation and as the disease progressed, his community and family provided increasing levels of personal care, with some supplementary professional support.

In anticipation of his passing, Fred recorded 35 video messages in which he shared his appreciations of Songaia Community members. These two- to four-minute videos have been viewed privately by members, who heard Fred tell about the ways he treasured their relationships. These video clips have had great impact on our children, as they continue to learn about losing a person they love.

Fred was an important role model for many. His inspiration spanned many realms of community: residential intentional communities, communities of spirit, alternative medicine, and more.

Fred will continue to share with the Universe for years to come, both through his direct impact on others, the organizations he supported and helped create, and his writing. COMMUNITIES magazine readers can learn more from Fred through several articles he contributed to COMMUNITIES over the last decade. Most recently, he wrote of Songaia's involvement in his final journey in Issue #145, Winter 2009.

—Craig Ragland,

Songaia Cohousing Community, Bothell,
Washington



Remembering Margo Adair

Margo Adair—a pioneer in exploring the intersections of spirituality and social justice and a woman of unique insight and compassion—died September 3, 2010, at age 60.

Community was a thread that ran through all of Margo's lifework. For her, community was not so much a place as a way of being. Her passion was to bring people together into relationship as an essential principle of making the world whole.

Since the 1970s, Margo explored the subjective side of politics and developing

ways to address issues of power, enabling people to place their own experiences in larger cultural and historical contexts. She helped define the work of people of European descent in uprooting racism. She conducted countless workshops across the country on establishing productive, positive relationships across the differences that divide us. She co-authored with Shea Howell some of the earliest work in this area, *The Subjective Side of Politics* and *Breaking Old Patterns, Weaving New Ties*. Both works continue to influence the development of efforts across the country to address issues of race, class, and gender.

Margo went on to develop Applied Meditation, a contemplative practice integrating intuition, visualization, and mindfulness that is used by therapists and healing practitioners around the world. Her three books, *Working Inside Out*, *Meditations on Everything Under the Sun*, and *Practical Meditations for Busy Souls* (co-authored with her life and work partner, Bill Aal), explore the connections between consciousness, politics, and spirituality.

Recently, Margo's insights have been a source of inspiration for many in the communities movement. Through presentations at community conferences and workshops at intentional communities, Margo provided many communities with tools for change. Craig Ragland, from Songaia Cohousing Community, reflected that Margo's work on class differences and power had profound impact. "I just didn't appreciate how my relatively privileged background affected my perceptions of others as leaders." Craig recommends that other communitarians explore the resources section of Margo and Bill's website at toolsforchange.org.

This past November, Margo was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Rather than protest her circumstances, she characteristically responded with fearlessness. As she wrote, "Nothing like having your own life at stake to open you to life's gifts." She and Bill were blessed by an outpouring of support from the intersecting communities they were involved in. Her constant query was, "How can we build on the community that has come together around me, to be supportive of each person as we face our personal challenges?" Throughout her illness, she persisted in bringing the circle of care together

(continued on p. 76)

Editor's Note: We usually reserve pages 4 and 5 for readers' letters, but since major communities movement figures died as we prepared this issue, we are dedicating this space to remembrances. As always, in the future, we welcome reader feedback on the articles in each issue, as well as letters of more general interest. Please send your comments to editor@ic.org or COMMUNITIES, RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

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 or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work 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 also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

We do not intend to promote one kind of group 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 thematically to community living and/or cooperation, 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, RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 660-883-5545; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at communities.ic.org.

Advertising Policy

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

We handpick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to our readers. That said, we are not in a position to verify the accuracy or fairness of statements made in advertisements—unless they are FIC ads—nor in REACH listings, and publication of ads should not be considered an FIC endorsement.

If you experience a problem with an advertisement or listing, we invite you to call this to our attention and we'll look into it. Our first priority in such instances is to make a good-faith attempt to resolve any differences by working directly with the advertiser/listener and complainant. If, as someone raising a concern, you are not willing to attempt this, we cannot promise that any action will be taken.

Tanya Carwyn, Advertising Manager, 7 Hut Terrace, Black Mountain NC 28711; 828-669-0997; 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; others are both. For all their variety, though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAUB

The Passing of a Gentle Warrior for Peace

This past July, Al Andersen died peacefully, and FIC lost its last living link to its pacifist roots in the late 1940s. He was 91.

I first met Al in the fall of 1991, at Lama Foundation, where the Fellowship Board was gathered for our semi-annual meeting at 7000 feet. It was a meeting of high ideals at high altitudes. The FIC as I knew it was less than five years old; the FIC that Al knew was more than 40 years, and he came up from his winter home in Tucson to see what all us youngsters were up to, having breathed life into coals that had been banked in the 1960s.

Al applied to be a Conscientious Objector during World War II, but that status was denied him by his draft board. When he subsequently refused conscription, he wound up serving eight months of a two-year sentence in a federal prison in Danbury CT. Here is a sampling of poetry he wrote in his cell about 65 years ago:

*There's no one more unwelcome
Should he happen to call
Than the person who knows just enough
To think he knows it all.*

*Life is simple
And life is complex
But don't lose the one for the other...
If your soul is sick
Then you've settled for one;
The Cure? To seek out his brother.*

After the war ended and he was released from prison, Al moved to Yellow Springs OH to work with Arthur Morgan (who had been the president of Antioch College 1920-36) and his son Griscom, who were operating Community Service—a nonprofit that promoted the concept of small communities as a fundamental building block of a sustainable world.

Shortly after arriving in Ohio, Al conceived of convening a gathering of cooperative communities centered in the Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic States, to tackle the serious challenge of eliminating the occasion for war. He and Griscom organized that first gathering and the response was positive enough that meetings continued on a yearly basis.

Many of the regular attendees had, like Al, refused conscription in World War II and all held the hope that cooperative communities could be an inspiration for a better society. In view of the importance that this group placed on commitment, they coined the phrase “intentional” community, and styled themselves the Fellowship of Intentional Communities. In recognition of a heavy Quaker influence, the early FIC—just like the current version—made decisions by consensus, and Al was deeply touched by that process.

In 1954, Al moved to Tanguy Homestead in eastern Pennsylvania, where he joined a 38-family group that was already well established. He lived there until 1964, which was his longest stint of community living.

While the early FIC remained regionally focused and never collected dues or developed programs, it was the first ecumenical communities network that was able to sustain activities for more than a few years. Annual meetings lasted into the early '60s, after which there was a dispersal of energy and regular meetings were suspended.

Al had served in the role of Chair during the last few years, which easily explained his deep curiosity about what had been revived under the FIC banner three decades later.

After that first meeting at Lama, Al joined the current FIC and kept close tabs on our development. True to the 20-something who had lived through the horror and atrocities of a world at war, and who had nurtured in prison the will to organize gatherings of communities to discuss peace, Al retained throughout his life a steadfast dedication to his core concern for building a more humane and just world. While Al applauded FIC's commitment to promoting cooperation, at every opportunity he would respectfully advocate that the Fellowship take a more robust position about social justice. We'd explain that we took a hands-off policy when it came to how communities operated, so long as they were up front about what they did, and didn't advocate violent practices or interfere with a member's right to leave freely. While we were focusing on freedom of choice, Al never forgot the specter of Hitler, and the ways in which there is mounting evidence that the US is obsessed with world hegemony today.

He attended four or five organizational meetings over the years, and I frequently spoke with him on the phone. The last time I saw him was in August 2008, at The Friends House, a Quaker-based assisted living center in Santa Rosa CA. He and his wife Dorothy had invited me to speak on the topic of how intentional communities offer a response to US imperialism and can be the basis for a fairer and more just world. He was the same old Al, right up until the end.

As it happened, I went head to head that night with Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention in Denver. My modest audience of a dozen or so was gracious enough to videotape Barack and listen to me live.

• • •

Al was a gracious warrior for peace and he always kept his eyes on the prize right up until the end. Here is his final piece of writing, last revised just two months before his death:

Considerations in Seeking a Humane and Equitable Alternative to the “American Empire”

The goal must include commitment to sustained justice/fairness for all sentient beings, human and non-human.

What constitutes sustained justice/fairness in each historical situation is to be decided by consensus decision-making in intentional communities, each member of which is strongly committed to sustained justice/fairness for all sentient beings who might be impacted by such decisions.

Each such intentional community would then send a delegate to meet with other such delegates at their common county level; which gathering would also be committed to sustained justice/fairness for all sentient beings; where, again, decisions would be made by consensus.

Ideally, such a process of consensus decision-making would continue to the state level, and the level of world government.

• • •

So long Al, it's been good to know you. ☺

See also Al Andersen's article in COMMUNITIES #97 (Winter 1997, pp. 12-16) called “Fellowship Roots: Where We've Been; Where We Might Go,” which tells his story of the early FIC in greater depth.

Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri, where he lives. He authors a blog that can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

Communal Studies Association

Encouraging the study of Intentional Communities

Founded in 1975, the Communal Studies Association publishes *Communal Societies*, a journal covering many aspects of historical and contemporary communal societies with articles and book reviews written by academics, communitarians and preservationists.

CSA hosts an annual conference at various historic and contemporary communal sites. Awards and fellowships promote research and honor those who help achieve a greater understanding of communal living.

Join us!

CSA Office
PO Box 122 • Amana, IA 52203
Voicemail and FAX 1-319-622-6446

csa@netins.net • www.communalstudies.info

OCCIDENTAL ARTS & ECOLOGY CENTER

Permaculture Design Courses

March 5-18 • July 16-29
September 17-30

Starting and Sustaining Intentional Communities Courses

April 18-22 • October 3-7

*For complete 2011 Course Listings,
please check our website WWW.OAEC.ORG*

15290 COLEMAN VALLEY RD, OCCIDENTAL
(707) 874-1557x201 • WWW.OAEC.ORG

Occidental is located in western Sonoma County, 20 minutes west of Santa Rosa

Your financial partner.

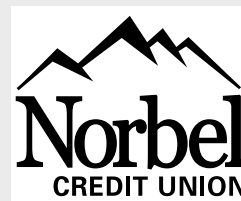
The value and benefit of a Credit Union is to help you take care of your money with integrity, honesty and responsibility.

**Norbel Credit Union
is here to help you
with the right tools:**

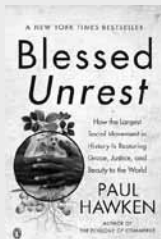
- Financial Literacy with **"FoolProof"** at www.norbel.org
- Online Billpay
- Green Checking Accounts
- Health Savings Accounts
- Rewards Debit Cards
- 16,000+ FREE ATMs
- Mortgage, Business, Auto, and Personal loans

**Understanding
community with
your interests in mind.**

**Discover more today!
www.norbel.org**



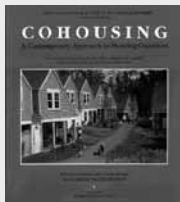
Community Bookshelf



Blessed Unrest
How The Largest Social Movement
In History Is Restoring Grace,
Justice and Beauty to the World
by Paul Hawken

2008; 342 pages; paperback
The author of this important
work has a wonderful gift
of pattern recognition that
enables him to draw from

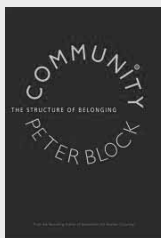
diverse sources and sew together a patchwork of information that is compelling in its message: We must work together if life on this planet as we know it today is going to survive the threats of devaluation of individual life, depleted resources, pollution, and global warming.



Cohousing
A Contemporary Approach to
Housing Ourselves
by Kathryn McCamant
and Charles Durrett

2nd Edition, 2003; 288 pages;
paperback

This groundbreaking and practical guide to creating cohousing is a must-have for the growing number of people who want to build a cohousing community. Revised, updated and expanded this new edition includes case studies of communities in Europe and the United States with illustrations, photographs, and personal experiences.



Community: The Structure of Belonging
by Peter Block

2009; 448 pages; paperback
Whether you are new to community or an old hand, Peter Block has something to offer. The author of this readable and usable book uncovers the

cultural underpinnings of people engaging together and offers concrete support for putting that understanding to work in any group.



Ecovillage Living
Restoring the Earth
and Her People
edited by Hildur Jackson
and Karen Svensson

2002; 216 pages; paperback
Ecovillage Living is multi-faceted
in its approach to its subject.

Concrete data, practical real-life examples, and a lot of resources make it a useful text for anyone studying ecovillages or contemplating starting one. The book is also a beautiful full-color tour of many ecovillages around the globe. This visual variety and global context should give those interested in this lifestyle stimulation to translate their dreams into action.



Open Space Technology
A User's Guide
by Harrison Owen

2008; 246 pages; paperback
Used in conferences, meetings,
businesses and a host of environments to create a greater
sense of empowerment and

help level the playing field from traditional meetings, Open Space Technology is a "must know" approach to fostering cooperative culture.



Plan C
Community Survival Strategies for
Peak Oil and Climate Change
by Pat Murphy

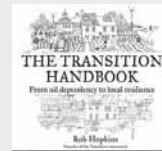
2008; 304 pages; paperback
Plan C is about cooperating
instead of competing for the
remaining supply of fossil fuels.
It is also about each of us taking

responsibility for curtailing our energy usage on behalf of the human community that exists in the present and the one that will exist in the future. Beyond the political Plan A (ignoring the problem) and plan B (panic) is the world of community, and Plan C.



The Senior Cohousing Handbook
A Community Approach
to Independent Living
by Charles Durrett

2nd Edition, 2009; 320 pages; paperback
Rich in ideas and inspiration, *The Senior Cohousing Handbook* is recommended to anyone interested in planning such a community or living in one. It is also a valuable resource for anyone who works with seniors.



The Transition Handbook, New Title!
From Oil Dependency to Oil Resiliency
by Rob Hopkins

2008; 240 pages; paperback
This is the book that is inspiring (or making visible, some might say) a whole movement around the world to get our towns and cities ready for life after oil. An excellent resource for neighborhood organizers, sustainability advocates, or anyone wanting a glimpse into the future—and support to get there.



The Zen of Groups
by Dale Hunter,
Anne Bailey and Bill Taylor

1995; 196 pages; paperback
This book dances between three perspectives: the individual in the group, the group as a whole, and the facilitator of the group. When all three of these are functioning well, the group synergy flows. What this book does that a lot of group dynamics books don't is to bring to light (and make concrete suggestions for improving) this dynamic relationship.



The Communities Directory
by The Fellowship for
Intentional Community

2010; 512 pages; paperback
One of the Communities Movement's most valuable resources, the Directory has helped tens of thousands of people connect with the community home and inspired dreams of starting community for 20 years. This latest edition is hot off the presses, packed with profiles and contact information for a whopping 1,300 intentional communities, Laird Schaub's latest State of the Movement report, maps and easy-to-use reference charts to help you sort through the available information for communities in North America and beyond. Essential packing for your communities tour, and a great conversation starter for your coffee table.

store.ic.org



Eggshells and Stone Walls

Q: *I am new to living in community (rather than being a part of a community) and I am wondering if I can get some advice. My family and I currently rent a large house with another woman who was a colleague and friend prior to deciding to begin forming our community. I knew that she had the habit of not speaking up at work, and then making online critical comments about issues on which she had not spoken. I thought our level of friendship precluded that behavior, but we are now at the point where there are co-habitation issues to work out, and she mostly silently, but with a smile, agrees to whatever we discuss without contributing to the discussion. Not only do I feel that we are steamrolling her into doing things without her input (although she is given ample time and invitation to speak*

or even email about chores, time issues, and other responsibilities, and we WANT to know how we can help meet her needs), I also suspect that she is posting complaints online since I know that was her pattern at our workplace. I do not want to stalk her to find out what she is thinking; I just want to encourage her to be direct with us in the same way we are trying to be with her—constructive and non-confrontational without subsuming our own needs or discomforts. I have noticed that the advice in the magazine often addresses more aggressive meeting contributors, but what about the ones who are smilingly refusing to participate? It makes the rest of us feel as though we are walking on eggshells because we feel can never tell how she is really feeling, and that creates a discordance in our living situation.



Tree Bressen responds:

I have been trying to wrap my head around this one. I think it's really easy for those of us who are comfortable with direct communication and formal process to think that everyone should be like us, and the reality is that they aren't. The use of strategies such as passive-aggression and gossip-

ing signal that someone is feeling less empowered, but multiple communication cultures also exist in our diverse society, and the combination can be very difficult.

I assume that you've already tried talking with your roommate about the overall pattern (beyond any particular chore or household issue), and that that has not worked, that you've not been able to make a real connection there. If not, I suggest trying that first. If this is impacting your friendship with her—and it seems like it must be, given the loss of trust expressed in your

story—be real about that. The more you can come from a place of heartfelt caring and friendship, and a genuine willingness to explore her point of view, the more likely a good outcome...but there are no guarantees.

If you've tried that and felt stonewalled, then it seems there are two main possibilities:

(1) Your family can learn to adapt to your friend's communication style, which is likely far more subtle than what you are accustomed to. Preferences may be indicated through small comments during otherwise unrelated conversations, jokes, and mostly through energy and body language, which you'll slowly get better at guessing and interpreting over time. Take this as a growth opportunity, a chance to expand your awareness and flexibility to encompass the many people who aren't jazzed by immediate direct talk on sensitive subjects and prefer a more indirect mode of working things out. Note that this choice is unlikely to succeed if it's based on avoidance of choice #2 rather than genuine desire.

(2) You can stop living together, with all the fallout that goes along with that (which apparently in this case may include the posting of complaints about you online).

What I don't recommend is trying over and over to get the other person to change, which even if well-intentioned, can be experienced by them as a form of violence. If your friend aspires to more direct communication and simply has a gap in skills, that's one thing—then you can be her ally on that journey. But if it's really not the direction she wants to go in, or if she is unwilling to back up theoretical desire with committed action, then it's unrealistic and unfair to both your family and her to expect her to become the roommate of your ideals. Better to accept her as she is and move from that base. Hopefully it's not too late to salvage a mutually respectful relationship.

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 lowercase "i" in her writing as an expression of egalitarian values.)



Beatrice Briggs responds:

I suggest that you raise your concerns directly with your housemate, explaining your dissatisfaction with the current situation and asking for her views on the situation. If she is unable or unwilling to open up, then it is time to acknowledge that you may not be compatible and that

you and your family may need to start looking for another liv-

Next time, do some "trial runs" with prospective housemates. Go on a weekend trip, plan an outing, throw a party together—anything that lets you experience each other's capacity to give and receive feedback.

ing situation—or a new housemate. Who knows, she may be relieved at the opportunity to be given a graceful way out. Or she may acquiesce and then complain bitterly online about the bad treatment she received at your hands. Or she may acknowledge how important this living situation is to her and agree to make an effort to speak up more in the future.

Next time, take the time to do some "trial runs" with prospective housemates. Go on a weekend trip, plan an outing, throw a party together—anything that lets you experience each other's capacity to engage in constructive dialog and give and receive feedback. Be explicit about the purpose of these activities and the importance that you and your family place on open communication.

*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.*



Laird Schaub responds:

It's a good sign that you've tuned into the subtle possible meanings of this woman's low level of input on group matters. Silence, in my view, is the hardest thing of all to interpret accurately, and I think you're right to have your eye on it.

Reading between the lines, I'm assuming that something feels off to you about her silence; that her energy is somehow out of alignment with her words. At least some of the time, you read her agreeable smile as false, and you're racking your brains for how to draw her out. While I'll address your options about that below, I want to start by looking at the possibility that she really is OK with what's been happening, and that you are misreading her. While I whole-

heartedly support groups exploring the potential meanings of “off feelings,” it’s important to appreciate that Intuition is not necessarily Truth. It’s not always simple to distinguish readily whether the observed person is in discord, or the observer is projecting discord onto them. Tread lightly here.

While I understand your frustration at this woman’s lack of participation in meetings (it would certainly bother me), would it be acceptable if she were a member who makes her contributions to the group in other ways than in meetings, so long as she’s not rocking the boat? My point here is that it’s one thing to be quiet, happy, and productive; it’s altogether different to be quiet, disgruntled, and withdrawn. This is a non-trivial question about the expectations of membership and is something for the group to talk about.

Now let’s explore your choices where you suspect that she’s holding relevant views that she’s not sharing in meetings. My first piece of advice is to put into place (if you have not already done so) an explicit you-gotta-deal agreement whereby all members of the group are expected to make a good faith effort to hear and work constructively with questions or feedback that any other member has about their behavior as a member of the group. While it generally works best if you give members a fair amount of latitude about the timing and format for those conversations (safety and authenticity trump speed), it’s my view that this kind of agreement is foundational in healthy groups.

While a fair number of groups have effectively developed a norm around this, few state it explicitly and its absence can lead to what folks at Ganas (on Staten Island) style “non-negotiable negativity,” where it’s possible to filibuster your way out of addressing things about your behavior that others find odious, or at least uncomfortable. Note that I am not saying that anyone has to agree with someone else’s analysis that they’ve done something wrong, or necessarily agree to do something differently—the commitment here is only to listening to the feedback and agreeing to attempt to be constructive about what to do about it.

Assuming you have that in place, I’d then approach this quiet woman with a request to speak with her one-on-one about your concern that you’re not hearing enough from her to feel confident that her thinking and desires are adequately reflected in the group’s deliberations. If she reports being mystified as to why you’d ask that, you can relate your experience with her as a co-worker where she said little in meetings and then posted criticism online. Having seen her voice concerns indirectly in the past, you’re worried that she might do that again, and you’re wanting direct communication.

While this gambit may open things up, let’s suppose it doesn’t. Suppose she denies that she’s posting criticism online or that she’s holding any unvoiced concerns (which, after all, may be true, as I pointed out above). If it plays out like this, I think you’ll want to stay in the conversation long enough to do two more things:

Question A: First, ask her if there are things about how the

At the end of the day, all you can do is try, and you may ultimately be faced with the choice of either accepting that she’s someone you’ll rarely get input from, or asking her to leave the group.

group operates that inhibit her from speaking. Perhaps certain people or styles are intimidating for her. Perhaps the free-flowing dialog moves too fast for her to organize her thoughts. Maybe expressing emotional needs is too scary for her (based on how she was raised or past traumas). Rather than guess why she’s generally so quiet, ask.

To be fair, there’s delicacy here in creating an environment for the conversation that doesn’t trigger the things that shut her down. Not knowing ahead of time what those triggers are, it’s not hard to imagine that you might inadvertently trip them. My advice here is to trust your instincts (watch her body language and tone of voice for cues about her level of comfort) and be cautious about projecting what you need for safety onto her.

Request B: Second, make it clear to her that it’s hard for you (caution: speak only for yourself and resist the urge to arrogate to yourself the authority to speak for others) to feel that the group is on solid ground when she contributes so little to the conversation. Make a request that in the future, whenever she’s asked for her opinion on group issues and she doesn’t feel she has anything relevant to add, that, at a minimum, she either explains briefly how her views have already been expressed by others, or why this issue doesn’t concern her and she’s fine with whatever others decide.

If you can offer her reasonable assurances that you’ll try to be her ally in getting whatever she asks for in response to Question A, I think there’s an excellent chance that she’ll agree to Request B, and that should help.

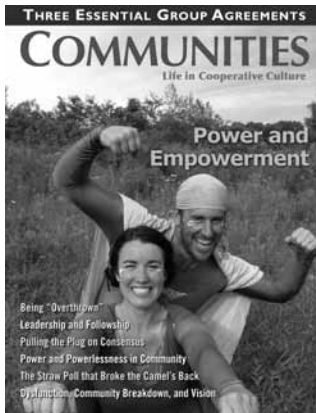
Having said all this, it’s possible that none of it will succeed in drawing her out. At the end of the day, all you can do is try, and you may ultimately be faced with the choice of either accepting that she’s someone you’ll rarely get input from, or asking her to leave the group. 🐦

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

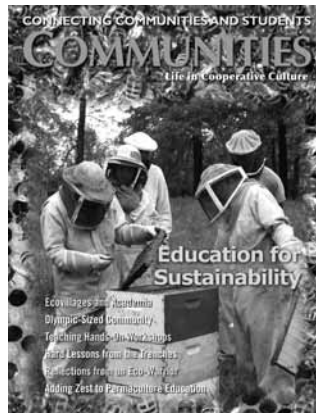
Do you have a question for our Cooperative Group Solutions panelists? Please send it to editor@ic.org.

COMMUNITIES

All back issues are \$5 each.



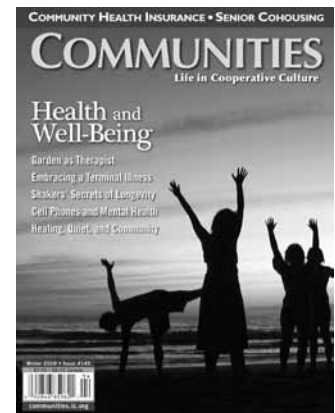
#148 Power and Empowerment
 Being "Overthrown"; Balancing Powers; Leadership and Followship; Power and Disempowerment on the Ecobus; Pulling the Plug on Consensus; Power and Powerlessness in Community; The Straw Poll that Broke the Camel's Back; Dysfunction, Community Breakdown, and Vision; Call in the Experts?
(Fall '10)



#147 Education for Sustainability
 Ecovillages and Academia; Teaching Ecovillages and Academia; Teaching Hands-On Workshops in Community; Connecting Communities and Students; Leadership for Social Change; Hard Lessons; Olympic-Sized Community; How to Add Zest to Your Sustainability Education Program; Building for Health; Car-Reduced and Car-Free Communities.
(Summer '10)



#146 Family
 An Abundance of Dads; Second Family; When an Ecovillage is Raising Your Child; Parenting in Community; Exploring Family; Being Almost Two Years Old - Again; A Community Newcomer Finds Her Rhythm; Nudging at Boundaries; G8; Asperger's; Together and Apart; Family Dramas; Problem Solving in Community
(Spring '10)



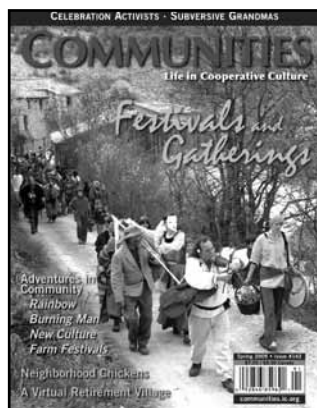
#145 Health and Well-Being
 Earthaven Culture; Health and Community; Embracing a Terminal Illness; Garden as Therapist and Community Organizer; Cell Phones, Education, Farming, and Mental Health; Gut Health; Shakers; Artabana; Healing Biotope; Asthma and Allergies; Senior Cohousing; High Wind; Health and Quiet; PEACH Health Care Plan; Bullies.
(Winter '09)

#144 Community in Hard Times
 Emergency Community; Hard Times at Orinda; Shared Living; Birthing a New Order; Building Community in Hard Times; Throwing in the Founder's Towel; Somerville Ecovillage; The Transition Initiative Comes to Cohousing; Food Security; Gardens of Gratitude; Svahnholm Goes, Carbon-Neutral; How Collaboration Falls Short.
(Fall '09)

#143 Ecology and Community
 Sharing and Climate Change; Revolutionary Communitarianism; Cars and Rabbits; Ecovillages, How Ecological Are You?; Findhorn's Incredible Shrinking Footprint; How Ecology Led Me to Community; Reindeer Herders of Northern Mongolia; Water is Life; Environmental Activism.
(Summer '09)

#142 Festivals and Gatherings
 Festivals at The Farm; FIC Events; Adventures in Temporary Community; Burning Man; Comin' Home to the Rainbow; Network for a New Culture Camps; Sandhill Sorghum Festival; Celebration as a Way of Life; Festival of the Babas; Currents Community; Relocalization; Poetry in Community.
(Spring '09)

#141 Scarcity and Abundance
 All We Have Is All We Need; Ecobarrios; As Is: Secrets to Having Enough; Free to Serve: Notes from a Needs-Based Economy; From Car and House, To Bicycle and Tent; The Richness of Giving; Potlucks; When Community Land Is Privately Owned; Nashira Ecovillage.
(Winter '08)



**Purchase online at
store.ic.org**

COMMUNITIES BACK ISSUES ORDER FORM

Please send me issue #s _____ for a total of _____ magazines.
 \$5 each, shipping \$5 for first 3, \$1 for each additional 3 by book rate US, call or visit store.ic.org for other shipping destinations and options.

Charge Visa/MC/Dscvr# _____ Exp Date _____

Check enclosed (US funds to COMMUNITIES) _____
 Total Amount - \$ _____ Check Enclosed Charged

NAME _____ PHONE _____

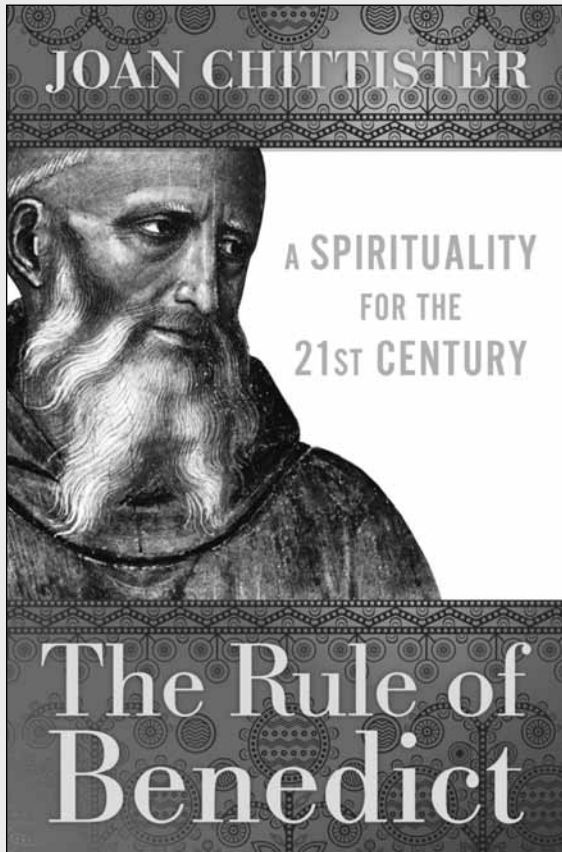
STREET _____

CITY/TOWN _____ STATE/PROVINCE _____ ZIP/POSTAL CODE _____

Photocopy and mail to:
 FIC, RR 1 Box 156-CM, Rutledge MO 63563 • Ph 800-995-8342 #149



Running a Community, Medieval Style.



Stewardship, relationships, authority, balance, work, simplicity, psychological development, meditation. . . Wisdom about how to structure our communities today can come from unexpected places. Such is the *Rule of Benedict*, a five-hundred-year-old classic written by the founder of Western monasticism for his monks' use.

This Crossroad edition presents the full text of The Rule, and a prophetic and practical commentary for those seeking a deeper, more spiritual understanding of modern communal life. The Rule is presented by Joan Chittister, one

of the world's bestselling monastic authors, a renowned Benedictine Sister who has worked with issues of community all her life and become a global voice for the need for all peoples to cooperate, and for the disenfranchised and the earth.

Joan Chittister, OSB

The Rule of Benedict

A Spirituality for the 21st Century

978-0-0245-2594-1 • \$16.95 paperback • 328 pages • Color Illustrated



The Crossroad Publishing Company

www.ipgbook.com • 1-800-888-4741 • orders@ipgbook.com

Getting Elder All the Time

Ouch! I'm loading sorghum cane onto a wagon here at Sandhill Farm. With each armload lifted, I'm reminded of yesterday's Ultimate frisbee game, when I received a sharp elbow to my ribs. My knee is also aching, the result of years of wear and tear and a past injury. I remember when I could work in the field or garden, spending hours on my feet or knees, without discomfort. But my body's not as young as it once was, and, at age 48, I'm inching toward...well, 50, then 60, then full-fledged senior citizenship (assuming both I and a livable planet last that long). Hopefully I've gained some wisdom with age, to compensate for the gradual decline in my physical youth and abilities. I do appreciate the fact that I can still run around the Ultimate field, often ending up with the frisbee in the end zone. At those moments, I don't feel old or even close to it. But I can no longer stay in quite such airtight denial that I am aging, and, barring unforeseen circumstances (like premature death, a radical change in the physical and biological laws of the known universe, or the end of time) will eventually be "old."

What will it be like to be an elder? If it is simply an accumulation of physical complaints, I expect it will be no fun. In addition to finding ways to take care of and adapt to a changing body, the redeeming factors will need to be a better understanding of life and a new social role, one in which the lessons I've learned through experience are more helpful to others than how many loads of sorghum cane I can lift. (Realistically, I believe that is already the case.) Whereas physical activity and single-focus goal-accomplishment may make it possible to ignore some of one's own needs for deeper social connection and relevance as a youth, aging seems to force a rebalancing and realignment of priorities, as our vulnerabilities and weaknesses become more obvious. A social web that recognizes this process and fully values people as they age seems a prerequisite for having happy elders.

In our highly mobile, ever-changing, fast-paced society, ways of life and work seem to become outdated almost as soon as they're introduced, and images (often fabricated mirages) of youth often form the standard against which we consumers are encouraged to judge ourselves inadequate and therefore in need of buying something. A throwaway culture makes it all too easy to "throw away" those who don't fit the latest model of efficiency, production, or entertainment. The number of seniors who end up in large-scale nursing homes, and the numbers of farmers, artisans, storytellers, and other wisdomkeepers who end up with no one with whom to share their skills, experiences, and insights, attest to how tenuous the place of elders in our society can be.

Cooperative groups have a chance to change this formula—and many of them do. So do some traditional cultures and subcultures, small towns, and longstanding neighborhoods. But this seems not to be the norm. How can we improve the lot of elders, and thereby all of us?

Despite the rich benefits offered by elders and their capacity for compassion, wisdom, emotional maturity, and practical savvy, intentional communities may encounter many challenges in retaining and integrating them. For starters, in high-turnover or new communities, members often become "elders" long before physical age would suggest that description. And accompanying elderhood of any kind come power dynamics, which if not handled skillfully by both elders and newcomers or youth, can result in the flight or expulsion of the elders, the youth, or both. When membership turnover is high enough, elders can find themselves awash in a constantly-reinvented world in which others don't know them or value them for who they are and what they've done—in which abiding interpersonal connections and appreciation have not had a chance to grow. And new members of a mostly-new community have no particular reason to believe they should defer to a previous generation who represent a world that no longer is.

I've felt most at home in multigenerational, sustainability-oriented communities that find roles for their elders. I don't want to confront my own elderhood as mostly a catalog of physical complaints—or a constant struggle to maintain my place, my feeling of community, and some semblance of continuity. I want the remainder of my life to be rich in connection and relevance, shared with others in settings in which all generations benefit from one another's gifts. The articles in this issue suggest ways in which this hopeful future can manifest.

• • •

Sadly, the communities movement lost several elders since we assembled our last issue. We profile four of them in this issue: Al Andersen, Margo Adair, Fred Lanphear, and Jane Blaffer Owen. Other recent passings include communal scholar Jim Kopp, author of *Eden Within Eden: Oregon's Utopian Heritage* (reviewed in COMMUNITIES #146), and Tamar Friedner, whose 10 years at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage had earned her the position of "elder" despite her physical youth. This has been a time of both mourning for these losses, and celebration of these individuals, who touched the lives of so many. 🐰

Chris Roth (editor@ic.org) edits COMMUNITIES and recently moved to Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage.

It Takes a Community to Grow an Elder

By Rebecca Dale

Photos courtesy of Rebecca Dale



Growing up and growing “elder” together. Right: The author celebrates her 70th birthday with her community, and gets a birthday hug from one of the community kids, Jade, who turned seven on the same day.



Growing older was not sitting well with me. At 65, I was having an identity crisis worthy of adolescence, moodiness and all. Who was I now that I was retired, no longer able to answer the question “What do you do?” with a job title? Who was this person in the mirror with gray hair and wrinkles, with aches and pains and other intimations of mortality? When people my age got their names in the paper, they were usually labeled as “elderly,” a term that sounds like “has-been” to my ears. Although we sometimes refer to older people who have great influence and responsibility as “elder statesmen” or “elders” in our churches, we don’t seem to have a respected role for “elders” in everyday life, so I didn’t know how to be one. All the messages I had received up to that point told me there was no honor in growing older, only a gradual shuffling out of the category of adulthood into a separate world of retirement communities, senior centers, and the patronizing smiles or thinly veiled impatience of people who think you no longer have a brain. No wonder I was depressed.

I had been widowed for a decade. My children and grandchildren lived at opposite ends of the continent. I tried to fill the identity gap with volunteer work: nature education, garden writing, agitating for a farmers market. But these things held little value in a place where shopping malls and suburban sprawl were bulldozing their way across the family farms and small towns I had once known, and which now seemed as obsolete as I felt. My old way of life was gone, my sense of place, my human connections. Then I learned about intentional communities through the internet, which led me not only to a new home but a new life partner as well.

Currents is a small community in rural southeastern Ohio, founded nearly 30 years ago, along with several other small communities, in the beautiful foothills of the Appalachians. Five original members remained at Currents, all 60-ish and beyond, all community elders with much community wisdom to share. I would be joining them as an elder in community with much to learn. Since my joining, two mid-life couples

with young families have become members also, and so I’ve become something of a bridge. Like the younger ones, I’m a newcomer to community life, but I’m also an older person growing into a new role of...elder? What can this mean?

That summer of 65, the summer of my discontent, I went to a week-long study gathering with Joanna Macy called “The Great Turning.” I was sharing some of my feelings about aging with another woman of my generation, when she smiled brightly and said, “Why, don’t you know? We’re the hope of the future!” Surprised, I answered, “I always thought children were the hope of the future.” “Oh no,” she replied, “Children ARE the future. But we’re the HOPE of the future because we hold the wisdom.”

We hold the wisdom. That sounded so right, yet the more I turned that statement around in my mind, the more it seemed as if I had been handed a gift that needed to be unwrapped. And each layer of wrapping was like a provocative question, and my search for answers became

like a little treasure hunt through my own life.

Is it wisdom, then, that makes one an elder rather than merely old? What is this wisdom? And where does it come from? Obviously age alone doesn't automatically make one wise. No more than simply reaching 18 or 21 automatically makes one an adult! One can be childish and self-involved at any age, but I've noticed that those we call elders are those who have done their inner growth work, who have successfully navigated the developmental stages of life.

I looked again at the human development theories of Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, Jane Loevinger, and others, and was struck by how much our society functions like an adolescent, competitive and concerned with appearance and social conformity, things that I stopped caring about long ago. I'm much more inner-directed now, while probably more idealistic and outwardly focused than ever.

Mainstream society looks at me and says I'm past my prime; developmental theories suggest I'm just now getting there. This is definitely good news! Aging doesn't have to mean drying

up. On the contrary, it appears that when people open to inner growth, including its ethical dimensions, "they still bring forth fruit in old age, they are ever full of sap and green." (Psalms 92:14 RSV)

OK, so we're flexible (green), draw on juicy, nourishing resources (sappy!), and continue to be fruitful. But what is the shape of this new fruit? And how is it to be shared? In traditional societies, the elders assimilated and passed on their culture's skills and values. But in our adolescent culture, educational institutions and mass media assume that role, teaching the values of wealth and the skills of competition. Such "conventional wisdom" tends to drown out the voices of our true elders who could call us to a saner way of being human. We have a culture that marginalizes our elders, so many of us have no models for elderhood. Who will show us how to access our own wisdom and share it?

Recently I read about some studies reported in the New York Times indicating that our brains actually learn a new trick as they age.¹ They are better able to take in seemingly irrelevant bits of information often overlooked by younger brains. And in spite of occasional memory glitches, our older brains, while a bit slower, actually get more creative in drawing on our storehouse of these many bits of knowledge and experience and integrating them into helpful forms. What this suggests to me is that if wisdom is experience grounded in maturity, I actually have an inner elder ready to kick in and put together some wisdom when I need it. And so do my mature and ripened friends, who have different knowledge and experiences. What if we let our inner elders out to play more often, maybe in circles of elders, maybe together with others of all ages? Could we conjure up some wisdom magic? How cool would that be?

Actually, I've just described what I've seen happen on those occasions when community works well, especially multi-generational communities like mine. Younger people can develop nurturing, non-parental relationships with older ones; our presence can help to anchor their lives in a deeper historical context. I think this is part of what "holding" the wisdom means. Older people get to see the world anew through younger eyes. This keeps us on our toes, gives our wisdom-generating apparatus material to work on.

But there is a particular form of wisdom that our community elders are in a unique position to share: the values and the skills of creating and maintaining community. This is not my personal wisdom because I came to community late in life. It is something that I am learning from those who have been here for many years, who know something (however imperfect our

actual practice may be) about organizing, resolving conflicts, cooperation and communication, and just plain thinking well about what community really means—and what it can mean for a world that sorely

needs more of it.

What is MY wisdom? What can I pass on to a generation that is inheriting a dramatically changing world? Knowledge of ecology and restoring the land, yes. Knowledge for re-skilling in food growing and processing, of course...but knowledge isn't wisdom.

I used to think that my ability to navigate change was my particular gift. I once lost a farm and a way of life that I loved. I moved on and found other good ways to live and love. But "moving on" is not the same as thriving unless one becomes anchored again in a place and with a people. Just changing careers is not enough. People who have lost their way of life as so many did in the wake of Katrina, and now in the Gulf disaster, cannot simply be re-trained and "move on." One needs a sense of place, and connection to a people and a way of life that matters, and that continues. The many young people and families who are finding their way to Currents (and other communities) these days to experience these things are longing for them.

This kind of placemaking is the wisdom that our community elders hold. I trust they know how very valuable and wise this way of life is, this way that they have struggled for, this way into a future with hope. This is the wisdom that I am learning, the wisdom that is turning me into an elder, instead of merely elderly. ☺

Rebecca Dale is a late-blooming communitarian living in Currents Community in southeastern Ohio. She has been a farmer, worked as a nurse, librarian, and occasional free-lance writer, and used the freedom of retirement to complete graduate work in Earth Literacy and earn a certificate in permaculture design. Digging in the dirt and hanging out in the woods are high on her list of favorite things.

1. www.drweil.com/u/QAA400422/My-Aging-Brain-Whats-Your-Name-Again.html



Elderhood, In and Out of Community

By Dianne G. Brause

Last December, I turned 65; my father died at 89; and my mother, at 92, fell and went into an assisted care facility back in Ohio where I grew up. For the last five years I have been back and forth from the intentional community I cofounded in 1989 in Oregon and my birth community in the fertile farmland of rural mid-central Ohio, attending to my parents and cleaning out the large house my father built when I was a young child. Almost every day for the past two years, I have visited one or the other parent at Carlisle House, the assisted care facility where they each have been living. (My mother refused to join my father there while he was alive and swore that she “wanted to die at home” and “would never go there.” Unfortunately, she is now there with a memory gradually becoming less acute due to dementia, and with a near-total deafness which she refuses to correct with hearing aides.)

These experiences over the past few years have put the whole issue of Elderhood in my face—sometimes more graphically than I would like—while definitely allowing me to ponder what it means to be growing older within my various and diverse circles.

• • •

In my intentional community, I was often both the oldest person there, and the person with the most seniority. Over my 20 years there, I wrote a variety of “treatises” on how I thought we ought to deal with the issue of our older members. Unfortunately, we were always underfunded, barely able to support all of our members with the simple necessities of life, let alone think clearly about how to provide for those people who had contributed and were getting older, so mostly my thoughts were ignored.

I assumed that when the time came, we would either be better off or at least willing to find a cooperative way to support one another in this particular life phase, as we had for members going through birth, death, marriage, miscarriage, accidents, and emotional traumas in the early years. For myself, I always assumed that I would at least be able to stay there within the home I had bought and paid for with money saved in my prior life. My dream from the very beginning was to always have my little home there—regardless of whether I was contributing on the property or doing the international traveling and service that I often felt called to do throughout the years. I secretly imagined my fellow community members would be delighted when I was on the land, offering the wisdom that I had garnered over the years, and would also celebrate my desires to explore and

Dianne plays Elder to young woman in the sacred yurt.



Photos courtesy of Dianne G. Brause

I experienced many emotions over this time, often feeling that I (and we as a community) had failed to honor our elders.

experience other parts of the world, knowing that I would return with more stories to tell and gifts from other peoples and cultures.

Unfortunately, that is not what happened (at least in my mind). While I was spending more time in Ohio with my ailing parents and gradually letting go of my responsibilities in the community, the membership changed and the focus seemed to shift from a strong ethic of community cooperation and friendships to a greater focus on bureaucracy, efficiency, and money-making. People seemed less important than the product they could produce. Consensus suddenly was too cumbersome and a waste of time and decisions were made by an inner circle in a process not necessarily understood by the people living there. At times it seemed as if people relatively new to Lost Valley were making decisions affecting those who had been there much longer than they had, sometimes without prior knowledge and agreement of the full community or even the full membership of the community. The need for an Elder's Policy was acknowledged, but the now-smaller (and better-paid) "staff" never seemed to find any time to actually get around to writing one.

During this period, many of the "old-timers" gradually left and found other places to offer their services and create communities of friends and "families of choice." No one quite felt the strength to fight for the "good old ways" or to invest what it would take to negotiate the waters of finding a middle ground between the traditions and the new ideas. On my part, I didn't really feel great about the changes, but I also knew that I personally didn't have the stamina, while also dealing with my parents 2000 miles away, to stand up for what I thought was perhaps a better way to make the changes. In addition, I had begun a Ph.D. program and needed a sense of focus in order to do the work necessary to complete 12 intensive classes and write a scholarly dissertation

at the same time. I was saddened to feel that I needed to sell my home and car and store my belongings with a friend in town, rather than to feel the support and joy of the people who were in fact receiving the benefits of the work and sacrifices that I had made for two decades to fulfill a vision that many of us held over many years.

I experienced many emotions over this time, often feeling that I (and we as a community) had failed to honor our elders, and in fact were treating our senior members in a manner similar to the dominant society. This was especially ironic to me in that we had been founded to offer a model which was more humanistic and honoring of the needs of the group, living simply so that all could benefit! I was disappointed that just as the general culture was beginning to feel the need for what we uniquely had to offer, we seemed to be going in the opposite direction to become more "corporately minded"! I do not know if the new group in power has struggled with the difficult issues of elders since I left, but I rather doubt it—as it seems hard to tackle issues that are not immediately being encountered.

I have visited a few intentional communities that have "gotten their act together" around their elders. My observation is that these tend to be communities on the more egalitarian end of the spectrum—whose very charter has to do with meeting the needs equally of their members—or those that started out with more prosperous (and perhaps older) members in the formative stage. Others have seemed to crumble over the struggle to deal with aging members who tend to have more needs but less energy to contribute (at least with physical labor). I know that some cohousing groups are specifically set up just for older people, a sort of alternative retirement community model. I think this might be a good option, although I personally favor the positive effects of having members of all ages, since I believe that both elders and children can benefit a huge amount from knowing one another intimately.

Further Thoughts on a Community's Changes

We at COMMUNITIES were aware that some of Dianne's perspectives in this article would not be universally shared among her former community mates. However, since most of the people involved in the situations that led to her departure are already dispersed, it was not possible to get a response from the group as a whole. Instead, to get as well-rounded a picture as we could, we contacted both Dianne and a former community mate to ask for further clarifications and reflections on her article. Both Dianne and Marc were thankful for the chance to comment on the accompanying story.

To clarify: I in no way wrote this article to “badmouth” my former intentional community or highlight it as a group that isn’t caring of its elders. I just wrote of my experience from my point of view, trying to be generous in including myself in the process that led to my experience there. I believe that the community continues to offer invaluable experiences to many people each year. What they are doing is a fine service in the world. My point was really that it changed in recent years in ways that didn’t seem to fit parts of the original mission, and I no longer seemed to “fit.” And I do think people within the communities movement and aspiring communitarians need to know what some possible issues around elders might be—especially when the turnover in communities is likely much more frequent among younger members, who also may not know or care about the contributions of people who have been there over time. In any case, my leaving has liberated me to go forward in my life and I imagine has freed up some energy for the changes there. Both are good things, I’m sure.

—Dianne G. Brause

I was given a chance to read Dianne’s article and write a response as I am one of the few people who currently lives in the community Dianne describes who was here during much of the period she describes. I write from my own perspective only, not on behalf of the community. I have great admiration for Dianne’s absolutely essential role in helping to create and sustain this community and have personally learned a great deal from her.

Dianne’s experience is partially about elders, but is also about how people respond to change in a community, organizational structure, the role of founders, and communities trying to run a business.

We currently have a woman in our community who is 86. She seems to be very grateful for her situation in the community and to my knowledge we are not offering her anything different than we offered Dianne.

Dianne mentioned feeling that the community had not honored its elders. I think we can look at this issue in three areas: the personal, the financial, and the organizational culture.

In terms of the personal, I believe the community generally honored Dianne and community “old timers.” Those of us who led some of the changes Dianne describes went to great efforts to make it clear that we were not trying to disrespect anyone as a person or fail to honor their past contributions and dedication, even while we critiqued some of their deeply held ideas about community and organizational structure.

In terms of the financial aspect, it is true that we never figured out a retirement package and we still have not. Dianne was always perfectly welcome to stay at our community, travel

the world, and come back and share her wisdom with the community as she describes wanting to do. And she would have to pay standard community fees. Our community provides a great place for elders to live, but at the same costs as for anyone else. I greatly wish that our education and conference center could provide full benefits for all employees. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done when just paying our monthly bills is often a stretch. The “old timers” didn’t set up systems that would support these types of benefits, such as savings plans, so those benefits were not there when they wanted them.

This leads to issue number three: organizational culture. Dianne describes the shift in negative terms, and I believe it was positive and necessary. I do not see it as moving away from friendship overall in the community, but it was saying that for paid staff, during work hours, getting friendship needs met is fine, but not the primary objective. During work hours we do indeed need to focus on productivity and efficiency. And we need to make enough money to pay off the debt on the land, and to offer the benefits that Dianne wanted to all our long-term employees.

The shifts have resulted in people making more decisions in smaller groups related to their area of responsibility and experience. Sometimes people feel left out or there is missing information. No decision making system is perfect. But the “old ways,” I believe, were not working on many levels, and we needed to try something different.

Those of us wanting these changes did not organize a takeover from a majority—we simply got so tired of the “old ways” that we offered to all resign and leave the community. At this point, most of the people in the community—members who were in the middle, not sure which approach they preferred—figured they better support us making the changes or the whole place might not be able to continue.

Dianne’s vision, from the beginning, was extremely broad and holistic, which is part of what drew me here. It involved trying to steward a big, complex, expensive property, employ most of the residents, function as nonprofit corporation, demonstrate sustainability, serve the educational and retreat needs of its clients, demonstrate inclusive decision making, and be the developer of new housing. I now wonder if in some ways, Dianne’s brilliance in thinking broadly and holistically was too far ahead of its time in relation to the realistic capacity of a group of 20-plus humans raised in the dominant culture. Maybe it’s possible at this time to achieve some of those goals in one relatively small community, but not all. We have chosen to focus on the educational center, and I think that a somewhat more conventional management approach on the “business” end of things is necessary at this time to do that well.

I wish Dianne the best of luck in finding communities whose focuses match her own priorities, and I believe that she could be a great asset to them. These might be communities that are focused mostly on inclusive decision making and non-hierarchy, and I would bet that they have fewer people and/or a simpler set of other goals than our community. Or maybe she will find some that have truly figured out how to achieve all the original goals of this community in a way that we never could. If so, we’d be glad to learn about how they do that and share that with our students.

—Marc Tobin

• • •

Meanwhile, back in my conservative farm community, I am re-experiencing the pluses and minuses of this lifestyle, especially for the elders of the area. The biggest plus, I think, is that people have known each other for generations. For example: in the assisted care facility where my father died and my mother now lives, which is located at the edge of the county seat and 10 miles from my farm and the tiny village I called home for my first 19 years, three of the elders were residents who had been in my father's confirmation class and three had graduated together from high school (in 1938!). My 102-year-old Latin teacher is there, as are my Aunt and the wife of my father's best man at his marriage! Even the residents who did not directly know each other earlier, generally know something about each other's families, churches, or whatever. Clearly there is community here. Every month there is a special dinner for family of the residents, as well as a community dinner where anyone who wants to learn more about the place—as a possible option for themselves or their family members when the need arises—is invited to join in for food and entertainment.

Almost every day I go in for dinner with my mother and sit on the corner of a table with three other women. After eating, if there is not another scheduled activity, I generally play dominoes with whoever wants to join in. Although each woman has her own physical and/or mental challenges, I encourage all to participate. And amazingly, they have been able to find allowances for each other in generally loving ways. My mother, who cannot hear at all, is still able to play a pretty sharp game—because she can see well and is still able to interpret the overt and subtle cues that have developed among the group. Several ask at the beginning of each game, “How many dominoes do we take?,” and another asks which way the turns go around the table. One asks, “What is the name of this game?,” and she persists each day saying “I don't



Lois is Mom's close friend for the last 68 years.

Here in the farming community, people have known each other for generations. Elders are respected and honored for their lives and contributions.

believe I've ever played this game.” Then she joins in and wins several games per night! Those who can't see well enough to be able to identify the number of dots are helped by their neighbors. Only one of the “regulars” makes nasty remarks about the others' disabilities.

In the broader community, the level of support for people in health, economic, or other crises is quite remarkable. If a family is in particular need, often the community comes together to create a benefit event, usually including food, auction items, a raffle, and entertainment. Usually this doesn't pay all the bills or rebuild the burned-down house, but it certainly helps people to feel the support of the community—as does the daily food dropped off at the house or the offers of shopping, childcare, or whatever.

Here in the farming community, people tend to work beyond anyone's expectations. Many of the farmers continue to get out on their tractors well into their 80s—often because they have no heirs willing to take on the farming lifestyle. Their wives continue to garden, tend to their chickens, and go to church quilting parties until they can practically no longer move their arthritic hands or see the stitches—and then they come to stuff pillows or just “hang out” learning the latest local gossip. These elders are respected and honored for their lives and contributions.

Here, people don't often pull up stakes and leave because times get hard or they don't particularly like their neighbor across the field, as members in intentional communities are apt to do. For one thing, they have invested in the land and community for many decades and it is hard to just pick up and leave when times get tough.

It is fascinating to watch the people in the assisted care facility as they gradually weaken and come to their final days. I have observed that more often than not,

Residents have a party at Carlisle House.



Dianné's 102-year-old Latin teacher.



Dianné's father last Thanksgiving.

Intentional community family.



people tend to live their last days much the same as they have lived most of their lives. Those who are “complainers” tend to go to their grave complaining, and those who like to see the glass half full rather than half empty tend to take whatever cards they are dealt in a cheerful way. Two people with essentially the same diagnosis and discomfort levels may have wildly differing ways of presenting themselves to others, and the reactions they get from others are quite different as well, among both their fellow residents and their visitors and family members. Some of the residents have no family left—or none within visiting distance. Fortunately, the staff, the other residents, and family members of other residents often go out of their way to make them feel at home and loved.

Of course, life is not perfect there by any means, and given the choice, I would prefer to live in one of the many intentional communities that I am aware of in the US. In most of them, I believe I would be welcomed for the many years of experience I have under my belt and as long as my mind remained more or less intact (and perhaps if I had enough financial abundance to “carry my weight”). I would hope that the wisdom I have garnered over the years would be honored and appreciated—as long as I was able to impart it as a gift to be received, with no strings attached.

In fact, I have a dream of getting a VW pop-top camper, equipped with solar panels for my computer, cooking needs, etc., after my Mom passes, and take off across the country visiting old friends, new friends, and communities I have wanted to visit for decades, offering my being as an elder in exchange for a place to park, perhaps some food, and the fine company of fellow communitarians! So far, I am fairly fit and could also offer physical labor part of the day in exchange for my room and board. My guess is that it would generally be a win-win situation and hopefully I would know (or be gently told) when it seemed time for me to move on.

An alternative to this dream—or perhaps an addition—is for me to do some extensive international travel, visiting places I love and those I’ve never seen before—again offering my self and my services freely in exchange for living in a similar manner to the local people. Just out of college, I joined the Peace Corps and learned to save money on my 19 cents per hour “salary,” and in some ways I’ve continued to live very simply (some would say frugally) my whole adult life. Reduce, re-use, recycle has been a way of life for me long before it came into vogue and “ecology” became a common word in our culture. I like to challenge myself to do the opposite of the American ethic of buying more, bigger, and better. If I can possibly keep from buying anything newly made or recently extracted, I try to do so—not fanatically so, but as a general intention. I try to acknowledge that when I put BP gas into my car, or throw away a newly purchased plastic bottle of water, or even buy a new pair of sneakers at a chain store, I am a part of the problem—one of those who are consuming much more than my share and adding to the destruction of the planet. This doesn’t mean that I necessarily beat myself up or even stop doing those things entirely, but as an elder, I believe that my actions count—and often become a model for those younger than myself.

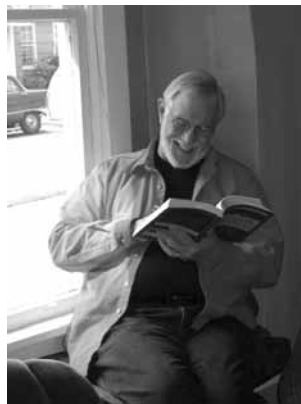
In addition, when I am traveling abroad, I notice how amazed local people are to see an “American” who does not fit the stereotype seen on all the popular media. To discover an American who is willing to live more like them (on a simpler scale) makes a huge impression, and, I believe, leads toward more peace and understanding than many words and signed treaties! So in my international travel, I hope to be seen as a Peace Pilgrim, just by the way I act, and to be a welcome guest within many humble homes (as I already have been on many occasions in my sojourns). Of course, in many parts of the world, generosity is the name of the game—by the poorest and humblest families and

I have great appreciation for each of the cycles of my life and each day discover more about the strengths that each one has given me.

communities—and elders are fairly universally respected and honored, as long as they stay within certain mores within the culture. Back when I was a young curvaceous red-headed and light-skinned international traveler, I had to fend off a fair number of potential suitors, looking for love, money, prestige, or a free pass to America. Now, I find that with my white hair (and more conservative dress), I am more likely to get offered a lift in a car or help with my suitcase than encounter someone “coming on” to me or a whistle in the street. Truly, there are some advantages to getting “old”!

So, as you can see, I’m pretty excited about being an elder. And I am equally excited about the prospect of soon becoming “homeless”! I have enormous trust that the universe will supply me with my needs (although not necessarily what I expected). My intuition warns me that massive changes will be happening over the coming few years and that whatever the 2012 predictions really mean, all of our planning and desire to control the future will not result in our being in charge of what actually happens. On the other hand, I trust that wherever I am, I will be able to utilize some of the skills and knowledge that I have gained through my first 19 years living in a frugal farming community in Ohio and the recent 19 years living within an intentional community dedicated to simple living and cooperative interactions among people. I have great appreciation for each of these cycles of my life and each day discover more about the strengths that each one has given me—despite whatever difficulties and hardships I had to face along the way.

May you each enjoy your elderhood as it comes your way. ☺



I dedicate my article in memory of Jamshed Storer, my Sufi friend and the “Spiritual Elder” of Breitenbush Community, who passed away in early October. Jamshed and I always talked about how it was to be the “Elder” of an intentional community; compared notes on how our respective communities were doing; and considered ourselves as brother and sister on the spiritual path. He was a teacher and a beloved friend, whose love was boundless. I am feeling his presence and the goodness of his being in my heart and I will miss him greatly, even though we didn’t often see each other.

—Dianne G. Brause



Dianne G. Brause has been involved in the communities movement since the mid-1970s, when she lived and worked in a communal retreat center and attended the quarterly gatherings of the New England Network of Light. She wrote a vision of a future intentional community as part of her M.A. program with Beacon College. She later cofounded an intentional community in Oregon and lived and worked there for almost 20 years. Currently, she is working toward her Ph.D. in Wisdom Studies at Wisdom University and hopes to become a traveling “Elder” in the US and abroad. She

can be contacted at diannebrause@gmail.com.



Photos courtesy of Arjuna da Silva

On Becoming Elders

By Arjuna da Silva

The most broken part of mainstream Western culture may be elderhood. While new families are far more enlightened these days about how to raise healthy children, and folks of grandparenting age have a lot of information about how to stay younger and healthier, not much attention is paid to the roles of elders in our lives. We need elders when we're young, and we are needed as elders when we're old.

It's probably been an issue for all generations, but as we baby boomers grow old enough to be called "old," we may be surprised to find ourselves face to face with the excruciating and uncharted challenge of leaving many of our deeply ingrained patterns behind. These are patterns we developed intentionally or as a matter of course while "growing up," then used to help stabilize ourselves while "maturing" into people the species hopefully would depend upon to guide it in sustainable directions. (Don't laugh.) Joining or turning into elders in intentional communities provides opportunities galore for this transformational experience.

For many boomers, taking on the mantle of eldership means setting aside the sometimes rambunctious, in-your-face, empowerment-obsessed energy we worked so hard to sustain. Or better yet, focusing it *inside*, where we can feed it with intention and wisdom until it becomes capable of motivating others. Isn't that the potential of eldership? Of course, not all boomers were practiced revolutionaries, but as a generation "the '60s" produced a group image for us that many identify with, even if we never sat in, dropped out, or turned on.

Life weathers us, too, and even revolutionaries become parents, business owners, and community leaders people depend upon to help hold the social fabric together. Robert Wright, in his book *The Evolution of God*, makes an incisive point about how far people will go (and have gone) in order to sustain a cohesive social fabric. We became hard-wired to *belong* through many, many millennia in which group context and group identity were fine-tuned for survival. Although some people seem to be pure recluses, for most of us our souls, if

you will, long to be related, to know we are with our kin, with extended family, with our tribe.

Toss all that into the salad of modern life and we've got individuals hard-wired for community having grown up *out of* community or, at least, now living out of community. Families, if we get along with them, are far away and nuclear (thus often explosive). Best friends get married or change careers and go off to other regions or countries. Our own kids long for greener pastures.

Once boomers decide to create community anew, we practically need to do a generational about-face as we integrate the roles of eldership, which require different qualities than those that propelled us through our youths and much of our middle age. We need to translate that individual spark and group fire into something our youngsters, given who *they* are, can assimilate.

The storyteller and mens' initiation leader Michael Meade gave a great lecture (available on CD) about eldership a decade ago called "Throw Yourself Like Seed: On Youth, Elders and the Work of Change." He points out that it isn't age that creates eldership, but the experience of deep suffering and recovery. Of course, live longer and your chances for deep experience may expand, but younger folks who demonstrate wisdom "beyond their years" have often lived through traumatic childhoods. The more we've suffered and survived, the more "spiritual rank" we accumulate, according to Arnold Mindell of the Process Work Institute. Spiritual refinement, whether born of survival challenges or innate gifts, is exactly the true elders' gift to communities.

Another aspect of eldership that is even harder for us in the West to achieve is an indigenous gift. "An elder is a repository for the wisdom of the ancestors, the culture, and the tribe," West African teacher and author Malidoma Somé told an interviewer for the *The Sun* magazine [July 2010]. "He or she is familiar with the various protocols for maintaining relationships with the other

Generational Crossroads

Perhaps given our awkward generational context, we need to learn more about how to bridge our differences, not only individually, but generationally. Here's what I learned in a workshop called "Generational Crossroads" last year. —AdS

The major events (global or local) that occur on the world stage while a generation is in its formative years hold keys to the values and mindset that generation develops. What we hear and what goes on in our families of origin are saturated with responses to current events. Plus what we imbibe as cultural norms changes rapidly in the modern world, so that your generation has a whole different set of values and needs than the ones before or after you.

Baby boomers (folks born between 1946 and 1964), for example, are now well over 40 years old on the young end and old enough to be elders on the old end. Boomers were shaped by the early days of television, Dr. Spock's advice on childrearing, the rock 'n' roll explosion, John Kennedy and his assassination, Woodstock and psychedelics, and the Vietnam War. Most of the founders of Earthaven are boomers. Boomers are characterized as optimistic, competitive, changeable, challenging, and questioning. They work hard, especially for a cause, and expect that everyone should pay "their dues."

Boomers' parents' generation (*aka the silent generation*)—folks born between 1925 and 1945—are also represented at Earthaven. Although for the most part these folks are not and never were part of the mainstream of their generation, they were deeply affected by the Depression, the birth of the film industry, World War II, Big Band music, and Hiroshima. Each one would no doubt have a fascinating story about how they held up the light for themselves through all that. This generation is thought to be comparatively conservative, frugal, stable, and...well, silent.

Generation X-ers, born between 1965 and 1981, grew up with MTV and *Star Wars*, computers, satellites and microwaves, Reaganomics, and the threat of AIDS. For the first time ever, many parents divorced while their children were still young. Mothers joined the work force while many daughters and sons were raised as "latch-key kids," at home alone after school. Consequently, Gen X-ers became more self-reliant, independent, and skeptical, and more concerned with individual work and recognition than the previous generation.

A few of our newest and aspiring members at Earthaven were born after 1982, in **the millennial generation**. They've known a more virtual world than others, and childhood day care centers became much more popular during their early years. Cell phones, the internet, hip-hop music, and the World Trade Center disaster shaped their environment. They became faster-paced, more team-based and entrepreneurial, and generally more inclusive than their forbears, and are characterized by their confidence and optimism, loyalty, ambition, critical thinking, and multi-tasking abilities.

Taking these various and to some degree alternatively balanced sets of values into consideration casts light on where some of the lines of disagreement and dissent show up in mixed-generational decision-making. While boomers cleave to the group's power (echoed again in the millennial group), X-ers rely more on themselves. Their relative pessimism in the face of more optimistic boomers and millennials can create serious challenges for them. And so on. Despite over-arching similarity in values, the complicating factors that go unnoticed between the generations may account for many of the difficulties that come up when we all work together.

Generational Crossroads was presented by Leading to Change of Charlotte, North Carolina (www.leadingtochange.com).



*Above: Rosetta Neff (Diana Leafe Christian's mom), who is her community's most senior elder, at 94.
Page 24: Elders at Earthaven join in a blessing for a new site.*

world and is the keeper of the various 'recipes' that sustain the soul and the spirit of the community." When elders are absent, he warns, "there is chaos and instability. The young are in charge but don't know where they are going."

While it is encouraging to see how well older members in multi-generational communities are doing in contrast to retirement villages and old folks' homes, it seems as though our basically egalitarian values level the playing field on who knows what's best for the whole. Furthermore, whose ancestors can we access in intentional community? Do we bring them with us, or are they spirits already abiding in the land?

When communities of size have egalitarian intentions and are trying not to be "ageist," the challenge of making decisions across the generations can pile up.

There is so much need for guidance in life, and guidance is not easily accepted by the young; maybe never was. (Perhaps some of the terrifying aspects of initiatory rites were designed to cow youth into listening!) And how easy it is to forget the struggles of adolescence and young adulthood once the blessings and burdens of midlife take over. But when communities of size have egalitarian intentions and are trying not to be "ageist," the challenge of making decisions across the generations can pile up. If older folks aren't garnering respect by their actions and words, if younger folks are rejecting parental criticism or ineptitude or are just full of the natural optimism and hubris of youth, how can wisdom be channeled to the next generations? How can culture thrive?

From which hat do we pull the protocols for instilling eldership into modern individualistic, egalitarian Western culture? Are we getting there? Have any communities reported on their progress? In our world, it's easy to understand any generation's difficulties in assuming postures of eldership that are humble and/or persuasive enough for succeeding generations to appreciate. Yet step up to the plate and guide we must, or surrender the future to chaotic instability. There seems to be a huge cultural gap, on the flip side of the modern trend to prolong youth, that challenges us to work with great focus on these issues in our neighborhoods and communities. We must reach deep into our DNA, perhaps, for the most vital and viable eldership patterns that once were and might again be the bulwarks of cultural cohesion and enlightened evolution.

Keeping this pivotal issue in the forefront of community consideration will also help us distill wisdom and common sense about leadership from the circuitry of our collective awareness. 🐦

When Arjuna da Silva was only 48 years old, she helped found Earthaven Ecovillage with a group of robust baby boomers. Since then, she has done her best to exercise her limited eldering skills while serving on many administrative and visionary committees and teams and dreaming about getting free enough to be a dedicated writer. She also coordinates the Natural Building School at Earthaven, including its Natural Building Camp, and is experienced as well at teaching and facilitating consensus and group process skills. Contact her at 828-669-0114.



And I Listen

Staying connected and building trust when adult children choose the “alternative” lifestyle of living in community

By Victoria Albright

My first experience of living in an intentional community was at age 53, and the first four days there were among the most challenging of my life.

It was 2001, and I had come to Lost Valley Educational Center near Eugene, Oregon, at the invitation of my then 25-year-old daughter Sarah who was there for an organic gardening internship. She was enjoying her time there and wanted to share the experience, *plus* the community needed someone to head up food preservation activities, something I knew about from growing up in an Iowa farm family and from preserving the fruits of my avid gardening. She wanted me to share my

skills and teach the young adults there how to “put up” food.

I jumped at the opportunity for the two-month work-trade position. My friends in Houston thought I was crazy: “A visit, yes, but two months? What are you thinking?” Sarah and another community member met me at the train station, gave me a warm welcome, and settled me into my room at the guest house. She introduced me to a few people, including one of my “supervisors” for the food preservation project—an intense young man with scary tattoos and lots of piercings (even in his nipples...I had never seen THAT before!). The next day, my daughter left for the weekend. Her new boyfriend (who eventu-

Had I been in possession of a car, I would have written a “Dear Sarah...what have you gotten me into?” letter and been out of there.

ally became her husband) was leaving town for a month and wanted to celebrate her birthday. So off she went, bidding me to settle in and enjoy myself.

Although I'm not a shy person, it was a long and lonely weekend for me. Many of the community members were gone for a few days and the others were running a four-day personal growth workshop (Naka-Ima) so they were totally focused on those responsibilities. Throughout the weekend I would hear shouting, howling, and cries of despair coming from the classroom area. Hmm. I was invited to share meals, but the intensity of the dinner-table conversation related to the workshop drove me to eat alone in my room, partly to honor the process of the workshop participants but also because I didn't have a clue what anyone was talking about!

Had I been in possession of a car, I would have written a “Dear Sarah...what have you gotten me into?” letter and been out of there. But I had no car, so I retreated completely to my room. When Sarah returned on Monday, she found me curled in a fetal position on my bed contemplating my navel and trying to comprehend the situation.

She encouraged me to tell her what was wrong, so I really let her know EVERYTHING that was wrong...in MY opinion. She listened...and then listened some more. She apologized for “leaving me stranded in this alien land,” as I had put it. It turns out that the community members had thought that Sarah was going to give me an orientation and spend the first few days with me, while she had assumed that they, probably the Pierced One, would take care of those things...and I simply fell through the cracks.

As I berated her for “throwing me to the wolves” and insisted that she arrange transportation to a rental car location or the train station, she gently encouraged me to calm down and work through this so that we could carry on with our original plans. But I was beyond mad and in panic mode and would have none of it...especially when she said that she would find a third person to “sit” with us (which I soon learned is community-speak for a mediator). I believe my response was something like “Absolutely not. This is nobody's business but ours!”

That's when I saw her love for me, her trust in the members of the community, and her strength as a woman living her heart's passion come together in a way that would eventually transform our relationship and my life. She stood up, took hold of my shoulders and looked me in the eyes. “If you won't do it for yourself, Mama, *do it for me.*” That's the day I fully realized that the “elder” in a situation is not necessarily the “older.” Those words of wisdom coming from my daughter pierced through my fear and my anger and opened the door to the adventure of a lifetime.

A few hours later, we “sat” with one of the elders of the community, who was at least 10 years younger than me, and I once again experienced the profound beauty and healing of deep listening and compassionate communication. Dee was a loving and compassionate woman who had spent years developing these skills. She helped me cut through my anger to the core of the pain I was feeling, encouraging me to reconnect with the special bond that Sarah and I had as mother and child, and leading me to a place in my heart where I could see and respect my daughter as the beautiful and confident young woman she was becoming.

Before we started, we sat together in silence and slowed down our breathing, gathering our awareness into the present moment and relaxing into each other's presence. When she looked at Sarah and me, I could see that she was genuinely interested in us and wanted to support us. There was no sense of urgency or impatience and, to my

amazement and relief, no apparent judgment on her part that I was some clueless mainstream mama from Texas.

As Sarah had done earlier, Dee listened...and then listened some more. She asked, “What about this situation threatens you?” and “What is your greatest fear related to Sarah?” all the while encouraging me to go deeper with each question, never judging but sometimes reflecting back what I had said to make sure that she had understood me correctly. She turned to Sarah and asked, “What are your needs related to your mother's visit and to your relationship in general?” On it went for almost two hours...asking, listening, openly sharing, reflecting, going deeper, and, in the process, transforming.

So I stayed for the two months, immersed myself in community life, made new friends (including a deep appreciation and love for the Pierced One), and happily fulfilled my work-trade duties—picking blackberries and apples, making jam and apple butter, and teaching canning techniques to dozens of young people. I also did things which, though unplanned, turned out to be some of the most valuable and transformational activities of my life, such as participating in the Naka-Ima workshop which had alarmed me that first weekend. I learned a lot about myself, all the while thoroughly enjoying my new relationship with my daughter.

During that summer, I realized that many of my fellow communitarians were working through struggles with their parents regarding their own decisions to live in community. I heard their stories and found myself, unexpectedly, growing into the role of elder as I began “sitting” with some of their parents who had come for a visit. This role culminated the weekend that I finally participated as a student in Naka-Ima, along with three other mothers, while our daughters assisted at the workshop. Everyone at Lost Valley lovingly dubbed that weekend “Mama-Ima.” [A description of this experience is online at lostvalley.org/talkingleaves/node/133.]

In preparation for writing this article, I asked my friend, Devon, to recollect her conflict with her parents around her decision to join Lost Valley. She recounted:

I am not sure when I communicated with my parents about choosing to join the community as a "member." I just remember how difficult it was and some of the fear-based responses that I heard from them. "You can't do this to us." "It's a cult and we are worried about you." "It's not fair to us." "Join the real world." Etc. I felt upset that they were not owning their feelings but instead putting them on me, telling me that my decisions caused them pain and fear and, therefore, I was being "selfish."

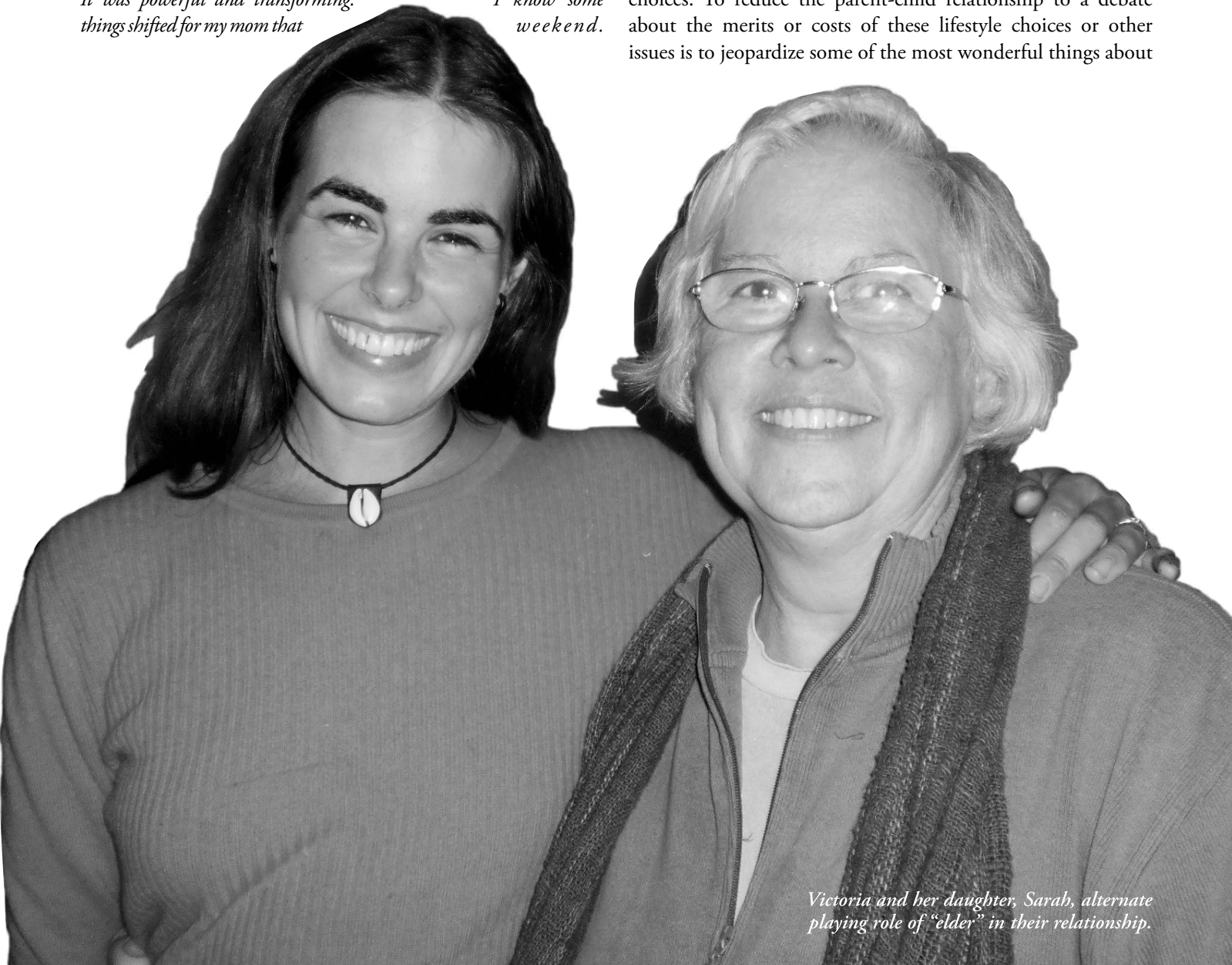
The tension in their dialog eased the weekend Devon's mother participated in "Mama-Ima."

At the workshop, she had plenty of time to talk with the other mothers. They shared their experiences, fears, worries, and concerns. I think it was a great relief for my mom. They also created a ritual to release their daughters as children and connect with them as young women. It was powerful and transforming.

*I know some
weekend.*

While participating in community life with my daughter, first in Oregon and later in communities in France, Iowa, and Missouri, I have met dozens of young communitarians who are truly devastated by the conflict they are experiencing with their parents over their decision to pull away from a mainstream lifestyle. I think it is pretty safe to say that most parents want what is "best" for their children and for their children to be happy. But the rub is that parents can usually offer only what they know, which may include a steady job, benefits and health insurance, a traditional family lifestyle, and modern conveniences (cars/planes, computers, appliances) that all translate to them as a safe, secure life. Living in a community rarely fits into that picture.

Intergenerational conflict is nothing new, but we are living in transformative and chaotic times. Whether those of us who are parents like it, or not, our lives are different in ways we never dreamed or expected, including our children's lifestyle choices. To reduce the parent-child relationship to a debate about the merits or costs of these lifestyle choices or other issues is to jeopardize some of the most wonderful things about



Victoria and her daughter, Sarah, alternate playing role of "elder" in their relationship.



Victoria and Sarah's first breakthrough in communication came from "sitting" with another community member who helps facilitate the process of compassionate communication and deep listening. They have continued this practice for 10 years, this time with Keren at The Possibility Alliance.

being human—our heart connection, our capacity for love and acceptance, and our joy.

Parents have a choice...to open up and stay connected with their children by truly seeing them as adults who have the God-given right to choose their life's path OR to forfeit that connection by resisting and attacking the life their children have thoughtfully chosen. Devon wrote:

I feel grateful that my parents have been willing to accept me no matter what, and I know it has not been easy for any of us. While living in community, I met many people who had severed all ties with their families.

Their parents did not even know where they were living. At times, I actually envied them. I had so many struggles, and still do, communicating with my parents! Even so, I am extremely grateful for their acceptance and love.

Just like their parents, adult children also have a choice... to show respect and express their appreciation and gratitude to their parents for the values they share in a compassionate and loving way OR to focus only on the disagreements and create a permanent barrier to a loving connection.

Sometimes in community, it felt easier to just adopt the other friends and residents as my family rather than work on loving and accepting my own family. But by making that effort and doing the

work, I have come to really appreciate my parents and I am so glad that I have.

Most of us go to great lengths to avoid emotional struggle and pain, but the truth is that by doing so we inevitably cause more of it. Based on my experiences, and those of so many others that I have witnessed, mustering up the courage and making the time to communicate and discuss these sensitive issues pays off a hundred-fold.

Sarah called from England to excitedly share the "wonderful news" (I thought she was going to tell me that she was pregnant!) that she had decided to be car-free! THUD. I told Sarah that it felt like she had just spit in my face!

It is worth noting that the need for this work never stops. Several years ago, Sarah called from England to excitedly share the "wonderful news"

(I thought she was going to tell me that she was pregnant!) that she had decided to be car-free! THUD. Memories flooded in...joyful road trips together, the freedom to travel at will, the promise that "Even though Ethan is carfree, I will *always* ride in the car with *you*, Mama." I felt like I was in one of those movies where you can time-travel to the past in a spinning vortex... right back to 2001 in that lonely room in the guest house filled with anxiety that I had lost all connection with my daughter. The hurt was no different. I told Sarah that it felt like she had just spit in my face! All of my pain and fears rushed out at her over the phone. We were both surprised and devastated for our own reasons.

But this time, at least, I knew there was work to be done and how to do it. This time, I *listened*...to my own pain and aspirations and to those of my daughter. As she crossed the Atlantic to come home, I wrote her a long letter sharing what I had learned. This “conflict” became another opportunity to grow closer. And we did.

If the community of Lost Valley had not made the decision to offer workshops that teach the skills of nonviolent (compassionate) communication and deep listening, my relationship with Sarah may never have achieved such positive transformation. I thank them for this gift from the bottom of my heart. It is my fervent hope that other communities will see personal growth and loving interpersonal communication as priorities, and make them available to their members and visitors as well.

My daughter, Sarah, and her husband, Ethan, went on to found a new community in northeast Missouri called The Possibility Alliance. Our paths continue to align, so my husband and I purchased a home where I can live close-by during half the year. For the past three years, new community members, interns, and visitors have arrived at The Possibility Alliance in Missouri who are struggling with family conflict over their lifestyle choices. As the gray-haired mother/grandmother/elder figure (let’s be honest, that’s how they see me, at least until they

get to know ME), I encourage them to invite their parents for a visit and, whenever I can, I host the older generation at my nearby home (affectionately called “The Annex”) so that we can have a talk.

When the time is right, I share my story, this story...and I listen. ☺

*Thirteen years ago Victoria Albright left a 25-year career as a medical writer and wellness educator in Houston, Texas, to explore holistic healing practices and environmental education. Her search led her to an earth-centered spirituality and a passion for simplicity, sustainability, service, and nonviolence. Victoria’s work as a community event consultant has included ecology conferences, sustainability fairs, feminine spirituality retreats and croning ceremonies, peace festivals, nonviolence workshops, and eco-education events for all ages. She is currently writing a facilitator guide for a 10-week series exploring *The Wheel of Nonviolence*, a personal and social transformation model based on the teachings of Gandhi. Her vision is to work with other cultural creatives to bring about a culture of peace.*

Victoria wishes to thank Devon Bonady, Dee Kehoe, Sarah Wilcox-Hughes, Ethan Hughes, Ann Sieber, and Trish Haas for their inspiration and collaboration in writing this article.



Victoria’s “Farewell Circle” before departing for her winter home in Houston, Texas. The “Farewell Circle,” part of the ongoing compassionate communication and deep listening work practiced at The Possibility Alliance, is an opportunity for community members to express their observations and heart connection with the person who is leaving (who opens their heart and receives what is said without responding). Quite an experience!

Remembering Jane Owen: New Harmony's Joyful Elder

By Nancy Roth

Jane Blaffer Owen
April 18, 1915- June 21, 2010
New Harmony, Indiana

Photo courtesy of Nancy Roth



Author Nancy Roth, with Jane Owen.

On her 86th birthday nine years ago, William Lee Pryor wrote a poem for Jane Owen. It was printed in the program of her memorial service early this summer, and includes the following lines:

*Like Faust, you dream, create—grow and give.
Again, like Faust, you are serene and near-fulfilled yet not complete;
there are visions still to come,
more deeds to be performed.*

*The Fates weave on, no end in sight.
You stay the rendezvous with night—
nowhere near, with the vigor of
your dance: a love affair with Life!*

Jane Owen never “settled in” to a comfortable, self-centered old age, but continued

to dream, create, grow, and give. Fortunately, she “stayed the rendezvous with night” long enough so that I could finally meet her during her 94th year, thanks to a mutual friend who had long been her admirer and had been eager for us to meet. “You’d better *hurry*,” he warned me presciently last year: “She’s in *her 90s!*” I suspect it was not through mere coincidence that, soon thereafter, I was invited to present a program in the Episcopal church in New Harmony, Indiana, where “Lady Jane” (as our mutual friend calls her) makes her home part of the year.

New Harmony is the former site of not one, but two, historic intentional communities. During my long weekend visit, Jane ferried me around town in her golf cart, an efficient and preferred means of local transportation for residents of the present-day town of New Harmony. She showed me buildings similar to those of the first settlers: the Harmonists, German pietists who settled here beside the Wabash River with their leader George Rapp in 1814 in order to prepare for what they expected would be the imminent end of the world.

As the end of time failed to arrive and the Harmonist community dwindled, in 1824 their land was purchased by social reformer Robert Owen, a visionary of a different stripe: he brought with him to New Harmony a utopian community

of “Owenites” for whom the life of the mind was paramount, and philosophers and scientists flocked to the community. Jane’s late husband was a descendent of Robert Owen, and the couple had traveled there often from their home in Houston, Texas, where he was making money in oil—which would prove fortunate for New Harmony’s future well-being.

When Jane was widowed, she set to work dispersing her wealth on behalf of the town she loved so well. Historic buildings were restored, new buildings commissioned from outstanding architects, and various works of art chosen and lovingly placed. As I strolled—or rode with Jane in her golf cart—around New Harmony, I discovered that we couldn’t go far without spotting something beautiful. It might even be alive: of note was the elegant white swan gliding in a lake next to the New Harmony Conference Center. I learned that the swan was a gift from Jane, but never did get around to asking her where she bought it. The only person I know of who “owns” swans is the Queen of England, who, I once learned, is the keeper of all the swans on the Thames River. I wouldn’t have put it past Jane to have made a deal with her. On our route were two labyrinths for walking meditation (one of Harmonist design, and the other a replica of the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral), and New Harmony’s famous “roofless church,” an outdoor worship space designed by Phillip Johnson (Jane wanted a church “with only the sky for a roof”), with a bubbling fountain as a baptismal font and a striking abstract bronze sculpture of the Annunciation by Jacques Lipchitz that I recognized as a twin of one on the Scottish island of Iona. (Jane told me that it was actually one of triplets, for there is one also in Assisi.)

As I spent time with Jane, I began to appreciate more and more her “place” at New Harmony. She was certainly the community elder, and didn’t pretend otherwise. When I met her granddaughter, I discovered the origin of the word boldly painted on the front of her golf cart, lest someone else mistake it for their own. It was “Gammy.” She was so thoroughly “Gammy,” in fact, that after that I soon found myself calling her by that name! She was indeed New Harmony’s “Gammy,” caring for the community by nurturing it with the gifts she had, like any affectionate grandparent. Jane’s gifts included not only her wealth but her intelligence, appreciation of beauty, zest for life, and extremely good taste, and the town of New Harmony will forever bear her mark. It owes not only its beauty but its allure as the site of a historic utopian community to her, as well.

As I thought about the place of elders in community, I’ve reflected that, although we are not all blessed with monetary wealth, we all do have gifts that accumulate over the years: life experience, wisdom, and, perhaps most of all, joy in being alive, which we are likely to take less and less for granted as our “rendezvous with night” gets nearer and nearer. I hope that, as I myself move more and more into elderhood, I’ll remember to use my own gifts, whatever they are, to nurture my “community,” whether it be immediate family, my neighborhood, my circle of friends near and far, or the community that is the small college town in which my husband and I have chosen to live. I hope I will remember that keeping my gifts to myself is not life-giving; it is giving them away that creates a youthful zest for life like Jane’s.

And that reminds me of the baby birds in Paul Tillich’s head. “*What???*” you ask? “Baby birds in Paul Tillich’s head?” Well, here’s the story:

Behind the New Harmony Conference Center’s restaurant, The Red Geranium, a path meanders through a grove of tall pines. At my feet as I walked along it were rocks engraved with the sayings of theologian Paul Tillich (with whom Jane had once studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City) about the sacredness of our relationship with the natural world, such as “*Man and nature belong together in their tragedy and in their salvation.*” At the end of the path is a bust of Tillich. As I approached, a small bird, startled by my presence, fluttered out of the back of his head! Curious, I tiptoed around the bust. Sure enough, the skull was hollow, a perfect size for a nest—and inside was a nest, baby birds and all.

What a metaphor to take home with me: we ourselves make room for the next generations through making space by “emptying” ourselves, sharing what is within us—all those functions of our brains, like our intelligence, our imagination, and our passions. Generosity, in other words, begets generativity. Jane not only believed that; she lived it. Among the things she shared was her own knowledge of the healing power of nature’s beauty. One more story...

During my final dinner with Jane, her daughter, and her granddaughter Sarah, her daughter’s cell-phone rang. It brought them the sad news of the death of their beloved dog. It was devastating for the little girl. Gamma swung into action after dinner. She herded the three of us into her golf cart and set forth towards the town’s outskirts, finally turning down a rough road that took us into a very dark woods. When Jane had arrived at the place she was looking for, we came to a stop. Beside us, among the trees, the air was alive with the twinkling of literally hundreds of fireflies. I have never seen such a display. As we sat there in silence, Sarah’s sobs became less and less violent, and finally ceased. Calm descended over all of us.

Without the elder wisdom of Jane, the two other adult passengers might have tried to comfort Sarah through talking and reasoning with her. But Gamma set the tone. She had lived long enough to know that sometimes life’s events cannot be dealt with in words. Instead, she let the natural world speak to us, in the universal language of beauty, of nature’s community. I hope I always remember that moment, when a community elder was wise enough to allow another species, in a place called New Harmony, to speak comfort to four people, spanning human age from a child to a nonagenarian, sitting quietly together in a golf cart, in awe. 🐦

Nancy Roth is an Episcopal priest, writer (her most recent book is Grounded in Love: Ecology, Faith, and Action), and avid reader of COMMUNITIES. Her website is www.revsnancyroth.org.

Snapshots of Elders...

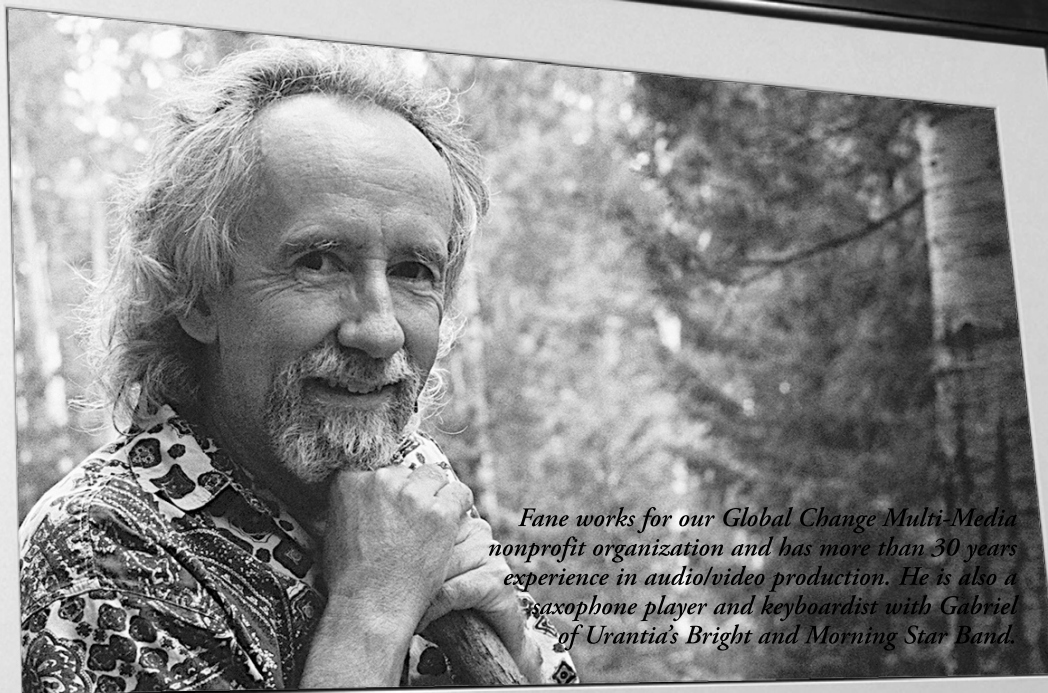
The Beauty and Bounty of Aging Within Community

By Niánn Emerson Chase

I am freshly 62 years old and still at times cringe to think that I am considered a “crone” or “elderly” because of my chronological age. When some sweet young stranger lets me know that I can have a senior discount at her place of employment, my dominant-culturally trained vanity kicks in. Do I actually look my age? Ouch, that hurts. It hurts, when walking in some busy, public place, to see the eyes of those in their teens, 20s, and even 30s slide by me with apathy because I’m too old to be of interest.

I ache when I subject myself to advertising in the dominant culture’s media that emphasizes the profitable commodity of the vigor and physical beauty of youth (or at least the appearance of it), disregarding the value of maturing physically, experientially, and psychospiritually. It hurts to see so many of mainstream society’s elderly condemned (due to financial and family factors) to the undesirable and sometimes hidden margins of society, living in situations that are not nourishing, empowering, or health-promoting.

Most of my aching and cringing disappear when I am “home” in the culture of an intentional community of currently 103 members. I feel valued and vigorous. It doesn’t matter if I look my age or am considered an



Fane works for our Global Change Multi-Media nonprofit organization and has more than 30 years experience in audio/video production. He is also a saxophone player and keyboardist with Gabriel of Urantia's Bright and Morning Star Band.



elder because I really feel respected and loved by my very large, extended family of community members, and I think that most elders of the community would concur with me.

• • •

If being 50 years of age or older is considered being an “elder,” then almost one-third of the membership of Global Community Communications Alliance (GCCA) consists of elders, 33 to be exact. We also have another understanding of the concept of “elder,” as has been historically the case in many cultures for thousands of years. Eldership implies not only the number of years an individual has lived on this earth, it also indicates the psychospiritual maturity, wisdom, experience, and leadership abilities of a soul. In that sense, I have been considered an “elder” from the beginning of the formation of the intentional community I cofounded at the ripe old age of 39.

At this time GCCA has a Board of Elders of 10 individuals, ranging in age from 80 (one) to the mid-40s (two in number). We also have another level of leadership or eldership that includes 23 additional members who range in age from the mid-70s to the late 30s. So eldership in this context is not necessarily confined to chronological age, though age of living life definitely is a determiner.

From the very beginning of the formation of what is now Global Community Communications Alliance, the emphasis

for joining had nothing to do with chronological age but with a sense of calling or mission that inspired an individual to consider becoming part of this particular enterprise of community-building. In those beginning days, two of our more stable and permanent members were in their late 50s when they joined, but we had many in their early 20s as well as in their middle ages.

What we discovered is that an individual’s “staying power” had more to do with him or her feeling a purposeful place in the community, feeling valued as a unique person, and willing to experience the rigorous discipline of community building and soul building. Understandably, more of those in their middle and elder years “stayed” for the long run of creating and maintaining community, thus providing a more stable foundation for those younger to join a few years later. At times, youth—in its impetuosity and wanderlust—has enticed those chronologically younger to leave our community before really rooting themselves in the solid foundation of life within the circles of a village and extended family, in contrast to those with additional years under their belts, who seem to ride the waves of life’s ups and downs with more balance and, thus, more staying power.

• • •

In relation to the chronological age of being an elder, there



Clistine is the coordinator for the younger children's educational programs—nursery, preschool, and primary school. She also is the music director for the community's 40-person choir that performs in the surrounding area.

they didn't want to be "put out to pasture" or live a marginal life with mainly other elders, separated from other age groups and trans-generational activities. Each one of these souls didn't think they were done growing psychospiritually and wanted to continue expanding intellectually as well as learn new skills.

Some of them were in great physical health when first joining and then eventually declined physically as they aged. Others came with many health problems, and though most claim that their health has greatly improved, there have been the few whose physical health continues to deteriorate quickly, requiring much physical care from other community members as well as many trips to their physicians located in nearby towns and cities.

There have been those few who were initially very excited about living in a community that encouraged continued psychospiritual growth and provided opportunities for meaningful work and loving socialization with people of all ages. But as the months passed (and for one it was years), for whatever reasons they grew weary of living in GCCA and "retired" into mainstream society. Mostly though, those who joined GCCA as elders have remained and plan on passing on within the community hospice setting, as five members have already done.

Recognizing the value and significance of aging individuals, after 15 years of providing hospice care for our community members, we established and operate Soulistic Hospice with a trained and certified team of 14 community members and five non-community members—ranging from a psychologist, medical doctor, and nurses, to massage therapists, ministers, office staff, and other healthcare professionals—who assist elders (and their loved ones) in mainstream society in their transition time from this world. The at-home care and nurturing allows each older person to move into their graduation from this life with much dignity and peace.

are many in our community whom I admire. Olga emigrated from Germany at age 82 to join GCCA. She had lived her whole life as a single person, traveling around the world, working in a profession until retirement, and pursuing personal spiritual expansion. She lived with us for 10 years before passing on in our community hospice.

Up to the last couple of months of her life Olga insisted on having "jobs" to do. When asked how she could make such a drastic change in her life at the age of 82—leaving her native country where she lived an independent and very quiet life to be in a communal situation in another country—Olga stated that she was not done living yet and that she couldn't really "live" in the culture she was in. So, after approximately a year of correspondence with GCCA, she moved to become a part of this community, attending two weekly evening classes of spiritual studies and working approximately four hours a day in various functions, including being a translator.

• • •

I think of others who joined GCCA in their "twilight" years—people who had retired from their life-long jobs (single as well as couples) and who indicated that

Community member Marayeh, 67, is the Administrative Director and psychologist for Soulistic Hospice, and Landau, 63, is the Medical Director and practicing physician. Besides these two elders, seven other community staff members are elders, ranging from 54 to 64 years of age.

• • •

Karina (whose name has been changed for privacy purposes) was a widow of more than 20 years when she first contacted GCCA. She had suffered decades of depression and poor physical health and had lived alone since the death of her husband. She was geographically apart from her four grown children and several grandchildren, as well as also relationship-wise separated from two of those children and their families.

She initially stayed in the community for one week as a resident visitor, celebrating her 68th birthday during that first visit. About a month later she decided to join the community for a six-month initiate interim to investigate if living in this particular community would be a good fit. That was two years ago, and she continues to express her gratitude for a less lonely life.

Karina started out sharing a room with a woman a couple of years older than she and recently changed to having a roommate who is in her mid-20s, because both elders were tired of living in a home with mainly elders and requested moving to a community home that had more young people in it. Interestingly, Karina's new younger roommate had requested to live in a home that had more mature and older people because she felt she needed the stability that

Before joining our community, Karina had suffered decades of depression and had lived alone since her husband's death. She now expresses her gratitude for a less lonely life.

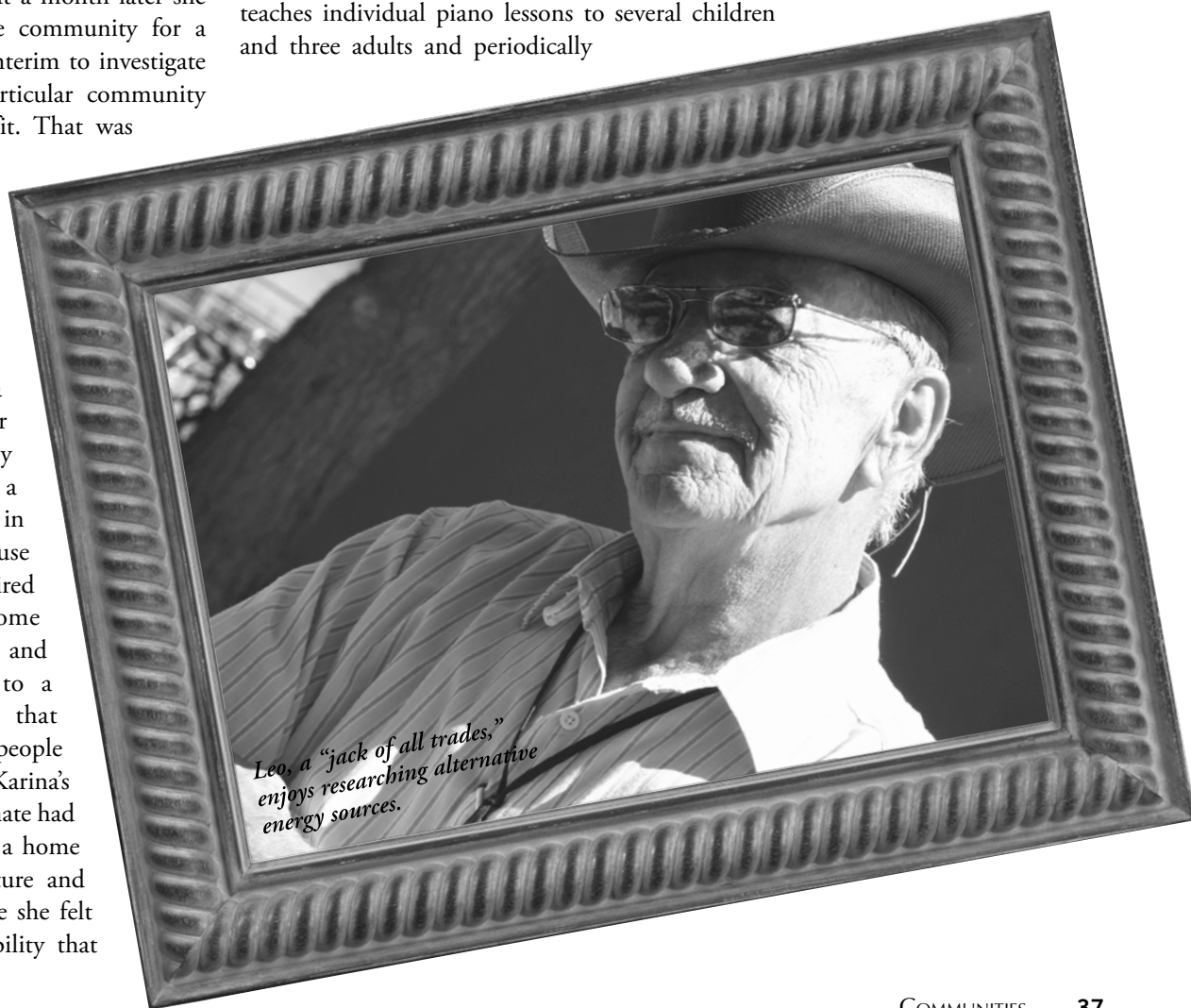
elders provided.

Karina had not worked for 20 years when she joined the community, but immediately asked to help out with the preschool- and primary-age children a couple of hours a day. Though she does have some physical limitations, she was able to "work" with the children and now assists in teaching four hours every morning as well as filling in where needed in the kitchen for an hour or two in the afternoons if she feels physically able.

• • •

Cynthia came to live in GCCA eight years ago at the age of 66. She entered an extended initiate program for one year before deciding to become a full-time community member. She had been crippled with arthritis and other medical problems for many years before coming to live in the community and doesn't think that her physical health has really improved that much. But she says she is much happier and less lonely, though she feels she still needs emotional healing from events that happened to her in her childhood and youth.

She also loves learning and is an avid student in two evening classes of spiritual studies as well as tutoring one evening with some young men. She also teaches individual piano lessons to several children and three adults and periodically



Leo, a "jack of all trades," enjoys researching alternative energy sources.

conducts six-week workshops on the life and music of certain composers of classical music. She even gave salsa dance lessons a couple of years ago when it was discovered that in her younger years she danced the nights away. And she assists almost daily in the community personnel office. Just recently Cynthia indicated that she would like

to volunteer as a receptionist a half a day a week at the local state park.

• • •

Almost all elders in GCCA pass on certain skills to interested younger people in the community. Leo and Phlon are elders in their early 70s who oversee the vehicle mechanics area. Several younger people have apprenticed under them, learning to maintain cars, trucks, and tractors. Leo is a “Jack of all trades” and is in constant demand to assist others in repairing coolers, washing machines, electrical wiring, and so on. He also is a wonderful liaison with the larger community outside of GCCA, interacting with other Jacks (and Jills) of all trades to swap ideas about challenging repair problems.

• • •

Kamon, our head farmer, is in his mid-60s and is a real hit with the rugged cowboys and ranchers in this area who usually shake their heads at those “liberal organic gardeners and granola eaters” who are moving into Arizona. Well, they don’t necessarily “tisk tisk” over us in GCCA because they know and respect Kamon, who is also a Vietnam War veteran. In fact, some of those hard-core desert dwellers drop in to visit our gardens and community, often staying for the communal lunch or dinner and even confess that it was a good meal, regardless of it being beefless and organic.

Many community members have Kamon as their instructor in spiritual studies as well as learning horsemanship, gardening, fence building, and many other useful and practical skills. He also is a well-known artist in the southwest, using natural items from our gardens as well as from the desert around him to cre-

ate beautiful art—flutes and other instruments as well as vessels and jewelry. He has a 16-year-old apprenticing under him in this area.

• • •

Elinsa joined GCCA at 64 years of age and has been here for nine years. Though she has volunteered in many areas of the community, she now works part-time in Global Family Legal Services, an outreach program for GCCA. Elinsa uses her experience of living in Latin America for many years and bilingual skills in serving many of the Spanish-speaking clients who come in to see the attorney, Celinas, who is 61.

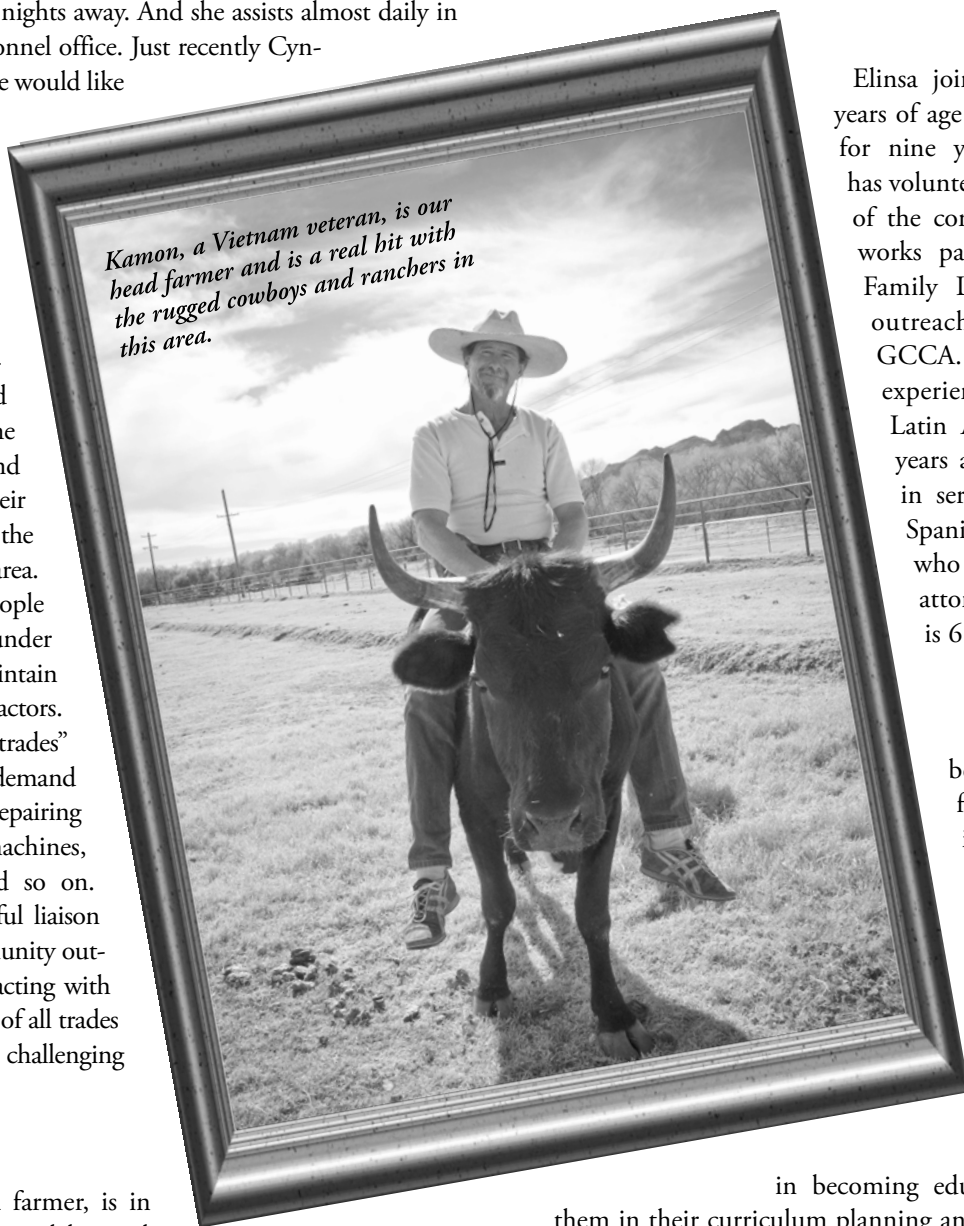
• • •

Clistine, who has been with GCCA for 15 years and is now 75, is the coordinator for the younger children’s educational programs—nursery, preschool, and primary school. She trains younger people interested

in becoming educators and assists them in their curriculum planning and writing. She also is the music director for the community’s 40-person choir that performs in the surrounding area. Clistine has written several books and for many years directed a community theater troupe, blessing others with her rich dance and theatrical experiences and training, including graduating from the Royal Academy of Art in London. She continues to teach creative writing and often reads her poetry at open-mic and poetry-reading events.

• • •

Sixteen years ago, at 62 years old, Spectra emigrated from Australia to join GCCA and continued her nursing skills as a volunteer in the community and with a physician who served not only community members but patients in the neighboring area. Many have benefited from her loving ministry when they





Spectra, originally from Holland, emigrated from Australia to join GCCA when she was 62 years old.

some other type of intentional community.

One of the great losses of our modern (and often materialistic and shallow) society is the discarding of elders. In addition, the great rise in “assisted living” and other “homes” for the elderly continues to further foster the separation of the oldest and often wisest generation of living humans from those younger and often still groping generations who are to inherit the mantle of world operations. What a tragedy, to rob both young and old of the pleasure and myriad benefits of shared lives with one another. I personally feel blessed to be part of a worldwide movement of intentional commu-

were ill, and she has always been there for our community hospice.

As a child in Holland, she suffered from tuberculosis of the bone and spent a couple of years in the sanatorium before it closed down due to the Second World War that came to Spectra’s doorstep. She was crippled with a damaged hip because of her childhood illness, but that never slowed Spectra down. Most in the community have enjoyed her stories of her life as a child in Holland as well as of her family’s immigration to Australia and her new life in that wild country as a young woman.

From the time she arrived, Spectra has played “grandma” to many of the little children, and now at 78 she has slowed down due to her increasing physical limitations and can often be seen sitting on a porch of one of the community homes with two to five little children sitting with her as she reads to them or serves them snacks or teaches them sewing and mending.

• • •

There are other elders who have given so much of themselves for the enrichment of others’ lives and who have themselves been enriched by living in this community. I know that actively living in any true community is a win-win situation, whether the community be an extended biological family, a church group, a religious order, a neighborhood, or

nities creating cultures that value people of all ages—from newborn to 99. 🌸



Niánn Emerson Chase grew up on four different Native American reservations in the southwestern United States. After earning her Bachelor’s Degree in Literature/English and Education, she returned to the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona where she lived and taught for 15 years. In 1989, she cofounded Global Community Communications Alliance—currently a 100+ member intentional community and working ecovillage (at Avalon

Organic Gardens, Farm, and Ranch) located in southern Arizona in the historic southwest towns of Tubac and Tumacácori. Within the community, Niánn Emerson Chase serves as the Director of the Global Community Communications Schools for Adults, Teens, and Children, as well as serving on the Board of Elders and as a pastor.



The Elder and the Community: Perspectives from São Paulo

By Beatriz Vera Pozzi Redko

No one, at any age, can sleep well if there is hunger and misery in the world.

When I turned 66 I decided to study the sustainability of old people together with the sustainability of places.

First I did some research. The only entries I found online for the sustainability of old people were “Pensions” and “Health Plans.” No use for that. I am strong and I can do many other things, besides living on my pension and health plan. I must do something useful for others—if not, everything I have in my head will be lost forever, and I will become a walking garbage pile.

Finally I found a program on Sustainability given by Gaia Education at UMAPAZ, in São Paulo, Brazil.¹ I applied, and to my surprise, I was accepted. When I started my Gaia program I was 69 years old.

I never understood why I was accepted. During all my professional life, I had worked as a researcher in forestry and sustainability, but for the pulp and paper industry. I did a lot of social work in the meantime.

Most of my fellow participants treated me as an outcast, rejecting me without knowing anything about my ideas and my ideals. Very, very few came to ask me what I really thought and what my purposes were for attending the classes.

The students were very young and not realistic. They cared far more for animals in danger than for people starving.

After I made my points, the few friends who understood me better told me (only half-jokingly) to bring a bodyguard to the class for my protection.

Being older I did not participate very much in the dancing. Truthfully, I still do not see the point of all this joy when we have so much suffering, ignorance, greed, and hunger throughout the world.

I learned to discuss my arguments (and I had a lot) in private with the teachers.

The course ended, and I started to use my new knowledge for

my purposes: to contribute to making a better world and not to be a useless reject of society, as most elders are considered.

Being an elder, I know that the elder’s self-esteem is lower than the level of the sea, and I started to work on this problem.

I was accepted as an elder at Ecobairro, www.Ecobairro.org.br, an NGO dedicated to making the boroughs of São Paulo more sustainable and resilient. Many of my colleagues at Ecobairro see older people as backwards and slow. More than a quarter of the neighbourhood adults are elders today and that is growing. My colleagues do not consider that they also are aging—and that in the near future to be older will be the rule, not the exception.

“Elder” is not a good term. Too often, it is demeaning, and labels the person as inept and incompetent. She is rejected before she opens her mouth. But she is alive, and she is as responsible as every other person to construct a better world.

I feel during my work that to be considered an elder is a stigma. Most of the work we can do well is denied to us, and our opinions are not heard. It is very difficult to be accepted as an equal in any decision-making process.

How I am changing the game?

Educating and improving myself every day; encouraging others to improve every day. And working, studying, working, studying. And speaking with my heart, without fear or shyness.

Dialogue is fundamental to all education and improvement. Only knowing the other and accepting the other can we eventually build something together. The main problem of the older generation is to talk to the new generation.

A beautiful old lady told me that the best behaviour in a family conversation for her would be to be like “the cow in the nativity scene”: mute, always agreeing. A retired gentleman said that he travels a lot to avoid family reunions. If this happens within a family, the acceptance of older people is far worse with strangers.

At Ecobairro I am responsible for the older persons of the

1. São Paulo is the largest city of the southern hemisphere. Its metropolitan region has a population of 19,223,897 and it is the sixth largest urban agglomeration in the world. São Paulo has the same size as Cuba. The citizens of São Paulo are kind; we elders are respected here and can have a good life. We have free public transportation, privileged and reserved seats in buses, metro, and trains, half-price tickets for cultural and sports events. The law gives us preferential treatment for all occasions, from bank lines to health treatments.

São Paulo, like many cities, is aging. In 2012 it will have more people over 60 than under 12. In my neighbourhood more than 25 percent are over 60 years old today. Soon the norm will be to be an elder here.



A meeting of the generations in Jova Rural Community (both photos).

Any positive change must involve all of society, and our contribution is necessary in any healthy and sustainable world.

borough. I arranged a series of meetings involving conversations of various generations, among people from different backgrounds. The results were surprisingly alike: the older people feel that they need to adapt to the younger to be accepted, and that they need to improve continuously.

In a conversation with lots of older people about their aims, they cited: continuous self-improvement, to have their voluntary work valued, to be given means to do more voluntary work with the poor people, to be given more responsibilities in the community.

Besides, they feel the need to develop a life plan, and to pursue their dreams. And to help end the misery of the world, they must do voluntary work. Strangely enough, older people are more respected in the poorer boroughs, where their contribution is more needed and valued.

We older people today must use all the resources that are available to us: radio, photos, videos, movies, TV programs, internet, social networking, Twitter, mp3s, cellular phones, everything. With them we can reach the world, we can know, we can help, and we can contribute.

We, older people, need to change continuously.

First we must change our own perception of who we are, so



that we see that we are a valuable and useful part of society, that any positive change must involve all of society, and our contribution is necessary in any healthy and sustainable world.

The media is starting to help, but that is not enough. We must act. We must unite. We must develop social nets among ourselves for our education, for our rights and duties, for our concerns, for our compassion for others, for the urge to help.

We are alive now and we will struggle until our last breath for a world without suffering. 🐦

A member of the Environmental Working Group since 1979, and a volunteer with various sustainability and empowerment projects (including coordinator of Ecobairro's Ecomaturity Project starting in 2009), Beatriz Vera Pozzi Redko completed an eight-month Ecovillage Design Education course with the Free University of Environment and Peace Culture (UMAPAZ) in 2008, and has also participated in a Transition Towns Training, "Carta da Terra" (Earth Course), and other courses on Sustainability and Environment with UMAPAZ. Contact her at bvredko@attglobal.net.

FOUR STEPS TO AN ELDER'S THRONE

By Understanding R Israel, M.A. Ed.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Patch Adams



The author Understanding Israel and Dr. Patch Adams of Gesundheit on the occasion of his 65th birthday: silliness and laughter can help one live long enough to attain elder status.

I am an elder in two worlds and I love it. First, I am an elder in the intentional community where I helped to raise over 160 children through legal guardianship. Second, I am an elder in the local Native American community where I am active as a storyteller. In the first world, I love having adults introduce their children to me with the words: “this is the woman who helped care for me when I was your age.” Second, I really appreciate the attention I receive as an elder in the Native American community. Elders there receive premier care: best

seats at the Pow Wow and dinner, to mention only a few of the benefits. This is my favorite stage in my life. Therefore, I would like to pass on some tips that might help younger people realize the value of elder status, and encourage them to add a path to the elder’s throne in their lives.

1. Invest more in giving than in Botox. I was a national beauty pageant winner as a young adult (Miss Yellowstone National Park 1964, and local runner-up in the Miss America Contest), yet my legacy is the service I gave others. Grey hairs and wrinkles do not bother me. My Native American Grandmother taught me this.

2. Exercise your forgiveness muscle as much as your gluteus maximus.

3. Invest in a big heart as much as a big bank account. I am welcome in so many homes and lives, and honored not for the money I saved, car I drive, or home I do not own, but the time, energy, and devotion I gave.

4. Capitalize on community. Invest in your community to expand the wealth of your return as an elder. It is so nice to be honored as an elder by a community. Big investments here return big rewards.

That is it. So much today is made of the glory of youth. However, many cultures recognize the value of elders. I hope that you can find a community that aligns with that principal and start working your way to the golden throne. 🐦

Understanding “Uri” Israel lived for over 26 years in a commune located mostly in the Cascade Mountains. She received her B.A. from Pacific Lutheran University, her M.A. Ed. from Antioch, and is currently working on a Doctorate in Educational Leadership through Argosy University Seattle. She raised many children through legal guardianship and birthed four: Rebecca, Melissa, Strong, and Magic. She is proud of her Jewish and Native American ancestry and active as a storyteller in the Native American community.



Kronus and Crone

By Isis Aquarian

Elders represent many things to me, but most important, they embody the third and final stages of the God and Goddess Trinity: Kronus and Crone.

As members of the Source Brotherhood/Family/Tribal commune from the 1970s, we had many concepts of the wisdom teachings. Being in my Elder years now, I find that I am very much connected with the last stage of the Trinity, my Cronehood.

The stages of the Trinity include:

Female: Youth/Maiden...Woman/Mother...Elder/Crone.

Male: Youth/Knight...Man/Father...Elder/Kronus.

In society and tribes of old you will find that the Elders were the ones who held the true power. They were the ones looked up to for life experience and wisdom, the ones who held the sacred duty of passing down their truths and lineage to the younger generation in oral stories, memories, and reminders. The continuation of the tribe depended on them. Today we still see remnants of this within Polynesians, Native Americans, and Asian families, as well as in communal society at large in its still functioning groups around the world.

The Elder is crowned with the wisdom of the ages, always retaining the innocence and vigor of the youth, the maturity of the wo-man, and the consciousness of the Elder. The secret hidden in this great mystery is that these three stages of life all create the Elder. Modernkind has lost sight of the Elder as literal and spiritual head of the family or tribe. The Elder led the way to balance, peace, and understanding, as well as readiness

for death, which also led to an understanding of rebirth. The Elders were revered, grounded in wisdom and love. Because they understood the cyclical essence of nature, had harvested the experience of many cycles, they would pass their wisdom on to the tribe. They were the caretakers of the Sacred Trust of life.

There has been a constant struggle over the Patriarchal and Matriarchal powers. What we need and are now finding is the two-in-one balance, not one or the other. In today's world, the media and advertising industries still harbor fears of being old, ugly, and not important. Be we are finally becoming more aware, learning how to heal our dysfunctions and our wounds and beginning to shine some light back into these shadows. We can start by recognizing, again, the sacredness of Elderhood. 🐦



Born Charlene Peters in 1942, Isis Aquarian was appointed to be Source Communal Brotherhood archivist, historian, and keeper of the temple as the high priestess by its founder, Father Yod. As the Elder of the Source Tribe, she maintains the legacy of the Source with the yahowha.org website, the Source Foundation, and a private social website for the Family. A book, The Source: The Untold Story of Father Yod, Ya Ho Wa 13 and The Source Family, was

completed several years ago and has served as a way to bring the members back in connection as well as saving the legacy. Isis now resides in Hawaii near her daughter and granddaughter.

Aging in Community

By Raines Cohen

I feel blessed to be part of a parallel evolution in the field of aging, a newly emerging phenomenon we in the movement call “**Aging In Community**” (not to be confused with the important but relatively mundane “Aging In Place” that we build on). New community-based people-powered institutions and models for cooperation are giving us the opportunity to overcome the multi-billion-dollar aging-industrial complex trying to put us into prefabricated generic slots in nursing homes. We need to help each other to get past the well-intentioned efforts of our own families to “take care of us” in ways that strip us of autonomy.

A new perspective is that we can gain control of our lives, and even elements of choice in our deaths, and earn independence through interdependence, as my wife Betsy Morris, a longtime community researcher, has written. People are dealing with complex systems necessary for their own sense of well-being. Empowerment comes from peoples’ discovery that in sharing information and ideas, access to a greater whole becomes integral to one’s personal success. Passionate groups of users—amateurs and professionals interacting freely in structured settings—became a community of stakeholders with the power to reshape the system itself, first through voluntary exchanges among themselves, and then by translating social connections and trust into economic and political clout.

A Movement of Many Pieces

Aging in Community is a ragtag movement of ordinary people banding together and stepping forward to fill in gaps

of the patchwork of care with overlapping efforts, regional and national, “multiple centers of initiative,” people just like you who are, just in the past decade:

- Building “village model” support structures that can help us stay in our homes, connecting to neighbors rather than isolating ourselves as we age.
- Creating new cohousing neighborhoods and ecovillages specifically designed to provide homes that we can live out the rest of our lives in, transforming our collective impacts on the earth for the benefit of generations yet to come.
- Forming Elders’ Guilds and studying Sage-ing, collaborative courses, Second Journey workshops, and study groups for conscious aging, where we together re-imagine old age and embody the wisdom to help heal the future.
- Becoming Earth Elders dedicated to creating a just, sacred, and sustainable future.

A few people are exploring new areas of development in the movement, including:

- Supporting developers creating ElderFire communities, ElderShire neighborhoods, and “GreenHouse” nursing homes.
- Sharing strategies to remake our cities and towns into Aging-Friendly Communities that will meet our aging populations’ needs.
- Supporting each other with Senior Networks that keep people connected and engaged across distances through computer communications.

The term “Aging In Community” appears to have been coined early this century by participants in Second Journey’s work-

shops on Spirit, Service, and Community. I credit White House Conference on Aging member Janice Blanchard from Colorado as the one who has done the most to popularize the term, forging a foothold with talks at American Society on Aging national conferences and throughout the “industry of aging.” It’s going to take a lot of us working together in this regard to help the movement see that we’re all working on the same essential core, despite differences in scope, scale, and methods.

We’re still in the early stages of finding each other, and as a self-help citizen-organized movement, we’re in the de-commodifying business, so you can’t (yet) just look up your local Aging In Community center and say “I’d like one of those villages by next week in green, please.” A few national organizations support matchmaking and group development for some types of community efforts, but at the moment, if you want one of these groups to meet your needs, the odds are that you’ll have to step up and make it happen. Fortunately, there’s a lot of help available.

Curious? Join me, if you will, on a brief journey through some of these innovative efforts and what makes them so essential to our little revolution in aging.

Cohousing

In Denmark in the early 1970s, families looking for deeper connections with neighbors and support for raising kids together pioneered a new form of neighborhood, one combining private homes with a large shared area. A common house included shared kitchen and dining area that they could use together a few times a week, while they still had the independence of their own kitchens in their own homes. Cars were pushed to the edge, with design for walkability. Folks could share in childcare, but weren’t forced to do everything together. This “yes, and” principle of adding choices turned out to provide a high quality of life without adding much cost to basic homeownership.

People live in smaller, greener homes, living richer lives for less.

We call this **cohousing**. In more than 100 neighborhoods across the country, it offers condominiums with community,

developed by the residents. In these “intentional neighborhoods” that start green and get greener, you know

your neighbors and build the shared experience that makes it easy to trust and share. These are projects that cities will approve and banks will finance (even when the economy is stalled everywhere else), because the future residents are part of the process, investing and sharing an interest in the success of the project; they’ve got “skin in the game.”

Senior Cohousing

It turned out that these same cohousing neighborhood design principles had a lot to offer aging Boomers, including:

- Shared guest rooms to accommodate visiting family members or shared long-term care providers, living independently rather than in your own house so you don’t get into that whole servant/master dynamic.
- Shared meals to keep people talking to one another and aware of significant events in each others’ lives
- Community connections that keep people active, because they know they’ll hear from their nice but nosy neighbor if they don’t get dressed and get the paper by noon.

Senior cohousing, recently imported to the US by Charles Durrett (decades after he brought over the original intergenerational form with his architect/author wife, Kathryn McCamant), is just getting off the ground here, with a handful of communities established in California, Virginia, and Colorado, and a couple dozen more in the development process. The Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US) is helping these bold pioneers challenging bureaucrats, land-use regulations, and their own fears that can keep them from realizing their visions.

(continued on p. 77)

Definition of an Elder

An Elder is a person who is still growing, still a learner, still with potential, and whose life continues to have within it promise for, and connection to the future.

An elder is still in pursuit of happiness, joy, and pleasure, and her or his birthright to these remains intact.

Moreover, an elder is a person who deserves respect and honor and whose work it is to synthesize wisdom from long life experience and formulate this into a legacy for future generations.

—Barry Barkan, Elders’ Guild

Elders’ Guild

Our Vision is a world in which powerful and conscious elders join together in common purpose to bring healing, joy, and connection to our lives, our families, our communities, and our world.

Our Mission is to create the communities where we re-imagine our old age, look after one another, and embody the wisdom that will enable us to help heal the future.

www.eldersguild.org

(a project of the Live Oak Institute, Berkeley, CA; regular meetings take place twice a month in Berkeley)

The Making of Senior Cohousing: The Story of Wolf Creek Lodge

By Suzanne Marriott

In 1969, I was driving up Highway 1 just north of Santa Cruz on a warm California day. To my left I saw a farm house and barn. The area was jammed with Volkswagen bugs and buses displaying the usual bright colors, painted flowers, and bumper stickers of the time. I knew there were like-minded people there and that I would be welcome to join whatever party was going on. It turned out to be a hippy wedding, and I was not turned away.

A year later, in the winter of 1970, I was traveling by train through East Germany. We were stopped at a checkpoint when a uniformed conductor tore open the door to my second-class compartment and demanded “Passport!” in a tone that reminded me of Nazi officers from World War II movies. Out the window, I saw a young DDR guard standing beside the track, rifle in tote. On impulse, I flashed him the peace sign. He returned it, not raising his hand, but keeping it discretely by his side. His eyes met mine. The train pulled away.

What do these two stories have in common? They both hold an overarching sense of community—one that transcends place and time. Whether a guard in Russian-occupied East Germany or a California girl looking for fun, we were all connected, all part of one, huge generation—and we knew it. We were a generation that recognized itself, hung together, had fun, and was determined to change the world. And we did.

Theodore Roszak tells us—the boomer generation—that we did it once and now it’s time for us to do it again. Change the world, that is. In his new book, *The Making of an Elder Culture*, Roszak writes, “What boomers left undone in their youth, they will return to take up in their maturity, if for no other reason than because they will want to make old age *interesting*.” (p. 8) He’s talking about us. (Remember Roszak? In 1968 he coined the term “counter culture.”) We’re still here, and we are going to be here for quite some time. Roszak reminds us that we are still a power to be reckoned with, still active agents for positive change.

Cohousing is part of that change, and *senior* cohousing, in particular, is a social force whose time has come.

My Journey Begins

In the past four years, through my involvement in senior cohousing, I’ve rediscovered that feeling of connection I had in the 1960s—that feeling of being a part of something larger and nobler than I could achieve on my own. I am once again part of a movement that offers a new way of living, a movement that addresses the social and ecological challenges of the 21st century through sustainable community.

My own journey in senior cohousing began early in the summer of 2006, six months after the death of my husband, who succumbed to complications of multiple sclerosis.



After Michael's death, I began looking for ways to bring new meaning and motivation to my life. Through an online search for "cohousing," a concept both my husband and I had been attracted to in the past, I discovered that a group formation workshop was scheduled that summer in Grass Valley, California. Immediately, I felt drawn to attend that meeting, despite the three-hour drive and the \$200 fee it would entail.

As I drove up Highway 80 from my home in the San Francisco East Bay Area, I wondered what I would find. As it turned out, I walked into a workshop with a group of strangers and left knowing



Photos courtesy of Suzanne Marriott

Above: Some members of Wolf Creek Lodge gather at Nevada City Cohousing for a marketing photo session. This photo: Beautiful Wolf Creek flows through the Wolf Creek Lodge property.



they would become my neighbors. That day, 16 households began the long process of building a new and vibrant community. As octogenarian Magdalene Jaeckel, our eldest member, reflects, "Although we are from different backgrounds and didn't know each other in the beginning, I have never found a group that was so spontaneously helpful and fun to be with. It seems to me that the idea of cohousing draws people who are genuinely interested in each other and therefore would make good neighbors."

Starting Our Community

We learned that the cohousing concept was brought to this country from Denmark by Katherine McCamant and her architect husband, Charles (Chuck) Durrett, and these were the people who had called this meeting. One of the things that convinced me to join was their enthusiasm and expertise in creating cohousing communities.

Cohousing communities are small-scale neighborhoods that are planned, developed, and managed by members. With their fully-equipped private units and large common spaces, they provide a balance between privacy and community living. This balance was a major factor for all of us in our choice of cohousing.

Over the ensuing months and years, we grew to become a close-knit community. We named our group Wolf Creek Lodge, after the free-flowing creek that borders our forested property, and embarked on a



Ours will not be our parents' aging. It will be different—vibrant, socially revolutionary, and fun.

multi-year journey to learn about community building. We did not have to create our community from scratch. Katie gave us each a binder that contained recommended procedures, including how to form teams, develop proposals, run business meetings, and make decisions by consensus. Through our team efforts and our monthly business meetings, we adapted all of these tools to our own needs. We had a consultant who led us through the process of crafting our vision statement and learning intentional communication skills. Through a series of workshops with Chuck, we worked on our design for the common facilities and private units, identifying values and priorities and creating the spaces to foster them.

Living lightly on the planet became a primary focus. Our three-story lodge will be compact, the opposite of the urban sprawl many of us hoped to escape. By having a 4,000 sq. ft. Common House at the center of our design, we can reduce the size of our private units and still have everything we'll need. This shared space will include two guest rooms, laundry facilities, a craft area, library, sitting room, and a workshop where we can store and share all kinds of tools. A large kitchen and dining/social/meeting area will provide ample space for community meals and activities. By sharing resources, we will have many opportunities to come together as neighbors.

Our Lodge will be green-built and energy efficient, following ecological construction practices, such as the use of non- or low-toxic materials from sustainable sources, active and passive energy-saving measures, insulation exceeding state standards, low water usage, and responsible landscaping. Our site is walkable to shops and services, reducing our need for cars, and one third of our wooded property will remain open space.

As our dreams became our design, we couldn't wait to move in! We were truly creating a lifestyle revolution—one based on intelligent aging, sustainable living, and community.

Why Choose Senior Cohousing over Intergenerational Cohousing?

Senior cohousing, as opposed to intergenerational cohousing, is our group's choice for many reasons. To begin with, senior cohousing is all about active aging-in-place within a supportive community. We accept the inevitability of aging, and we want to

be in control of our own aging process. Ours will not be our parents' aging. It will be different—vibrant, socially revolutionary, and fun. As one member enthusiastically puts it, "We are cutting-edge!" We are choosing senior cohousing in order to remain independent for as long as possible.

What better way to maintain our independence than through the collective support of our peers? As member Butch Thresh puts it, "We are choosing a place not because we have to, but because we want to. If you have to move because your kids are telling you it's time to move, you have to move somewhere where you don't want to move to. We're making a proactive choice about where



our life goes from here.” Many of our members, such as Butch, are planning to move from homes in remote areas, knowing they will not be able to maintain them and their surrounding acreage forever.

Another way to maintain independence is through what we call “co-care.” At some point, some of us may need more care than cohousing can provide, but co-care will greatly extend that time. Co-care means that neighbors look out for neighbors. This includes giving people rides to doctors’ offices, caring for each other through illnesses, checking up on each other, and, basically, just being good neighbors. As member Pat Elliott says, “I live alone with no nearby friends or relatives. I look forward to knowing that in Wolf Creek Lodge I will be surrounded by friends who will check on me if I don’t show up for our morning coffee or walk. And I look forward to doing the same for them. For me, that epitomizes a caring community.”

By incorporating “universal design,” senior cohousing can accommodate the physical changes that may occur as we age. For example, we will have larger doorways and wheelchair accessible bathrooms throughout. Although our lodge will have three stories, each unit and the Common House will be one-level construction. We will have elevator access to the upper floors.

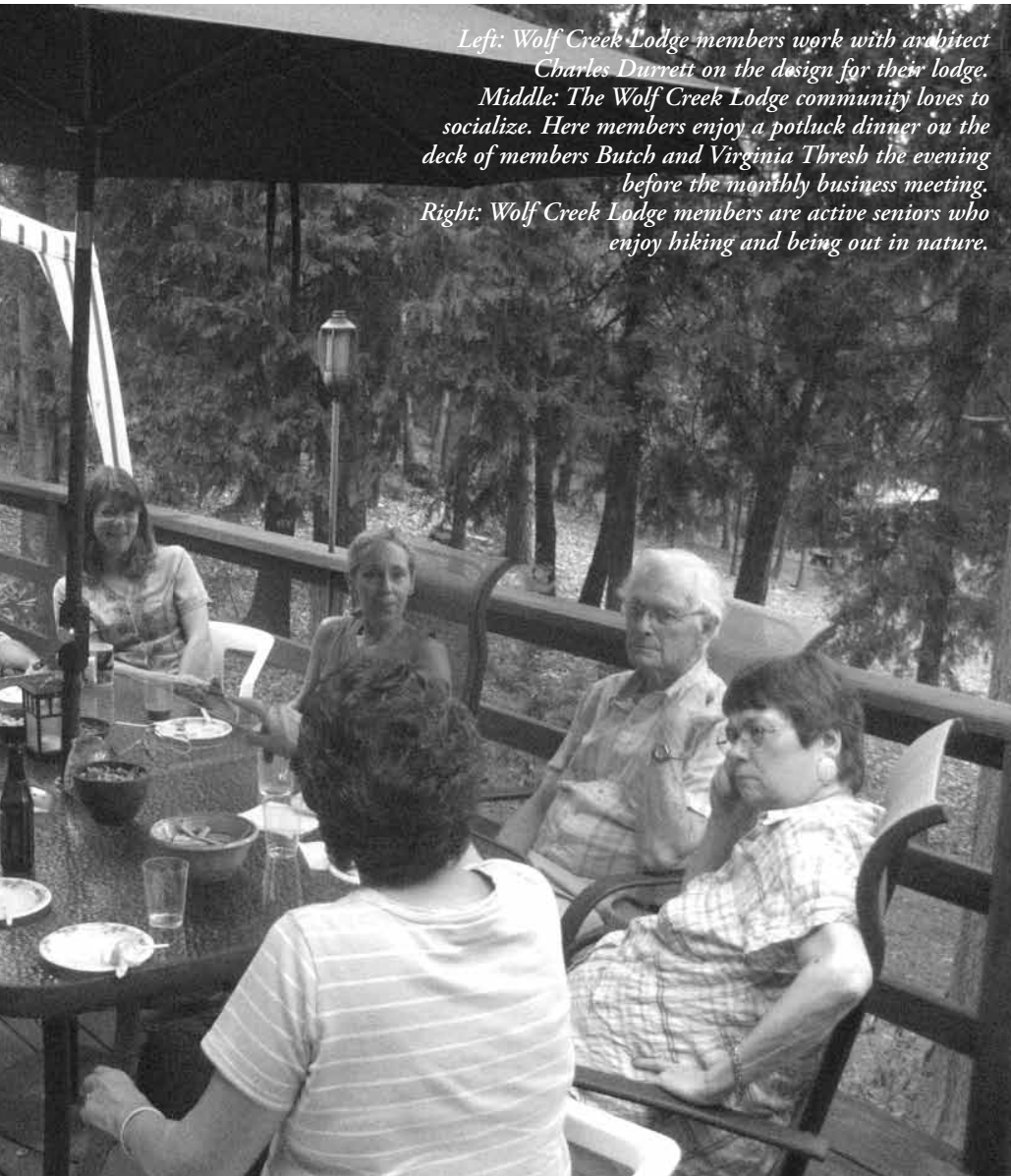
In intergenerational cohousing, special accommodations are made for children. In

senior cohousing, special accommodations are made for adults. For example, we chose to include a crafts area and an espresso bar in our Common House rather than a children’s playroom and pool table for teens. Mindful of the realities of aging, our group decided to include designated space for a live-in caregiver. If one or more members should require such a service, they could hire someone to live on site. Remembering the years of caring for my husband when he suffered from MS, I find this provision especially comforting.

Our planning didn’t proceed without its opposing viewpoints and difficult discussions, but through these we refined our goals and got to know each other better. A cohousing group doesn’t become a neighborhood until members actually move in and start living together, but before that, they do become a community. What holds the community together is the dedication to making decisions based upon what is best for the community as a whole, rather than personal preference. What’s best for the community becomes the determining factor.

At the end of our planning phase, Chuck Durrett said of our group: “I’m rather astonished by the level of consciousness the core group participating in the planning develops. When elders spend time talking about the issues of the day and about what it means to be an elder, they get honest and open. They get out of denial. They come to grips with

*Left: Wolf Creek Lodge members work with architect Charles Durrett on the design for their lodge.
Middle: The Wolf Creek Lodge community loves to socialize. Here members enjoy a potluck dinner on the deck of members Butch and Virginia Thresh the evening before the monthly business meeting.
Right: Wolf Creek Lodge members are active seniors who enjoy hiking and being out in nature.*





Being a part of something larger than myself has given me new opportunities for personal growth, as I venture into new territory and take new risks.

reality.” (From an interview: www.secondjourney.org/newsltr/08_Fall/Durrett_08Fall.htm.)

Avenues for Personal Growth

Being a part of something larger than myself—something that calls me to contribute and move ahead toward shared goals—has given me new opportunities for personal growth, and I have been able to venture into new territory and take new risks. For example, as a member of the Process Team, I discovered that I enjoyed facilitating our monthly meetings. As time went on, I became involved with marketing, the last thing I imagined doing. Also, I love to write, and I soon found myself writing articles, ads, and website content, and editing newsletters.

As point persons for the Membership Team, Kirk and his partner, Barbara, have also experienced personal growth and challenges as they work to bring new members into our community. Their stories are unique to their own personalities, yet typical of the type of growth common to all of our members.

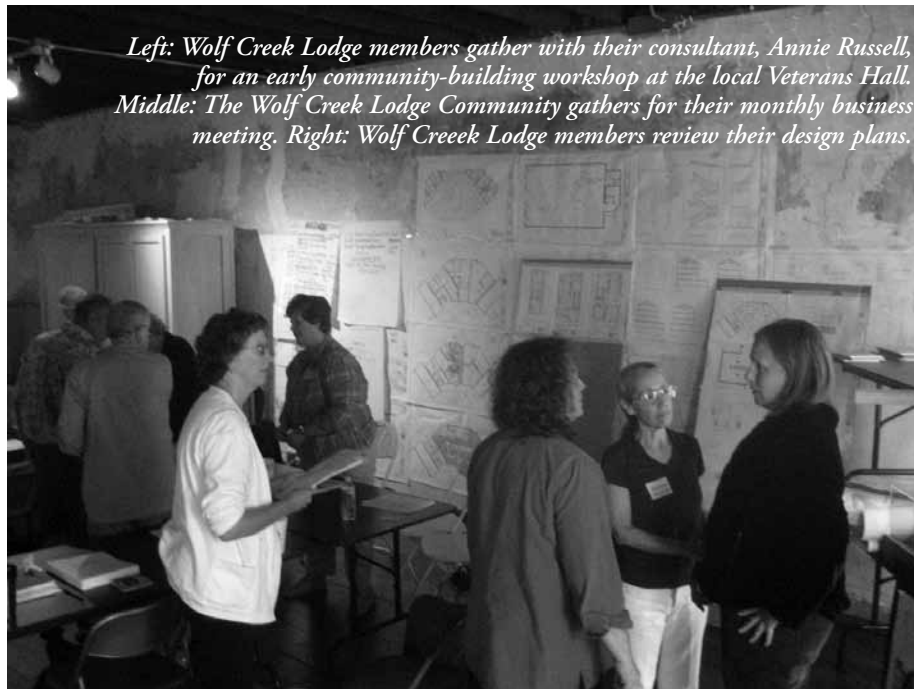
Kirk, who had built his own stone cabin far from town, values his solitude and connection with nature. Yet, he realized that isolation has its disadvantages when a neighbor died and was not discovered for days. When Barbara introduced him to cohousing, he was interested, and soon they both became members. He realized that Wolf Creek Lodge offered him a way to combine his need for independence and his love of nature with his growing desire for community. He has come to know our wooded property inch by inch, especially the beautiful creek that flows along its lower boundary. He enjoys showing people the site and inspiring them with his love of the land.

Barbara always saw herself as a support person, not a person in charge. Yet her enthusiasm for her new community drew her into leadership roles, and she became the lead for the Membership Team while also serving on the Process Team and the Financial Team. As one member recalls, “Working with Barbara and Kirk is a lot of fun because they have such enthusiasm for our project.”

Recently, Barbara and Kirk have stepped back, as have I, and new members are now in the lead. This is one of the remarkable benefits of cohousing: new people come forward as needs arise. The choice to participate in a cohousing community is an intentional choice, one that is not made lightly. Because of this, commitment runs high and participation follows accordingly.

Problems and Challenges

In creating Wolf Creek Lodge, all was not smooth and easy. We faced our share of obstacles, including the challenges of navigating the city planning maze and the suspicions of future neighbors who feared we were all a bunch of hippies who would hang laundry on our roofs and lower their property values. We embarked on a long process of building a relationship with these neighbors that included going door-to-door for informal conversations, holding “tea and cookies” gatherings at the site, and attending meetings of their Homeowners’ Association, where we patiently tried to set their minds at ease. One unconvinced householder insisted that he really didn’t understand this cohousing thing and didn’t know why anyone would want to live “like that.” “But,” he added, “You’re a bunch of nice people.”



Left: Wolf Creek Lodge members gather with their consultant, Annie Russell, for an early community-building workshop at the local Veterans Hall. Middle: The Wolf Creek Lodge Community gathers for their monthly business meeting. Right: Wolf Creek Lodge members review their design plans.

As our group grew, we gained some members who were geographically distant from Grass Valley and able to attend only a few, if any, meetings and social gatherings. So we took steps to promote inclusion, such as setting up a teleconference line and a listserv where members can access messages and files. Volunteers keep the technologically-disconnected informed through phone calls or face-to-face meetings, and we have a buddy system for new members.

Our Biggest Crisis

In the beginning, we were confident that our construction loan would be approved quickly. We had two-thirds of our units sold. Construction bids were in, and we were ready to build our lodge.

Then the economy collapsed, and banks began requiring much higher equity and collateral. In the fall of 2009, our local bank told us to reapply in the spring of 2010. Meanwhile, we continued to search for other lenders.

Meeting the interest payments on the property loan became another challenge. In September of 2009, we had a special workshop to see if we could come up with the money to cover these carrying costs. It was a long, difficult meeting with a series of discussions followed by secret pollings to determine the amount

each household could commit. In the end, we were able to raise sufficient new funds to meet the carrying costs. We left that meeting exhausted, but with a new sense of solidarity and commitment.

From that point on, marketing became our main focus. We had a workshop to identify new strategies, and we redesigned our website, fliers, and newsletters. Our efforts are paying off, and we are gaining new members. In September 2010, the bank finally approved our loan. We signed a new construction contract, then started working through the title and escrow process. In the middle of October, we broke ground!

Creating the Future

We of Wolf Creek Lodge remain optimistic and enthusiastic about our community and the development of our project. We are one component of a larger movement—the growth of senior cohousing and the quest to find more viable and sustainable modes of living to meet the social and ecological challenges of the 21st century. Our vision is to live the rest of our lives as active members of a vibrant community of elders, dedicated to developing insight and wisdom in order to benefit ourselves as well as the larger community: from our lodge to our city to our state and nation, to the earth that we honor and depend upon. As active seniors, we are once again on the cutting edge of change, pioneering a sustainable and intelligent way to live and actively age in a manner that sustains community and meets the challenges of an endangered planet. We hope to be joined by many others in this venture. To quote again from Theodore Roszak’s inspiring new book, *“Urban-industrial culture is aging beyond the values that created it. The revolution belongs to the old, not the young.”* (p. 40) 🐦



Suzanne Marriott is a member of Wolf Creek Lodge cohousing for active adults in Grass Valley, California and is currently living in Castro Valley in the San Francisco East Bay Area. In addition to writing about cohousing, she is also the author of travel articles and an upcoming memoir. More information about the author and Wolf Creek Lodge can be found at www.wolfcreek-lodge.org.

Reinventing Retirement and Assisted Living Communities

By Jennifer Munns Burnham (JaFoo)

Many baby boomers, having witnessed the lonely, painful, and unaffordable side effects of extreme longevity with our parents, actively seek **Interdependent Living Communities**. We're visualizing places where we can age productively, develop spiritually, care for one another like loving family, die beautifully (without excessive medical intervention), and enjoy the company of children without covenant restrictions.

Elder living options have improved since nursing homes were the only option for frail elders. At age 87, our parents moved into an independent living apartment in Tucson (meal plans, van rides, fitness classes, etc.). Like most boomer offspring with parents who are no longer able to cope with driving and the work of a home, we were relieved. We were lucky: they knew it was time for more support and didn't insist on living "independently" (alone and vulnerably in the family home). And while this facility was more affordable and friendly than most, we wondered if they would feel stifled in a community of old folks—after all, they joined the Peace Corps and spent three years in Bogotá, Colombia, when they were in their mid-50s! They had slowed down, but were not your average WWII geezers.

They made friends with everyone (residents and staff) by offering music (mom on the piano, dad on the harmonica). They built community with sing-alongs, rhythm band, and everyone's favorite—special birthday music (Happy Birthday and the celebrant's favorite song)—played at the noon meal.

When our mom Gace died there last month, in her own bed, she and my dad received extraordinary care and consideration. She had been diagnosed (via blood test) with cancer two months before and refused to spend her final months getting more diagnosis and treatment. She looked forward to her date with the Almighty! After she could no longer go down to play piano, she held court in bed, explaining to her bewildered neighbors that natural longevity, especially when under the care of Tucson's best hospice, was a beautiful way to check out. And she did just that—lucid and laughing until the last couple of days of her transition. Their apartment felt like a portal of light and love; she died peacefully in her community!

Many boomers (future elders) seek alternatives to living alone or in quasi-institutional residences not just out of preference—we will need them. Through healthier living and/or medical "miracles," most of us will outlive our money. Cooperative culture will be a necessity. Some will be able to "age in place"—converting big homes into shared housing. Those of us who have experienced communal life as younger people are planning to bail out of the rat race, anticipating rich and supportive relationships with close neighbors.

What could boomers offer intentional communities?

- Advocacy: time and inclination to champion the needs of our planet
- Appreciation for diversity: people, music, dance, art

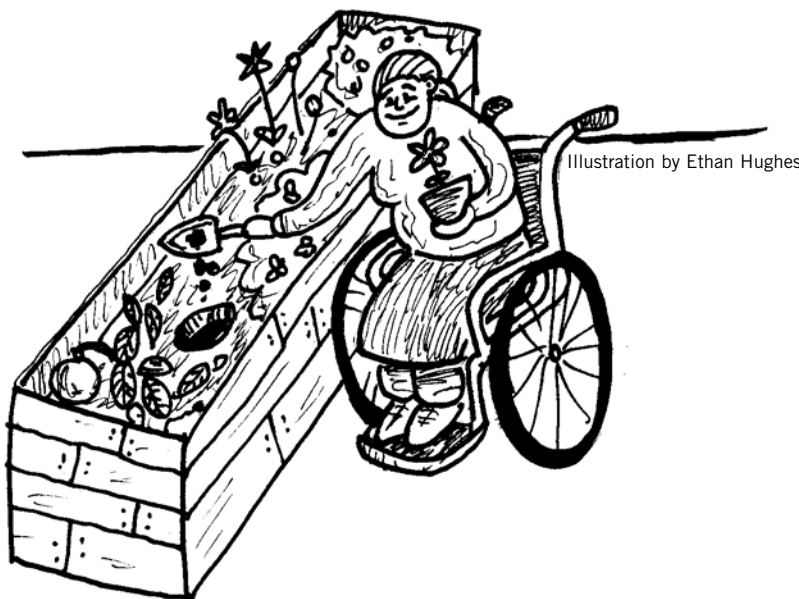


Illustration by Ethan Hughes

- Delight in the time-consuming tasks of organic/green living
- Good stories
- Mentoring
- Money
- On-site grandparenting
- Outreach to surrounding neighbors
- Pitfall avoidance—been there, done that (when in college co-ops, communes)
- Skills, creativity, innovation
- Time for community service
- Tools, equipment

What accommodations will boomers want/need in a community?

- Accessible walkways, entrances, community showers, clotheslines
- Beautiful, multipurpose transition space for births and deaths
- Devotional, learning, and social areas with comfortable seating
- Good lighting
- Guest/get-well rooms in the community space for visiting family or when someone is ill
- Raised vegetable beds
- Sound buffering (we blew out our hearing at rock concerts in the '60s and '70s!)
- Toilets that are higher and with hand bars
- Small, easy-care bungalows

What are the potential pitfalls of an influx of boomers?

- Face it, everybody dies. Will you call 911 if someone is near death? Once you activate the EMTs, their mission is to save lives, no matter what the cost or the outcome. If you agree to “no 911,” it would be smart to share that with a sympathetic local official (try a hospice social worker). Being known as the place where people are dying and no one calls for help would be “problematic,” to say the least.
- Young people should be thinking about the day when unprepared boomers (perhaps your own parents) could arrive, hoping to be taken in as they grow old and frail. What would you do?
- Talk about how (or if) you will care for each other. If you accept boomers, and don't have or can't develop capacity to hospice dying members, it's best to make that known up front. Could you



Author's mother, building community.

Photo courtesy of JaFoo

support them in finding and providing an alternative?

Are there any small businesses that could provide income to intentional communities and help boomers at the same time?

- Green cemetery on site at the community: Some religious practices require burial; this would be both a community service and ongoing funding source requiring minimal work beyond the zoning hassles.
- “Mama meals”: Communities that cook together could make extra and deliver home-cooked food to seniors who live alone (it would make a lovely community service, but many boomers who live far away from elderly parents would be glad to pay for this service).
- “Community living match.com”: Like the online romance services, this fee-based search service could help community seekers pre-screen compatible climates, definitions of basic necessities, ecological willingness, financial issues, ages of co-communitarians, desired practices and habits, “deal breakers,” animal preferences, community service goals, facility wish lists, etc. Many boomers are so busy trying to work while caring for parents, adult kids, and grandchildren that they have little time and money to do adequate research. This could go a long way in helping them to find each other and to join/develop their ideal intentional communities. 🐾



JaFoo (“Death Doula and Mistress of Mirth and Possibility”) is a crusader who currently promotes cooperative culture with her husband and neighbors in Metro Denver. She is helping boomers “navigate issues they'd rather avoid.” Within the next few years, she's looking forward to living in an ecovillage somewhere in the world, joining with others who are interested in spiritual eldering. Contact her at jafoo@boomop.net.

Green Houses: Providing Humane Care for Elders

By Deborah Altus

Resident of an Asbury Park Green House on the patio where she grows roses.



The term “greenhouse” normally brings up images of a building for growing plants. In the caregiving field, however, the word has taken on a completely different meaning. The new meaning of greenhouse does not focus on plants or buildings but, instead, describes a model of caring for older people in small, resident-centered group homes. Why the term greenhouse? The Green House model is designed to provide the optimal environment for the health and well-being of elders in the same way that greenhouses are built to provide the optimal conditions for plants to thrive.

The founder of the Green House model, Dr. William Thom-

as, refers to these homes as intentional communities. Thomas is a key player in what is known as the “culture-change” movement in long-term care. His work focuses not simply on designing humane living environments for elders but on changing the way society views aging—earning him a spot on the *Wall Street Journal’s* list of the 12 most influential Americans shaping aging in the 21st century.

In the 1990s, Thomas, a geriatric physician and professor at the University of Maryland, developed the Eden Alternative, an approach that brings person-centered schedules, children, plants, and animals into nursing facilities to humanize the

institutional environment. One of Thomas' goals is to alleviate what he sees as the "three plagues" of long-term care institutions: loneliness, helplessness, and boredom.

With the Green House model, Thomas has proposed a radical shift from the medical focus of traditional nursing facilities. To Thomas, the medical model of long-term care is flawed because it views aging as a disease. In contrast, the Green House model views aging as a natural part of the life course. In this model, older people are looked up to as wise elders rather than treated as sick patients. They live in small (six to 10 bed) family-style homes rather than hospital-like institutions. Their schedules are person-centered rather than staff-centered. And their needs are addressed from a holistic (bio-psycho-social-spiritual) perspective rather than a medical one.

In Green Houses, the direct service providers, who are typically Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), are called Shahbazim, a Persian word meaning "royal falcon." Thomas chose this word because he feels strongly that caregivers should be honored and respected. He refers to the Shahbazim as "the midwives of a new elderhood." The role of the Shahbazim is much broader than that of traditional CNAs. They cook, clean, do laundry, and provide personal care, much as a family member would do. This is part of the Green House plan: to create a family-style environment that feels like home rather than an institution.

The nursing station, often the hub of activity and power in a nursing facility, is deliberately kept small in the Green House

A Songaian Perspective on Long-Term Care

Songaia Cohousing Community, in Bothell, Washington, looked into the Green House model as they explored ways to ensure that members could age in place at Songaia. Member Craig Ragland went to an all-day Green House workshop and came away inspired that people were trying to establish a greater sense of community in long-term care settings. However, he realized that this model "was not tuned to an intentional community setting" and would not work well for them. He found the Green House model too closely tied to the medical model to fit with his community's goals and also felt that the private space provided by a group home environment was inadequate. Ragland is interested in creating what he calls a "community model," where the community, itself, helps to manage the care of older members, or provides onsite housing for caregivers. In addition, he sees the need for suites, similar to studio apartments, where older residents would have sufficient private space to socialize with friends and family and be able to prepare snacks or the occasional meal. These suites would be optimized to meet the needs of elders. When an older member moved into a suite, his/her home would be available for occupancy by younger people—thereby keeping the average age of the community at a healthy level.

—Deborah Altus

Exterior of one of the Green Houses at Asbury Park retirement community in Newton, Kansas.



Photos courtesy of Deborah Altus

model and located at the periphery. This is done to normalize the environment and to encourage staff to interact with the elders. The Shahbazim oversee the day-to-day operations of the home, while nurses act in a consulting role but are responsible for clinical outcomes. Green Houses are often built in clusters so that homes can share nurses, which helps to keep costs down.

Each elder has a private room and bath which opens onto a central living area called the hearth room—the focal point of activity in a Green House. The hearth room is situated next to an open kitchen where elders and Shahbazim can interact during the daily routines of cooking, cleaning, and other activities.

Residents are able to furnish their rooms with their own belongings. “I have my nice furniture and my pretties in here,” says a 75-year-old Green House resident. She describes the Green House as “like home” and says that the other residents are “like a family.” She notes that she is “very satisfied” with living in the Green House and says that it “makes us feel like we aren’t being thrown away.” She particularly likes the fact that she can determine her own

schedule, as she prefers to stay up late to watch television and sleep late in the morning. She loves to tend the roses in

the Green House garden and sit on the front porch with other residents when the weather is pleasant.

Tom Williams, the CEO of Asbury Park in Newton, Kansas, has overseen the construction of four Green Houses on the campus of his continuing care retirement community. Williams, who has been in charge of much bigger projects throughout his career, says that building the Green Houses is the most gratifying thing he’s done. “We are making a place where people can spend the last years of their life with dignity,” says Williams. “We grow up in households that are nurturing, protective, and caring, and this is what we get in a Green House.”

When asked if he sees a change in the residents’ demeanor after they move into a Green House, Williams responds with one word: “joy.” He notes that a couple of residents who arrived in wheelchairs started getting up and using walkers as a result of the more nurturing, stimulating environment of the Green House. He also points out that the Shahbazim like being part of a team and appreciate the chance to develop family-like relationships with the elders.

One staff member, age 54, who works as a Shahbaz, says that the thing she likes the most about the Green Houses is that they “give back home to people who have had everything else taken from them.” She loves having the time for one-on-one interaction with residents, something she didn’t have when she worked in a traditional nursing facility. “We have time to give better care here,” she says. “You aren’t on a tight time schedule and you can give holistic care—care for physical and mental needs.”

Another Shahbaz notes that staff become so close to the residents that some even call on their days off to see how the elders

are doing. “They are like family to us,” she says. When one of the residents died, “it was like when my Grandma passed.” She notes that the Green House residents are much calmer than those in the nursing facility—even the residents with dementia. She also says that the family members of the residents love the Green Houses. “They are comfortable here. They come in more than they did in the main building. They have a place to sit and socialize with the residents and staff.”

This is not to say that Green Houses are without their problems. Williams is the first to admit that any new approach will have kinks to work out. Dealing with zoning, building codes, and licensing can be challenging for Green House adopters because local and state officials are often unfamiliar with this type of housing. The cost of care is not cheap and is similar to that of a traditional nursing facility. Green Houses may accept some residents on Medicaid, but Williams points out that it would be difficult to break even with all Medicaid patients. Nurses and CNAs who have worked in traditional nursing facilities may find it chal-

lenging to adjust to their new roles. And administrators may find this new path hard to navigate without established programs to

emulate. “We’ve had to learn as we go,” says Williams, “but the rewards have been worth it.”

The use of the term “intentional community” by Green House founder Thomas may seem like a bit of a stretch to those involved in the Fellowship for Intentional Community. The Green Houses are run by paid staff members. Some residents, such as residents with dementia, may not intentionally choose to live there. Residents aren’t involved in decisions about who shares their home, who works there, or how their money is spent. Yet, unlike many nursing facilities, the residents can personalize their schedules. They live in a home-like environment rather than a large institution. Their caregivers act more like family members (e.g., they cook, clean, do laundry, provide personal care, and offer activities) than nursing assistants. They have their own bedrooms with their own furniture and they eat family-style meals. Even if “intentional community” may not be the appropriate descriptor, the Green House model appears to be an important step toward humanizing the care of frail elders.

Author note: Portions of this article were taken from an article written by Deborah Altus for the Fall 2009 issue of Speaking of Kansas, entitled “Green Houses Bring Culture Change in Long-Term Care to Kansas” (pp. 3-4). ☺

Deborah Altus is a professor at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas. She conducted sabbatical research on the Green House model in Spring 2009. Deborah is a member of the Editorial Review Board for the FIC, former president of the Communal Studies Association, and a board member of the International Communal Studies Association.

The hearth room is situated next to an open kitchen where elders and Shahbazim can interact during the daily routines of cooking, cleaning, and other activities.

Mish'ol: An Urban Kibbutz

Standing and holding hands in the garden at Kibbutz Mish'ol, in Israel, we welcome “a peaceful and blessed Shabbat,” recite “How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity,” and remind ourselves, “everything that passed during last week belongs now in the past. During Shabbat—the spirit is renewed.” Before dining, we “bless the farmer who tills the field, the miller who prepares the flour, the baker from our house who kneads the dough, and everyone who labours to make the fruits of the Earth into life-giving food before us.” After dinner, we adjourn to share some beer while watching a semi-final game of the World Cup.

Degania, the first kibbutz, was established in Palestine in 1910, and still operates today. Kibbutzim became the biggest intentional community movement in the world, with several of the 269 rural kibbutzim having more than 500 members. Over recent years, however, many of these kibbutzim have been privatising and their future is not bright.

Contrary to this trend in Israel is the development of about 100 active and passionate urban kibbutzim whose members try to adapt the old kibbutz model to a new social, political, and economic environment. Kibbutz Reshit, in Jerusalem, is the oldest of these, having been established in about 1980. The

Dancing at Kibbutz Pesach Seder.



Photos by Emily Bock

biggest urban kibbutz is Mish'ol, located in the small city of Migdal Ha'emek, near Nazareth, Israel, and here I am staying for several days in July 2010.

Kibbutz Mish'ol was established by 25 people in 2000, and now has 82 adult members and 32 children, the oldest of whom is just starting second grade. Most adults are aged in their 20s or 30s, markedly different from the aging membership of conventional rural kibbutzim. Mish'ol members live within smaller, more intimate living groups known as *kyutza* (plural *kyutzot*), each with six to 10 adults plus children. Most meals are eaten within these smaller groupings. Members of each *kvutza* can best be thought of as comprising a household or pseudo-family, and one might think of Kibbutz Mish'ol as a federation of these eight *kyutzot* (households).

Mish'ol members tell me they have a vision to be “an alternative to wider Israeli society through sharing all life together” and equally important to be an “alternative to the way of life within traditional kibbutzim.” Several members tell me they are “reclaiming socialism” but I am unsure how widely that view is shared. Members are not rejecting the conventional rural kibbutz model but feel that while it may have been suitable for 20th century Palestine, then Israel, it is unsuitable for 21st century conditions. One member tells me: “two things are broken and need repairs: Israel and kibbutzim.” An active and passionate commitment to peace, justice, and equality is a theme running through my conversations with members.

Kibbutz Mish'ol has a large rented house in which no one lives but from where their nonprofit educational programs operate, where members come to meet, and from where communal affairs are managed. Mish'ol's management group or steering committee (known as *Mazkirut*) consists of two members from each *kyutza*. Each April, the *Mazkirut*, through consensus, decides on major projects and directions for the next year. There are various other kibbutz committees responsible for specific matters such as finance, finding a permanent home, and social and cultural functions. At weekly meetings, members can make kibbutz-wide decisions based on consensus. Most decisions, however, are made within the smaller *kyutzot* or within work groups. Members live, usually sharing with other *kyutza* members, in nearby rental housing.

Mish'ol members operate several small businesses which employ some members; these include catering, web design, childcare, and coaching for new mothers. A few members work outside in occupations ranging from computer programmer to childcare expert, but most work in educational projects in schools, youth movements,

after-school clubs for “at-risk” youth, etc. Almost all work has some connection with education, peace, justice, and social welfare. All member income goes directly into the kibbutz coffers. There are no private cars but the Mish'ol owns vehicles that members book as needed.

Money in Mish'ol's coffers is allocated by their finance/treasury committee to each *kyutza*, according to membership, and to cover kibbutz-wide expenses and to promote and develop new projects.

Re-ut was one of the founders of Mish'ol in 2000. She sought to retain the “good aspects of kibbutz philosophy and practice”—but adapt them to a “smaller, more human-scale” intentional community. She grew up in Ramat Yohanan, a large, prosperous kibbutz where she enjoyed a “peaceful and happy” childhood—and yet felt “lonely in the crowd” because of the large size of the commune. She tells me “the large kibbutz made small people,” because each member was relatively powerless. She is “very proud” of what Mish'ol achieves in promoting social equality and being a model intentional community, demonstrating how Israelis can live better, fairer, more ethical lives, “not alone or in competition with others.” She adds, “My character is very suitable to a communal life but unsuitable to a competitive lifestyle.” Re-ut admits to wanting a partner and children but nevertheless is “very happy here” and doubts she would be as happy living any other way.

Anton “grew up within Habonim, a Socialist-Zionist youth movement” and after spending a year in a conventional kibbutz “one of the things I learned was that I didn't want to live on such a kibbutz—and I never want to be a farmer!” He helped start a small commune in Jerusalem but recognised that they needed to join with others to be effective in creating “social change based on Socialist-Zionist principles.” In 2002, Anton's group joined Mish'ol. He believes that only through the flexibility of their small living groups (*kvutza*) will they will be able to adapt to whatever the future brings. Recently, as a reserve

One member tells me: “two things are broken and need repairs: Israel and kibbutzim.”



member of the Israeli Defence Forces, Anton refused to serve in occupied territory (West Bank) and he suffered two weeks' imprisonment for his "humanistic principles and conscience." Today he is "very happy and fulfilled in what I am doing." Anton will be known to many COMMUNITIES readers as the Editor of *C.A.L.L.*, the *Communes at Large Letter* (communa.org.il), which brings together information about intentional communities around the globe.

Re-ut and Anton promote Palestinian-Israeli dialogue through facilitating annual seminar camps in Cypress where they foster "mutual understanding and respect." They feel that they are having a beneficial impact on the wider society—although admit to falling far short of what is needed. Anton says, "there is a lot of healing to be done in this part of the world. We can do it—we must do it—and Kibbutz Mish'ol is part of the process."

Uri, another founding member, and his partner, Elite, are leaving Kibbutz Mish'ol because she is no longer happy there. Elite tells me, "I still believe in socialism and kibbutz values but, with two small children, it is just too stressful trying to fit in with such a large group where every decision has consequences for so many people. For example, if I want more time with my children I have to work fewer hours for the group and this makes me stressed and unhappy. Having many close friends within Mish'ol, leaving is painful for Uri and me but I hope that we shall return one day." Uri and Elite, with their children, are moving to a small house in nearby Haifa where Uri works in Information Technology.

James tells me that as a teenager from UK his first exposure to the kibbutz movement was motivated by naïve social goals, and that he understood little of Zionism, Socialism, or even Judaism as a religion. He admits, "Israel was a bit of an embarrassment." After spending a year working in the chicken house on Beit Haemek, a large rural kibbutz, James became clear that he was committed to



Brit Ceremony-Celebration of Birth.

the core kibbutz values of socialism and equality—but equally clear that he did not want to be a farmer or live rurally within such a large social structure. "The kibbutz needs updating" he tells me. James migrated to Israel in 1999 with two friends, settled in Jerusalem, and started looking for others to join in creating an urban kibbutz devoted to socialism, environmentalism, peace, and social justice. In 2003, they all joined Mish'ol. James believes that their efforts towards peace and reconciliation are of utmost importance, yet doubts they are doing enough. He tells me they are "reclaiming the kibbutz values and adapting them to current realities." For James, Mish'ol is about the right size to serve as a model secular intentional community for both Jews and Arabs.

Mish'ol members are negotiating to take over from the Jewish Agency a large, disused "Migrant Absorption Centre" in nearby Upper Nazareth. This will have two advantages: all members will be able to live under the same roof, and they will be near the largest Arab Israeli city (Nazareth), offering them far more opportunities to promote mutual respect and understanding, and (hopefully) making them more effective as agents for peace and social justice. They will also be far more visible as the model intentional community to which they aspire.

I expect that moving together under one roof will throw up a number of challenges to their way of life. Will it allow them to become more socially, culturally, and politically active, to better exemplify an ideal intentional community—or will they find the larger social grouping saps their time and energy? Mish'ol members are inspiring, warm, welcoming, and passionate, so I hope that the move is beneficial. How they cope and how they develop will be well worth watching.

The kibbutz movement, said by some critics to be floundering and dying is, in fact, flourishing in the guise of this new generation of urban intentional communities. They might just contain the seeds of a solution to the long-term problems of peace, equity, and justice that beset Israeli Jews and Arabs, as well as Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

Or am I too hopeful? ☺

Dr. Bill Metcalf, of Griffith University, Australia, is the author of numerous scholarly and popular articles, plus seven books, about intentional communities, the most recent being The Findhorn Book of Community Living. He is Past President of the International Communal Studies Association and has been COMMUNITIES magazine's International Correspondent for many years.



Jean K. Mason

The View from #410: When Home is Cohousing

By Jean Mason

iUniverse, 2010, 260 pages

Available through Community Bookshelf

When I took over managing Community Bookshelf, one of the legacies I was handed was a box full of review copies: books we are sent or handed by someone (often the authors themselves) who thinks this work is a good match with the values of FIC. When I first picked up this book with its grainy photograph cover and un compelling title, my immediate response was a deep sigh: not another self-published and probably spotty “memoir.” I resigned myself to being bored and irritated and cracked it open.

Two hours later, I realized I hadn’t moved from my perch, and I was thoroughly hooked. Jean Mason is one of those rare individuals with a real story to tell, and a talent for telling it. “This,” I thought, when I finally did get up to stretch, “should be read by anyone who wants to start a community; particularly a cohousing community.”

As a former founder myself, I found myself wincing with sympathy as she described long meetings, misunderstandings, and a whole group’s simultaneous journey as its members start to understand what “we” means on a whole other level—and frequently shoot the leaders in the process. Her own ups and downs are described plainly and with thoughtful self-awareness.

Mason is clearly a product of her generation: there is an elegance and dignity to her work that comes through and seems to me to be typical of intelligent people I’ve come to know in their 80s and 90s. And yet she is not at all some “old lady”

stereotype: she had a lively professional career with an activist spirit that overlays her story. She also doesn’t toe some “elder” political line: she is pro-family in her community at a time when elder cohousing is gaining popularity, sees graffiti as a legitimate artistic expression of culture, and is anti-clothesline. (Incidentally, part of why I really like her is that when she doesn’t get her way on either of the latter issues, she accepts the outcome with grace and humor, seeing these “losses” in the perspective of what she has gained by living in a community of diverse perspectives; would that all founders could adopt this approach!)

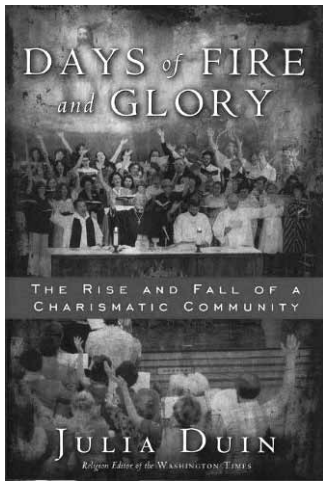
The book is clearly self-published and has some typical flaws: it could have benefited from a heavier hand in the copy-editing department, some chapters are weaker than others, and some of the images are not very good quality and I have the sense were put in because a picture was a good idea about now, but not so much because the picture itself was great or all that relevant. However, what we get in exchange is a truly personal and rich book where she is saying exactly what she thinks we need to hear. For potential founders, this work is an excellent introduction to what it is really like.

While she disclaims early in the book that she could only be so honest about things, it strikes me that she has done a great job of telling the story with openness; what is missing is the dramatics and line-drawing that some folks can’t resist including in any story of substance. In other words, she doesn’t confuse honesty with some dramatic “tell all.” In this, she models some of the most important aspects of consensus: tell your piece, don’t make others look bad for having theirs, and reach for the group good.

This book also doesn’t dodge the big issues: from dealing with disability to how the community relates to the wider neighborhood (in this case, a sketchier part of Cambridge), from cleaning to affordability, sustainability to money, she leans into the heart of those things that really come up for groups and describes eloquently what the core of each issue is. She weaves between insightfully summing up complex topics and sharing personal stories—some of them heartbreaking in the stretches her group has made at times, through exhaustion and interpersonal challenges, in order to truly meet each other.

And in this, she does one more great thing: for those who aren’t in cohousing, and somehow see that model as “community lite,” this is a great read for humanizing this sub-movement. The people stuff here is all the same, and it is well worth a read for those of us who see ourselves as doing something “more radical.” Mason does a great job of articulating the necessary growth we all go through to take the next steps in more communal lifestyles.

Don’t judge this book by its cover! Mason has a lot to offer.



Days of Fire and Glory: The Rise and Fall of a Charismatic Community

By *Julia Duin*

Crossland Press, 2009, 336 pages

This is a complicated book and it evoked complicated responses in me. In writing this book, Julia Duin is riding a whole series of thin lines: between devout Christian believer and investigative reporter, between community insider and history maker, and between the personal and the communal. While all this dancing between roles might lend a schizophrenic quality to her work, it instead lends a richness and honesty that, for the most part, I enjoyed.

Duin is telling the story of the charismatic Christian community (or more accurately communities) that sprung up around the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Houston over a 30 year period in which her story takes place. The central figure to the tale is Graham Pulkingham, the leader of the church and its residential communities for many of those years. While these residential intentional communities might be of most interest to COMMUNITIES readers, my sense is that these are not at the heart of the book so much as the broader church community is. Still, she concludes at the end that what made the experiences so potent for so many people was a profound sense of community, and this is hard to separate from the deep and fast bonding and spiritual growth that many of the key players experienced on the fast track of living together. Those experiences will ring true and universal for anyone who has lived with others for any length of time.

This is really a book about sin and redemption in the Chris-

tian sense, and power in the universal sense. Duin is exhaustive in her research (having conducted 183 interviews) and her skills as an investigative reporter shine throughout the book. Following the trail of a community that once enjoyed status as the spiritual hub of charismatic Christian America, through the slow downward slide of its leadership, she ultimately plays a role in exposing Pulkingham's sexual abuse of eight different men during the time he was the church's leader. The book is an interesting read: part pot-boiler and part plain-speaking history. She does a good job of not over-sensationalizing...but the story itself is pretty sensational, and the level of detail with which she writes lends itself to the racy tension most of us are used to in fiction.

As the tale unfolds, and you start to be able to see the "sin" of Pulkingham emerging between the lines, I found myself wondering (as a progressive with quite different spiritual beliefs might) how much of the tragedy and betrayal that parishioners finally are left having to reconcile was really set up by this community's insistence that homosexuality is wrong. Indeed, the attitudes about gay life and psychology in the book were hard for me to read, and when I started to grasp the number of lives torn apart by Pulkingham's inability to "heal himself" of his gayness, I was left feeling like all this suffering was a waste of good sincere people's goodwill, and also feeling oddly sympathetic toward Pulkingham, who was caught as much in his church's expectations as he was caught abusing them.

As the church community finds itself coming apart, Duin's work as an investigative reporter allows her to see other church communities in similar straits, and for me, this was the most interesting part of the book. Indeed, the most powerful lessons here are about how leaders handle themselves when they have broken their people's trust. There are a series of touching and heart-rending scenes of church leadership coming clean with their congregations about a range of improprieties, from sexual to financial to simply getting caught up in the power trip that ecstatic feelings can encourage. These admissions and subsequent re-orientations (which seem to me to be successful to varying degrees) speak to the faith and sincerity of Christian parishioners all over who have had to endure scandals within their own churches.

Unfortunately, Duin's own church doesn't get the benefit of this kind of reconciliation and healing process. Just as Pulkingham has finally come clean, he dies of a heart attack, and other people are left to put the pieces together.

While the book is well written and researched (and she doesn't spare the tender feeling of either her fellow parishioners or herself in the telling), readers should know that Duin's insider and believer roots show to the point where she accepts things like God speaking to people directly as "facts" and, in this at least, leaves the traditionally desired reporter's skepticism at the

door. This may be highly frustrating for some readers; on the other hand, I learned quite a bit about the culture she is writing about from her unabashed acceptance of things I normally want more distance from, and found myself being better able to understand why so many people stuck it out for so long as the walls came tumbling down.

As a communities movement advocate, I also found it a bit disheartening that we are left with the unfortunate impression that the majority of Christian groups are up to their eyeballs in corruption. While I don't think this was Duin's intent, nor do I think it is true, I found myself wishing once I put the book down for stories of healthy and vibrant Christian community to counter-balance these.

Overall, this was a fascinating and engaging look at a subculture many of us will never touch directly, and—if you either believe in or can hang with the imbedded cultural perspectives—well worth the read.

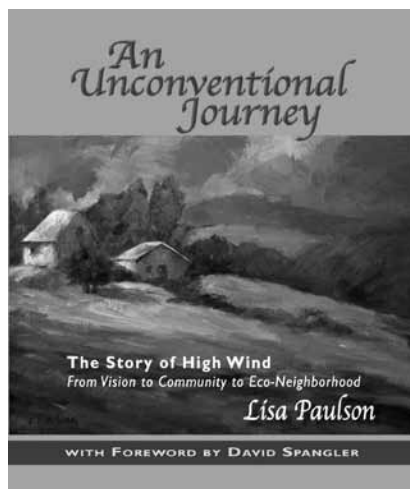
sions very well in the letter she sent with the review copy: “For those already in or aware of the [communities] movement, *Journey* would seem a natural; communitarians will identify with the enormous energy and spirit and imagination it takes to make the dream of community work. Others who are questioning contemporary values might be inspired by the examples of those who dared to step out of the dominant culture to create alternative societal experiments.” Both things ring true for me, and I was indeed inspired by their example.

Paulson has written a balanced, open, and educational book about High Wind, the community in eastern Wisconsin she founded with her husband, Bel. But she has also done something much more precious: she has placed her own experiences—and High Wind's—into context: as a child of the political climate in the '60s and '70s, as a group inspired by Findhorn Community and its prodigious spiritual legacy, and as part of the intentional communities movement in general. In this book, we get a rare glimpse of the seeming inevitability of a culture evolving, led, sometimes, by these odd little outgrowths of experimental living we call intentional communities. It is clear that both of the Paulsons are adventuresome, smart, and willing to take risks, and the resulting experiment (plus the various interesting side stories she includes in the book) are a great example of how to live an engaged, fulfilling life, and the role intentional community can play in that.

One of the things Paulson captures nicely is the cyclical nature of community life. The in- and out-flows of members, the tensions between founders and joiners, the seasons, the focus on community life versus outreach; all of these things come and go and create a kind of rhythm to life that is apparent in this book. Because they were together for a long time, you get to see all of this play out over time in Paulson's narrative.

If you like books with pictures, you will have hit the mother lode with this one. There are a lot of them, and they are informative and interesting, covering everything from the connections with Findhorn and various visiting teachers, to daily community life and the land, to the Paulsons' life before the community that influenced its creation. These pictures are especially fun for anyone who knows the community or knows the players who have bit roles in their story, but they do a good job of communicating visually the richness of community for anyone.

An interesting choice Paulson made in organizing the book is to have sidebar-style sections accompanying each batch of pictures that offer a sort of narrative synopsis of the previous chapter, often with a little more detail or focus on some particular aspect of the story. At first, I found this a little confusing (didn't we just go over this?) but by part way into the book, I found myself looking forward to the slightly different telling of the story, one that felt a little more intimate somehow. It



An Unconventional Journey: The Story of High Wind, From Vision to Community to Eco-Neighborhood

By Lisa Paulson

Thistlefield Books, 2010, 160 pages

Available through Community Bookshelf

This book is great. Paulson actually summed up my impres-

REVIEWS

makes me think about how we are almost always forced into a single track of telling our stories, and how much we lose by having to pick a single perspective or focus. Life, after all, is never just about one version of things.

There is a whole chapter dedicated to talking about conflict and tensions, and I appreciated the openness in speaking frankly about it. My only disappointment in this whole text was wishing that she'd been a little more forthcoming about how she and her husband Bel may have actually been less than totally conscious about their role as founders, rather than focusing so much on how others saw them. Still, she describes the typical trap of founders as well as anyone I've seen, and should be applauded for that. And the chapter offers a good list of basic tensions any group might face, and does it in the same matter-of-fact way she handles everything else.

Ultimately, the Paulsons (who retained ownership of most of the land throughout the community's history) are faced with a key question: Is what we are really committed to a residential community, or contributing to a shift in consciousness on the planet? High Wind as a formal residential community comes to an end when they recognize that shifting consciousness is really their highest priority. What remains is an interesting evolution: a neighborhood of similarly committed people, and an ongoing experiment for just how to contribute to that shift most effectively. The communities movement is blessed that, for a while, the Paulsons' answer to that was creating a dynamic and growthful community. 🐰

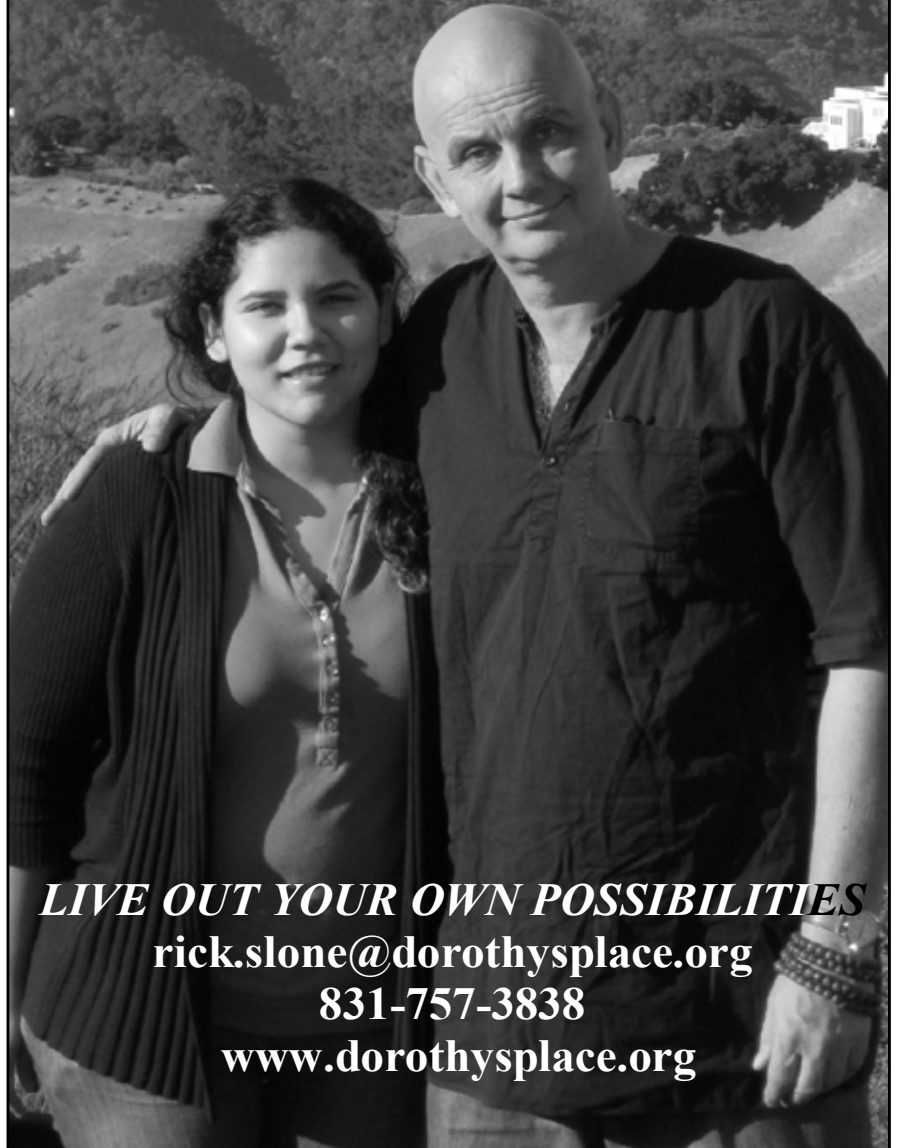
Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig lives at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, teaches facilitation and consensus with her husband, Laird Schaub, and manages Community Bookshelf for the FIC. She is the author of Passion as Big as a Planet: Evolving Eco-Activism in America, a guide to spiritual activism in service to the planet.

Imagine Paradise, Practice Beauty

with

Companions of the Way Interfaith Dharma Community

Located in California's Central Coast
Working with the poor and homeless to
promote social justice
Serving in the spirit of Dorothy Day and
the vision of St. Francis



LIVE OUT YOUR OWN POSSIBILITIES

rick.slone@dorothysplace.org

831-757-3838

www.dorothysplace.org

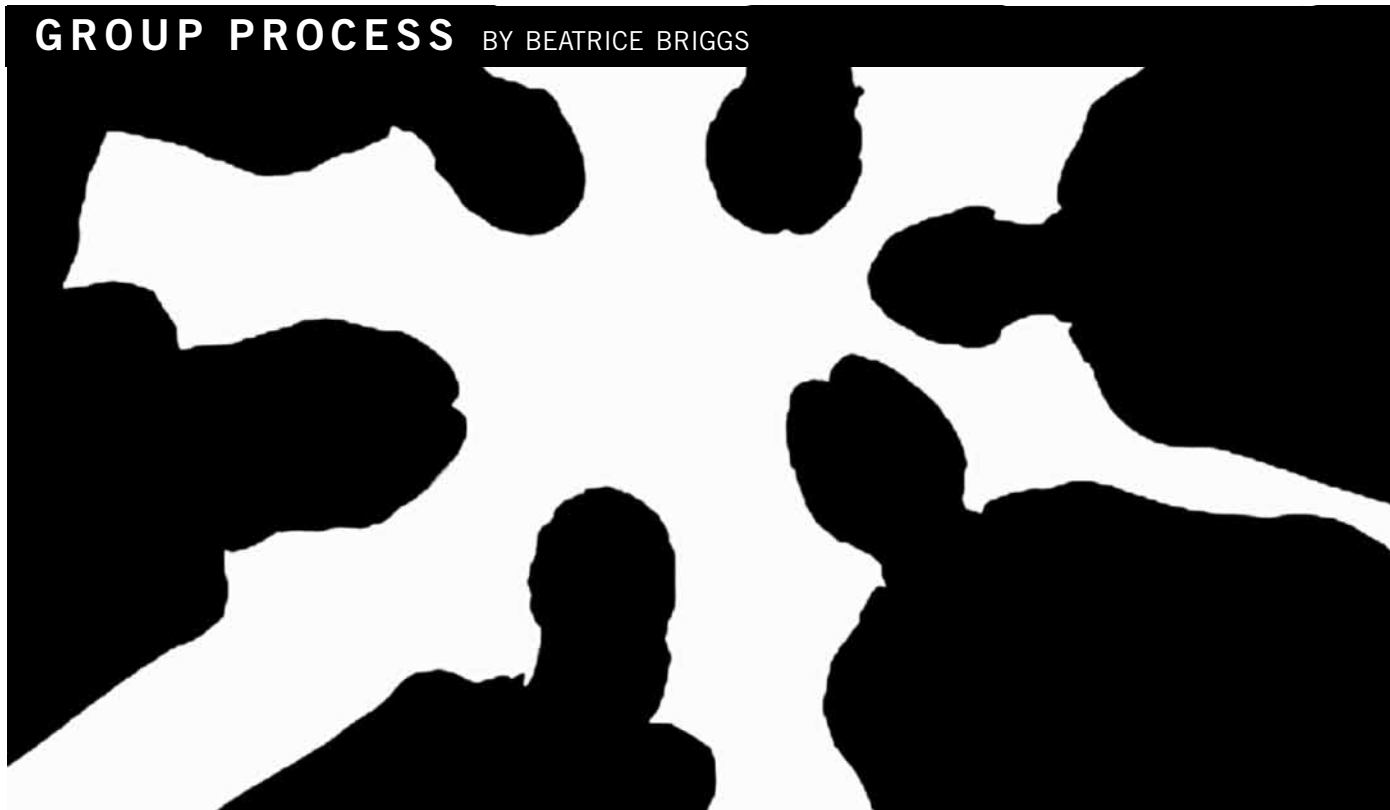


Illustration by Yulia Z.

Six Traps: How Good Meetings Go Bad

A well-planned agenda is the key to leading great meetings. Here are six common mistakes in agenda planning. (And we're not even counting the mistake of not having an agenda to begin with!)

1. Too many items on the agenda

Not everything can get covered in every meeting—prioritizing your agenda items makes your meetings more effective.

2. Unrealistic time estimates

Some agenda items can be breezed through, but many require additional clarification, questions, and discussion. Make sure you allot enough time for each agenda item.

3. Too much time spent in passive listening (reports, speeches, etc)

One word: B-O-R-I-N-G. Distribute reports in advance, and limit speechifying.

4. One person does all or most of the talking

The true purpose of a meeting is collaboration. If all of the communication is “one-way,” or dominated by one individual, consider alternate communication strategies.

5. No breaks are scheduled

Bodies don't like to sit for more than 90 minutes. Regular breaks will revive your group's energy and give an appealing structure to your meeting.

6. “Miscellaneous” agenda items

Just like the “junk drawer” in your kitchen, a “miscellaneous” agenda category is sure to be a cluttered mess that contains many items of dubious value. Furthermore, because you do not know in advance what they are, they are almost sure to make the meeting run overtime.

Experienced meeting facilitators can spot these common mistakes and work with the meeting convener to plan an agenda that keeps participants engaged and serves the needs of the organization. 🐦

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.

Poor Minutes Lead to Wasted Hours: Keys to Effective Notetaking

Good records of what happened at meetings are important for a variety of reasons:

- Informing members who missed the meeting what happened. The minutes should include sufficient detail that people will be able to tell if points dear to them have already surfaced in the conversation—if this is not clear, you can be certain you'll hear comments repeated the next time that topic is addressed.

- Providing a record of decisions and task assignments, which can serve to clear up ambiguities when memories fade or don't agree. This is particularly valuable for committee mandates and for explaining to prospective members what they are joining. (In a consensus group, new members must abide by the full body of agreements already in place—this generally works better if new folks are fully informed about those decisions ahead of time, rather than surprised by them afterward.)

- Helping the agenda-setting crew figure out exactly where the plenary left off and where it needs to pick up when the topic is next considered. (Re-plowing old ground can be the height of tedium.)

- Providing background on the rationale for decisions. This can be crucial in deciding whether it's relevant to reconsider a prior agreement. For my money the litmus test on whether to reconsider is "what's new?" If the minutes are good enough to spell out what factors were taken into account the last time the group grappled with that issue, you'll be in an excellent position to discern whether anything has altered enough to warrant a fresh look.

Questions to Consider

Groups can benefit enormously from discussing what they want minutes to accomplish and the standards they want to set for them. This is a plenary conversation. Questions to discuss include:

- Timeliness: how soon after a meeting should they be posted?
- How will they be disseminated? Is email to a listserv enough, or should there be a hard copy posted on a bulletin board as well—and if so, where?
- How will minutes be archived?
- Minimum standards for what content will be covered. Keep in mind the need to get enough sense of the discussion that

people who missed the meeting will know whether their concerns have surfaced or not. If this is not done well enough, the next plenary will be condemned to recapitulate a conversation that's already happened.

- Process by which people can propose revisions to the minutes, and how it will be decided what changes should be incorporated if there's disagreement about it.

- Suggestions for formatting such that readers can easily scan minutes for decisions and tasks. (Do you want executive summaries of the minutes to help those with limited time get the gist?)

- What will be your standard for recording attributions (who said what)? In general, the two situations where it tends to be most valuable are when someone is expressing upset or when they are speaking in an official capacity (for example, as a board member, manager, or committee chair).

- Do you want to create an (indexed?) Agreement Log, which would provide a place for people to look up more easily what the group has agreed to?

- What compensation (if any) will notetakers get for doing minutes?

- What committee will be responsible for seeing to it that notetakers are trained, and that minute standards are being adhered to?

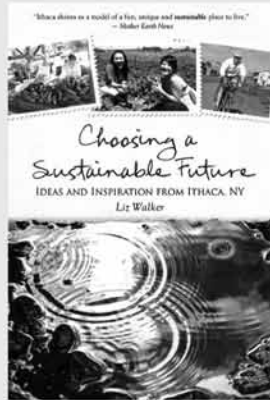
Not Just for Secretaries Any More

It can often be challenging for a group to find enough energy among its membership for taking, editing, and organizing minutes. Here's a hint for how this might be enhanced: *ask folks who want to learn to be better facilitators to take turns doing minutes.* The art of quickly crafting a concise yet accurate synopsis of a speaker's comments is the same as that used by facilitators to track and summarize conversations. Though the facilitator is doing it orally, while the notetaker is doing it in writing, it's still the same skill. This awareness might help generate some additional enthusiasm for practicing the noble craft of taking minutes—and doing the group a good turn into the bargain. ☺

Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri, where he lives. This article is adapted from his March 23, 2010 blog post at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.



fall releases from new society publishers



Choosing a Sustainable Future

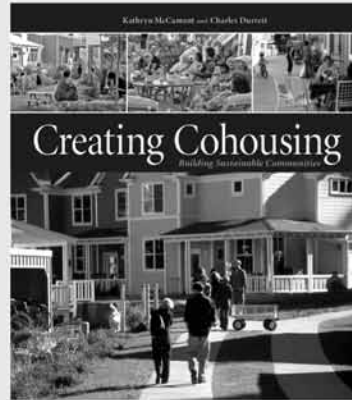
Ideas and Inspiration
from Ithaca, NY

Liz Walker

A small city's big vision that can help
transform your own community

US/Can \$19.95

978-0-86571-675-9



Creating Cohousing

Building Sustainable Communities

Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett

The cohousing "bible" by the
US originators of the concept

US/Can \$32.95

978-0-86571-672-8

Available February 2011

deep green for over 25 years • www.newsociety.com • 800 567 6772



The Federation of Egalitarian Communities

A better world is not only possible,
it's already happening.

www.thefec.org

The Federation of Egalitarian Communities is a network of communal groups spread across North America. We range in size and emphasis from small agricultural homesteads to village-like communities to urban group houses.

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.





REACH

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

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #150/Spring 2011 (out in March) is Friday January 23, 2011

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

tional five percent.

Please make check or money order payable to COMMUNITIES, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions, and category to: Tanya Carwyn, Business Manager, COMMUNITIES Magazine, 7 Hut Terrace, Black Mountain, NC 28711; email: ads@ic.org. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online Communities Directory at <http://directory.ic.org>. Listing on our web site is free and data from the site is used to produce our print version of the Communities Directory.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALENDAR

A FORUM FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE CONSIDERING OR HAVE HELPED FOUND AND FUND COMMUNITY ENDEAVORS. People with land and/or more money than most, have a unique situation and opportunity to help foster the efforts we are involved in with others. These resources come with blessings and challenges for all.

If you are experiencing the varied issues of sharing, letting go and/or gifting property, money, or funds to help build/create something with others, and you'd like to share thoughts, ideas, challenges, opportunities, etc within a confidential and supportive setting, please contact me for details about a conference call later this fall. The call will be a discussion of several of the most pertinent issues that come from the participants.

More conversations, a blog, perhaps an article for this publication, even a workshop/conference are all possible in the future if we feel inspired to continue this kind of forum. Please email cshend@gmail.com for more info.

ENTROPY PAWSED. Entropy Pawsed is a nature-linked low energy living demonstration site in rural West Virginia. Visit: www.entropy.pawsed.org.

TAKE AN INSPIRING COHOUSING TOUR! 2010 Coho/US Bus Tours let you visit multiple communities in a single day. Learn from experienced guides as you tour in the areas around San Francisco Bay, Seattle, Portland, Denver, or Boston. Learn more at www.cohousing.org/tours.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPEN-

INGS

THE MIDDLE ROAD COMMUNITY NELSON BC. This magnificent five bedroom log home is one of eleven homes in The Middle Road Community, a thriving co-housing strata-development with a strong sense of neighborhood living. Located on a sunny elevated bench on Nelson's North Shore of Kootenay Lake, this strata consists of 52 acres of forest, wetland, fields and meadows. Half is developed as 11 privately-owned lots with the rest remaining commonly shared property, which includes 2 1/2 acres of organic garden and orchard, horse pasture, community hall and play grounds. This particular lot is quiet, private, and secluded. The warm and inviting home was built with a strong environmental consciousness using primarily natural, renewable materials. The unique qualities of this home's many comfortable spaces evoke an experience of connection with the surrounding beauty. Features include radiant floor heating, sound proofing organic insulation, central vacuum, Japanese water-room and tub, custom-built high-end birch cabinetry, energy-saving fridge, marble shelf cold cupboard, front-load washer and dryer, double-coated wiring, and four decks: southern exposed large deck, covered cozy seating deck, game-enticing open deck, and outdoor sleeping porch. Enjoy the spectacular views from this bright and enchanting home overlooking Kootenay Lake.

For photos and more information: Canadian Co-Housing: <http://cohousing.ca/openrealty/open-realty208b/index.php?action=listingview&listingID=67BC> Homes for Sale: <http://www.bchomesforsale.com/view/nelson/lilli/Default.htm>. Lilli Ruth Rosenberg, (250) 825-0023. Lilli23@shaw.ca

PERMACULTURE SYNERGIES. Permaculture Synergies

is about people connecting or self organization in a time of separation. PS believes we can go beyond lifestyles of dependence on faltering institutions and the demise of the high tech visions of the "good life". Dependence has usually meant being beholden to impersonal, corporate entities and its' results of a few winners and many losers. Now production and jobs have moved to Asia and we are left to government, the Tea Party, crying in our beer, or more violent reactions. PS offers a PLACE FOR SELF AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, where self and community serve for mutual and reciprocal development. We offer a small, sustainable living community with private and common land for more independent and cooperative living. This will be a modest lifestyle to enhance self-reliance and shared work in the basics of food, shelter, and energy production that can be used to built relationships and, importantly, reveal interests that can lead to the pursuit of a wide range of additional cooperative activity.

We believe this kind of self-organization can naturally come about if the conditions are available, namely if affordability, time, space, access to each other, and a commitment to communication over the longer term are inherent parts of the new environment.

Offering such a facilitative environment in the scenic hill of SE Ohio with good access to towns and colleges is Permaculture Synergies' goal. We invite interested people to complete and return our Skills and Interests Questionnaire. Once 3 or 4 people with shared work interests have been identifies, we will schedule weekends for discussions at a SE Ohio country inn and conference center. We eagerly await your response. It is only for us to start talking about SERIOUS things that true change and improvement can happen. The folks at Permaculture Syner-

From our Community to Yours We'Moon 2011 Groundswell

We'Moon: Gaia Rhythms for Womyn is a best-selling astrological moon datebook, featuring earth-centered/ goddess-inspired art and writing from women all over the world. *We'Moon 2011: Groundswell* highlights and inspires grassroots momentum toward peace and restoration of our precious planet. We'Moon is made on women's land in rural Oregon.

**Datebooks • Wall Calendars
• Cards • Posters**



Mother Tongue Ink • www.wemoon.ws • 1.877.693.6666 US • 541.956.6052 Int'l

gies. www.permaculturesynergies.com

THREE SPRINGS COMMUNITY, NORTH FORK, CA. Since 1996, we have been living on 160 acres with a year-round creek, waterfalls, swimming holes and an extensive trail system, in the Sierra Foothills, near Yosemite National Park. We are 7 adults and 5 children; sharing a communal kitchen, bathrooms and common spaces, while residing in private dwellings. Having recently expanded our infrastructure with accommodations for new members, we invite you to come experience and share community living and learning with us. We practice open communication, consensus decision making, sharing financial responsibilities, creativity, spirituality and loving more. We eat organic, home grown and locally bought food. Our garden also supports an organic flower business and apprenticeship program. Come visit us soon! Tour our website for more information www.3springs.org.

COMMON GROUND, VIRGINIA. Intentional Community of 30 years, with cooperative focus on large organic gardens, has openings. Located in picturesque area near college town of Lexington. Live close to nature in the wooded mountains of Jefferson National Forest. Seeking young families of a homesteading mindset/spirit to add to our small but growing group. Kids welcome. 80 acre land trust, community freshwater spring, trout pond, warm swimming pond, pavilion, schoolhouse/ visitor's center. Sustainability key, not the maddening grind. Transitional housing available with partial work-exchange possible. Interested visitor's contact Glen Leasure 540-463-4493 or through web contact at our page on IC.org.

DANCING RABBIT, RUTLEDGE, MISSOURI. We are a growing ecovillage of more than 50 individuals and are actively seeking new members to join us in creating a vibrant community on our 280 beautiful acres in rural Missouri. Our goals are to live ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives, and to share the skills and ideas behind this lifestyle. We use solar and wind energy, earth-friendly building materials and biofuels. We are especially interested in welcoming natural builders and people with leadership skills into our community. Help make our ecovillage grow! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE, TUBAC, ARIZONA. Founders Gabriel of Urantia, Niánn Emerson Chase 1989. 110 adults/children. International members. EcoVillage, green building, sustainable living. God-centered, based on The URANTIA Book and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation (The Cosmic Family volumes) teachings. Organic gardens, farm, & ranch. Children's school, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Spiritual commitment required. Agricultural internships. PO

Accredited College Programs in Sustainable Communities

Australia • Brazil • India • Israel • Mexico • Peru • Scotland • Senegal • USA

**Living
Routes**

Study Abroad
in Ecovillages

Permaculture • Consensus • Peace & Justice • Service Learning • Fair Trade



www.LivingRoutes.org

(888) 515-7333

SUBSCRIBE TO COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE

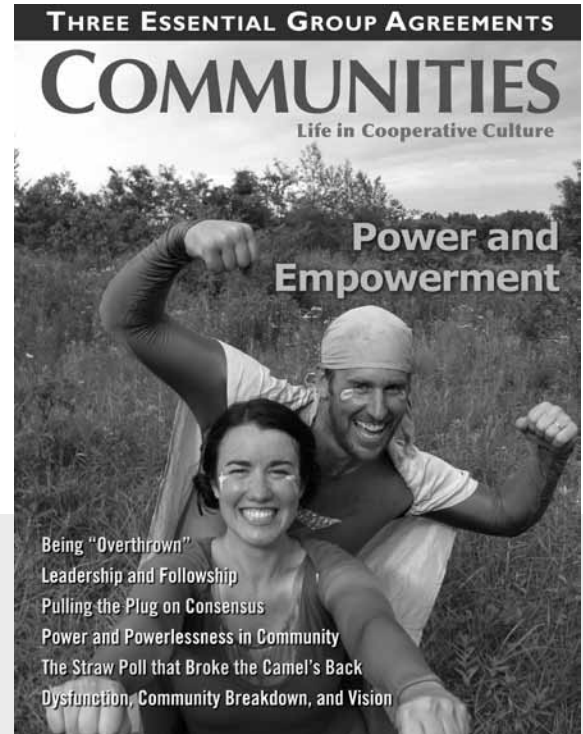
Your source for the latest information, issues, and ideas about intentional communities and cooperative living today!

Each issue is focused around a theme:
Conflict & Connection; Ecovillages; Growing Older in Community; Love, Romance, & Sex; Christian Communities; Cohousing ...

Reach listings—helping communities looking for people and people looking for communities find each other.

“Offers fascinating insights into the joys and challenges of communities... by their foremost pioneers.”

Corinne McLaughlin, co-author, *Spiritual Politics*,
cofounder Sirius Community



SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Please indicate number desired in each box (including gifts). For gift subscriptions, please attach additional addresses on separate sheet.

COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE delivered quarterly. (Outside US prices in parentheses)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-year subscription—\$24 (\$29 Canada, \$31 other) | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-year subscription—\$52 (\$66 Canada, \$73 other) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-year subscription—\$40 (\$66 Canada, \$54 other) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sample of current issue—\$7 (\$8 Canada, \$9 other) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime subscription—\$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepurchase of 10 copies of issue # _____—\$50, postpaid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earmarked donation: \$ _____ for issue # _____ or for general fund _____ | |

Total Amount: \$ _____

- Enclosed is my check payable to FIC in US funds.
- Please charge Visa/MC/Discovery card (circle your choice).
Card # _____ Exp Date _____
- Please *don't* share my name with other like-minded organizations.

Please photocopy this form and mail to:
FIC, 138-CM Twin Oaks Rd, Louisa VA 23093
Ph 800-462-8240

(or subscribe online at store.ic.org)

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL OR CONTACT PERSON

PHONE

EMAIL

GROUP NAME OR AFFILIATION (IF APPROPRIATE)

STREET

CITY/TOWN

STATE/PROVINCE

ZIP/POSTAL CODE

**Immerse Yourself for a Week
at Earthaven Ecovillage
June 11-17th, 2011**



"Wanna know what it's like to live in our village?"

Take Tours • Meet Residents
Join in a Work Party • Relax in Nature
Participate in Village Culture

828.669.3937 visiting@earthaven.org

Earthaven is an aspiring ecovillage founded in 1994 on 320 acres in the mountain forests of western North Carolina, about 50 minutes from Asheville. Our members are dedicated to learning, living, and demonstrating a holistic, sustainable culture.

Looking for more information about community?

Community Bookshelf

A handpicked collection of books on building, finding and sustaining community as well as group process, communication, and social change.

store.ic.org



Striving to live sustainably?

Be part of a community where you:

- Reduce your ecological footprint by using renewable energy
- Help the environment by eating local and organic food
- Use fewer resources easily by car sharing, and much more!



Dancing Rabbit is a growing ecovillage whose members are dedicated to sustainability and social change. We're especially seeking natural builders and people with leadership skills.

Go to join.dancingrabbit.org to arrange a visit.

1 Dancing Rabbit Lane • Rutledge, MO 63563 • 660-883-5511

Your financial partner.

The value and benefit of a Credit Union is to help you take care of your money with integrity, honesty and responsibility.

Norbel Credit Union is here to help you with the right tools:

- Financial Literacy with "FoolProof" at www.norbel.org
- Online Billpay
- Green Checking Accounts
- Health Savings Accounts
- Rewards Debit Cards
- 16,000+ FREE ATMs
- Mortgage, Business, Auto, and Personal loans

Understanding community with your interests in mind.

Discover more today!
www.norbel.org



Box 4910, Tubac, AZ 85646 (520) 603-9932.
 info@GCCAlliance.org; www.GCCAlliance.org;
 www.GlobalChangeMusic.org; www.GlobalChangeMultiMedia.org.

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

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.

DANCING WATERS PERMACULTURE CO-OPERATIVE. We are a 28 year old rural co-op. 130 acres and freshwater springs in the rolling green hills of southwest Wisconsin. Consensus decision making, all homes commonly owned, lotsa gardens, 1/2 hour from a vibrant alternative community/small town. Vacancy for a family or two folks. Contact Rikardo 608-872-2407 or rif@countyspeed.com. More info at ic.org.

COMMUNITIES FORMING

COOPERATIVE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY. Anywhere in the US. Primitive. Inexpensive. Security and privacy are priorities. Gun owners preferred. Box 7472, Denver Co 80207

SEEKING PIONEERS. Ecovillage forming. 35-acre wooded sanctuary one hour from KC. Have old farmhouse and 100-year-old refurbished barn that serves as lodging and meeting space. Retreat and workshop center under Unity Churches for 14 years. Welcome

**Check out
communitybuzz.ic.org**



**2010
COHOUSING
ASSOCIATION
Bus Tours**

The Cohousing Association (or Coho/US) conducts tours of Cohousing communities throughout the year, please visit our website to learn more.



For more info and to register: www.cohousing.org/tours

McCamant & Durrett Architects/The Cohousing Company
Creating Cohousing in North America for 20 years!

Facilitating participatory design from group formation to final design:

- Complete Architectural Services (licensed nationwide)
- Site feasibility and group outreach
- Development consulting and Getting-It-Built workshops
- Making It Happen workshops for seniors cohousing
- Environmental sustainability and energy efficiency
- Experience gained from designing and consulting for over 50 cohousing communities




www.cohousingco.com T: 530-265-9980 info@cohousingco.com

home • community • planet



Specializing in cohousing and community design, offering a full range of services.

*24 communities...
and counting!*

lfitch@krausfitch.com



**KRAUS-FITCH
ARCHITECTS**
413-549-5799
www.krausfitch.com

It's Done!

\$30

The long-awaited Part Two of Geoph Kozeny's *Visions of Utopia* is now available as a DVD



124 minutes profiling 10 contemporary communities:

- Catholic Worker House (San Antonio, TX)
- Community Alternatives & Fraser Common Farm (BC)
- The Farm (Summertown, TN)
- Ganans (Staten Island, NY)
- Goodenough (Seattle, WA)
- Hearthaven (Kansas City, MO)
- Miccosukee Land Cooperative (Tallahassee, FL)
- N Street Cohousing (Davis, CA)
- Remote Hamlet (CA)
- Sandhill Farm (Rutledge, MO)

The bookend companion to Part One (released in 2002) which features a 2500-year overview of community living, plus profiles of seven current groups. Get 'em both!

Order: store.ic.org or 1-800-995-8342

CAMPHILL SCHOOL OF CURATIVE EDUCATION

Foundation studies
Professional certification
BA options

Practice-integrated studies in education for special needs



For more information contact :

Camphill School of Curative Education
c/o Camphill Special School
1784 Fairview Road, Glenmoore, PA 19343
610.469.9236 schoolofce@camphillspecialschool.org
www.camphillspecialschool.org

diversity. Seeking homesteaders and investors, those with energy and skills to create, learn, and ultimately model sustainability in a living community. Visit www.lightcenter.info, email info@lightcenter.info.

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

WEST MARIN, CALIFORNIA. COHO CANYON is offering two shares with dwellings starting as low as \$100K each. Visit <http://www.marincohousing.org> or call Alex 415-608-2594.

HOUSES AND LAND FOR SALE OR RENT

YULUPA COHOUSING TOWNHOUSE, SANTA ROSA, CA. 3 Bedrooms/ 2 full baths, 1718 sq ft. Kid & pet friendly, 5 yr old complex of 29 units with flowing, lyrical architecture. Many "green features": shared roof & walls to reduce heat loss, double paned e-coated windows, thermal mass cement floors for passive heating & cooling, low VOC paint & insulation. Townhouse overlooks courtyard with fountain and features radiant heating in floors with separate thermostats downstairs & upstairs, master bedroom with sitting room & balcony, master bathroom with double sinks, full tub & shower in both baths, 10 ft ceilings on 1st floor, vaulted ceiling and clerestory windows, large closets in unit + enclosed locked 3' x 10' storage unit in carport, kitchen with high end appliances including, Maytag Gemini gas stove with 2 ovens, Amana refrigerator with bottom freezer and GE over-the-range microwave/ stove vent fan, GE front loader washer & dryer between master bedroom & bath, ceiling fans in master bedroom, 1st floor bedroom and living room. Brick patio and fenced in back yard. Original owners. Asking \$259,900. Call 707-695-9287 or email lisahauge@aol.com.

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

COHOUSING.ORG, the Cohousing Website, is filled with core resources for cohousing community - a thriving segment of the intentional communities movement. The site includes the Cohousing Directory, info on National Cohousing Conferences, Classified Ads, and FREE publications including Cohousing Articles, online Cohousing Books, In-the-News, Just-for-Fun, and much more. Its presented

O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE



Practice
Learn
Play
Create

TOPIA:
The
Sustainable
Learning
Community
Institute

Join
Celebrate
Diversity



We are inviting an exciting team of international teachers for the season.

Programs offered at
O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE
Shawnigan Lake, B.C.
Canada

- Sustainable Food Internship
- Natural Building Internship
- Timber Framing Program
- Permaculture Design Certificate

Please note: dates for more Workshops and Speakers as well as info on other educational opportunities available on O.U.R. website

Contact us to book a tour!
info@ourecovillage.org

250-743-3067
Shawnigan Lake, B.C. Canada

Stay with us at O.U.R. Eco B&B!

www.ourecovillage.org

THE LAST STRAW

The International Journal
of Straw Bale and
Natural Building



“Excellent newsletter,
both technical and entertaining.
Essential for any
straw-bale enthusiast.”
—Environmental Building News

1-year subscription \$28 (\$33US Canada)
Online Electronic Copy (check the website)

The Last Straw Journal
PO Box 22706
Lincoln NE 68542-2706
402.483.5135 / fax 402.483.5161
<thelaststraw@thelaststraw.org>
www.thelaststraw.org

Finance your Community?

This CD ROM has a 90-minute recorded webinar packed with how-to information to help you finance the creation of your Cohousing or Intentional Community.

Featuring
**Kathryn
McCamant**



Learn more at
www.cohousing.org/financecd

Upcoming COMMUNITIES Themes:

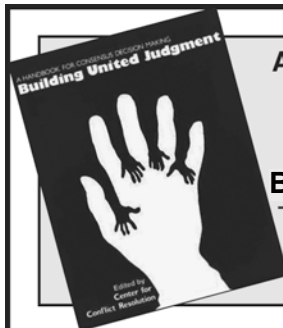
Spring 2011: Mental Health: Challenges and Hope

Summer 2011: Intimacy

Fall 2011: Right Livelihood

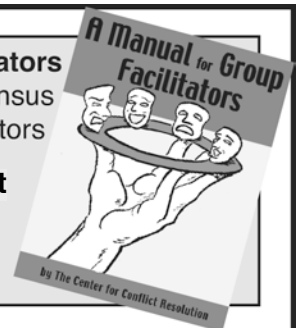
Winter 2011: Permaculture

If you'd like to write for COMMUNITIES, please visit
communities.ic.org/submit.php



A Manual for Group Facilitators
“The bible” for consensus facilitators

Building United Judgment
The best handbook around
for consensus



Essential reading for anyone interested in consensus decision making. —Caroline Estes, consensus teacher

Make your group more effective with these classic texts. We've reprinted these books because they're some of the best available. \$16 each plus \$2 s/h

To order:

The Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC)
1-800-995-8342
Route 1, Box 156-CM
Rutledge, MO 63563
consensusbooks.ic.org

wholesale discounts
available for multiple copies

Take charge of your future!
Be a part of our new community
in Grass Valley, California.



Wolf Creek Lodge COHOUSING

a socially and environmentally
smart choice for active adults who
value living in community

- Green built
- Privately owned homes
- Easy walk to shops & services
- Generous common facilities
- Extensive creek frontage

www.wolfcreeklodge.org

Designed by national award-winning firm
of McCamant & Durrett Architects

For more info: 800.558.3775
info@wolfcreeklodge.org
CoHousing Partners 530.478.1970

Find Love & Save the Planet



free to browse
free to join
dating
friendship
romance

GreenSingles.com

"where hearts and minds connect"

by Coho/US, the Cohousing Association of the United States - please visit us at cohousing.org.

FINANCING COHOUSING CD ROM with Kathryn McCamant. This 90 minute recorded webinar is packed with how-to information on financing the creation of your Cohousing or Intentional Community. Learn more at www.cohousing.org/financedd.

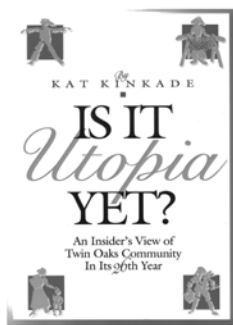
WANT TO BUY/SELL YOUR COHOUSING HOME? The Cohousing Website Classified Ads provide many choices in different price ranges all across the United States. Check out these and more cohousing-related classified sections at www.cohousing.org/marketplace.

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.

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.

GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES available at Tree Bressen's website. Topics include consensus, facilitation, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on. Dozens of helpful articles, handouts, and more--all free. www.treegroup.info



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.

Twin Oaks Publishing
\$18.00 each includes S/H (US delivery)

Twin Oaks Publishing
138-CM Twin Oaks Rd Louisa, VA 23093
540-894-5126
www.twinoaks.org publish@twinoaks.org

Read COMMUNITIES Magazine Online!

Register | Login | View Cart | Search GO Share

fic Fellowship for Intentional Community

MAGAZINE
COMMUNITIES

IC HOME DIRECTORY MAGAZINE WIKI RESOURCES STORE ABOUT FIC

COMMUNITIES HOME SUBSCRIBE SAMPLE ISSUE BACK ISSUES ADVERTISING CONTACT COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITIES
Life in Cooperative Culture

THE CURRENT ISSUE
Health and Well-Being

COMMUNITY HEALTH INSURANCE • SENIOR COHOUSING

COMMUNITIES
Life in Cooperative Culture

Health and Well-Being

Embracing a Terminal Illness
Shaking a System of Language
Caring for the Elderly
Integrating Life and Community

PURCHASE THIS ISSUE

Subscribe
Renew
Back Issues

Since 1972, *Communities* has been the primary resource for information, issues, and ideas about intentional communities in North America - from urban co-ops to cohousing groups to ecovillages to rural communes. Below is a selection of articles from our most recent issues.

• **GROWING A CULTURE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT EARTHAVEN ECOVILLAGE**
Arjuna da Silva

At a permaculture-based ecovillage in North Carolina, care for the earth, care for people, and care for inner health all benefit from a dynamic culture based on local self-reliance, holism, and community. (From Issue # 145 - Health and Well-Being)

• **REVIEW: HEALTH AND QUIET**

Noise and quiet can both affect well-being profoundly. Gordon Hempton's *One Square Inch of Silence* offers ear-opening stories and

Find Articles by Topic

All Articles
Community Economics
Community Where You Are
Finding a Community Group Process
Life in Community
Starting a Community
Sustainable Living

Search Communities GO

Most Read Articles

- **Growing a Culture of Community Health and Well-Being at Earthaven Ecovillage**
- **Shared Living—When Home Is a Community**
- **Hard Times at Orinda**
- **Garden as Therapist and Community Organizer**
- **Throwing in the Founder's Towel**

Communities: Life in Cooperative Culture - Magazine on Facebook

We've rolled out a whole new COMMUNITIES magazine website where you can read a selection of articles from our quarterly magazine online. We will post a handful of articles from each issue so you can get a taste of what COMMUNITIES offers.

You can browse our online articles by category, author, or you can search the article text. You can even receive notification of newly posted articles via RSS or ATOM as well as updates on reader comments for any or all articles. We encourage you and all our readers to comment on our online articles and help us create a vibrant forum on the subject of community.

Help us promote intentional community and our magazine by sharing articles with friends.

On our new site you can email articles and share links to them via Facebook, Twitter, or a whole array of social networking sites. Please share links to our articles widely and consider adding a link to our site to your webpage or blog. Help the world know how critical community is in our lives.

As always, you can purchase a subscription or renew your subscription online and receive our quarterly print magazine for one year at \$24 (higher outside US). You can also purchase copies of our current issue or back issues online. In addition, the new site provides a look at the complete table of contents for each of our recent issues.

Since the site is new we are still working out the kinks and adding new features. If you find problems or have suggestions please let us know and we'll see what we can do to improve the site. Thanks for your help.

We will also post announcements of new articles on our COMMUNITIES Magazine Page on Facebook. You can also join the Intentional Community Cause on Facebook and help support the FIC.

communities.ic.org



www.cohousing.org

The Cohousing Association of the United States (Coho/US) provides a wide variety of resources for Cohousing Communities and other related Intentional Communities.

Visit Cohousing.org to:

ATTEND THE ANNUAL NATIONAL COHOUSING CONFERENCE

June 16-20, 2010

in Boulder, CO

June 15-19, 2011

in Washington, DC

DISCOVER EXISTING AND FORMING COHOUSING COMMUNITIES

Cohousing Directory
Classified Ads with homes for sale or rent

TAKE AN EDUCATIONAL COHOUSING BUS TOUR

In several U.S. cities, including the areas around San Francisco Bay, Seattle, Portland, Denver, or Boston

LEARN ABOUT COHOUSING PROFESSIONALS

The Cohousing Professionals Directory

PARTICIPATE IN THE COHOUSING MOVEMENT

Volunteer with Coho/US

GROW YOUR COMMUNITY

Use our contact database
Advertise for new members

www.cohousing.org

The **Permaculture Activist** Magazine



1 year subscription (4 issues) \$23.

- permaculture design • edible landscaping • bioregionalism • ecovillage design • cooperative action • aquaculture • natural building • earthworks • forestry • energy • soils • agriculture • urban sustainability • botanical regeneration • plant nurseries • seed sources • and more

POB 5516, Bloomington, IN 47407
812.335.0383

www.permacultureactivist.net

Compassionate Wisdom

Stories from women who are proud of their age!

Wisdom



Don't miss a single issue. Subscribe!

See CroneMagazine.com or

Send \$20 for one year to:

P.O. Box 687 • Forest Grove, OR 97116

For a free sample call 888-724-3966

REMEMBRANCES

(continued from p. 5)



to reflect on the experiences we had and to celebrate each other.

As she lay in hospital in her final hours, messages poured in from the many communities she had graced with her caring and wisdom, thanking her for all she gave to the world.

Margo will be remembered and loved for her courage and commitment. In the words of Starhawk, her longtime friend and fellow social justice activist, "Over all these years, I've seen you [Margo] hold firm and consistent on your devotion to social justice. That's always been the focus of your work and your life. You've embodied in your life the values you believe in. It hasn't made you rich, or a famous superstar, but you have influenced thousands of people along the way. You've made the world a better place than it would have been without you. You've made sacrifices in order to put your best life energies behind what is truly sacred to you—and in so doing, you have made your life a sacred journey."

More about Margo's life can be found at formargo.wordpress.com.

A number of Margo's many friends collaborated on this remembrance

AGING IN COMMUNITY

(continued from p. 45)

Part of what is driving this movement, according to Durrett, is the tendency of Boomers to reinvent society's institutions as they engage them. "What is more audacious than 25 seniors deciding that they should build their own neighborhood?" Durrett asks. "What is more audacious than 25 seniors deciding, 'hell, they don't know how to do it, we're gonna figure out how to do it.' All these seniors should stay in their houses, not just be told to be happy in assisted care. This generation understands that the Stepford country is not where it's at."

The Danish national aging curriculum, which he is adapting for domestic consumption, helps people band together in "study groups" to talk about all the taboo topics of aging that are important to discuss before crises arise:

- health
- death
- finances
- co-care agreements
- spirituality

Through work together mapping these strange new (and old) territories, cohousers are able to efficiently partner with professional developers and co-create neighborhoods that will be able to better meet their needs, increasing the odds that they can remain in their homes over time without either becoming a burden to their neighbors or facing unreasonable obligations of unlimited support.

Village Networks

Starting with Boston's Beacon Hill Village in 2001, this model is now spreading around the world.

These are member-based neighborhood networks that help people stay in their homes as they age, by making where they live into **aging-friendly communities**, overlaying services and community.

In the "Beacon Hill Village Model," people (typically 50+) in a particular area band together to form a nonprofit organi-

zation providing "concierge services," one-stop shopping for transportation, home-care, house maintenance, medical, and care-management services.

Typical membership fees are \$500 to \$1000 per person or household per year, with mature villages offering reduced-fee subsidized memberships for people who can't afford the full fees.

Memberships include basic transportation for shopping and excursions, and regular social events, but additional trips and other services are usually offered on a fee-for-service basis, with membership discounts. They publish newsletters, host parties, and help people get to know each other better and form "affinity groups" with shared interests.

Network operators screen service providers, using their leveraged group-buying power to get quality service with member discounts. ☺

For more information about all of these models, see www.agingincommunity.com/models.

Sections of this article are excerpted from Raines' Cohen's chapter in the book Audacious Aging: Eldership as a Revolutionary Endeavor (Elite Books, 2009).

Raines Cohen is a Northern California Regional Organizer with Cohousing California, a regional umbrella group fostering the creation of green intentional neighborhoods (ecovillages) throughout the state. He has spent a quarter century launching grassroots nonprofit organizations and helping them manage their growth. He served two terms on the Cohousing Association of the United States national board and currently is a Fellowship for Intentional Community board member. He is a Certified Green Building Professional and Certified Senior Cohousing Facilitator, helping people create new choices for retirement, and a member of the National Aging In Place Council and founding member of The Elders Guild.

Read
COMMUNITIES Magazine Online!
communities.ic.org



2011 National Cohousing Conference
 Wash. DC '11

Putting Cohousing on the National Agenda

2011 National Cohousing Conference
 June 17 - 19, 2011

www.cohousing.org/confer-

Sheraton Crystal City
 Arlington, Virginia

Support the FIC
 Become a member today!

When you join the Fellowship for Intentional Community, your contribution supports projects like the Communities Directory, COMMUNITIES magazine, and the Intentional Communities Website (www.ic.org)

Join online at www.ic.org

RELATED BACK ISSUES

Elders



The following COMMUNITIES back issues speak to various aspects of our current “Elders” theme, as do some others not listed here. See communities.ic.org/back_issues for a complete list of back issues and ordering information. You may also order back issues \$5 apiece plus shipping using the form on page 13.

- | | | |
|------|---------------------|---|
| #146 | <i>Spring 2010</i> | FAMILY |
| #145 | <i>Winter 2009</i> | HEALTH AND WELL-BEING |
| #132 | <i>Fall 2006</i> | WILL YOU LIVE YOUR ELDER YEARS IN COMMUNITY? |
| #121 | <i>Winter 2003</i> | THRIVING IN COMMUNITY |
| #112 | <i>Fall 2001</i> | MULTIGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY |
| #102 | <i>Spring 1999</i> | HEALTH & HEALING: COMMUNITY IS HEALING |
| #92 | <i>Fall 1996</i> | CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES THEN AND NOW |
| #89 | <i>Winter 1995</i> | GROWING OLDER IN COMMUNITY |
| #50 | <i>October 1981</i> | DYING |
| #43 | <i>April 1980</i> | HEALTH AND WELL-BEING |

NEW EDITION—UPDATED FOR 2010

COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY



SIXTH EDITION

A Comprehensive Guide to Intentional Communities and Cooperative Living

Up-to-date information on over 1,000 intentional communities in North America, including ecovillages, co-ops, communes, and cohousing projects—as well as 250 communities from around the world. Plus detailed cross-reference charts, an index, and maps to help find the community you are looking for.



COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Over 1,000 North American communities, plus over 250 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

We've also 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, food choices, decision making and more.

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



Scheduled for release summer 2010. Order it NOW online!

Special Offer! \$30 Postpaid (Shipped book rate to US addresses. Call or shop online for other options. Price after 12/1/2010 can be found at store.ic.org/directory or call 800-462-8240.)

store.ic.org/directory • 1-800-462-8240

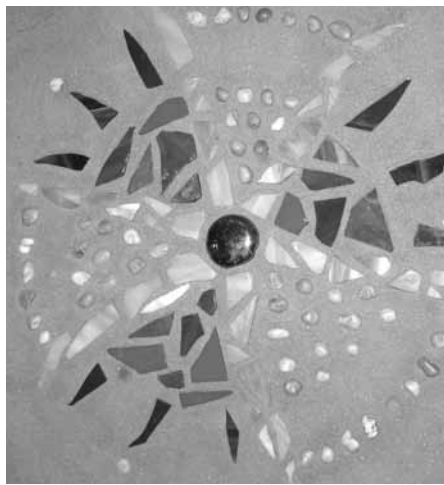
ONLINE COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

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

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



CREATING COOPERATIVE CULTURE



Tamar Friedner: Leaving a Legacy of Beauty



Tamar Michal Friedner, a member since 2000 of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, Rutledge, Missouri, died of pancreatic cancer on September 12, 2010 at her sister's home in Massachusetts. Tamar was buried at Dancing Rabbit on September 17 during a service at which friends and family members gathered to share stories, offer tributes, celebrate her life, and bid her farewell.

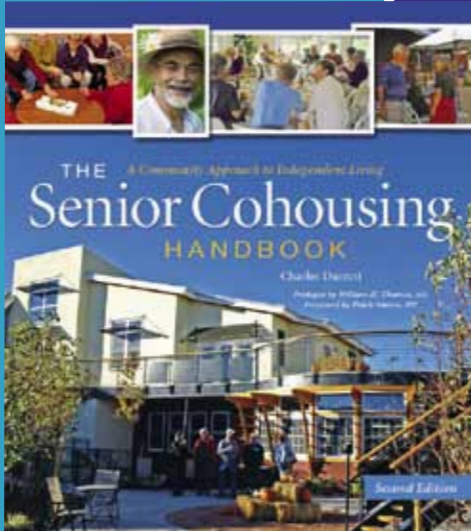
While Tamar is sorely missed, she left a legacy of art and creativity throughout the village that will be appreciated by all for many years to come. The photos on this page depict just a few examples of the beauty with which she graced the various natural buildings she worked on, as well as her own artistic eye (the nature photos are Tamar's own). Both the buildings and the art (often created in collaboration with others) reflect the caring for people and love of the earth that were so central to her being, and which continue to inspire all who knew her.

—portions adapted from Tamar's obituary, written by Ted Sterling

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

Kathy Goss, *Journalist*

THE Senior Cohousing HANDBOOK



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

A community approach to independent living

Twenty years of designing and living in cohousing have inspired this 288-page book by award-winning architect Charles Durrett. After the introduction of the cohousing concept to the U.S. by husband-and-wife team Charles Durrett and Kathryn McCamant in 1988, almost 100 such communities have been built and over 150 groups are in the process of creating a cohousing community.

Illustrated with photos and graphics, this 288-page book explains the advantages and the why and how of senior cohousing. It is for seniors and also for younger people working with their parents. The book is divided into four parts: Introducing Senior Cohousing, Senior Cohousing in Denmark, Creating a Senior Cohousing Community, and Pioneering Senior Cohousing in America, and offers detailed steps to create a senior cohousing community.



Charles Durrett, award-winning architect and author

The most creative housing option for seniors today



“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. 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. 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

“This book 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 is a very inspiring testament to growing old “in community.”

Lisa Anthony
Second Journey
www.secondjourney.org

To order the book, contact:
New Society Publishers
800.567.6772 • fax 800.567.7311
PO Box 189, Gabriola, BC V0R 1X0 • Canada

Order online at:
www.newsociety.com

\$34.95 (USA & Canada; Contact publisher for other locations.)
Price includes shipping and handling.

COMMUNITIES:

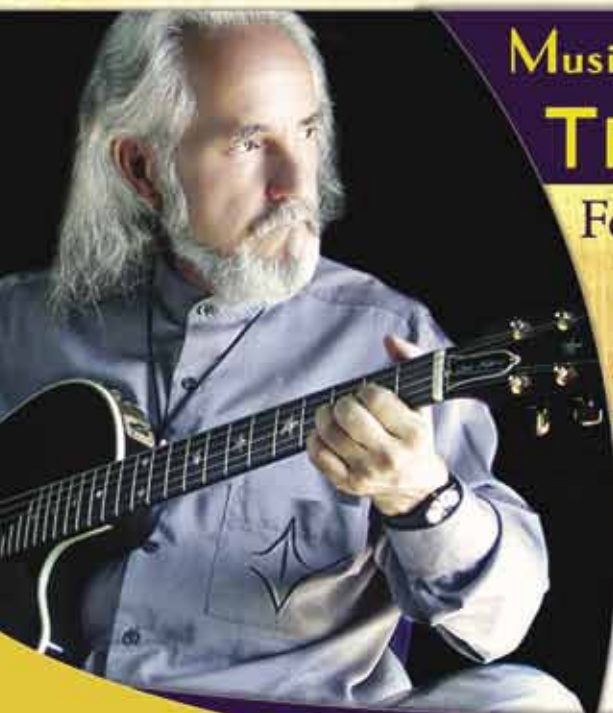
Life in Cooperative Culture

RR 1 Box 156

Rutledge MO 63563



Subscriptions - 4 issues: \$24; \$29 Canada; \$31 outside US/Canada; US dollars



Music of the Future for Minds of the Future THE COSMOPOP HOUR

Featuring the original CosmoPop® music of

TaliasVan of Tora &
The Bright & Morning Star Band

Listen online at
globalchangeradio.org

The global Spiritualution™



with DJ
Shakta

Trying to shock you
into a new music revelation!

520-398-2542

dj@cosmopop.org • cosmopop.org

TaliasVan of Tora/Gabriel of Urantia is not only a musician; he is a spiritual leader and visionary, a social and political change agent, an environmentalist, a prophet, a father, an activist, and the author of several books.



The God Child Came Special Holiday DVD & CD Set

Start a family holiday tradition with this sacred performance of *The God Child Came* Christmas musical play by the Global Change Theater Company. This beautiful, uplifting, humorous, and inspiring play follows the journey of Asonta, a young ascender in the celestial realms in search of the true meaning of Christmas. Included with the DVD is *The God Child Came* CD—a captivating collection of 12 CosmoWorship™ compositions. The CD is also available separately.

God Child Came 2-Disc DVD/CD Set — \$14.95

God Child Came Christmas Album CD — \$9.99



THE COSMIC FAMILY Volumes I and II

The Cosmic Family volumes (the continuation of *The URANTIA Book*) shine the light of hope and provide real answers for the crises our world faces.

Volume I, Softback—\$16.06

Volume II, Softback—\$29.95

Volume II, Hardback—\$49.95

Teachings on Healing, From a Spiritual Perspective

Offering very real solutions for personal transformation and healing.

Softback—\$14.95 • Hardback—\$19.95

TO ORDER PRODUCTS: Call 520-398-2542 or TOLL-FREE 866-282-2205 or visit globalchangetools.org