

SKILL BUILDING FOR A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Winter 2018 • Issue #181

THE CULTURE OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY



An Evolution in Community
Adventures in Remote Simplicity
The Shaker "Culture of Cleanliness"
Bringing Fairy Dust to Corporate America
Compassionate Inquiry and Transformation

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CONTACT US: aciv@cfnc.us 304-825-3555 <http://aciv.cfnc.us>

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 Sunday October 1, 2017



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ONLINE ONLY

GaiaYoga: The Art and Wisdom of Living Holistically, Unifying Spirit, Self, Community, and Earth

Ano Tarletz Hanamana

The cofounder of GaiaYoga Gardens traces the life journey that led him through various intentional community experiences and teachers to seven “yes”s—ultimately forming a comprehensive vision of a new “Domain 9” culture consciously designed to be in alignment with all of who we actually are.

(Article available at www.ic.org/gaiayoga.)



ON THE COVER

Participants in Richmond Vale Academy's organic gardening program work with local people to build gardens in their communities, producing healthy food for home consumption and farmers' markets. Photo courtesy of Camille Bru.

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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LETTERS



Conversations to Build Community

Dear Editor,

I noted with interest Allison Tom's point in your wonderful last issue, "Networking Communities" (#180) about the need for members to get to know each other in ways that go beyond discussion of land and architecture, early on, when they are building community.

I wanted to alert everyone to a free series of deep, open-ended Conversation Guides structured to help people get to know each other: Living Room Conversations, www.livingroomconversations.org/topics.

While Living Room Conversations exist to help us talk to people who differ strongly from us, many Topic Guides are wonderful to use with anyone. I especially recommend the Relationships Guides and Privilege Guides, though you'll find Guides on most

political topics and a great many personal and social ones as well.

I work for Living Room Conversations, and am a co-developer of an intentional community in rural Virginia—so if anyone has any questions, please feel free to reach out to me: beth@livingroomconversations.org or bethraps@raisingclarity.com.

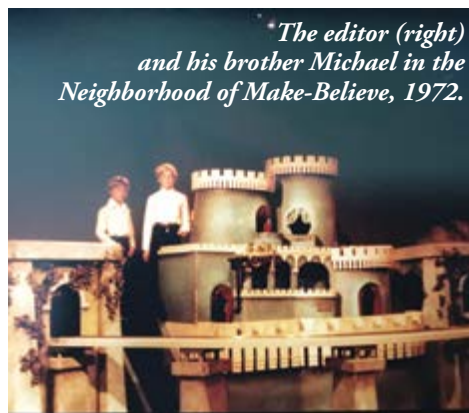
Beth G. Raps
Eagle Rock, Virginia

Inspiration, Moral Guidance, and Fred Rogers

Dear Chris,

The fall 2018 issue of **COMMUNITIES** arrived this morning, and I just read your editor's note about Fred Rogers. *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* was the one television show my wife and I steered our three daughters to as they were growing up. I can hardly think about it without some tears welling up. The girls are all "out of the house," but my wife and I like to think that they embody the kind of person that Fred Rogers hoped would fill the world. We no longer have a television but, like you, I still draw inspiration and moral guidance from Fred's legacy. As you suggest in your editor's note, the state of the world today represents such a tragic decline from what we have been, and is so incredibly far from what we could be. Pessimism doesn't produce productive change, so we must shoulder on. Building a neighborhood is like building a community, and both are essential to building a better world. Thanks to you and others at FIC for everything you do to Fredify the world.

Jon Andelson
Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa



Nancy Roth

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COMMUNITIES Editorial Policy

COMMUNITIES is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living 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, 1 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Box 23, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 800-462-8240; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at ic.org/communities-magazine.

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.

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Please check ic.org/communities-magazine or email ads@ic.org for advertising information.

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.

A Culture of Cooperation

As someone who has lived in intentional community for the past four decades, I long ago became aware of a feeling of comfort and familiarity when I interact with other communitarians. I live in a secular, non-income sharing, rural community, but I get the same feeling when I am with cohousers, income sharing folks, urban communitarians, or spiritual community members.

I am also comfortable in our larger society as I have worked both at community-run businesses and as an employee in private and nonprofit companies, venture out into the larger world on a regular basis to shop, attend cultural events, go to restaurants, visit family and old and new friends and acquaintances, travel, and live uncloistered in central rural Virginia. But the experience of being with other communitarians has a different quality and ease of interaction.

My intuitive explanation for this is that there is a shared culture amongst communitarians of all sorts. I can define what this is and how it expresses itself, but I generally find that greater credibility is obtained by citing an “expert,” even if said expert uses the same language I would have. In this case I will quote Bill Moyers, a well known, long-term reporter, investigative journalist, contemporary observer and philosopher, and discerning commentator on current events and larger issues of our times. Amongst his many accomplishments, he was a key figure in the early days of the Peace Corps. In his 2008 book, *Moyers on Democracy*, he offers the following: “the Peace Corps is more than a program or mission. It is a way of being in the world”—one which values “the culture and customs that gave meaning to a particular life.” (Italics in the original.)

What is this way of being in the world that creates a cultural bond and sense of the familiar between myself and others who live in intentional community? I think that the various articles in this issue will expose the key elements in the telling of the stories. The essential factor is the dedication to creating a cooperative society. Note the references to cooperative, collective effort; the value of interpersonal relationship; communication; and collaborative decision-making.

As we look to the long history of exports to the larger society of innovations emanating from community, there would be none more significant than spreading a culture of cooperation. 🍷

Marty Klaif is a member of the FIC's Board of Directors, Oversight Committee, and Editorial Review Board, and is also the liaison between the COMMUNITIES staff and the FIC Board. He has lived at Shannon Farm community for the past 17 years. His article “A Day in the Life” appears on pages 14-16 of this issue.

Magazine News

“The Culture of Intentional Community” marks the fourth consecutive issue available for digital download free or by donation—an initiative that started with our “Class, Race, and Privilege” issue, #178. We thank everyone who has helped spread the word and increase the readership and impact of COMMUNITIES. Please let others know that they, too, can find the magazine, in whichever format they prefer, at ic.org.

We also need monetary support to continue this model (and to publish at all). We very much appreciate your subscriptions, gift subscriptions, book orders, back issue orders, advertisements in the magazine and online, and donations. Your dollars sent to the FIC to publish COMMUNITIES and undertake aligned projects have an outsize impact on our budget compared to most other places you could spend that money—and make possible our work to foster more cooperation, community, and long-term well-being for people and planet.

Issue sponsorships have helped the magazine survive over the past decade; please contact us if you are interested in supporting or partnering with us to publish an issue on a specific theme. For the current issue, we want to express our gratitude to Marty Klaif, who not only suggested the theme but also secured funding to support it. Thank you Marty!

—Chris Roth

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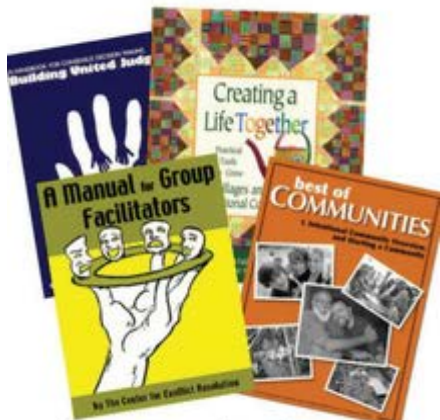


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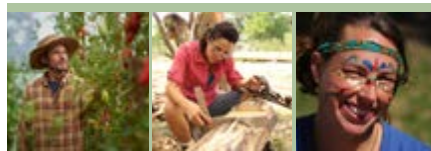
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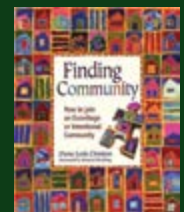
—Mark Westcombe,
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hours of practical
answers about Sociocracy.”**

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—Susanna Michaelis, Pacific Gardens
Cohousing, British Columbia



diana@ic.org

www.DianaLeafeChristian.org

Slices of Life in Community



Attendees at Lost Valley's revisioning retreat, day three, October 21, 2018.

Photo courtesy of Jason Robinette

I start my day by bicycling up into the forestland above our 87 acres. If I'm unusually lucky, I'll see a bear, or two, or three during my bike ride. Even less commonly, I may see fox, or coyote, or cougar. Much more often, I'll see perhaps squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, various birds, maybe deer. Without fail, I'll be surrounded by trees and underbrush, my main companions during these bike rides. An hour or more will pass at the beginning of my day without any need or occasion to utter a syllable meant to be understood by another human being. Anyone who imagines that the culture of intentional community does not allow for solitude has not experienced intentional community—or at least not rural intentional community.

I handle some pressing emails related to community life, to this magazine, and to a few far-flung friends, then head to the lodge, where my next six hours are devoted to preparing, serving, eating, and cleaning up after our community lunch. While I do the cooking and cleaning alone, this does not mean that I don't have interaction. Various other community members drift in and out of the space, and the kitchen team inventories our bulk food supply and plans an upcoming food order. I spend the lunch hour in a meeting with two other community members to iron out details of a new housing arrangement.

After completing cleanup, I check on some laundry I started earlier, deal with a few more emails, then head to a Community Council meeting, where I and four others discuss well-being issues within the community (after checking in about how we're each doing ourselves). We create action steps to follow up with community members whom we know to be having challenges either with their lives in community or with each other, and we also plan a future all-community forum.

After dinner, and some extended conversations in the lodge (we are all both decompressing from and inspired by our recent three-day revisioning retreat), I head back to my abode, where I take care of some additional tasks resulting from that weekend retreat, as well as some online research: trying to track down broom corn for a class project at a Waldorf school in town at which I'm volunteering. I'm still feeling gratitude for that retreat, for which we enlisted the services of a professional facilitator (Laird Schaub, whom I've known for three decades and whose contributions to this magazine over the years outnumber almost everyone else's) and a connection-activity leader (Lisa Stein, a Heart of Now teacher, whom I've known for nearly 25 years), and to which we invited Dianne Brause, Lost Valley's cofounder, whom I've known for almost as long as Laird and whose presence helped the experience feel particularly grounding and resonant for me.

Dianne moved away 10 years ago, and her return (as a retreat attendee and now a volunteer on a number of subcommittees) feels to me like part of a weaving-together of strands that had drifted apart. The main outcomes of our retreat were commitments to increase our expectations of both community participation and community connection, and to enhance our structures support-

ing them. I feel grateful to be in a group that, somehow or other, has managed to deal with its conflicts in healthy ways. Here, disagreements are not hidden but instead honestly discussed, and they don't prevent true bonds of affection. In fact, I came away from the retreat with the impression that everyone in it genuinely likes one another—partly because of, not despite, the fact that we can be honest about our different points of view and our sometimes inconvenient emotions.

All of this I reflect on now—as well as the excitement of the new educational experiences I'm having in the school in town. And I wonder how an issue on “The Culture of Intentional Community” can possibly do justice to its topic. I ponder whether the article I myself penned a few months ago (pages 17-21) is what I wanted to say. Then I recognize that, in community, in COMMUNITIES, in life, each of us can at any one time hold and offer a part of the truth, but rarely the whole truth, individually. It is in pooling our perspectives, our stories, our various disparate offerings that a greater truth emerges. And even then, especially when it comes to words, “A finger pointing at the moon is not...the moon itself.” (Thich Nhat Hanh)

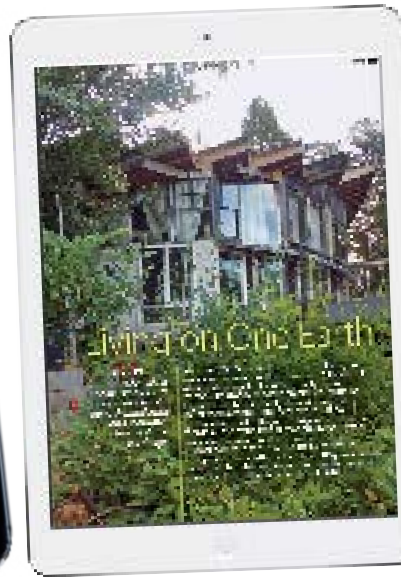
Hopefully these fingers pointing at the varied landscape of intentional community culture will encourage each of us in its exploration. 🌱

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES and calls Lost Valley Educational Center (lostvalley.org) home.

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CHANGING SKIES

By Karen Gimmig

My morning ritual, just after dawn, is to walk to the neighborhood pond and do yoga on the dock. I bathe myself in morning light, fresh air, and the expanse of the sky.

It is the sky I want to tell you about. While the water and the trees are fairly constant, the sky is ever-changing. This morning it was bright and blue, a few bits of puffy white near the horizon quietly shape-shifting minute to minute. Another day it was bright shades of grey, layering and re-layering themselves, sometimes exposing bits of blue, sometimes dropping a sprinkle of rain, sometimes both. Some days the sky is dark and stormy, the grey clouds threatening (and delivering) downpour. On those days I am hesitant to step out into the weather, but sometimes I do. Maybe I get drenched and slog my way home. Maybe I find myself dancing in the rain. The sky is ever-changing and you never know for sure what it is sending your way.

Communities are like that. Buildings and trees may be constant, but relationships shift and change day by day. Sometimes they bathe us in warmth and light. Other times we peek out the door and are washed over with darkness and threat. The culture of intentional community includes a commitment to remain in relationship despite the shifts. At our best we embrace community however it arrives. We see the value of togetherness. We know we were created for this.

Those sunny days are lovely. They build us up. They nourish us. They

are joyful and they strengthen foundations of attachment and caring that sustain us. With that nourishment, it is the cloudy days that teach us who we are. We don't like the grey as much, but we are created for this too. It is the foreboding darkness that calls us to growth. It is venturing into the cold that divulges who we are in relationship and confronts us with the gulf between who we are and who we want to be. It is the rain that cleanses old wounds and washes away the clutter to reveal what we can become.

Sometimes we aren't ready for growth and we find ourselves shivering our way home, but sometimes we find ourselves dancing in the rain, partnering with neighbors, refreshed in self-awareness and compassion, held in community, and one step further on the lifelong journey to become our best selves.

For me the culture of intentional community is about the commitment to venture out together into the blue skies and the grey. It is about joy, but it is also about the hard work of growth. It is about creating the possibility of the dance. 🌈

Karen Gimmig is a professional facilitator and relationship coach, certified by Imago Relationships International. She helps communities and organizations form closer relationships, grow through conflict, and make decisions in ways that build connection. See www.karengimmig.net.



Cat Karma

By Troy Matthews

The other night, Highway MM from Rutledge to Memphis, Missouri and back was two very different experiences. On my way, in the partial light and drizzle, it was a beautiful country drive: hills and curves and cows. I love these kinds of drives. I used to have to leave the city to take a country detour like this. Now, as a new resident at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, I get to enjoy these back roads in the natural course of my comings and goings.

While the drive to Memphis was enjoyable, the drive back to Dancing Rabbit later that night was a completely different story. I enjoyed spending a couple hours with some new acquaintances in Memphis before heading back to Dancing Rabbit about 8:30. That same appealing drive through the country a couple hours earlier turned into a test of my nerves and equilibrium on the way back home. It was my first time driving the road at night, and the darkness was complicated by more rain, big puddles trying to pull me off the road, and the glare of oncoming headlights. I knew the center line was there, but it was impossible to see. I slowed down. The curves came out of nowhere. I slowed down again. Just as I thought I was getting more comfortable and speeded up a little, I'd hit an unexpected puddle and need to slow down yet again. Funny how my move to Dancing Rabbit is proving to be remarkably like that trip to Memphis.

Visiting DR in May for a Visitor Session was more like the leisurely drive in the country I first described above. It was bright, sunny, and easily navigable. May is my favorite month of the year, by the way. I could see the curves coming up ahead and the yellow lines were clearly marked. Not a puddle to be muddled. No glare off the smiles of the other Rabbits in the bright light of day. But the subsequent reality, of

moving to Dancing Rabbit on August 30 and living here as a new resident, is akin to that nighttime trapeze on wet, winding, unfamiliar roads.

I wouldn't go so far as to say the transition has been treacherous, but the terrain is unfamiliar with unexpected, sharp turns and a steep hill or two popping up out of nowhere. The solution, once again, seems to be slow down. I don't know about you but slowing down has not been something I've been very good at in my lifetime. I tend to speed up until I hit the rumble strips on the shoulder, then I slow down. Speed up, slow down. Speed up, slow down. Over and over. "This time it will be different." At least, that's what I'm telling myself.

Let me tell you more about myself. My name is Troy Matthews, and I'm from Kansas City—Overland Park, Kansas, to be exact. I'm the newest resident of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Rutledge, Missouri. I first found Dancing Rabbit online around the year 2000. I was looking for something different and better, to my way of thinking, than how I was living as a suburbanite. In my mind, getting out of the city into the country was part of living better, and it still is. Grandma and Grandpa lived on a farm near Alma, Missouri, when I was a kid. My dad and mom did not have the farming bug, so I grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City and in southwest Florida. After many years of living mostly in the 'burbs but also in big cities like New York and Paris, I bought my first home about 30 minutes south of Kansas City in the country. My country house was situated on a little pond with several pecan trees in the yard. I imagine that most of you reading this understand the call of country living. Moving to Dancing Rabbit is another step toward the country and I'm very happy to be here.

And then there was a white, bedraggled cat...

Recently, as I walked the gravel path in the residential area of the village, a white cat approached me from behind, pulled up alongside, passed me, walked five or six feet ahead of me, and had a heart attack. I kept walking. Mr. Cat recovered instantly. He trotted ahead of me again and then had a stroke directly in my path; writhing on his back like a puppet with a couple strings missing. You might already realize what was going on, but I still did not. I continued walking.

Again, the cat recovered and caught up to me. Instead of just passing by this time, Mr. Cat rounded my right leg rubbing as we

I think karma got back at me the next day. Bad, cat karma. Here's what happened. I woke up knowing I should roll over and stay in bed. An annoying sound like a fax machine being suffocated by a feather pillow kept poking my peace in the ribs making continued sleep improbable. I got up. It was raining.

I checked my usual email and social media. Rabbits get a lot of emails about goings-on in the village and other business exchanges. While I was web-surfing, Bear asked me to move my truck to the lower field in preparation for Dancing Rabbit's Open House. (We wanted space for visitors to park upfront, right at the entrance to our village.) I assumed the rain had made for a muddy lower field, but I figured I had four-wheel drive and wouldn't get stuck. I put the truck in 4-low and moved to the lower field just a few hundred feet down the road. I had an inkling of the obvious, yet I did not heed it. Two other vehicles were parked already, and I wanted to conform, so I pulled in just as they had done.

Immediately, I wondered if I would be able to back my truck out, and immediately, I attempted to pull away, and immediately, I found myself stuck. "Hah! Won't get stuck." Stuck. Stuck. Stuckity-stuck-STUCK! I knew it, shaking my head. The truck was stuck in the muck. Stuck!

I walked back up the hill to the village self-talking my way out of a tantrum or a pity party at the least. "Told you I shouldn't have gotten out of bed." I told a couple other folks about my truck being stuck in the muck. "Welcome to the club," said one. "Getting stuck is a rite of passage here," said another. "I can help you," said yet another. I felt a little less disgusted with myself.

I found myself stuck. "Hah! Won't get stuck." Stuck. Stuck. Stuckity-stuck-STUCK! I knew it, shaking my head. The truck was stuck in the muck.

walked. He then rushed ahead and collapsed in the path before me, yet again. "Maybe this cat wants some attention," I finally realized. "Of course! Mr. Cat just wants some attention." I'm a little slow. I told you I lived in the suburbs for a long time. I did not oblige Mr. Cat with any attention. I was busy going nowhere. I did not have time or inclination to indulge this conning cat. Vague warnings like "Do Not Feed the Bears," "Natural Area: Do Not Disturb," and even "Don't Pet Strangers" flitted through my brain. Mr. Cat persisted; I persisted as well. Instead of flopping down on the gravel on pass number six, Mr. Cat just kept cat-ting on his way. I'll give Mr. Cat credit for his persistence.

Just after I got the truck stuck in the muck, my new Dancing Rabbit community "circled up" to kick-off the Open House. We circle-up and hold hands before Tuesday Potluck and Community Dinner on Friday, as well. There were about 30 adults and a bunch of kids in the circle. "Who knows the DR song?" The song was sung. As I leaned in to hear the words and catch the melody, I got that warm, connected, I'm-glad-I'm-here feeling once again. By the end of the song, most of the mucky, stuck-truck taste in my mouth had washed away.

That's all for now. I'm settling into my new life at Dancing Rabbit. It took the help of a tractor to get my truck out of the muck. Mr. Cat is nowhere to be found. If you see me in town at Keith's Cafe, Tri-State Used Furniture, or getting a coffee on the square, all of which I've already visited, be sure and say "Hello." If I look like I'm in a hurry, I'd appreciate a friendly reminder to slow down, again. 🐾

Troy Matthews is one of the newest residents at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage outside Rutledge, Missouri (dancingrabbit.org). The piece is adapted from the September 18, 2018 edition of Dancing Rabbit's e-newsletter, The March Hare.



Photos by Troy Matthews



REFLECTIONS FROM A COMMUNITARIAN ENTREPRENEUR

By Larry Stopper

When I would jump in my car to head off to work, my commute was often a little longer than most. Though I live at Shannon Farm, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, my jobs were generally in the urban centers of the northeast, and I had a five- to seven-hour ride to work. In the mid '90s, along with two non community members I met in the industry, I started a business called Bigwood. Our objective was to become the premiere salvagers of urban lumber from Boston to Baltimore, and I'm quite proud that after about 12 years we achieved that goal.

Since Shannon Farm is a non income-sharing community, we are all expected to find our way to providing for ourselves. This was one of the ideas that drew me to Shannon back in 1975, and it's helped keep me here ever since. I come from an entrepreneurial family, and I have those genes deep inside of me. I helped start the first and most successful business to establish itself on Shannon Farm back in 1977 (Heartwood Design—custom cabinetry), but after 15 years in that business, I felt the need to strike out in a different direction. After a few fits and starts, Bigwood emerged.

Buying, selling, and participating in the salvage of our urban forests met my needs on many levels. On an emotional and values level, finding and developing markets for recycled lumber help fulfill my beliefs in the viability of alternatives to simply trashing our forests. In the course of my time with Bigwood, we reclaimed approximately 10 million board feet of lumber, which is a lot of wood. But if I'm really being honest, the place where Bigwood really scratched the itch for me was the freedom to be as entrepreneurial as I wanted. I loved the opportunity to gamble on my ability to figure out how to make a business work, and to get dirty in the very rough and tumble world of salvage lumber.

In many industries dealing with commodities such as lumber, there are industry-wide price sheets. Often released weekly, these show the prices on both the buying and selling side of the equation. This leaves very little room for negotiating, since everyone knows more or less what everyone else is paying. Not so in the world of salvage lumber. In my world, everything was a negotiation and while some factors remained constant, others varied wildly. We called it cowboy capitalism, and it provided the freedom to exploit my negotiating talents to their fullest. It was also where the years spent in meetings at Shannon Farm paid big dividends.

As we all know, the object of successful negotiations in community is a win-win solution. Most of us who have lived our lives in community understand that to be successful in enjoying life in a community, you have to surrender control, but still stand for your beliefs. This is deeply helpful to understand and appreciate when you're sitting across the table from someone who has something you want, but you can't overpay for it. Also, these were not often one-off negotiations. If things went well, we would work with the same contractors again and again, but in very different situations. You had to develop relationships and never allow yourself to be bullied. That last part wasn't always easy since I'm a rather small adult and some of the demolition companies we worked with had mob connections (I was chased off one demolition site in Manhattan, New York by a crowbar-wielding contractor and had to use my chainsaw as protection).

Since my role in Bigwood was negotiating with the demolition companies to acquire the wood, and then finding buyers, I was always negotiating with someone. In addition, I was the peacemaker between my occasionally warring business partners. At every step in the process, my key task was understanding my counterparts in these negotiations, and having patience since sometimes the approach to a job could be quite a long timeframe. Once I understood the situation, my job was to use my knowledge to make them happy, and earn us the most money possible.

A perfect example of the type of negotiating I would often be involved in was for the lumber coming out of a very large former warehouse on the Brooklyn, New York waterfront. The building sits alongside a beautiful new multimillion-dollar park directly under the Brooklyn Bridge. The contractor was a division of a multinational development corporation, so right away I understood that the money I offered for the lumber would mean little to the parent corporation. Experience had taught me that what they needed was service and an envelope of cash now and then in the pocket of the site supervisor. In a situation where the income to the

demolition company was immaterial, you had to take care of the site supervisor in order to insure the wood was not damaged during the salvage operation. So, while the payment we offered to the parent corporation was minimal, I got the job anyway because I was very clear that there was a cash-filled envelope for the site supervisor after each truckload. Underhanded, maybe, but successful, which is the point. While I have dozens of similar stories, the point is that understanding the person across the table from you, and what's most important to them is critical in business and vital to making a community work.

What I often say about a new member at Shannon Farm is that in order for us to fully appreciate whether they will be able to last here, they must have an idea that they consider great. Present it to the community, and watch it be shot down by other members. Then get up the next morning and be able to greet their friends and neighbors and not be overwhelmed with anger that their great idea went nowhere. This same lesson applies in business as well. I had to present a proposal to a demolition company that I considered fair and appropriate, and watch it be ignored in favor of a competitor's bid. Then, three months later, I had to try working with that same company. You can't carry a grudge, just keep smiling and get better (and maybe offer a little cash under the table).

Most people don't see the intensely competitive world of business and the twists and turns of community as being very compatible. While in many ways this is true, there are lessons in community that directly translate into achieving better results and a higher income in the world of business. Learning to negotiate your way to a happy ending is a perfect example of where the two worlds meet. 🐦

Larry Stopper has been a member of Shannon Farm Community for 43 years. He's also a serial entrepreneur, helping start six businesses over his lifetime. He's been happily married for the last 16 years to the wonderful artist, Susan Greene. He's retired from business and is currently the chairman of the Nelson County Democratic Committee (and no longer giving anyone envelopes of cash).

A Day in the Life

By Marty Klaif



*Shannon Farm's community center,
10 years in the planning.*



*Shannon Farm's lake, nestled
within its 520 acres.*

My name is Marty and I live in a rural intentional community (henceforth referred to as “the farm”) in central Virginia. It’s a community of about 40 private houses, as well as a community-owned barn, tractor shed/shop and tractor, community center, and a limited number of other large community-owned tools and facilities, all on 520 acres in the foothills of Virginia.

It has been described as a hippie subdivision.

But, it is an intentional community and I hope the following will make clear the distinction, which is not so evident in casual observation as in the larger relationship web.

All members of the community are on the Board of Directors of the corporation that owns every non-personal possession on the farm including the homes—but members own the rights to, and value of, their leasehold. The founders of the community created a structure for evaluating the value of houses that would discourage a competitive real estate market and make leasehold purchases affordable. All of the houses are owner-designed and range from small cabins with no services to modern middle-class houses. The two other very significant early economic structure decisions were to not have a buy-in to join, and to support the community with a dues structure that is a percentage of income rather than everyone paying the same amount.

The internal, political structure of every intentional community is unique and determined by the folks who live there. Maximizing self-determination and self-governance is a primary motivational force for those of us who have decided to live in community rather than fit as best we can into the larger society. My community uses a consensus decision-making process which encourages participation and takes everyone’s perspective into consideration, but can result in a very extended deliberative process. On the extreme end, agreeing to build and deciding where to locate our community center took about 10 years. We also have a mutual-evaluation-based membership process that tries to assure that new folks understand who we are and how we operate, and that we have confidence that there is a good match.

To paraphrase a pretty ancient TV show intro: there are as many stories of “community” as there are communities, and as many individual stories as there are individuals (we estimate about 100,000).

This is one of them.

It’s August 27, 2018.

My day starts pretty normally as I get up early to help my partner, Diana, get her food together for her day at work in Charlottesville. She works for a small, nonprofit publisher of philosophy journals preparing academic papers for hard copy and online publishing, and doing whatever odd graphics the company needs. I held the job for eight years and turned it over to her when I was pretty burned out and she wanted to get off the farm and participate in some “in town” activities. Our skills overlapped so we were able to work it out. She took a small pay cut from my already very modest wage, but that was ok because we live in a community that facilitates a lower-than-might-be-expected-by-our-quality-of-life need for cash flow. We own our leasehold, get water from a shared well, and installed a solar hot water system and a shared photovoltaic solar array with the two other houses in our cluster.

Diana goes to work and I take our dog for a walk. Our community has about four miles of self-maintained gravel roads, and many off-road paths that folks have created and maintained over the past 44 years. The route I generally take is part on the road and part on paths through the forest. Each of the 60 members regards the whole property as their own. Our stated values include respect for the land and all inhabitants, meaning all flora and fauna (including people). We are also aware of our role as stewards and have respect for each others’ range of tolerances.

I generally walk early, particularly in the summer. Chances are I’ll either meet another walker or see someone leaving for work—maybe stop and chat in either case or at least extend greetings. As I begin this walk, I pass a guy going the other way who is a guest of one of our members for whom he originally worked as a WWOOFer (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) on a break from hiking the AT (Appalachian Trail) which passes by about six miles from us. While he was here he took advantage of the opportunity to integrate himself in lots of community activity. After his WWOOF time was up, he left but came back because he liked being here, had made some friends, generally liked the area, and we like him. Now he’s living here as a guest and working at a farm in the area. We exchange greetings and each continue on.

After my walk of about two miles, up and down hills, through the woods, etc., I return home, feed the dog, eat breakfast, read and write emails, read the news (currently an unfortunate, but pretty addictive habit), and do some other around-the-house things.

The phone rings and it’s a friend on the farm who asks about borrow-

ing my post pounder. Loaning out tools is a norm, particularly (but not only) amongst closer circles of friends; the value of sharing resources is wholly embraced. So we agree that, since I expect to be out doing some errands, I'll put it in an obvious spot and he can come by and pick it up at his leisure. Some tools are more delicate than others and some demand special skills and care. But, once a member establishes a track record of responsibility, just about anything you need can be available.

My next stop is at the garden to pick up a few posts to set off an area by my house in which I'm planting a ground cover. The community long ago established an area for members to have personal garden space. Most of our homes are in the wooded hills and don't have the space or solar access to grow a garden. The community decided to support those who want to garden by setting aside the space and sharing the cost of fencing. The community also ran an underground water line from our lake for a gravity-fed water supply. Members figure out how to divide the space amongst those interested and how to cooperatively maintain the space.

While at the garden I come across another member who tells me that she is planning on bush hogging the seriously overgrown sections of the garden (including space I have been using the last few years). The community-owned DR mower went in for repair a few months ago and communication around its status has been virtually nonexistent, so this is welcome news. (The DR soon reappeared and I got a phone call from the Ag Committee convener, in response to a note I sent, explaining the reasons for the delay.)

After returning home, my next task is to collect eggs from our chickens, fill their water dispenser, and let them free-range for a couple of hours. We have a chicken house in the woods by our house with a large yard that is mostly defined by our septic field which is shared with one of the other two houses in our cluster. We get enough eggs to support our egg habit, selling what we don't need to community members. With about 60 members, there are many services and skills represented and, as much as is practical, folks try to keep the economy local with lower, community rates as a norm.

As I'm coming up the hill from the chicken yard (with the chickens now out and roaming the woods) another friend backs up to my house to unload a power washer. The two of us along with three others recently

bought it as a collective. One of us will be the caretaker and we'll make it available to others in the community for a maintenance fee. I also belong to a similar collective for a wood splitter, but with seven others. There are various other collective activities that I vaguely know exist amongst members with similar needs.

While we're chatting about various aspects of the state of the community and the world, my neighbor arrives home. She recently returned from her annual one-month-long trip to Glacier National Park. Before she left she recruited various folks on the farm to take care of aspects of maintaining her house. I picked up her mail, someone else fed and spent some time with her cat, etc. Before she leaves the common parking area she checks with me about the availability of our washing machine, which she has free use of, for the next day. I expect to be up early, so she can come by any time, whether I'm there or not, to use it.

Neighbor cooperation and assistance in times of need are commonplace and expected, without pressure or guilt when not available. I'm always struck by the comparison to my sister's situation. She lives in Boulder, Colorado—a pretty hip town—in a small cul-de-sac with a housing association. She frequently has stories of folks building additions without considering their neighbors, spats about parking spots, installing bright overnight “security” lights without consideration for how others will be affected, contractors carelessly abusing a neighbor's property with no follow-up, etc. The good part of hearing those stories is the positive reinforcement for the lifestyle choices I've made.

The day is winding down. I check email, try to figure out what's for dinner, and Diana returns from town. Neither of us has a committee meeting to attend, so it's a night of relaxing until going to sleep on our screened deck—built by one of our community members. 🐦

At the age of 24, Marty Klaif retired from federal civil service in Brooklyn, New York, after 13 months and set out across the country looking to create and live in intentional community. He has been living at Shannon Farm community for the past 17 years. Prior to that, he lived in an income-sharing commune in San Francisco for about 15 years where he drove a taxi and learned his computer skills. He has been a member of the FIC Board since about 2005 and serves on the Oversight Committee and the Editorial Review Board.



Photos by Marty Klaif

A field at Shannon Farm, with barn and tractor shop.

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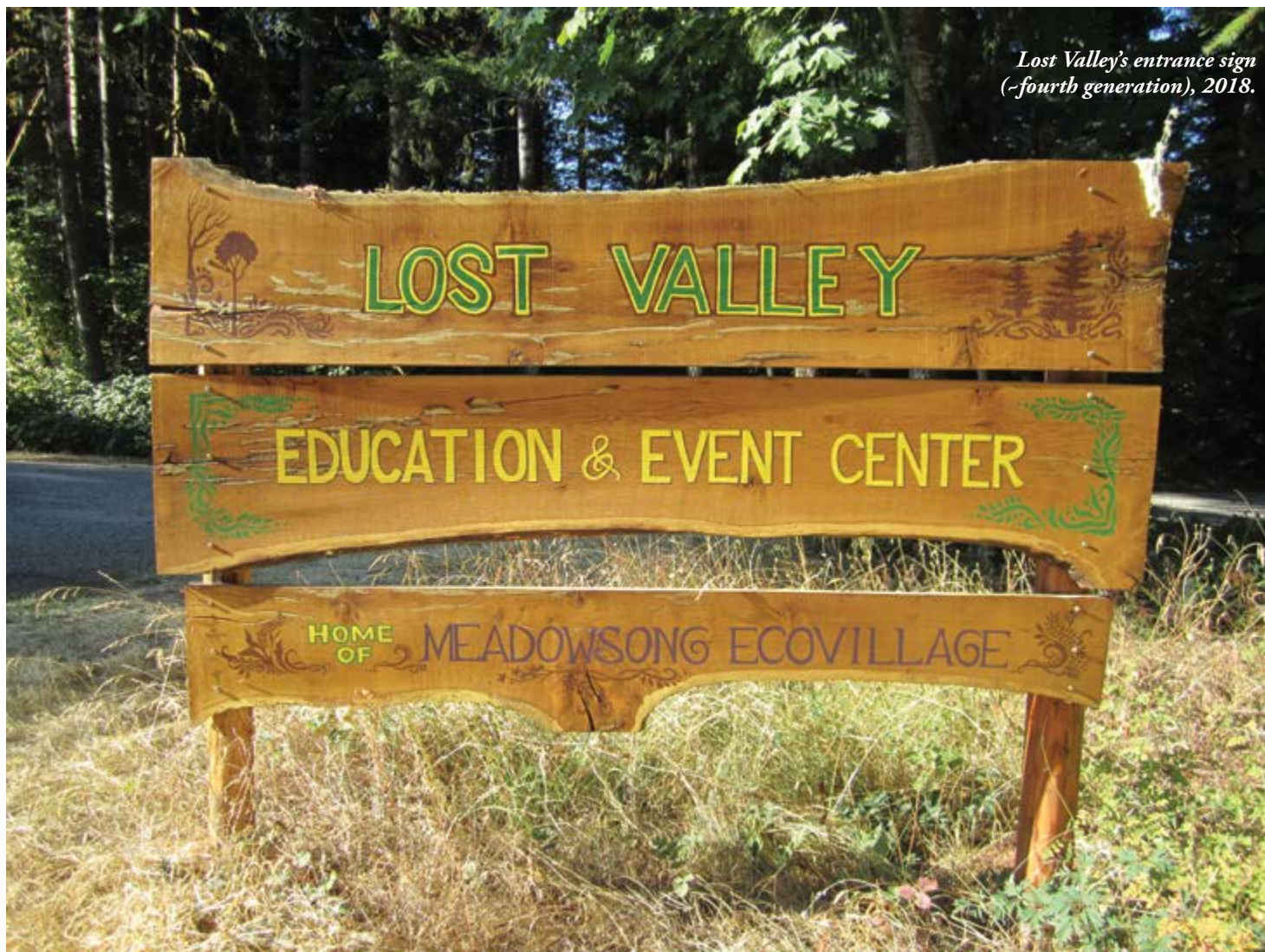


Tune in for
Season 1!



An Evolution in Community

By Chris Roth



Lost Valley's entrance sign (~fourth generation), 2018.

Photos by Chris Roth

Fourteen years ago, I wrote an article for a past issue of *COMMUNITIES* whose theme, *A Day in the Life*, closely resembled our current one (“In Deep Forest and Meadow,” *COMMUNITIES* #123, Summer 2004, pp. 50-54). In it, I described a typical day in my life at Lost Valley Educational Center, where I had lived for seven years at that point (I have since added 13 years to that total, subtracting a year midway between then and now which I spent in northeast Missouri’s tri-communities).

Recalling that article, I wonder: How does my life in community now compare with my life then? What has changed—in me, in my community, in how I relate to my community, and in who makes up the actual “community” of my life now? How has the culture of my daily life and of my home community evolved? Does this mirror the kind of evolution that other communitarians may experience as they spend not just years, but decades, in community? (My observation of others who’ve immersed themselves in community for years, as well as what I know about the history of other long-standing communities, tells me that the answer to that last question may be “yes.”)

The day I described a decade-and-a-half ago came in the midst of a dozen-plus-year stint as one of Lost Valley’s garden coordinators (I also taught in our garden apprenticeship program and led garden interns in managing the gardens even when we weren’t hosting apprentices). My other main job was editing *Talking Leaves: A Journal of Our Evolving Ecological Culture*, a magazine which we published for eight years at Lost Valley before it folded (as have many other

print journals, but fortunately not *COMMUNITIES*). Both of those jobs anchored me to our 87 acres and its people. In fact, that kind of on-site immersion was typical. At that point in our evolution nearly everyone living at Lost Valley still worked full-time (or close to it) for our nonprofit educational and retreat center.

Participation in community culture and decision-making was high. We had reduced the frequency of our community-wide business meetings (Purpose Circles) from weekly to biweekly, and had done the same with our well-being meetings, but all residents either attended both (meaning we all met together once a week) or sent their regrets when they didn’t attend. We operated by consensus, were all “in business” as well as “in community” together, all took turns cooking and cleaning



the community meals that happened at least twice every weekday and sometimes on weekends too. We all participated in the full meal plan, pooling our buying power and finding ways to meet most of everyone's dietary needs (with individuals supplementing the community food if they chose to with whatever they

rooms were cleaned, floors swept, trails cleared, etc.

We all had taken part in the personal growth workshop (Naka-Ima) that had helped shape the community in its spiritual rebirth/coalescence in the mid/late 1990s. (The first seven years after its founding in 1989 had been marked, by most accounts, with varying degrees of dysfunctional communication and unresolved interpersonal tension and conflict, until the introduction of this workshop had provided a breakthrough.) Even for those who didn't continue to assist in the monthly courses (which brought in large numbers of outside students and assistants in addition to onsite participants), that workshop

helped shape our well-being meetings and our daily lives together. It provided a shared language and mutually-understood ways of dealing with conflict, as well as an emotional intimacy and comfort (even in the face of discomfort) that came to define the community culture. My account of that day 14 years ago includes three instances of "working through" issues that had come up between people during the course of daily interactions—some resolved almost on the spot, some that were

A commitment to dealing with conflict and an emotional intimacy and comfort (even in the face of discomfort) came to define the community culture.

craved or needed but that we didn't purchase or prepare collectively—whether that be beef, fish, durian, papaya, or potato chips). We each put in two hours of "cleansing and creation" weekly—most of us through a regular two-hour community work party in which bath-

talked through the following day, all part of the process of living and working closely together and being committed to not letting issues fester.

One of those instances involved strong feelings about how to live the ecological values that Lost Valley has always been committed to in various ways. (From the beginning, the group has both taught about and modeled permaculture and other eco-living approaches—at times stumblingly, because of limited resources available to change the mostly non-eco-infrastructure we inherited

from the “end times”—expecting Christian community that developed the site.) On that day, one of the garden interns had expressed the belief that our civilization needs to crumble entirely and we need to start over from scratch—while two of us had advocated for a “softer” landing and more compromise in lifestyle as we make the transition to the more ecologically sustainable society we all hope for.

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That conversation, and many more like it—about the big picture of our civilization, and how our species relates to the planet—probably happen just as frequently today at Lost Valley, both among residents and among visiting students of permaculture, ecovillage design, and similar topics. Many current residents also share an equal interest in and commitment to working out interpersonal issues and exploring healthy communication. Although the last part of the last decade and the beginning of this one saw some major challenges to the culture that Lost Valley had developed in the mid/late '90s and into the 2000s, much of it (after appearing to almost totally disintegrate through community and organizational crisis) has reestablished itself, at least among a significant subset of the population. In fact, our criteria for residency and advancement to membership involve familiarity and commitment to compassionate communication, ecological living/permaculture principles (however those are interpreted in each person's case), and the spirit of consensus and shared empowerment via sociocratically-based governance and decision-making structures and practices.

Some things have changed in major ways, however—and I find that those things mirror changes in my own life. Our population has expanded, partly because we've opened up some additional living spaces and options. At the same time, employment by the nonprofit has declined significantly—only a few people work full-time or close to it for Lost Valley's businesses. Since the 2008 financial crisis, conferences, events, and educational programs have been harder to run successfully—people have had less available resources to invest in those opportunities—so the majority of our income now comes from rental fees, rather than from hosting guests and students. Lost Valley cannot afford to employ most of its residents, and we also no longer host interns or work-exchangers, for a variety of reasons; as a result, most residents need to find outside sources of income. This means that, rather than the great majority of residents spending most of their time in community/Lost Valley work and activities, and therefore staying on site, a significant number of people go off-site at least part-

time for work or other reasons, and/or engage in non-Lost Valley income-producing work on site that has them interacting, on average, less with other community members.

Partly because of this greater diversity in schedules and amounts of on-site presence—and also because, as seems to have happened in the wider culture as well, personal diets have become more individualized and varied, food allergies more prominent, and economics more tight for many—meal plan participation is now optional (except for participation in the “minimum meal plan,” two meals a week), and only a few residents take part in the full meal plan, which covers all of their food (except for

Some things have changed in major ways— and I find that those things mirror changes in my own life.

special-purchase items). Likewise, only a minority of residents do cook and clean shifts. The site-and community-maintenance tasks that used to be spread more evenly amongst residents via the two-hour weekly work party are now distributed, unevenly, to whoever has time (and is qualified) to do them, and are credited against rental fees (some people take on no tasks through this system, and have zero rent reduction, while others may earn \$100 or more in credits per month, depending on their participation in the system).



All of this also means that residents are on average less involved in daily interactions with each other. The “core community” as many of us experience it may be approximately half of the on-site residents—typically those who participate in the meal plan at higher levels, attend more community meetings, involve themselves more in community governance, resident interviews, etc. Each person’s “core community” will be somewhat different, however, depending which neighborhood they reside in, what

erment, ecological living, educational mission—are still all very much present, but manifested in different ways and to varying degrees of intensity in different residents’ lives.

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Where does this leave me? What’s my typical “day in the life” now?

My own evolution has mirrored Lost Valley’s. Whereas in 2004 I was fully committed to the on-site community, and to my work and relationships there, I find I’ve branched out quite a bit, that my sense of community has morphed considerably. My 2004 essay included a reference to a friend in town with whom I was arranging a meeting. At that time that was an anomaly...she was the only “town friend” I saw semi-regularly, since I was so involved at Lost Valley. Aside from occasional long weekends spent at Bioneers or other conferences (where I represented Lost Valley and *Talking Leaves*), I traveled on average once a year, to visit my parents in Ohio in the middle of the winter—the only time I felt I could get away from the gardens.

Nowadays, I typically visit that same friend in town weekly—along with, somewhat less frequently in some cases, and even more frequently in a few, close to a dozen other friends

Not only has the Lost Valley “way of life” become less all-consuming for most residents, but my own sense of connection has expanded.

their activities are, etc. The distinguishing feature, however, is that the community as currently configured is larger in size, less of a cohesive whole, more individualized and varied in participation than the group I was part of 14 years ago. The main strains of culture—involving commitments to personal growth, open and healthy communication, mutual empow-

with whom I’ve lived in community but who’ve moved to town or its outskirts in the interim. Not only has the Lost Valley “way of life” become less all-consuming for most residents, but my own sense of connection has taken me away from Lost Valley. Two major physical setbacks, involving parts of my body (first my knees, then my ears) essential to immersing myself in areas I was deeply involved in, have helped shift my focus from those activities (gardening, birding, music, nature-guiding) to human relationships. I’ve come to recognize, in ways much more than just intellectual, that we are all mortal, are all on a path to having our capacities diminish and fall apart, are all dealing with a lot more challenges than we may care to admit, all experiencing loss on an ongoing



Recreation and Leisure Studies with River and Terra (ex-Lost Valley).



*Ornithology with Isla
(Possibility Alliance).*



*Meteorology with
Terra (ex-Lost Valley).*

basis, all having fallen (or soon to fall) from whatever Eden we might once have experienced or imagined ourselves occupying.

Creating a “perfect” garden that eventually will be overrun by weeds no longer has the luster it once did. Blissing out to birdsong is no longer even possible for me—my ears are always ringing, as a result of a badly mismanaged ear infection and too much trust in a particular medical practitioner (who has come to represent to me the economic juggernaut that is destroying or degrading the well-being of the earth itself and its less-privileged peoples, not just my sense of hearing, all in the name of money and whatever drives the desperate perceived need to acquire as much as possible of it, regardless of what serves the greater whole). It is harder and harder to deny that our planet is in the midst of its sixth major extinction event, that humans are already confronted with increasing climate emergency, that as a species we are certainly “fallen” now even if at some point that was mainly a fable. For me the only thing that makes these realities tolerable is cultivating the community and connections with other fellow travelers that I’ve found over the course of—now, unbelievably—five-plus decades of life. My relationships with ex-community children, in particular, give me a visceral sense of hope that all may not be lost for us as a species—and at least cheer me up (it seems better to go down appreciating life than bemoaning it, all other things being equal).

I enjoy engaging fully at Lost Valley when I am there, making best use of the tools I’ve acquired over the past decades in the areas of communication and dealing with people—tools I never developed as fully when I was so immersed in more ecologically-focused missions. I deeply value the connections I feel within the community, and the opportunity to practice ways of empowering us all to create the community we want, while pursuing the kinds of open, honest connection that are most important to me—“falling in love” with each other by truly seeing and experiencing each other, including our vulnerabilities (this phenomenon having nothing to do with romantic love, at least in my own life right now).

And at the same time, it is important to me to cultivate those other connections I’ve made over the many years I’ve lived in community, during which most of those I’ve lived with have eventually left. A significant part of my life is now shaped around keeping up those connections—which feel like, and in some cases are in all practical respects, family. In community I have made some lifelong connections which I can’t imagine ever giving up—children that I hope I know (even as adults) for the rest of my life, people I love deeply (again, not romantically, but in a way that seems much more sustainable than that in my case). A typical day in my life now is almost as likely to be spent off-site as on, exploring a different kind of community with a larger network and family of friends, aware of how this may contradict some of my previously-so-closely-hewn-to ecological values (I drive a car now) and my ideal of total commitment to place (I now feel at home in a bunch of places, not just one). As I write this, I’ve spent the past five weeks (carless, thankfully) visiting friends and family in four different states—

Oregon, Vermont, Maine, and Ohio—while away from Lost Valley at a time of year (late summer) when, 14 years ago, I never would have dreamed of being gone. In each of these settings, I’ve felt the kind of connections that I came to community for. I’ve felt “family.”

COMMUNITIES may be partly responsible as well for this shift to a wider focus: editing it has connected me to people all over, and helped me see community in a much larger context. It has given me work that can be taken anywhere (at least anywhere within range of an internet connection). It has shown me a bigger picture in which our lives in community always turn out to be about change, evolution, transition, exploration, connection, and the mystery and wonder of finding that some of our once-firmly-held ideas have given way to new ones, grounded in experiences we never expected we’d have. We and our communities are likely to continue to go through transformations, setbacks, rediscoveries, ceaseless challenges and opportunities, as we recognize more and more that, for better or worse, we are all in this together. 🌱

Chris Roth lives at Lost Valley Educational Center (lostvalley.org) in western Oregon, and has edited COMMUNITIES since 2008. A month-and-a-half after the completion of this article, Lost Valley’s fall re-visioning retreat charted a course back toward higher participation and greater connection community-wide, making some of the descriptions above a bit out-of-date already. Meanwhile the author’s circle of community and involvement now also includes a public Waldorf School in Eugene.

MIND THE GAP: How the Cultural Difference between Incoming Residents and the Community Can Indicate Whether They Will Stay

By Colin Doyle



Mike Hedge

Lost Valley Ecstatic Dance opening ceremony, July 1, 2017.

Has this happened in your community? You have a new resident who clearly comes from a different subculture. They're unusual, but that's not a bad thing. Your community decides to give it a whirl because the person is enthusiastic and well-meaning. Within three months, however, they're gone and you say to yourself, "We should have seen that coming. Why did we think that was actually going to work?"

In seven years as a resident and staff member at Lost Valley Education and Event Center (Dexter, Oregon) I've seen many people come and go, and arrived at the view that the bigger the contrast between a community's culture and that of an incoming resident, the more likely the fit won't be good long-term and the person won't stay.

For example, if cigarette smoking is very rare in a community and a new person spends a lot of time at the smoking spot, there is a cultural disparity. That's tame in and of itself, but add a half-dozen other such small variances, and soon you have the picture of someone who may feel like they're in the wrong place, and leave to find the right place. At some point, healthy diversity leads to unhealthy distance.

Here are some recent examples of this phenomenon at Lost Valley:

#1—A couple came from a region known for separatists and gun racks. They were well-matched in some respects, such as being ethical, non-militant vegans. But their residency lasted only a few months, partly because their strong culture of independence chafed under community process and oversight.

#2—Over the winter a new resident moved in with a clear "player" attitude to a community where no one cares about such things. Talk of fancy cars was one indicator of cultural incongruity. In the end his attempt to move straight from Texas capitalism to an ecovillage in Oregon was too big a jump, though made gallantly. A second factor was equally important in this

case, though—communication style. He struggled to be clear and concise, and had a tendency to react defensively to feedback. This particular instance I consider to be partly a mismatch of culture and partly about communication skills, which are necessary in well-functioning community.

A relevant component is how the person *responds* to such subculture divergence. Two recent individuals came to Lost Valley wearing a lot of fragrance. Within a few weeks one was told this was challenging for some individuals around her, and she cut back her use of perfume dramatically, eliminating the rub with apparent smoothness. The other individual responded that his cologne collection was worth \$1000, as if to say its expense validates its use. Their contrasting responses to feedback about cultural disparity was an indication in itself of how well they'd do in the community.

What lesson can be distilled from these experiences? It is helpful if prospective residents get a clear snapshot of the culture of a community they'd be joining *before* diving in, so there are no surprises down the road (or gravel trail, as it may be). Characteristics of a community's culture are rarely stated—being subtle and unofficial—but it's useful to actually write them out. In the case of Lost Valley, I'd say we're into healthy food, personal/spiritual growth, calm communication, natural ecosystems, ecstatic dance, nonconventional education, permaculture, humility, slow pace/process, agreements/rules, sandals, tie-dye, yoga and meditation, and child freedom. In contrast, here are some common elements of mainstream American culture that are not popular at Lost Valley: television, chit-chat, fanaticism about pro/college sports, fashion, fancy possessions, factory-made jewelry, makeup, brand logos, gourmet coffee, generic meat, packaging, guns, sarcasm, and vices of distraction.

Such characteristics of the unofficial culture of a community matter, but even more central are its values. It's possible enough that a well-groomed Type A person will jive well at Lost Valley, but if they don't share the community's high value on transparency or honesty, say, it would be surprising if all goes well. But I won't get further into values match right now—the focus of this piece is culture.

There is even a geographic component to culture jive. Someone coming from nearby can use knowledge of the region's culture as a helpful steppingstone. People moving to Lost Valley

from Eugene (18 miles away) often understand the crunchy culture of the Pacific Northwest, whereas an arrival from Wisconsin or Colorado may succumb to this additional hurdle (as someone did in a recent case).

Of course, culture gap isn't a clear predictor of success in a given community—there is a *correlation* but not necessarily *causation*. The question is about likelihood of success, a general pattern found over many experiences, and thus not a forecaster of whether a *specific* person will fit well in the community long-term. It's similar to how eating a lot of vegetables and getting a lot of cardiovascular exercise correlate with low levels of heart disease. They pan out over a volume of people, but we've probably all heard of a stout relative who "ate bacon and eggs every morning and smoked two packs a day and lived to age 92." So this isn't a formula that can be applied to a given case, but it is helpful for communities as they try to recruit people who are likely to be long-term members, and not just bounce off and have to be replaced.

To show this, here are two examples in which large cultural differences were not a dealbreaker:

#1—RJ came as a student for Lost Valley's three-month Holistic Sustainability Semester. In his 60+ years of living in the Deep South he



Lost Valley Sustainable Living Fair craft tables, April 21, 2018.

Sarah Green



Holistic Sustainability Semester visit to Maitreya Ecovillage, July 10, 2018.

Zoe Frye



Lost Valley Ecstatic Dance evening ceremony, July 1, 2017.

Mike Hedge



Lost Valley Sustainable Living Fair meal circle, April 21, 2018.

Sarah Green



Holistic Sustainability Semester visit to Vistara community, July 10, 2018. RJ is on left.

Zoe Frye

had zero experience in intentional community, he regularly called himself a “rank amateur” in permaculture and just about everything else we do at Lost Valley, and comes off 30 years of straight-laced clinical work. Yet he has panned out swimmingly (as a student and now as a resident), taking it all in stride and happily adapting to a way of life he likes much better than the conventional variety he was previously steeped in.

#2—The longest-running family at Lost Valley moved from the heat and conservative culture of the Central Valley of California. The father Dan—originally from Denmark—is a very entrepreneurial sort and for years supplemented his income with poker winnings. These elements are in contrast to Lost Valley’s general culture, but it has nonetheless been a successful match.

Why is it that RJ, and Dan and family, have worked out well at Lost Valley? I see in both cases a willingness to personally put in effort, a flexibility to adapt to the reality of the community, and being at a point in life where they are truly ready for community.

This last characteristic is in contrast to a recent resident (whom I’ll name Toby) who turned out to be too focused on “me” and not enough on “we.” He initially tried hard to integrate into the community, hustling home from his day job in the city for community dinners. But Toby couldn’t internally sustain this for more than a month or two—once his true colors were seen it was clear he wasn’t ready to share. This was less about cultural difference (he jived with the Lost Valley culture in some ways, and in other ways not) but rather about essential personality

characteristics. Toby showed himself to not be emotionally mature or reasonable, the two core attributes I think every communitarian needs to exhibit; these indeed trump cultural difference as key determiners of good fit. Because he *had* these attributes another recent resident who drove a Porsche and led a jet-setting lifestyle did well at Lost Valley, despite the cultural differences. The present magazine’s theme is culture, though, not maturity, so I’ll return to my main premise.

It’s also worth saying that diversity and healthy heterogeneity are fed by having new folks not be like the existing community members. If the culture jump is nil the community

is nothing more than a herd of clones. So a healthy balance needs to be found in which new blood is somewhere between parallel and perpendicular to the extant culture.

In conclusion, what do we do with this notion, the correlation between small culture gap and long-term gel? I think the best use is to find residents who fit the community’s subculture in enough ways that their transition will be smooth—a step, not a leap. For example, putting out a craigslist ad in an area where the intentional community is a cultural island is not a great idea, while putting up flyers at the closest co-op (or other aligned hub) might be. The more residents who stick, the less work the recruiting/onboarding folks have to do, and the healthier the community is long-term.

Another application of this is simply noticing signs in a given instance, as indicators. At Lost Valley, “We should build a gym here” (real example) or “He’s totally into computer games” may give insight in one direction, while “She’s studying herbalism” or “The pace of city life really gets to me” (recent examples) might show the opposite. Either way, take it with a grain salt, one arrow in your quiver of community discernment, along with feeling out the prospective resident’s communication skills, values match, reasonableness, and maturity. 🐦

Colin Doyle is in charge of programs at Lost Valley Education and Event Center in Dexter, Oregon, where he’s lived in the community (called Meadowsong Ecovillage) since 2010. He is a regular contributor to COMMUNITIES. Favorite activities include intelligent conversation, geography, storage gardening, and exploring the biggest mountains he can find.



Jonathan Brinkley concert on Lost Valley lawn, July 1, 2017.

Mike Hedge

PLANTED IN GOOD SOIL: Cultural Roots and Community

By Julian Washio-Collette

*View from a
private hermitage.*

We tend to think of our age as one of alienation—from one another, from our most authentic selves, from the Earth, and from the deeper spiritual dimensions of our existence. Yet not until my arrival at New Camaldoli Hermitage, a Catholic monastery in the Benedictine tradition located on the coastline of Big Sur, California, did I become aware of another layer of alienation, that of estrangement from cultural roots. In fact, discovering that I even *had* such roots, and that they could be nurtured back to life under the right conditions, came as quite a shock to me. Relatedly, I have learned how vital such deep cultural roots can be in growing flourishing intentional communities that can sustain themselves over many years, and wonder what lessons can be appropriated from this insight by newly forming or recently formed communities today.

Months before my arrival at New Camaldoli Hermitage, I had been a member of the Sirius Eco-village in Shutesbury, Massachusetts, and had hardly given any thought to my nominal Catholic upbringing. Similar to many communitarians, I was originally attracted to Sirius by the motivation to seek the kinds of vital connections I had never really known. I sought a sense of shared purpose, of belonging to a wider cohesive community, a sense of loving rapport with the Earth, and to have all of these connections bound up in a meaningful spiritual vision of life. And, taking into account the usual disappointments and disillusionment that follow the initial enthusiasm of community living, I did experience a deep resonance with the life and vision of Sirius. More than just personal gratification, I felt that I was participating, in my own small way, in a radical revolution of values, helping to build the first green shoots of an emergent culture based on cooperation, care, and the valuing of all life.

And then, abruptly, after two and a half years at Sirius, I began to sense something missing, something I couldn't name at the time but in hindsight recognize, in part, as a longing to connect with cultural roots. Restlessness set in, which prompted me to pack my panniers and embark on a soul-searching bicycle camping tour. It was during this tour that I serendipitously stumbled upon New Camaldoli Hermitage while biking down the California coast.

I remember during my early days at New Camaldoli Hermitage, after participating in prayer with the monks by day, routinely having intensely vivid dreams at night, awash with robed figures floating through arched stone corridors, ethereal chant wafting through the air. I also remember one

evening during this time, while singing a hymn with the monastic community in front of an icon of Mary, the mother of Jesus, being struck with a distinct sense that the culture of New Camaldoli Hermitage was like living inside a poem. In harmony with the whole communal life, I was invited to steep myself in the beauty of this ritual action for its own sake, to savor it and allow it to take root in my mind, heart, and imagination. In this way, I was internalizing the culture of the community in a similar way that someone else might find themselves living inside a favorite poem or poems, living through its symbols, metaphors, and images. Given my Catholic roots from childhood, I felt as if a part of me that had lain largely dormant for years was now pulsating with life and connecting me to a cultural thread that traversed centuries and linked together people of widely diverse times and places. Within all of this, I experienced an utterly surprising sense of homecoming.

Some months after my arrival, I began my formal training as a monk. I was now challenged with taking that initial sense of immersion into monastic culture and tradition and integrating it with a deeper understanding of the communal way of life I was entering. There were similarities here with the introductory training I received at Sirius: I was given material to read,

participated in discussion groups and one-on-one mentoring, and was taught the various practices that constituted the life of the community. At Sirius, among other things, I learned green building methods, the art of gardening in attunement with the land, consensus process, and

era in a post-modern context. Like all monasteries in the Benedictine tradition, the life of New Camaldoli Hermitage is shaped and informed by the sixth century document, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*. This rule was written as a practical and spiritual guide to be followed by small, relatively autonomous communities of monks. Given its historical context and religious basis, much of the content of *The Rule of Saint Benedict* clashes greatly with contemporary sensibilities.

As an example, in Benedict's chapter on humility, he offers this counsel on how a monk ought to handle suffering in the context of obeying the abbot or leader of the monastery: "under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape." Surely, alarm bells must sound in the mind of a contemporary reader here. And indeed we do not approach such texts empty handed but bring to bear our understanding of the dynamics of oppression and privilege, of how

A community rooted in broad, deep cultural connections tends to endure, animated and enriched by participation in a living tradition.

conflict resolution. At New Camaldoli Hermitage, I learned methods of prayer and meditation and was introduced to the history, central texts, and main figures of the monastic tradition. In both communities, of course, my primary training came from participation in the daily round.

One of the primary differences I encountered in my training at New Camaldoli Hermitage, compared to Sirius, was that, at New Camaldoli Hermitage, I had to learn to apply values, customs, and assumptions from a pre-modern

women, people of color, and gender and sexual minorities, among others, have been systematically subjected to "difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions" at the will of others, often enough in the name of religion. How do we appropriate this text, then, without losing sight of the urgent need of so many for social liberation? At the same time, Benedict reminds us of an essential piece of wisdom largely lost to our dominant culture: that much growth and personal liberation comes from learning the art of patient endurance in the face of inescapable suffering. The challenge lies in bringing the best of these perspectives into conversation with one another.

On a personal level, this conversation across centuries has greatly expanded my cultural horizons, making me less quick to judge or dismiss those whose cultural values differ from my own, and more open to discovering wisdom in unexpected places. Given the increasing polarizations and shrill voices talking past one another in our society today, this expansion of horizons to include a plural-



Photos by Kayleigh Myers



Monks and non-monastic residents enjoy a barbecue. Lisa and Julian Washio-Collette are fourth and fifth from the right.

ity of perspectives, especially of those with whom we disagree, seems vitally needed. More deeply, over time, some of the participants in this centuries-long conversation with whom I experience a special affinity come to seem like intimate friends. In fact, I feel such a close connection to one such ancestor-friend, the 14th century hermitess Julian of Norwich, that I took her name as my own when I became a novice monk. Indeed, within the monastic culture of New Camaldoli Hermitage, I experience myself as enfolded within a network of innumerable ancestors.

On a communal level, the fact that Benedictine monasteries are rooted in participation in this wide, broad conversation spanning centuries means that, in terms of structure and culture, each monastic community has a deep stability in something larger on which to build and sustain itself. This contrasts greatly with contemporary intentional communities whose vision and mission are derived from the members immediately involved, and are therefore susceptible to abrupt change with changing membership or conditions. I think of the biblical parable of the seed sown in good soil. This parable compares seeds sown on the roadside, which are quickly eaten up by birds, with seeds sown on rocky soil, which grow up quickly and wither for lack of roots, with seeds sown among weeds, which are choked out by competing interests, with seeds sown in good soil, which yield a healthy, abundant harvest. In my own experience, I have found that returning to my cultural and religious roots has given me a sense of a broad, deep connection with people and history that our dominant culture, obsessed with novelty and focused on the individual, militates against. At the same time, I have discovered that a community rooted in such broad, deep cultural connections tends to endure, animated and enriched by participation in a living tradition.

That said, I do not simply conclude that traditional communities tend to be those planted in good soil. Rather, I think of how a seed draws nutrients from soil, air, water, and sun, which requires spontaneity, adaptability to ever changing conditions, delicate interactions and interrelationships, a living response to the now in all its complexity. I tend to think of the seed sown in good soil, then, as the ideal balance of a community that draws upon deep cultural roots which can inform its structures and common life, while remaining vitally open to fresh insight and creativity in response to the present.

Some years ago, after having taken temporary vows as a monk, I left New Camaldoli Hermitage. Recently, however, I have returned, with my wife. Together, we comprise the resident housekeeping crew, cleaning and maintaining the community's retreat facilities. The fact that we, as a married couple, now live and work in the monastic community is itself a sign of a much larger shift for many traditional religious communities today. Monasteries especially, and other communities that carry forward the

mystical heart of the world's spiritual traditions, are exercising a powerful attraction on a great number of people. Thousands flock to such communities for retreat, to connect with like-minded people, and to receive training and direction. At the same time, the number of women and men who are taking traditional vows of celibacy and lifelong commitment to living in the community tends to be dwindling. This unprecedented combination of circumstances is demanding a creative response to changing conditions from communities that have, in some cases, remained stable for hundreds of years.

My hope is that, in the midst of these changing conditions, both traditional communities—with their deep cultural roots and inherited wisdom—and more contemporary communities—with their spontaneity, creativity, and sensitivity to the present—may increasingly learn from and draw upon one another's strengths. This mutual sharing would truly make for good soil in which to grow vibrant, sustainable intentional communities. 🌱

Julian Washio-Collette is a former monk and current resident housekeeper, with his wife Lisa, at New Camaldoli Hermitage. He has also been a member of Sirius, Cambridge Zen Center, and San Jose Catholic Worker communities. During his theological studies, he toured intentional communities in the United States on a bicycle, exploring the intersection of traditional and newly emerging communities (emergingcommunities.wordpress.com).

The Shaker "Culture of Cleanliness"

By Susan M. Matarese



Photos courtesy of Susan M. Matarese

As the Shakers arrived in the New World in 1774, New England left behind a century of good health—the product of a dispersed population, a cold climate, and its relative commercial isolation—and entered a new century of epidemic disease including smallpox, typhus, and cholera. The latter killed thousands of Americans in the years between 1832–1834 and returned to claim additional lives in 1849 and 1866.

Cholera resulted from the growth of cities, the absence of sanitation infrastructure, and the closer integration of Americans in the trans-Atlantic economy. That the Shakers largely escaped these afflictions, despite having a number of communities with hundreds of members, is a testament to their commitment to a culture of personal and community cleanliness.

In 1874, the Shaker leader Frederick Evans claimed that “the cholera has never yet touched a Shaker village.” This statement was not entirely accurate. In fact, the Harvard community’s North Family suffered an outbreak in 1835. According to the physicians’ journal, there were four cases. Given the fragmentary surviving records of the 19 Shaker villages, it is impossible to say definitively that these were the *only* instances of the spread of the epidemic among the Believers. Nevertheless, existing community journals, letters, and health records uniformly suggest that the Shakers *were* in fact largely spared the ravages of this frightening disease that claimed the lives of so many of their fellow Americans. In an age before the advent of germ theory, it is remarkable to see the extent to which the Shaker preoccupation with cleanliness, and their ingenuity in insuring clean water in their villages, shielded them from an infectious disease that created so much suffering and death in the communities around them.

Practices that initially grew out of their religious beliefs and their efforts as a millennialist sect

to create “Heaven on Earth” in time became inextricably linked with progressive secular prescriptions concerning cleanliness. A review of Shaker publications including journals, letters, daybooks, and manifestos clearly shows that the Believers came to embrace what contemporary historians call “medical environmentalism,” the idea that a clean, well-ventilated environment free of filth and vermin and having access to clean water could contribute to good health.

Explanations of the Shaker culture of cleanliness begin with the life and character of the sect’s founder, Ann Lee, who was born in Manchester, England in 1736. The illiterate daughter of a blacksmith, she was the second of eight children who resided in a crowded house on Toad Lane, an address that itself evokes images of the stagnant water, artificial ponds of raw sewage, and foul air that came to characterize Britain’s cities as the nascent industrial

age gained momentum. Although details of Ann Lee's early life are sparse, we know that she worked first in a cotton factory, then as a fur cutter, and later as a cook in an infirmary, occupations that likely exposed her to the cesspools, dung heaps, and offal that increasingly dotted the Manchester landscape. Thus, it is likely that the circumstances in which she was raised help to explain her preoccupation with cleanliness and order, exhortations that were repeated by her followers long after her death. By her own account, Ann Lee was a "serious" child preoccupied with "the things of God." As a young woman she developed a strong aversion to sexual intercourse and came to equate it with sinfulness and filth. Forced to marry, Ann bore four children, all of whom died. She saw this as punishment for her "depravity" and came to preach against what she called "the filthy works of the flesh." Thus, celibacy was to become a central tenet of the Shaker faith.

A large body of scholarship has explored the complex relationship between "sinfulness," sexuality (including bodily secretions), and fears of defilement in a variety of religious traditions, and the rites of purification that are used to address such contamination. The cleansing, "purifying" effects of water often play a central role in such efforts, a belief illustrated most clearly in the Christian rite of baptism. The followers of Ann Lee embraced her rigorous ethic of purity, a virtue closely associated with their commitment to celibacy but having profound implications for personal and community hygiene as well. Ann Lee is purported to have said, "There is no dirt in heaven!" and the cleanliness and order that so characterized the Shaker communities undoubtedly reflected the intersection of the physical and spiritual realms that marked her life and teachings and that came to define Shaker culture at its core. To be clean outside, both personally and in one's physical habitat, was a metaphor for inner, spiritual purity.

That the Shaker villages stood apart from the population centers of the "World's People," the Shaker term for non-Believers, in their cleanliness and order is indisputable. Many were attracted to the Shakers precisely because of these qualities. Daniel Moseley, who visited the first settlement at Niskeyuna in the early 1780s, wrote: "I was brought up in New England among good farmers, but such neatness and economy as was here displayed in the wilderness I never before saw." Jacques Milbrand, a French naturalist and artist who visited a number of Shaker communities in the 1820s, remarked that "everything looked so spotless as if the walls and even the floor had been varnished." Countless visitors, some of whom were harsh critics of the Shaker faith, commented on the "serene beauty" and "neat-

The Shakers

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, more commonly known as the "Shakers," is one of America's most important and enduring communal societies spanning almost 250 years of American history. The Shakers lived in 19 communal villages ranging from New York and New England to Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. They are an example of America's "religious" utopians, a category that includes groups like the Moravians, the Harmonists, the Zoarites, and the Perfectionists at Oneida among others.

The Shakers sought to achieve "heaven on earth" and attempted to create a kind of Edenic perfection in their communities. This led to some of the most distinctive practices of the group including celibacy, pacifism, communal ownership of property, ecstatic worship, and withdrawal from worldly society.

The Shakers drew their converts from white, working class farmers, artisans, and mechanics. Villages ranged in size from 300-500 Believers at their peak. Each community was composed of multiple "families." Families varied in size, but generally had from 50-150 male and female members. Grouped according to spiritual maturity, each "family" was an autonomous unit with its own leaders, dwellings, workshops, barns, orchards, and gardens. Each Shaker family provided food, clothing, shelter, education, recreation, and religious training for its members.

Leadership of each family rested with two Elders and two Eldresses who heard confessions and meted out discipline for infractions of Shaker rules. A Central Ministry at the Mount Lebanon Community in New York watched over all of the societies. It crafted *The Millennial Laws* that codified the Shaker way of life in minute detail and achieved a remarkable degree of uniformity in societies separated by long distances. Furthermore, an elaborate system of visitation helped to ensure standardized practices throughout the far-flung Shaker federation.

Daily Life

The Shakers lived in large communal dwellings. Brothers and Sisters shared rooms with members of the same sex. Meals were taken communally in spacious dining rooms within each dwelling and all followed a daily regimen that included prayer as well as labor.

Each Shaker had his or her own "lot" or calling. The sisters prepared meals, did the community washing, ironing, sewing, and weaving, tended to poultry, and produced goods for sale including cloth, chair tapes, canned fruits and vegetables, medicinal herbs, and seed packets. Work was generally done in groups and was rotated on a monthly basis.

The Brothers worked about the farm, tending crops and herds of cattle, hogs, and sheep. Some worked in the tannery, others in the mills and shops where they made brooms, buckets, baskets, chairs, tables, cabinets, leather goods, and their famous oval boxes. As in the early monastic communities, the work of the Shakers was consecrated labor, a part of their worship and commitment to God.

Each family kept daily accounts of their activities, recording the cycle of farm chores, animal husbandry, and work in the craft shops that constituted life in a rural Shaker village. Extensive membership lists recorded admissions, defections, deaths, age at death, as well as the cause of death. Artisans and Farm Deacons kept journals recording in minute detail the rhythm of the workday, listing the goods produced, crops picked, and tasks completed. Cooks compiled journals with detailed rules concerning kitchen hygiene, recipes, and lists of the family's "daily fare." Community physicians and nurses carefully recorded accidents and illnesses among members and the ingredients and effectiveness of the herbal remedies they administered.

The Shakers reached their peak population (estimated at close to 4,000) in the 1840s. Although all of the villages survived the Civil War, the Shakers found it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain their membership as the 19th century progressed. In the early 20th century, entire villages closed. Many have been restored and are open to the public. With the death of Frances Carr in January of 2017, there are two remaining Shakers at the Sabbathday Lake Shaker community in New Gloucester, Maine.

—SM

Visitors to Shaker communities often commented on their remarkable cleanliness and order. (Interior of the Centre Family Dwelling, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky.)



ness” of Shaker buildings and the “pleasing,” “ethereal” character of their villages with their well kept roads, fields, orchards, barns, workshops, and enclosures.

Such cleanliness depended on access to water and the Shakers were careful to establish

ducts lined with massive rocks, the water was channeled into pipes that led to dwellings, kitchens, and workshops providing cold, clean, disease-free water for refrigeration, drinking, bathing, fire protection, water closets, mill races, and industrial power. One lake provided the Mt. Lebanon Shakers with ice—considered a luxury for the few in the urban centers of 19th century America. The Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill had the first system of running water in the entire state of Kentucky. Using a horse-powered pump to draw fresh water from a nearby spring

into an elevated tank, it was then gravity-fed through a series of pipes into every kitchen, cellar, and washhouse. According to community records, the Shakers at Groveland, New York bought additional land in order to have access to several springs that would insure “copious amounts of clean water” when they saw that the creek that flowed through parts of the property was tainted with effluence from nearby settlements.

The Shakers were careful to establish communities only in locations where clean, plentiful supplies of water could be found.

communities only in locations where clean, plentiful supplies of water could be found. Water of course was necessary to run the Shaker mills and industries, but just as importantly, it was vital for food preparation, cleaning, bathing, and the laundering of clothes and bed linens, practices that did much to prevent the onset and spread of disease. The waterworks at the Mt. Lebanon Village in New York were especially ingenious. A series of man-made lakes captured the natural spring water from the nearby mountains. Using a system of aqua-

It is important to emphasize that such waterworks provided the Shakers with benefits not found in the homes of much of the “World’s People.” This was especially true of the poor who lived in the worst houses in the most crowded portions of America’s cities. American cities were dirty. In New York, thousands of swine roamed the streets and decaying garbage and stagnant pools of sewage were commonplace. An early 19th century New England physician remarked that only one in five patients bathed or washed their bodies with water in an entire year. The poor lived in tiny, unventilated apartments, often with entire families occupying the same room, while the most miserable and degraded lived in unfinished cellars, their walls a mat of slime, sewage, and moisture after every rain. Rotting garbage, dead animals, and excrement were simply thrown in nearby rivers, the very rivers that most city dwellers depended on for their water supply.

The crisis of waste management that befouled the water in so many population centers in 19th century America provided an ideal environment for the bacterium that causes cholera and led to

the frightening epidemic that swept the United States in 1832-1834 and returned episodically throughout the remainder of the century. Despite 19th century theories that attributed the disease to “miasma,” cholera cannot be transmitted through the air or even through the exchange of most bodily fluids. The ultimate route of transmission is almost invariably the same: an infected person emits the bacteria during one of the violent bouts of diarrhea that are the hallmark of the disease and another person ingests some of this bacteria from hand to mouth or by drinking contaminated water.

Although especially deadly in places of concentrated populations, it is important to note that cholera visited its suffering and death across a wide swath of the United States in the early 1830s. As Charles Rosenberg noted in his seminal work, *The Cholera Years*: “Americans prided themselves on their railroads, canals, and steamboats. Before the end of 1832, cholera was to travel them all. Few communities, however remote, escaped its visits. Hastily dug graves in every state bore witness to the extent of cholera’s wanderings.”

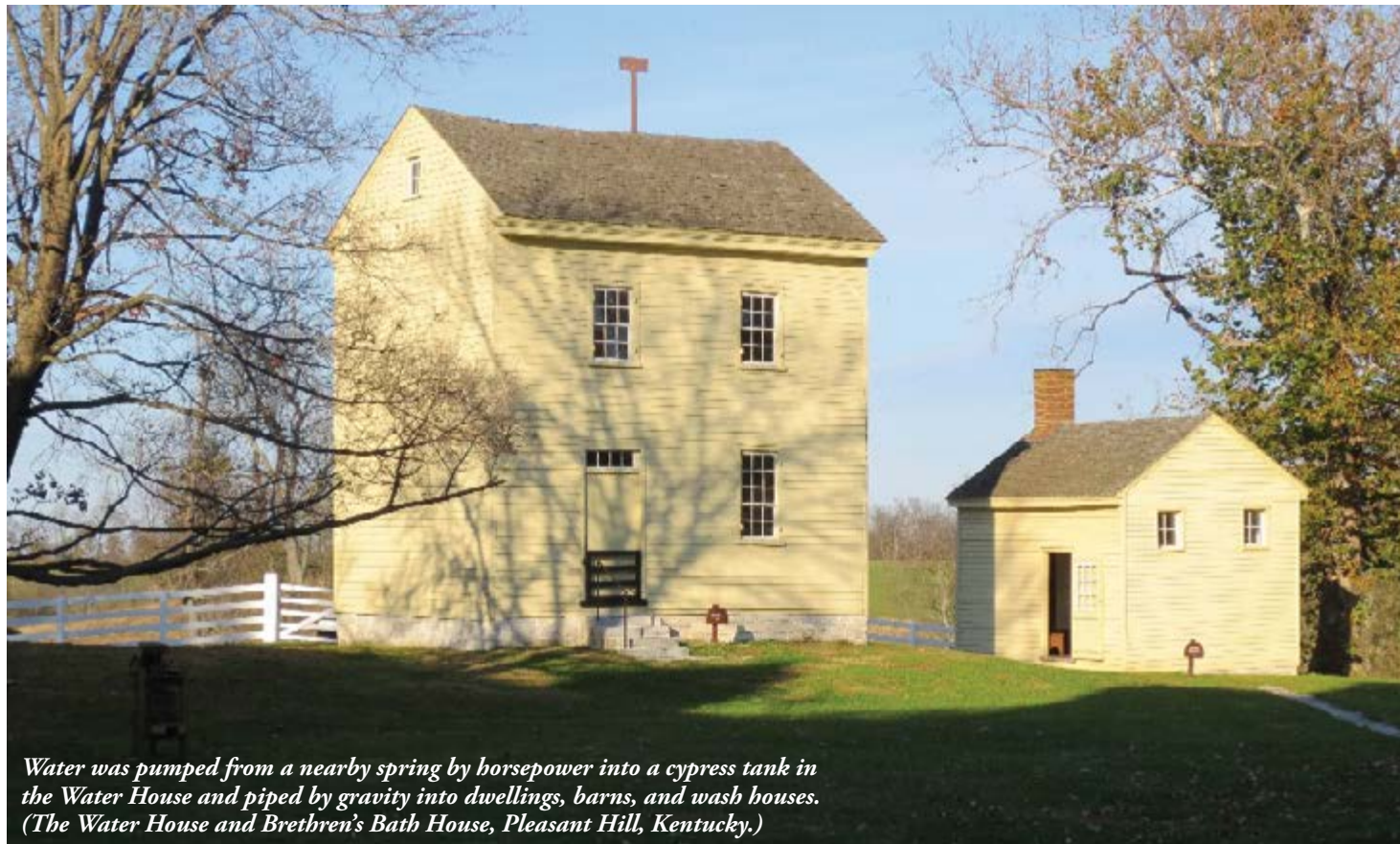
The Shaker “culture of cleanliness” that did so much to spare them the ravages of cholera was clearly delineated in the Millennial Laws, the highly specific guidelines that governed the daily lives of the Believers and brought a degree of uniformity to villages separated by long distances. Created by the Lead Ministry at Mt. Lebanon, New York, the Millennial Laws were periodically revised and updated throughout the Shakers’ long history. Together with the less formalized “best practices” that evolved in their communities through years of experience as builders, farmers, and inventors, the Millennial Laws provided explicit instructions concerning the preparation of food, personal hygiene, the washing, ironing, bluing, and starching of members’ clothes and bed linens, the proper management of drainage, waste, and debris, as well as the disposal of animal carcasses and human excrement. Guided by a theology that blended the physical and the spiritual, the “order of nature” and the “order of grace” into a total vision of purity and order, the Shakers anticipated the broad contours of the public health initiatives that were to be undertaken by their fellow Americans many decades later.

In 1832, Matthew Houston of the North Union community in Ohio wrote that the Shakers there had heard “much alarm about cholera... in Cleveland.” Elder Matthew went on to note

Guided by a theology blending the physical and the spiritual, the Shakers anticipated public health initiatives undertaken many decades later.

that within the North Union community by contrast, “we have enjoyed unusual good health.” He also wrote that he wondered if “right faithful Believers can ever be overtaken by such plagues.” As a faithful Shaker it is perhaps not surprising that Elder Matthew attributed the good health of the Believers to their religious steadfastness and fervor. In retrospect it seems clear that he might have also have thanked their “culture of cleanliness.” Of course for Shakers like Elder Matthew, the two were inseparable. 🐦

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Water was pumped from a nearby spring by horsepower into a cypress tank in the Water House and piped by gravity into dwellings, barns, and wash houses. (The Water House and Brethren's Bath House, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky.)

About That Clothesline...

By Josina Guess



Photos courtesy of Josina Guess

In December 2013, *COMMUNITIES* published an article I wrote called “Putting Our Lives on the Line” (www.ic.org/putting-our-lives-on-the-line). I wrote about the joys and challenges of line drying laundry for my family of six in the intentional community where I lived. I felt good about the piece and shared it with friends and family. I was amazed when the editor wrote me to say that a writer for the *Scientific American* blog cited my article in a piece about environmentally sustainable practices (blogs.scientificamerican.com/plugged-in/energy-and-community-lets-meet-at-the-clothes-line). I got word recently that it is being included in a new book, *Sustainability in Community: Resources and Stories about Creating Eco-Resilience in Intentional Community* (www.ic.org/community-bookstore/product/sustainability-in-community). (Yay, another step toward becoming a bona fide legit writer!) This book is one of a four-volume series on intentional communities, *Wisdom of Communities* (ic.org/wisdom). But here’s the catch, the addendum to my piece: In December 2017 I moved half a mile away from the intentional community where I lived when I wrote the piece, and I own a dryer now (but I hardly ever use it).

My love affair with line drying may have started to wane when I visited a friend on a rainy day in 2015 and brought a load of wet laundry with me. She’s a college professor, poet, and mom who was happy to share her dryer with me. I popped my clothes in to dry and realized, as we drank coffee and talked, that I wanted more choices than my current life offered. When I got home that night I wrote in my journal, “So is a basket of warm and fluffy clothes going to be the lure that finally pulls me out of intentional community?”

Then my mother-in-law moved to town in 2016. She watched me scrambling from one incomplete project to the next. She watched my children as I jumped from meeting to meeting. And she watched me haul baskets of laundry in and out of my house. “Crumb [that’s as close

as she gets to cursing], Josina, when do you ever find time to write?” I told her that I wrote on the occasional mornings when I would wake up naturally at 4:00 or 5:00 or sometimes at night when the kids are in bed. She is a classical violinist who knows from experience that raw talent can be refined through discipline and routine. She asked me how many hours a week I spent hanging and folding laundry. I guessed at least three. “Here’s what I’d like to do for you,” she said. “I’ll do your laundry but only if you use that extra time to write.”

So, she did my laundry, for a year, and I found my life falling a little more into balance. I also felt like the biggest hypocrite, imposter-fake-earthly-mama in the world. Here I was playing the role of the happy communitarian who—wait for it—actually, wore clothes that went through a dryer! It was like the year in junior high school where I tried to be a complete vegetarian, even tried to talk my friends into it, but, when I got home from school, I heated up a hamburger and ate it alone in my bedroom. I was eating my words, slowly and privately, unable to publicly admit to the internal conflict I felt between my ideals and my practices. I felt a growing strain in my relationships within my community because I knew that I could not rely on my mother-in-law’s generosity forever. I would have to choose to accept line drying for the rest of my life or move.

I also felt this amazing outpouring of grace. Every day that I dropped off laundry I felt like we were doing important redemptive work. Historically, when a woman of color appears with a full laundry basket at the door of an older white woman, the clothes are washed, dried, ironed, and folded by the brown hands. I appeared with baskets of unsorted dirty clothes and she returned them to my doorstep oftentimes better than I left them. Missing buttons were sowed back, rips were mended, and there would be little yellow sticky notes of apology for not being able to get out a stain. I didn’t use a full three hours each week, but I

started to prioritize writing time and produce work that felt tighter and stronger than when I was writing haphazardly. I felt a little embarrassed and completely undeserving of my own personal Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle (Beatrix Potter's laundry-doing hedgehog). Almost every week I would say, "You don't have to do this for us, really I can manage." And she would assure me that she didn't have that much to do with her day and that it made her happy.

It made her happy. As the years rolled by (and as I fought multiple rounds of super lice on my kids' heads—we'll save that for another story) I began to resent that I did not have the option of a clothes dryer. I realized that I felt happier knowing that I have choices. I realized that if I had to choose between two uninterrupted hours of writing or two hours of winter line drying, I would choose chilly fingers on a keyboard over chilly fingers gripping clothespins. I wanted my children to remember and see me happy with my choices.

I'm not going to be able to trace every thread that led to my family's decision to move, but one of the factors was, indeed, my desire for the choice to use a clothes dryer—a choice that our community had decided, long before we moved there, would not be an option. There is this tragic scene in the movie *Ray* in which Ray's little brother drowns while his mom was at the clothesline. Ray Charles' heroin addiction was an attempt to bury that haunting memory. I think constantly about women who had and have very little choices in their lives and the tragic consequences that can emerge when women and children are drowning in poverty. Hanging line after line in the Georgia sunshine I felt this enormous tension between the pleasure and privilege I had to slow down and hang my clothes on a line and the desire for time to join my voice with others in the ongoing fight for justice and equality. It doesn't have to be either/or, but for me and my family to thrive, I knew that we needed something as simple as how we did our laundry to feel like a complete and voluntary choice.

We bought our dryer on a rainy day in December, one week after we

moved into the old farmhouse where we live now. My husband and I went to the used appliance shop in the next town over and picked out a simple model for \$125. It has been over a month at this time of writing, and I have used the dryer about four times. We have a drying rack in the kitchen and a clothesline out back which we use on a regular basis. I still love that time of birdsong, breeze, and sunshine. I don't regret any of what I wrote or practiced over the past six and a half years. I moved only half a mile away because I still value and I am very connected to the community that helped to form me and my family. We still want to be good stewards of our resources. But I needed to be happy, free of resentment, and joyful in our choices. We are still intentional about nurturing healthy relationships to the earth and the people around us, and, sometimes, that means we choose to use a clothes dryer.

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So, if you've read this far, I'm curious:

When have you had to eat your words—have you written or proclaimed something that needs an addendum?

Have the things that were important to you four years ago changed?

How do you live with the gap between righteous ideals and flawed practice?

Have you ever tried to hide your choices from the people you love when your values and practices diverge?

Have you ever chosen to distance yourself from a community so that you can strengthen those relationships and live more authentically?

And of course, how do you dry your laundry and why? 🍷

Josina Guess, "mother of four, follower of Jesus, lover of beauty," posted a version of this article on January 26, 2018 at her blog site, Josina's Kitchen Table: josinaskitchentable.blogspot.com/2018/01/about-that-clothesline.html. Please contact her there or at josinaguess@gmail.com.

1. Editor's Note: to be clear, unlike the author's former community, many intentional communities—likely most of them—do allow the use of clothes dryers.



MY UNINTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

By Sheryl Grassie



We can live without religion and meditation, but we cannot survive without human affection.
—The Dalai Lama

I am a person who likes to live in relation to others, in proximity, in connection, in community. Over the years I have investigated cohousing and Camphill communities, but the fit was never right. I continually acquiesced to mainstream life in a single family home in an urban neighborhood. I live in the City of Lakes, Minneapolis, Minnesota. While I was raising my three children life was busy, and a certain fragmented sense of community naturally developed around their needs, their school functions, their recreational activities; their lives. But I longed for more, something more cohesive, more committed, more intentional.

When my last child went off to college, I decided to move and downsize. I thought maybe a condo would offer a sense of community, but I had two big dogs and needed a yard. I started dreaming of a condo with a yard, a party room, cooperative meals, and people with whom I could form community. I ended up buying a much smaller single family home four blocks from where I'd raised my children. Not the big leap into intentional community I was longing for.

However, I was soon surprised by the way my intentions began to manifest in the form of an unintentional community. My move netted more than just a new house on a new block; my new single family home, small, much like a condo with a yard, came with a neighborhood gathering place and a strongly established unintentional community. "The Garage" as it's called, was to become my dreamed-of party room, complete with co-op meals, established rituals, people with whom I could connect, and the interdependency of a community.

Maybe a little history on The Garage is a good place to start. The Andersons raised two boys in a modest two-story Tudor in southwest

Minneapolis. The boys grew up and moved away, and the parents aged. The father died, and the mother became ill, and the oldest son, Jimmy, moved home to care for her. Jimmy was a social fellow and needed somewhere to entertain that was not in the house, so he turned the two-car garage into a sports bar. Friends and neighbors pitched in. A family friend built a large slate bar with requisite height stools that seat 10 to 14. Someone donated a wood-burning stove for winters. A refrigerator, a pizza oven, side tables, cupboards, an easy chair, and two large-screen TVs arrived. Food and beverages began to stockpile along with drinkware, dishes, silverware, and serving bowls. Iconically present in the center of the bar was placed a large refillable container of dog treats, because dogs are more than welcome at The Garage.

The Garage is open to anyone. It isn't locked and there is no cost. You can stop by after work for a beer, or use it as a place to entertain your friends or coworkers, literally throw a party. By the time I arrived on the scene there was a fairly well established set of rituals taking place in The Garage. There are co-op dinners, parties for birthdays, holidays, and sporting events, work days for cleaning, wood chopping, gardening, and the informal hub of everyday. The Garage acts as a place to get your news, find needed help, connect with others, and discuss current events, politics, and sports. There is a key box on the wall that contains keys to many neighbors' homes. I can call a neighbor if I work late and they can retrieve my key from The Garage and let my dogs out. There is a high degree of trust and safety; we look out for each other, protect each other, and like a good therapist's office maintain each other's privacy. A metal sign on the wall declares WHAT HAPPENS IN THE GARAGE STAYS IN THE GARAGE. There is no gossip, no worry that if you

disclose something in The Garage it will become public news. This is like a family that works to love and trust and support each other. The feelings are deep and authentic.

There are no formal rules or mandates around life in The Garage. “Come as you are and have a good time,” might say it best. There is an emphasis on being genuine. As the “charismatic founder,” Jimmy set a tone of unconditional acceptance and welcome, and he was (because he died last year), without a doubt, one of the kindest, most giving people I have ever met. His example inspired others and if there is any creed that this unintentional community operates by, it is to emulate his goodness and practice a real version of “Minnesota Nice.”

The demographics of a community can vary greatly and are often enhanced by diversity. Our community is both homogeneous (racially) and heterogeneous when it comes to things like education level, socioeconomic status, or family configurations. Our Garage, sometimes called the “Alley Bar,” has a wide variety of people representing a wide variety of beliefs and professions. There are attorneys, doctors, academics, a postal worker, a museum curator, a pilot, a special ed teacher, a limo driver, a sports team manager, a priest, a musician, to name a few. Physically our block ranges from small two-bedroom homes built in the 1920s to large new construction “monster houses” that swell to capacity on their lots. Where commonality does dwell among us is in our mostly liberal orientations. We recycle and compost, shop at the local co-op, and strive for healthy practices. We vote predominately left, and are highly egalitarian.

Where did the people in The Garage community come from? Are they all neighbors? Jimmy originally invited some neighbors who live on the block and some in the greater community. Friends told friends and people found their way. Some nights there is a close inner circle of six to eight people, other times a dinner gathering of 12 to 14 and for bigger occasions 30 to 50 people might show up. There are enough regulars that multiple people have the same name and nicknames are required. There is Postal George, Alaska George, and Viking George. Mini-Cooper Jon, John Anderson, and Motown Johnny. Mary Olson and Geo’s Mary; the list goes on.

Some evenings we stay inside The Garage with the garage door up and the protective mosquito netting in place to enjoy the weather. Other nights we expand into the yard and enjoy an outdoor fire. Winters are a haven from the snow and cold in the overly warm quarters of the

woodstove-heated enclosure.

Without fail all these evenings include food and drink. Someone will make a simple salad and someone else will spring for a pizza. More often there is a multi-coursed potluck and the food can be spectacular! There are a lot of gardeners and gourmet cooks in the neighborhood. Tandoori chicken, Georgian stew, smoked tenderloin, and corned beef and cabbage; salads and veggies, homemade pies and baked goods, soups and pastas, casseroles and cookies—people have their niches. I am known as “Salad Girl” as I love making salads and almost always bring one. Other people have developed a specialty with grilling or baking. We do some loose coordination via email in advance. Someone will start the ball rolling. Mary and Tom will email, “We are roasting two chickens, dinner at 7:00 p.m.” Others will follow suit with, “I’ll bring a kale salad,” “I’ve got a new batch of pickles,” “I’ll pick up some corn,” “I’ll make a pie.” If someone happens by with nothing, that works too. And sometimes that is just what you need after a long day at work, the ability to just bring nothing and be supported by community with a lovely meal.

In general, connection and support are what communities provide. My unintentional community is a place where I am supported and can get my needs met: the need for help with a project, the need for someone to listen, the need for someone to track me, and check in with me, and nurture me, and laugh with me, and care, and a place where I can do that for others. Community vastly improves the overall quality of life for those who participate in it. Whether you engage with conscious intention to form community or serendipitously happen into it, community is essential to good health and happiness. Henry Emmons, M.D., author of *The Chemistry of Joy*, says that of the four major factors affecting health—diet, exercise, mental situation, and social connection—social connection is the most important. I agree with Dr. Emmons and feel incredibly blessed that seven years ago I chose a new home that came with community. 🐣

Sheryl R. Grassie, Ed.D. has maintained a private writing practice since 1997. She has taught writing and research at the graduate level and enjoys working with both authors and students on academic and nonfiction projects. She has authored, ghostwritten, and/or edited numerous books and articles related to a variety of topics. She resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota where she is the mother of three children, and an avocational potter.



Photos courtesy of Sheryl Grassie

Bringing a Little Fairy Dust to Corporate America

By Allie Stafford

I work in a corporate setting—a sea of cubicles neatly arranged, with the temperature kept low enough to ensure that no one is comfortable. It's a place where what passes for company culture is a bulletin board filled with ancient comics that never were funny. Where your boss's motto—"Be the hope"—is about as inspiring as a lap full of hot coffee.

It is hard to forge friendships in this sterile environment. But there are always opportunities to cultivate community if you make it a priority. Let me tell you about a wanderer I once met, who called herself a fairy and made a home in each new situation and moment. Her name was Moonflower.

I was 25 years old and on a solo vacation in an entirely new place. It was July, and I was in Portland, Oregon on my first trip to the Northwest. It felt very far away from the predictable pace, culture, and summer humidity of my home down South. I had no preconceptions or expectations of my trip, so when I met a gregarious stranger with loose plans, I was game to join her for a day of unexpected adventures.

I'm walking down the sidewalk, when I pass a tall, androgynous person with long dreadlocks and a tan ball cap. She catches up to me. "Hi, I'm Moonflower! Well, that's my chosen name." She has a large backpack, and is situating some pants on herself, which have a huge rip in the seat.

Her energy is friendly, positive, and restless. She seems to trust me, so I trust her back. Moonflower begins explaining her life philosophy to me. She's a nomad, because she yearns to be free from society's definitions of success and stability. She would sooner cut her dreads off and eat them for dinner than be confined to 40+ hours per week in a cubicle.

The street is lined with large and mid-size historic homes accented by quirky accessories such as old boots given new life as planters. Digging a little deeper, I ask Moonflower if there's anything she doesn't like about living on the go. "Traveling all the time kind of goes against my dharma," she explains. "I'm a people-person, but it's hard to stay friends with people when you don't have anywhere to invite them over to." She motions toward a big house for sale on a corner lot, and daydreams about owning it and having a bunch of friends live there. "I wish I had a place I could invite my friends over for dinner."

I commiserate with her about the fact that money dictates options. I see why she speaks to everyone she encounters as if she's known them for years. In lieu of having a community grounded by place, Moonflower was continually creating community by breaking down the walls we imagine between ourselves and strangers. Does it serve us to pretend that we are so disparate from each other? If Moonflower had a song to sing, she let it out right then and there: on a crowded bus, in a rustic gazebo, on a street corner, or in a head shop. The climax of the day was when a man offered us acid from a vial stored at his crotch. While I politely declined, Moonflower, ever the receptive, seized the opportunity to enhance her personal journey.

Friendships are deepened by thoughtfulness. But Moonflower also showed me that kindness isn't reserved only for friends. It can be shown in secret, to a total stranger, expecting nothing in return. In our last minutes together, we were walking to a bus stop when we passed a small strawberry patch to our left. It was on private property, but Moonflower stooped to pull a few weeds out of the garden. She explained to me, "Sometimes I'm sneaky. I pull weeds or do little nice things when I'm walking around. I'm like a fairy." And then I said goodbye to Moonflower, the anarchic fairy of kindness, and caught my bus back.

It's been eight years since I parted ways with Moonflower. In that time my life has changed a lot. I got married, co-bought a house, lost my job, loved and lost precious fur-babies, and gained new ones. As I've begun a reluctant new adventure into the corporate world, I am confronting the barriers to building community that the capitalist corporate setting presents.

Here in this place, walls between strangers are not only imagined; the separation achieved by cubicles serves as the fundamental and defining design feature of the space. Even getting comfortable in your location is discouraged. You can be moved at any time, for any reason. Hierarchical power structures serve to undermine workers' personal agency by constricting their time and sense of self. Your worth is quantified and stratified. In this challenging environment, how can we subvert these barriers and build a way that's more beautiful?

Food, of course. Food has always been a powerful focus for gatherings of families, friends, and strangers. The basic act of eating is primal and universal. Sharing a meal is one of humanity's oldest ways of building and nurturing community. During our day together, Moonflower and I shared many deli-

cious, carb-filled snacks. One way that my coworkers have encouraged community among us is by holding a small potluck in an empty cubicle once a month. We don't seek departmental approval. We don't invite the managers. We just divvy up a simple menu, haul in a few crockpots, and treat each other with deserved hospitality.

Another way to deepen bonds is by developing your own rituals and traditions. I often take a walk with an older coworker during our break, and we use the time to get some fresh air in the lush grounds outside, no matter how hot and humid it is. We enjoy checking on the corporate garden to see how the tomatoes, peppers, and watermelon are growing. (Everything always needs watering.) Our fellow coworkers take their morning break to grab breakfast together in the cafeteria. They use this time to catch up, joke, and check in about their day.

True community happens when you know you matter. In the workplace, the reality is you don't pick your social context. Your coworkers may have different interests, values, and backgrounds. You may live in far-flung parts of surrounding counties. The community is more incidental than it is intentional. In an age where people are cloistered in their own corners of social media, running in the same social circles, the incidental community of the workplace represents a worthy challenge to connect with each other, despite our differences and difficulties, as an act of subversion.

Supporting each other in these deeper ways can mean the simplest of things: throwing a rogue potluck, pulling a few weeds, truly listening, taking the time. Moonflower taught me that, if there is a desire common to all, it is the need to feel free, but safe. Unbound, but grounded. Cultivating community in the monotonous setting of the corporate grind takes true intentionality. Even in difficult spaces, indeed especially in difficult spaces, it is worth the effort to remind ourselves that we are human and connected. 🌱

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Allie Stafford

Musings on the Culture of Connection

By Joan McVilly

My working definition of a good and worthwhile life is one that answers the quest for quality of three “p”s—people, place, purpose. To that end, I have lived in various intentional communities based on ideological and/or written understandings for over 40 years. They have all offered possibilities for change and indeed, have all formed because of a perceived need for change.

I saw, and see so much need for change in our society. And most of all I see change that I can make in my choices, in my attitude, in my behaviour. This by no means diminishes the crying need for large-scale structural change. The imperative for change has been an underlying purpose during most of my life and substantially why I have chosen to live in intentional communities.

Are these internal and external changes all that is called for by intentional community living and is it through culture that they are promoted?

Or is culture more broad, not necessarily carrying a social change agenda? What’s the dictionary definition of culture? I find “The attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group” on my computer dictionary. If our “particular social group” is “intentional community,” culture is simply how we define ourselves. I guess this is what this magazine issue is about!

I have found the most ambitious, difficult, and worthy pursuit to be *connection*—connection to where I am on the planet and with others in face-to-face encounter. And in those intentional communities that I’ve heard about, that I’ve read about, and indeed been part of, it’s what I see as the most definitive aspect. Of course, we all handle it differently and with greater or less success.

My most recent, seven-year experience in a small intentional community in Queensland, Australia has been most rewarding in this regard. One constant struggle has been to walk that fine line of accommodation and compromise—for instance, between those who love meetings, those who hate meetings, and those who recognise the need for them. Various I have experienced that struggle as totally personal and within me, or for, or with other individuals!

Another is how to fairly share the work of maintaining not only the shared property maintenance and improvement but also the shared administration and shared logistics of a shared kitchen. And all of this depends on shared decision making! Necessary to all of this is our often needed and often revisited conflict resolution methodology.

This will not be news, to a greater or lesser extent, to anyone who has lived in intentional community. Does this describe culture?

The need for face-to-face connection with the other is real, vital, and often unsupported in the non-intentional community. Connection itself is perhaps the strongest positive aspect of the culture of intentional communities. It can be encouraged in plenty of ways by agreed-upon eating arrangements, working bees, design of living space so interactions happen by chance, scheduled meetings, other communally decided and shared activities. And all of this can be “legislated” and written down.

Is “writing down” necessary to the culture of intentional community?

What I’ve experienced in Canberra through my sister Fiona’s community is of a different kind. It’s a different sort of intentional community from the one in which I have lived for the past many years. It’s an intentional community formed through the intention of the people who live in proximity to each other to support and create connection.

It has no written rules that I know of, doesn’t have a complex structure, is simply people with overlapping interests seeking to be aware and kind. In this community I’ve experienced touching kindness and inclusion, deep caring and sharing, wise boundaries and honest feedback. It’s the heart of what I treasure about my experience of intentional community culture.

The lack of any documentation that I know of is not to say that it’s not intentional! As was pointed out to me by Sue, a longstanding member of this community, it wouldn’t exist without intentionality. What she spoke of first was the ongoing and constant need to establish and maintain connection.

She spoke ruefully of a neighbour of many years with whom she had only had a “waving” relationship—that is until the neighbour got a little dog, a starting point. “Now we have conversations, somewhat limited maybe, but more than waving!”

This is more than a random street community, though. The community exists as a web throughout Canberra and has been created over 30 years through daily living. The business of caring for children was apparently the instigator of connection on this street, with five or six households formalising a weekly playgroup in their back yards. Gradually other shared arrangements eventuat-

ed. A particular choice of school brought more into the group. A shared trailer still exists that is available to those in the community when needed. The proverbial popping in for a cup of flour—or coffee—becomes quite possible. The trials and tribulations of daily life can certainly be experienced as in the now all-too-common isolated suburban manner, but not for unbearably long.

Fiona and husband Réналд’s professional and social lives exist in theatre, arts therapy, book group, gardening, academia, shared celebrations, and simple friendship, all of which have extended and given ballast to their place in this kind and caring community.

Sue muses further. “Your article raises many interesting ideas. [My husband] Ray and I have often spoken about community and its development and maintenance. He remembers a close rural community based on geography, familial relationships, religion, and shared experience—one which seemed to a boy to ‘just exist’ and be constant. And to a certain extent that would have been accurate, and seems to still be when we visit his home town. I, on the other hand, from my experience, believe that community requires care and attention to maintain its existence—that would perhaps be the ‘intentional’ community? And it seems to me that such a community can be based or conceived upon geography (such as our neigh-



Author Joan McVilly.

Marven Ford

bourhood), shared interests (I'm thinking here of Ray's folk music community which is scattered across the country or of Réналd and Fiona's arts communities), shared ideals (the Orana [school] community) but the strengthening of these ties and their continuity does indeed require intentionality and commitment. Around the time of Réналd's dying many of his and Fiona's communities came together to support the family but as that time has passed, those communities will again most likely separate as there is no need or intent and therefore no commitment to remain as one community. That speaks to the ebb and flow of communities as they serve the purposes of those involved."

It seems that this intentional community depends more on the desire of individuals to have community than words to which they intellectually subscribe. Feeling excluded and perceiving conflict are aspects of living that are prominent where it's possible to retreat from trouble if one wants to—an easy option, for instance, in non-intentional suburban community.

The intentional community I'm describing has no apparent mechanisms for inclusion or conflict resolution. I haven't witnessed exclusion here, although I have seen active inclusion, haven't seen conflict or active mediation of conflict, but have seen awkward relationships discussed positively, seeking movement forward.

My interest in what I've seen of this community as an intentional one was piqued when I heard of this magazine's call for articles about "the culture of intentional community."

When Réналd died in May I spent a week in Canberra. Since his cancer diagnosis in 2010 I have more and more noticed the strength of the community of which he has been a part. My experience recently was fittingly that the centre of the web was around my sister's and her close friends' homes. What I experienced was naturally not an ordinary time in the life of the community. And yet there was an underlying flavour here that was sweet, not saccharin, with genuine tenderness and love.

I felt that something very true to the culture of intentional community was shown through the shared heart of the many people I met during that week. It speaks to my belief that intentional community is first and foremost about us being able to live together, without damaging each other. Our success in this ultimately depends on how much we are willing to communicate with each other, to build relationships, to be vulnerable to each other, to connect with each other. This is perhaps the most difficult requirement of living in any community and those of us who cannot bear it probably will not choose to live in any intentional community for much time.

The boundaries of this community in suburban Canberra are permeable and defined loosely through shared beliefs and diffuse although somewhat contained geography (roughly, the Australian Capital Territory). If I follow my understanding stated above then this community is truly an intentional one, where shared connection, deliberate and aware, at the time of the most extreme vulnerability was poignantly evident.

In my life thus far I have been fortunate to have found that for myself. Now I'm humbled

to have taken part in a significant moment in this intentional community's life, way beyond the expected participation in my brother-in-law's funeral.

When I consider the culture of intentional community I find no contradiction with the culture I have found in the Canberra community that I've described. I'm finding that the boundaries of intentional community can be soft or hard, and anywhere in between, and I don't want to see intentional exclusion because of an intellectual definition of the culture of intentional community.

I'm writing this at a time of personal reflection, having taken a sabbatical from residence at my community. My stated working definition for a good life of the three "p"s—people, place, purpose—remains true for me. It's clear to me that my life is something that ebbs and flows. It can't be bound by rules or laws even though these may give a framework. The meaningful and kind connection with people, the earthed connection with place, and honest personal reflection and action remain bedrock for me. I know that I will seek the culture of intentional community wherever I am.

I look forward to reading other people's takes on this topic! 🐦

Joan McVilly lives in South East Queensland, Australia and her abiding interest is in community—small "c"—and what makes it. Over four decades she has explored this through direct environmental action, membership in a religious group, an environmental education centre, and most recently Intentional Community. She can be reached at joan.mcvilly@gmail.com.



Ian McVilly

Community gathers to celebrate Fiona's (centre) birthday. Réналd on her right (second from left), Sue second row far left.



Fiona, Réналd, Joan, Sue.

Fiona Croft



Fiona Croft

Skill Building for a Culture of Collaboration

By Joe Cole

Finding the Right Path

At their monthly community meeting, Mountain Laurel Cohousing wishes to make a consensus decision about what kind of central path to build in their community. The path will connect parking areas with the homes and the common house, and will be the last major infrastructure project to be completed in the neighborhood.

To begin the meeting, the Building and Planning Committee presents information on different possible materials for the path, along with various bids provided by local contractors. Then the facilitator asks for questions and reactions from the group.

“Could you explain the different types of gravel and how much they cost?” asks Fred.

“Gravel is really difficult for wheelchairs, and some people can’t walk well on it,” says Barney. “Asphalt is a simple solution and will last for a long time.”

“I like what we currently have—a plain dirt path,” says Wilma. “We’d save money if we stick with what we’ve got.”

“Right now the path gets muddy when it rains,” says Pete, “and I’m tired of tracking mud into the house. We need to make a decision and get this built as soon as possible.”

“Does this expense fit into our construction budget,” asks Luisa, “or our annual budget?”

Betty raises her hand. “I’m strongly opposed to asphalt. I think we need a more environmentally-friendly solution.”

“Why are the estimates on labor so high with one contractor and so low with the other?” asks Felicity.

“I’m not sure we can trust that contractor who lives down the road, I’ve heard some bad things about him,” adds Sam.

“Why didn’t any of the proposals suggest permeable pavement as a solution?” asks Martha.

In this brief go-round, community members raised questions of content and questions of value, and some members also began advocating for particular outcomes. Community values like Affordability, Sustainability, and Accessibility are in the mix, alongside technical and factual questions about budget, path materials, and trustworthiness of contractors.

From this point in the discussion, how can the community proceed toward a consensus decision? What collaborative skills are essential for the group to have an efficient and productive decision-making experience that leads to positive, tangible results for the community?

Physical Infrastructure and Cultural Infrastructure

In the story above, Mountain Laurel Cohousing (MLC) is attempting to make a decision on an element of the community’s physical infrastructure. Because they are a community who has chosen to govern themselves using collaborative processes (like consensus or sociocracy), they must rely on their cooperative skills and their interpersonal bonds in order to reach a good solution. In other words, they must rely on what I call their “Cultural Infrastructure” to make a good decision about their Physical Infrastructure.

Across my experiences in planning two intentional communities, living in one, and working as a facilitator and consultant for many more, I’ve noticed that forming communities often put the most time, energy, and attention into the Physical Infrastructure of the community—the land, the homes, the common house, the roads, and other shared infrastructure.

This makes a lot of sense, right? Most communitarians are hoping for a great place to live and wonderful resources to share, and it’s a big challenge to finance and build all of this, so of course it deserves a lot of attention.

However, I believe that Cultural Infrastructure—shared values, governance system, social connections, leadership framework, conflict tools, power distribu-

tion, communication styles, community bonds—is just as important, though often neglected. Every human group has a Cultural Infrastructure, though we may not be consciously aware of what it is or how it functions, especially when we are members of the mainstream or dominant groups in a society or institution. (For example, as a white male in the United States, I can be blind to how this culture tends to welcome people like me into leadership positions while excluding women and people of color.)

Many of us seek community for the quality of human connections as well as the opportunity to create collaborative and sustainable models of human life. We want to create healthy, just, and sustainable communities that provide alternatives to cultures based on domination and exploitation. In order to succeed, we all need to develop competent-to-great skills in communication and collaboration. And yet, in spite of our idealism, many of us are working at a skill deficit in these areas simply because we’ve been raised in competitive, hierarchical, and aggressive cultures and institutions. While we can hire green builders to construct our sustainable homes, we ourselves are ultimately responsible for the

Forming communities often put the most time, energy, and attention into Physical Infrastructure. Cultural Infrastructure is just as important, though often neglected.

quality of our community relationships and the depth of cooperation we achieve in collaborative groups.

That's why I advocate that communities spend much more time and energy on cultivating collaborative skills and building a strong and cooperative "Cultural Infrastructure."

So, what helps us shift from a Culture of Competition to a Culture of Collaboration? Communities need a clear, cooperative decision-making process, a commitment to address conflict, and ongoing support for members in developing collaborative skills.

Having a Clear, Staged Decision-Making Process

First order of business: having a clear decision-making process and the group discipline to follow it. In a collaborative decision-making process, whether consensus or sociocracy, it's essential to have clear steps for moving towards proposals and decisions. In the MLC example, the discussion is chaotic in part because people are attempting to do multiple tasks simultaneously: ask factual questions, express personal feelings, explore the meaning of community values, and advocate for specific solutions. All of these actions are valid, but they cannot be handled productively at the same time. It's important to separate these tasks and address them one step at a time. Planning the focus of each conversation is the job of the agenda setters and the facilitators, but each member of the group should have awareness of where the group is in the larger process and the self-discipline to offer only what is needed in the current stage of the conversation.

One of the common pitfalls in cooperative groups is starting the discussion with a proposal. Instead of beginning with the proposal (unless there is an urgent or emergency situation), collaborative groups must first take time to introduce the problem and the topic, address questions of clarification, clear the air of emotional charge as well as they can, identify underlying concerns and values, and then together create a set of criteria and factors that can guide proposal-formation. Once that set

of factors for guiding proposals has been created, then the whole group may empower an ad hoc group or a subcommittee to craft a proposal using the criteria established and approved by the larger group. A good proposal will balance the criteria, honor the parameters, and address the concerns raised by the group.

One good model is the Six-Step Consensus Process Model that Laird Schaub has developed:

1. Initial presentation of the issue
2. Questions
 - a. Clear the Air
3. Discussion
 - a. Brainstorming criteria
 - b. Values connection
 - c. Prioritizing
4. Proposal Forming
5. Decision
6. Implementation details

There are many nuances here that deserve more detailed discussion than I have time for in this essay. Whatever model your group adopts, be mindful that it is crucial to have a well-structured decision-making process that does not begin with proposals, and further that group members are conscious of where they are in the process at each step along the way so that they can contribute effectively and productively to a strong community decision.

Conflict Tools

After living in a cohousing community for a few years, I felt a need to develop my own skills in collaborative governance, and I began a two-year training program in facilitation. One of the main insights I learned from that facilitation training—which included visiting and working with several intentional communities around the Southeast—was how essential it is for communities to have agreements and tools for working



Joe Cole

A meeting of Hart's Mill Ecovillage members, 2018. Healthy cooperative groups develop strong personal bonds and collaborative skills.

Figure 1



Figure 3



on conflict and addressing emotional energy.

My home community had no such agreements, so I set to work with our facilitation team to shepherd a discussion on this issue at one of our monthly community meetings. Given the amount of tension and conflict that we had already experienced in a few short years, I expected that my neighbors would see the importance of having conflict resolution policies, and that we could begin crafting a proposal to adopt tools to help us navigate conflict and emotional energy during meetings and in our daily life together. However, after the facilitation team introduced the topic, the conversation immediately stalled when one of the founders of the community voiced strong opposition.

“Our monthly meetings are business meetings, not therapy sessions,” he argued. “We’re not here to work on people’s emotional issues. Emotions shouldn’t be brought into a business meeting.”

This founder had expertise in construction and development and he had played a crucial role in building the community. Because of his status, his words were powerful enough to stop forward movement on creating formal agreements around working conflict in our community. In my remaining four years of living there, the best we achieved around a conflict policy was a set of suggested steps and resources that people might use informally if they wanted. However, the facilitators never received community permission to work on a conflict or address emotional charge during community meetings.

The words of the founder who spoke out against having a conflict policy held at least a few layers of irony. First, any gathering of human beings, even one categorized as a “business meeting,” is going to involve human emotions and at least occasional conflict. Smart organizations, including mainstream businesses, have detailed conflict resolution policies and tools in place. For intentional communities, it is an established best practice to have clear conflict agreements and tools that are regularly practiced in and out of group meetings. So, even though this founder spoke with an air of authority, he was poorly informed about the role of emotion and conflict in human groups, and the importance of conflict agreements and tools for a healthy organizational culture.

The second layer of irony was that he himself often brought a high level of emotional charge into business meetings. While he was known and respected for his calm and logical demeanor, his energy shifted when the group was discussing controversial issues that he cared about, and he could quickly become impatient, sarcastic, and even volatile if people did not agree with him. In addition, during meetings his partner was prone to emotional outbursts that were very impactful and often left the facilitators and the group at a loss on how to address what happened and how to get the meeting back on track. So the second layer of irony was a lack of self-awareness around his personal emotional volatility and his impact on the group, and how he himself could not live up to his view that there should be no emotional expression during a business meeting.

Self-awareness and emotional awareness are essential capacities and skills for members of collaborative groups, as are skills in recognizing and empathizing with the feelings and needs of others. There will be feelings in community business meetings, and we can all develop our abilities to navigate complex discussions amidst the rising and falling tides of emotion within us and around us.

When emotion reaches a certain level of intensity, people may stop listening to one another and the group’s ability to proceed effectively diminishes. That’s why it’s important to have a Conflict Tool in place and agreements for how and when to use it that include permission for facilitators to offer the tool during community meetings. At my current community-in-formation, Hart’s Mill Ecovillage, we have developed a Five-Step Conflict Tool that is a hybrid of NVC/Compassionate Communication and Laird Schaub’s Four-Step Conflict Tool:

- 1) What happened?
- 2) What feelings do you have about it?

- 3) What's at stake for you? What needs do you have that were not met in this situation?
- 4) What are you willing to do to help solve the problem or improve the situation?
- 5) What would you like others to do?

The standard use of this tool is to work with two parties in conflict, and create a safe space for each person to share their perspective. At each step, one person speaks and then the other offers reflective listening; then the roles are reversed. We move onto the next step only when each party feels fully and accurately heard. This tool deserves more discussion than I have room for here. But notice how the effective use of the tool requires the capacity to speak one's own experience, feelings, and needs; listen accurately to the other person and recognize their feelings and needs; and make commitments and requests to improve the situation.

Having an effective conflict resolution tool and a culture of practice is vital for healthy collaborative groups. There are good Conflict Resolution tools and frameworks out there. Find and adopt one for your community. And practice, practice, practice.

Collaborative Skills and Communication: Strategic Communication vs. Communication Oriented towards Reaching Understanding (COTRU)

To get a better sense of the variety of collaborative skills that communities need to work on, it helps to understand the different forms of communication we employ in our cooperative work together. In his work on Communicative Action, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas distinguished between two different approaches to communication. The first approach, Strategic Communication, is prominent in competitive cultures, and aims to “win” the conversation and persuade others to work for our personal goals. By contrast, Communication Oriented towards Reaching Understanding (what I like to call COTRU, or “co-true” for short) seeks to include all voices and perspectives, deepen mutual understanding, foster shared values, and achieve common goals.

Within COTRU, Habermas identifies three types of Speech Acts: Descriptive, Normative, and Expressive [see Figure 2].

In a Descriptive speech act, the speaker is making truth-claims about the objective world; for example, “Asphalt is more expensive than gravel.” Whether or not the group accepts this claim as true is a matter of evidence, verification, and discussion. Remember here that all truth-claims and fact-claims are contestable; “facts” and “truth” must be established and agreed upon within a community of understanding.

For Normative speech acts, the speaker is making value-claims about the social and ethical world; for example, “Sustainability is important in this community, and asphalt is not sustainable.” The legitimacy and meaning of such claims will need to be assessed by the members of the community based on their shared values and agreements. Remember that groups should expect diverse interpretations of their values and agreements—even carefully and clearly written ones will still be open to multiple interpretations. Note too that values (and people) are dynamic—there are no fixed or final definitions that can eliminate questioning, debate, or conflict over the meaning of shared values.

With Expressive speech acts, the speaker is making claims about their inner, subjective world; for example, “Accessibility is important to me, and I feel sad when I imagine a path in our community that is not wheelchair-accessible.” Whether or not this statement is valid is a matter of honesty, sincerity, and authenticity on the part of the speaker. Remember here that when people show up as their full and complex selves, our relationships and our communities become richer, so we want to create safe spaces for people to share all of who they are. Note too that there is important information in emotions, but that our personal emotional and psychological states also flow and shift—sometimes rapidly.

Figure 2

cotru COMMUNICATION ORIENTED TOWARDS REACHING UNDERSTANDING			
SPEECH ACT	DESCRIPTIVE	NORMATIVE	EXPRESSIVE
WORLD	OBJECTIVE	SOCIAL	SUBJECTIVE
FUNCTION	REPRESENT THE WORLD(S)	CREATE RELATIONSHIPS AND SHARED VALUES	EXPRESS EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS
VALIDITY	TRUTH AND OBJECTIVITY	GOODNESS, LEGITIMACY, CONSISTENCY	SINCERITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Figure 4



Graphics by Joe Cole

Each of these three types of speech acts—Descriptive, Normative, and Expressive—are relevant to the MLC path conversation, and to any decision process in cooperative communities. The three types of speech acts invoke three general standards for guiding the community—Truth, Goodness, and Authenticity—and are connected to three corresponding questions that guide collaborative conversations: “What’s happening and what are the facts?,” “What are the shared values?,” and “What does everyone think and feel?” Cooperative decision-making is based in having access to the best information, being clear about group values, and including all voices and each member’s full self in the conversation.

Collaborative Skills and How to Cultivate Them

Reflecting on the MLC conversation, the Consensus Decision-Making Process, the Conflict Tool, and the COTRU Speech Acts discussed above, we can begin to identify a set of collaborative skills that will help

community members work together more effectively to achieve their goals within a Culture of Cooperation:

- Self-awareness: Listening to Self
- Emotional Intelligence: Recognizing feelings and identifying needs
- Personal Expression: Speaking for Self
- Listening Accurately to Others
- Empathizing with Others
- Equity and Justice: Commitment to meet everyone’s needs as much as possible
- Research: Finding the relevant facts, examples, and knowledge to guide us
- Observation: Clear and accurate perception of what’s happening
- Verification: Testing truth claims, evaluating arguments and evidence
- Creativity: Using Imagination to open new possibilities
- Comfort with Uncertainty and Paradox
- Sense of the Common Good: Serving the well-being of the whole
- Deciding Together using shared group values and agreements
- Commitment to Growth, Learning, Healing
- Openness to receiving Feedback and working with it

This list is not meant to be comprehensive—it highlights several key skills, and it continues to evolve through my own community experience and my work as a facilitator. Also, it’s important to remember that very few of these skills and capacities are valued in the dominant organizational cultures in the United States. Hence most of us have a skill deficit in several of these areas regardless of our personal ideals or dedication to community and collaboration. The good news is that each of these skills can be learned, developed, and polished through commitment and practice. To close, I’ll offer a handful of suggestions for how to cultivate these skills.

First, groups can make time in community gatherings and meetings to practice skills. For example, a quick opening go-round to start a meeting could ask everyone to “identify one to three feelings that you are experiencing today.” When I do this opening, I like to give people a list of feelings, since many of us do not have well-developed emotional vocabularies. You can do the same quick opening go-round with “identifying one to three needs that you connect to community.” Again, I would provide people with a list of needs in order to help build their vocabulary and awareness. The Center for Nonviolent Communication offers very helpful PDF documents for both a Feelings Inventory and a Needs Inventory at their website: www.cnvc.org.

In order to build awareness during collaborative discussions, identify which of the three Speech Acts the group is focusing on in the moment, and create activities to solicit that kind of input from group members. For example:

- Descriptive: “Right now, let’s focus on getting the facts about the situation and collecting questions of clarification.”
- Normative: “Let’s brainstorm to list the relevant community principles and values that can guide any decisions we might make on this topic, and see if we have questions about what these values mean and how they apply.”
- Expressive: “We’ll now begin a sharing circle to hear each person’s feelings and thoughts on the issue.”

Take time out for moments of silence and invite people to check in with themselves, paying attention to what they are feeling and needing, and what they want to contribute to the conversation that hasn’t already been said.

Include Pair and Small Group Activities in large meetings in order to provide structure for each person to share and to listen carefully to others.

Practice Reflective Listening during meetings. My wife María has a great habit of gently asking people to stop and reflect back what she (or others) just said in meetings before moving on.

“Pete, what did you hear me say just now?” This way, she can be confident as a participant that people are hearing and understanding her perspective before rushing to express their own views and losing her comments in the shuffle.

Ask people to contribute to group discussions based on the standard of “What does the group need to hear from me right now?” instead of “What do I want to say?”

When checking for objections, consent, and/or consensus, remind people that we decide together based on group values, not on personal preferences.

Use group time to practice your Conflict Tools with Role Plays. It’s essential that group members practice the tool before they need to use it when the emotional stakes are high.

Create a safe and respectful environment for giving and receiving feedback. End meetings with evaluations of what went well and what could be improved. Provide regular forums for leaders to receive feedback. Recognize that we all have a lot to learn.

Commit to growth and healing. Find support inside and outside of community to heal the wounds we’ve suffered in aggressive and hierarchical cultures.

Finally, encourage members to make time on their own to practice skills in their daily lives—family, work, and relationships provide ample opportunities to practice!

These are just a few suggestions for building skills and cultivating awareness as you create a Culture of Collaboration in your community. Clarify your cooperative decision-making process, adopt conflict tools, and commit to the ongoing development of collaborative skills in your group. 🌱

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Narcissism, Dependence, and Culture Change

By Yana Ludwig



Today the view out my bedroom window is of the open, bright blue skies of Wyoming, with the small college town of Laramie off in the distance. The foreground is dominated by the Holliday Mansion, a structure built in 1878 to house the large and wealthy family of someone who was progressive for his time. My group, the Solidarity Collective, just bought the place, and we are turning it into a radical socialist experiment created by and for working class and poor people in one of the most conservative states in the country.

When I think about the power of cooperation, the new scenery of my life is the most powerful image I have.

This property was neglected and abused for most of the last decade; our group is using collective elbow grease to turn that trend around. The former owner was a cutthroat capitalist who consistently screwed over his own tenants; we've invited half of them to stay and join us in cooperative meals, collective decision making, and compassionate money relationships. The bank was about to foreclose; we've financed this relationally, drawing on a former community-mate from one of our pasts to make this happen in a way that builds security for everyone involved in a time of economic destabilization.

Our stated mission as a group is anti-capitalist, anti-oppression, and pro-relationship. As a group of politically and socially active folks, we envisioned our mission playing out on bigger stages than these three acres. And yet, culture change that doesn't seep into daily relationships isn't all that potent or grounded. Suddenly things got very material and immediate when this property dropped into our laps and we said yes.

I imagine Marx would be proud.

I'm a cooperative culture trainer and promoter, and have been what is often called the "burning soul" for getting this community landed. A lot of my work in the world is helping define, articulate, and promulgate a new understanding of who we can be as a people. The shift from a competitive, materialistic, individualistic culture to a cooperative, relational, communal one has many, many layers to it. It is interpersonal, economic, spiritual, and ecological. It is revealing itself to me in bits and pieces over time, and some days I feel like the best thing I can do for the world is just to take notes as new pieces come into focus.

For the sake of giving you a manageable bite of this pie, I'm going to focus in this article on just a couple aspects of this transition, and not try to say everything. But I'm also including a chart that summarizes more aspects of this work, because they are all important and to really separate them out is impossible. For now, though, let's talk about two aspects of culture

change that are not often at the forefront of that conversation, but directly impact our daily relationships: narcissism and dependence dynamics.

Narcissism

The US is, according to the Hofstede measurements (a series of measurements of multiple cultural spectrums), the most individualistic culture in the world, narrowly beating out Australia for that win. This affects many things in our lives, but one of them is a well-documented psychological phenomenon: our rates of narcissism are also off the charts.

I often ask in my workshops who in the crowd ever had a class on cooperation in school, and only rarely do hands go up. Instead, we talk about how we've been taught to be independent, competitive, and "successful" in an economic system that pits us against each other consistently and without the slightest apology. And our success is solely measured in individualistic terms. The basic message? We need to be self-centered to survive.

So we come into community with the best of cooperative intentions and a deep longing for something beyond being an emotional and economic island, and almost immediately, all that training arises to make it hard as hell to actually do. Our resistance to the isolation of self-centeredness drives us into community,

and then our training rears its ugly head. I watch myself, as well as people I'm close to, in this dance constantly: we want to be in connection, we want to cooperate...but the need to "take care of number one" means that this opening can feel deeply threatening, even to those of us who have spent years "getting it."

Thus, a functional cooperative culture requires us to do something even more difficult: become self-aware rather than self-centered. Awareness of our needs, our strengths, and our weaknesses (the latter of which you can never admit in a hyper-competitive environment) opens the door for being one important part of a functional team. It also asks us to have discernment about what of our needs we are appropriately responsible for and what we can reasonably ask the group to be responsible for.

I've facilitated any number of conversations where a group has gotten stuck in a discussion about a policy because there is no discernment being asked of people—with the resulting policy trying to be all things to all people instead of simply about whether dog's poop needs to be picked up on the sidewalk, if it is OK to have a private party in the common house, or if turkey can be served at Thanksgiving alongside the vegan options. Discernment is an antidote to narcissism, and it is also an essential component in functional decision-making. It can also interrupt the other thing I want to talk about in this article: codependency.

Dependence Dynamics

I find it amusing that the US has an actual holiday called Independence Day. I'm convinced a large portion of why we've become a car-loving culture is that cars represent independence for us, and very little is valued more highly in the nation of my birth. (And that of course ties in to the ecological aspects of our culture...but that's another article.)

In a survey done by the Pew Research Center, Americans were the only population among surveyed residents of western, economically privileged nations to say that "freedom to pursue life's goals" was more important than "everyone's needs met." This is not a western mindset issue; it is a distinctly American issue.

The result of this thinking is devastating. "Means testing" for social safety nets seems reasonable to most Americans, the "American Dream" is closely tied to ideas of lifting ourselves by our own bootstraps (never mind that one needs boots to do such a thing, and they are expensive), and many young people cresting their 18th year into adulthood suffer from deep anxiety about not being able to make it independently. Depression levels are at an all-time high among youth, and I lay a significant portion of the responsibility for that at the feet of this obsession with independence.

The alternative can't be codependence. Codependence comes about when one individual starts to feel they are solely responsible for the well-being (emotional, social, or economic) of those

other individuals around them and subsumes their own needs to make that happen. It's still an individualistic way of operating, centering the power of the "I" as in "I will fix this for you." What we need instead is a model of interdependence. Fortunately we have one in the non-human world of ecosystems.

If we look to how natural systems work, we can see that a collection of animals, plants, elements, minerals, etc. are all coexisting and co-contributing. Each being has a niche that is valuable, and no being can operate fully independently. Humans (and especially Americans) like to pretend we are somehow exempt from those interconnected systems, but we aren't. That attempt to exempt ourselves is causing incredible ecological damage to the whole planet, and it behooves us both socially and ecologically to take a good hard look at the cultural paradigm that has set that up.

We can practice something different in our small circles of community. It may not sound very sexy, but things like taking a skills inventory and helping each other find healthy niches in the system of our communities is one concrete way to counteract our tendency to try to do it all ourselves. Cultivating a culture of appreciation for contributions of all sorts (whether they are physical, economic, emotional, group process, or any other kind of contribution) is another way to create a different foundation that sees value across sectors and counteracts the illness of hyper-independence. Mentoring and skill sharing from a place of trust rather than honing our individual competitive edges is another basic relational way to interrupt this.

Culture change is lifelong work. Many of us have been at it in community for multiple decades and we still bump into defaults of disconnecting, individualism, and competition when the going gets hard. But by unpacking each aspect of this culture change systematically, we can, over time, start turning the tide. I'm grateful to have companions on this journey: you as the reader and everyone else attempting cooperation in its many forms. We are all social changemakers simply by making the attempt. 🍂

Comparing Cultural Worldviews and the behaviors that come from them

Extreme Competitive Culture	Sustainable Cooperative Culture	Extreme Cooperative Culture
Compete with others	Cooperate, including collaboration with allies	Cooperate within; collaborate only with others your group fully agrees with
Seek advantage and winning	Seek understanding and effective action	Seek attention as connection
Have skill? Use to dominate	Have skill? Teach with discernment	Have skill? Give away indiscriminately
Loudest voices win	Collaboration/consensus with discernment	Consensus with no discernment
I-oriented (individualistic, focus on self)	We-oriented (communal, focus on self in balance with others)	Us-oriented (hyper-communal, self subsumed to group)
Independence encouraged/celebrated	Interdependence encouraged/celebrated	Codependence encouraged/celebrated
Dis-integrated	Integrated with differences valued	Individual needs/strengths lost
Capitalize on circumstances	Empathize with circumstances	Pity circumstances
Protect (resources and emotions, with no risk)	Share (resources and emotions, with boundaries)	Share (resources and emotions, without boundaries)
Make others responsible	Recognize personal and collective responsibility	Over-own personal responsibility
Differences threaten me	Differences are interesting	Differences threaten the group
Narcissism based on being "the best" and not needing to care	Not narcissistic: self is valued member of valued team	Narcissism based on emotional neediness met by group
Systems serve me	Service to others	Martyrdom

Yana Ludwig is a cooperative culture pioneer, intentional communities advocate, and anti-oppression activist. She makes her home at Solidarity Collective in Laramie, Wyoming, is a regular host on the Solidarity House podcast, and serves on the board of the Fellowship for Intentional Community. Her book Together Resilient: Building Community in the Age of Climate Disruption (written under the name Ma'ikwe Ludwig) won the 2017 Communal Studies Association Book of the Year Award. More on her cooperative culture work can be found at www.YanaLudwig.net.

Building a Culture of Care at Black Bulga

By Geoff Evans

Members of the Black Bulga community live mostly in the city of Newcastle, a medium-sized city (population 400,000) on Australia's East Coast about 150 kilometres north of Sydney. Newcastle is a post-industrial city. While its historic steel mills have closed, it is still a major centre for the coal industry and is the world's largest coal-exporting port. Members of Black Bulga are involved in work on climate change, arts, education, and community development.

Our unifying passion is our shared values for social justice and environmental sustainability. We are dedicated to working for an equitable, inclusive world, nurturing of people, communities, and place. We share a deep commitment to social justice including for Aboriginal Australians who we recognize as the traditional custodians of the land we share. In fact, the name Black Bulga means Black Mountain, as Bulga means "mountain" in various local Aboriginal languages.

We are involved in work to transition this region, our country, and the world from fossil fuel dependency to a clean energy future. While this passion unites us, and has had a big role in bringing us together and sustaining our community, it is in fact our desire to build a healthy com-

munity together—for ourselves, our children and families, our friends, and fellow social change agents—that unites us even more.

The Black Bulga community has been together for almost 10 years since the first genesis of our intentional community project. We've owned shared land for about eight of these years. Our land is adjacent to the Barrington Tops World Heritage Area, a region of globally-significant environmental values. We are located at the foothills of mountains and flat-topped plateau that are often snow-covered in winter. We're at the junction of two pristine fresh rivers that babble over rocks to delightful waterholes where families play in our long hot summers. While water is a key reason we bought this land, its value is even more marked as Australia faces more frequent and severe droughts as a result of climate change. As I write, large areas of the country, including our valley, are in drought and river levels are very low.

Platypus, kangaroos, and koalas live on our land, finding refuge in the harshest of times. Platypus are particularly shy and unusual egg-laying mammals that live in our two rivers. They can usually be seen only in the early morning dawn and evening dusk as they hunt for small water

Straw and clay wall-making crew at Black Bulga, June 2018.



Photos courtesy of Geoff Evans

creatures. Seeing them brings us great joy and excitement!

Black Bulga's culture as a community has evolved even though we are not yet living on our shared land. We love to visit for weekends, for working bees, and whenever we can. Yet the current structure of our lives keeps us elsewhere most of the time.

Building a culture of an intentional community in this context is our project and our challenge. We strive to find various ways to support each other, our land, and our intentional community project emotionally, economically, and physically, while none of us is living there permanently. Recently, one member has moved to live on the land for a trial period. We are very thrilled about this as it represents a significant milestone in our community's development.

In many ways we are a "virtual" community, living and working away from the land and from our hometown of Newcastle for large parts of the year. We meet frequently in Newcastle, in a formal sense, as well as socially and incidentally—it is not such a big city and our social networks are well interlinked. Phone conferences and an online project management tool also help keep us connected and provide a platform for to us discuss and make decisions, especially with those members who are far away.

Over the last three years we have been more dispersed than ever, with members living in the Northern Territory or travelling for extensive periods during the year. Given our scattered membership, we have to work hard to keep our community's cohesiveness and "intentionality" strong and to develop a culture that sustains us in this particular stage of our evolution.



*Easter egg tree and
cob pizza oven at Black Bulga.*

The call of community and our shared land is strong. Even those of us who are working away from our land for years at a time still visit several times a year, especially during the summer holidays around Christmas and New Year, and for important community celebrations and major planning meetings.

Given this situation, perhaps our most crucial cultural practice is the attention and considerable investment we make in group processes and learning positive communication skills.

In between our major events there are regular meetings including monthly Community Forums which all members can attend face-to-face or by phone. We have two working groups (mostly involving members living in Newcastle, not distant members), one that focuses on planning and connectedness while the other focuses on building, infrastructure, ecological care, and land management. We hold four working bees each year to which we invite friends and which most active members also attend.

Over the last two years we have invested a lot in strengthening relationships and positive interpersonal communication skills within our group. We've been supported in this by an external facilitator who has lived in community for more than 40 years and has many decades of experience as a peace movement activist, relationship counsellor, and dispute resolution practitioner.

Workshops have helped us develop more open and honest communication skills, in a safe and supportive environment. They have helped us learn to develop the skills to have difficult conversations about inevitable tensions within the group and between individuals in the group. The workshops have been challenging, but they have enabled us to look deep inside our patterns as individuals and as a group. We have shed tears of anxiety but also tears of joy in these workshops.

It has been essential to have a highly skilled and compassionate facilitator who is independent of our group and outside the dynamics of it, but still familiar with the issues that are common in many intentional communities.

It has also been crucial to have the workshops on our land to ground our conversations in the locality and environment in which we are trying to build community, and in a physical and emotional space where everyone can feel safe to say what they feel and believe.

Pre-workshop preparations have been critical to their success as they have identified the difficult issues on which we want to focus. Workshops have provided sufficient time for raising issues, fully discussing them, reflecting, making agreements, and committing to whatever we agree and to each other. Sometimes the workshops have led to participants making agreements to meet afterwards to continue discussions to deal with unresolved matters and to provide ongoing

checking-in and support for each other.

What have we learnt from these workshops? As a participant, and writing from my own perspective, I have learnt a lot. The skills I see us learning together and the rich experiences we share are valuable both at a community and on an individual level. We have identified that we each have certain patterns of behaviour that we tend to fall into when we are under stress, and how these patterns reflect powerlessness and fight-or-flight behaviour rather than clear-thinking, balanced, and powerful behaviour.

Our facilitator introduced us to the Karpman Drama Triangle as a model of destructive interaction that can occur between people in conflict. Karpman defined three related aspects, or faces of drama: Perpetrator, Victim, and Rescuer. This tool has given us a clearer view of difficult dynamics and how to overcome them.

As a group, we have committed to remind each other at the beginning of each meeting to not fall into these roles and, instead, remind each other that we can choose to speak from an “empowered self”—whether this means being assertive without being aggressive, accepting our personal vulnerability, or demonstrating care without taking over.

We have learnt to recognize patterns in which we have tended to blame others when things are not as we'd like them—for example, when our work is not being fully appreciated or we believe we have not been listened to. We've recognised patterns of behaviour when we share our feelings of anger or frustration, while implying the blame lies with others. In response, we have now identified strategies to encourage each other to speak very specifically, openly, and honestly about our concerns in a powerful and positive way when we feel things have not gone well. We aim to take responsibility for the emotional impact of what we might say.

We agreed that we will not “gossip” about each other and our gripes so we do not recruit others in the group to “our side of the conflict” and thereby lock in a conflict. We're going to try to be braver, to talk to one another directly if we need to raise something.

We have learnt about and agreed to apply a “needs-based” decision-making process in our meetings. This means we identify all of our different individual needs as part of the conversation about an issue of concern. We talk openly about our needs and seek solutions that might meet our needs on the matter. For example, an older member of the group with relatively small savings in the bank might need to feel that any decision we make about spending large amounts of money will not make them feel financially insecure. We then explore options that can meet these needs.

We are finding that this approach helps us solve problems more collaboratively. It avoids

the quick “fixes” that often emerge from “proposal-driven” decision making that tend to sweep people along to an agreement but not necessarily with a high level of ownership of the agreed decision.

We have learned a lot and, most importantly, we have committed to apply the skills we've learnt to all our meetings and interactions. Plus, we're learning that it's okay not to be “experts” at relationships all the time. We are doing our best.

Our community is evolving and strengthening, and we envisage that over the next few years we will live out our intention to be a community that is grounded on our land, while continuing to extend to our lives in other locations, always remaining committed to each other and our positive relationships. We continue to support each other to be our most empowered selves and to grow closer to each other...and to our gorgeous block of land.

The Black Bulga community is still growing. We are currently on the lookout for new financial members who are keen to share this incredible journey and piece of paradise with us. Shares are currently for sale. We encourage you to get in touch to learn more about the place and our heart-felt activities to care for the land and one another. 🐦

Geoff Evans is a member of Black Bulga community, currently working in community development projects with Aboriginal communities in Central Australia. If you are interested to know more about Black Bulga you can visit our Friends of Black Bulga Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BlackBulga) or contact Geoff at geoffrey.r.evans@bigpond.com.



Black Bulga kid pyramid.

Climate Change Activists' Community

By Camille Bru

Working with the local community through gardening workshops.



Where do you go and what do you do when you want to become a climate change activist? When you start watching a lot of documentaries, understanding what is happening in the world, asking yourself about your role in society, and wondering how we ended up there, then it's time to take a step towards a different lifestyle. It doesn't have to be as radical as moving to the Caribbean, though that's the choice I made.

Climate change...what a vast subject. It feels like each and every action that we take in our comfortable western lives leads to this. We are indoctrinated with the belief that we need to always buy more, so we always produce more and then we just always throw away more. This remark from a friend still resonates with me: "You're throwing this away. But there is no Away!" We are taught to put things in waste bins and once our waste is in there, well, we stop thinking about it altogether. We are completely disconnected and nobody is held responsible for the waste we produce.

We could also talk about the textile industry and the Fast Fashion; or about the agrochemical industry and the monopoly of seeds and chemical fertilizers and pesticides; or about nuclear waste disposal, rising CO₂ levels in the atmosphere, privatization of water, mass tourism industry, overfishing, coral bleaching... The subjects are endless and the more you know, the harder it becomes to live a "normal" life. That's when I decided I needed to take some reflection time and start to experience a different lifestyle. I did some research and then I learned about Richmond Vale Academy.

As a biologist, I was working for a pharmaceutical company, trying to find cures for different types of cancers. I always thought that I wanted to prevent diseases instead of trying to cure them—that's why I was thinking about doing something different for a while, something that accorded with my personality and my values. I am very aware and affected by the issues of global warming, consumerism, environmental protection, agriculture, and so on. These issues led me to question my role in society. Am I there to consume and profit at the expense of all the people who have not had the luck to be born on the right continent? I wanted to act and make a difference in the world, at my scale. I know that I won't change the world on my own, but by working along with all the little "ants of change," it might be possible to make things move. That's why I think it's time

for me to listen to the wise who say, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” (Gandhi)

Richmond Vale Academy, most commonly known as RVA, stands for a different approach in education and is what we call “Another Kind of School.” It is an educational institution with the aim to train activists from all over the world to fight global warming and global poverty where the need is greatest. To do this, people from all backgrounds and cultures come together in the beautiful country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, to make a difference and change the world, one person at a time.

We live a collective life in an international environment, with teachers and participants from many different countries and with a multitude of different backgrounds, beliefs, cultures, skills, languages, and education. Life at Richmond Vale Academy is in many ways simple. About five to 10 people live permanently and groups of students start every three to four months, which means that there are constantly between 15 and 50 people living at the academy, depending on the number of students enrolled. We live at the end of the road in the second poorest nation in the Caribbean, very far from the consumerist society of shopping, restaurants, and bars. So we produce our own culture and entertainment, and a lot of creativity follows. Living at RVA means that we share everything and spend all our time together. Students are split into teams according to the program they are following and as the people come and go and the timelines overlap, we get to learn from each other. The students that have been here longer teach the new students how life is organized on campus and it creates a really strong sense of inclusion and belonging.

The six-month climate compliance program, my program, is divided into different periods. We spend about a quarter of our time studying about the various issues leading to climate change, through research, reading articles and books, watching documentaries, informing ourselves, preparing presentations, teaching each other, and debating as much as possible. This is a very important part of our lives here at RVA, as it helps us better understand the actions we can take to really change the world.

About half of our time is spent in the village, doing volunteer work. My team focused on building home gardens for locals in order to help them become more resilient and independent, and to give them the opportunity to attain food security and economic stability. This “Pass It On” model organic garden program is a good way of showing people that a lot is possible and

that everybody can do it too. Other teams have worked on building biogas stations, some on education, beach cleanups, tree planting, etc. Many actions can be taken to have a positive impact on local lives.

The remaining time is spent on different projects such as preparing workshops for visitors—about permaculture, about seeds, about plastic waste, etc. We also work on making booklets, videos, blogs, and newspaper articles to spread the word about the school and about the ways to help fight climate change.

And of course we also spend a lot of time together, during cultural evenings, game nights, movie nights, hikes, field trips, and much more.

Participating in one of RVA’s programs means being part of a team of two to 30 people from all over the world and that means adapting to very different ways of thinking, different ways of working. Some traditions or ways of expressing our feelings and emotions and passing on messages vary greatly from culture to culture. Something that you would normally say or do in your country might upset someone from a different culture and it can result in conflicts. A conflict can be challenging to deal with as it soon becomes a global/public matter in the small community. As amazing and



Selecting seedlings for the home gardens built in the local community by Richmond Vale Academy students.

Photos courtesy of Camille Bru

beautiful as it is, living at RVA brings its fair share of challenges and can sometimes be overwhelming, but it is all well worth it.

Living at RVA means giving up some of your usual comfort. For many of us, we have lived

difficulties in the beginning, as you get to share with a total stranger. This is a real challenge for some of us. But because we come here for a specific purpose we all work together to make it functional.

Community life can be enjoyable and successful for all of us only if we all put in the amount of work required. For some, sweeping the floor of the main hall once a week sounds like a lot, while for others twice a day would be more appropriate. Sharing tasks and responsibilities is part of

our everyday life and is not perceived by everyone in the same way. Every morning, we all take 45 minutes, before we start working, to clean a designated area. When everyone is dedicated and cleans, the whole dynamic is good and the atmosphere is very positive. But sometimes people get less involved and start to lose motivation; this drives the whole atmosphere down as people start questioning: "I am cleaning more than this and this person, I am not going to clean as much because it's not fair." The Health and Hygiene

team that is in charge of organizing the cleaning really needs to come up with creative ideas to

keep everybody active.

Tessa, one of the students, said to me, "What I found challenging—what I believe is a general challenge in communities maybe—is when people don't participate so much in community life or rather don't take the responsibility fully which comes with it; e.g., cleaning tasks, common action. I think the shared responsibility is great but it is always challenging when people don't see why they should do it; they see no benefit for themselves. Another thing that challenged me

The sense of family and community is very strong in Saint Vincent and it is beautiful to see the mutual help between people.

in a home with our family and then moved out to our own place like a flat or a house. Most of us had access to our own bathroom and a nice kitchen in which we could prepare whatever we fancied. Coming to RVA, you start by sharing a room, which most of us have not done for a very long time. That can create some dif-



View of Richmond Vale Academy buildings from the main hall.



*Saint Vincent—
The Rainbow Island.*

is the limited privacy. There were for example phone calls which I didn't want everybody to overhear; e.g., when I talked about troubles or worries. And even in the rooms, the walls and windows are thin. It was not a huge challenge; you get used to it; I survived. For me, it was worth it for all the benefits of community life."

We are very lucky to have cooks that prepare our lunch and dinner every day and an incredible Kitchen team that organizes the menus and the shopping list. We try to consume local and healthy food as much as possible. It can be hard to accommodate everybody's taste and it can be very challenging keeping everyone happy. We have had to adapt the menus many times; some cultures are used to eating bread with every meal, while others are trying to reduce their consumption of carbs. Accommodating all the eating preferences is another big challenge; we have meat eaters, vegetarians, vegans, gluten-free, and a combination of all of the above. Let me tell you, the cooks and the kitchen team have to be very, very creative.

Another challenge that people face when coming here is Reality. Most students come

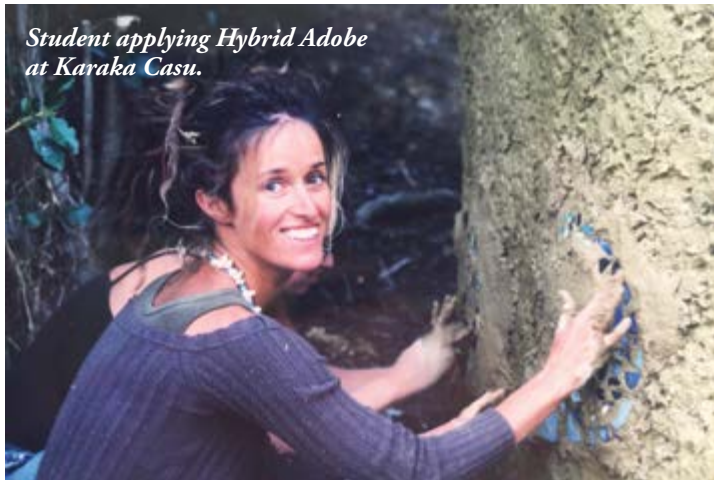
from rich countries and have always had access to the basic necessities. Most of us have always had food on the table, water coming out of the tap, and electricity to light up our lives in the evenings. Many of us have never had to witness poverty. Coming here, you realize that some people, your neighbors, don't have access to these basic commodities that we are so accustomed to. This often brings a feeling of helplessness and some people have a difficult time overcoming this. But the important thing is that even though there is poverty, everyone has a roof over their heads. The sense of family and community is very strong in Saint Vincent and it is beautiful to see the mutual help between people. If a neighbor doesn't have food on the table one day, people will happily share a portion of their meals to support them. If your focus is on what you are here to achieve, you can overcome this feeling of helplessness and accomplish a lot for these people to empower them to become more financially stable and make a big difference in their lives. That's what we do as part of the climate change activist program, by building home gardens in the local communities to help people gain food and economic security.

Spending six months at RVA was a way for me to define and explore possibilities for the future. I know that I don't want to go back to a society that pushes me to be someone that I'm not. I don't want to purchase dead things, wear make-up, and have a job that will benefit only a few. I want to change my lifestyle, live closer to the earth and nature, plant trees, and walk barefoot. Being part of a team, learning about the issues of the world, working in the gardens at RVA and in the village, meeting the local community, creating relationships with very different people is a very enriching experience that everybody should have the chance to live. 🍷

Camille Bru was born and raised on a farm in the south of France. She writes: "I'm a big nature lover; walking in nature through forests has a soothing effect on my soul... Traveling makes my world go 'round and that's why I've decided to take on my life's dream and go traveling, no strings attached, for the coming year(s)."

Adventures in Remote Simplicity: Four Distinct Community Styles

By Philip Mirkin



Student applying Hybrid Adobe at Karaka Casu.



Artistic fancy in Solar City.

As a world traveler who has founded, joined, or consulted on over a dozen intentional communities, my perspective may be valuable.

Here I present my very personal experiences as an involved co-conspirator. Each group offered up their wildly different styles contributing to my broader view. Each had noble characters who set out to create some kind of communitarian future. Each community had its distinct pleasures. *[Note: because the actual identities of these groups are less important than the stories told, and because the depictions below are subjective and may in some cases be controversial, names of the first and third communities described, as well as the individuals referenced in those sections, have been changed.]*

I ask the reader: What sounds appealing? What could you live with? What aspects suit you? These reflections may help you to ask your own right questions as you choose where to travel, contribute, or commit to...

Solar City

Back in the early 2000s, the lack of “community” in West Coast cities had me revisit an excellent resource: www.ic.org. This website provides invaluable information as to where to explore the sharing community.

A friend of mine, Sue, had also been researching [ic.org](http://www.ic.org) for years. After a cascade of visits she chose Solar City (SC) partially for its immediate warm welcome (and membership without a trial period). I considered her deep effort and trusted her decision.

SC lies just minutes from the Mexican border in a very hot and remote part of southern New Mexico (110 degrees F in July). Sue offered sweat-equity, as it had no-cost entry.

I discovered that the papercrete guru, Mark Campbell, lived there. I wanted to collaborate with him on some designs. On the phone he made me feel very welcome to live in the village.

Sue convinced me to give it a try and even arranged a trailer to rent for \$300 a month. I trusted her for this sight-unseen experience. She picked me up from the Amtrak Station in Deming. After a stop at a winery to buy the wine she said I must present (and get a bit drunk), she drove the 30 miles to SC. What the hell was I in for?

She lived at the compound of a harmless, yet wacky old hermit who built very tiny underground hobbit caves connected by little outdoor paths. My nearby tiny trailer was not very cozy, but her digs were worse. Her kitchen: funky wooden pallets tied together by baling wire and filled with red volcanic pumice rock for insulation. Red dust was everywhere and it drove her mad!

Barren desert surrounded us; our village of single-family homes on small lots held what you might call “sweet wackos” or the “tin foil hat brigade”; despite their unusual ideas and eccentric lifestyles they seemed fairly gentle and charming. The ones I met welcomed me warmly, glad for

new blood and fresh company. My international perspective was clearly different.

It seemed like a retirement community for eclectic, old hippies who wanted to build without permits or supervision, which is exactly what they did. A meeting hall hosted potlucks, a small library, and a shared computer and public phone, my lifelines to the outside world. A weekly movie night often gathered eight members.

Daily I walked past members’ homes encountering a few for a friendly chat. Then I wandered into the magical, scrub desert outside SC to get further outdoors. The desert wilderness was my refuge and served as an avenue for economic migrants to the States; I once ran across 10 migrants carrying only water jugs, making their way north.

Even in the warm winter it often seemed like a ghost town. SC was excellent for writing. I had a quiet workspace, creating four chapters for one of my books. The residents kept to themselves. Each had their own weird setup. Some ex-military gun nuts lived behind 10-foot high steel walls never interacting, according to other residents. A glimpse inside said don’t approach.

Live and let live. A community without judgment. That part I loved.

A massive 1970 Cadillac regularly trundled down our dusty, unpaved streets at two miles an hour. Inside was a kindly former country-western star, now retired. Another guy literally slept in a 20-foot-deep hole in the ground. He climbed down a long ladder to his cot.

I met Mark Campbell riding his self-made standup bicycle that he rowed with his hands. A lovable kooky inventor! Most residents like him

created fanciful, insulated homes for the heat. None of Mark's were finished; he lived in a motorhome with his mom.

Sue got sick of her dusty kitchen, begging me for permission to cook in my little trailer; before I knew it, her cookware and boxes of food overwhelmed half the space. She had no fridge. My compassion grew as she struggled with her lousy living situation. I shared what little space I had. At night, she slept in a hobbit hole only big enough for a single bed.

One couple was building an entire house underground. They were more than friendly, sharing barbecues, alcohol, warmth, music, and more. A crazy grandma gave ear candlings, and burnt my ear...she also insisted I receive coffee enemas. Nope.

What a remarkable adventure living in a very weird town of misfits. Something like "1997 Burning Man at the Border." A few folks were accessible but most were retired hermits who only wanted to do their thing.

I got to know Tim best. This Texan built a sprawling adobe house, literally filled with stuff, like a giant storage locker except in the kitchen. Strangely, Tim and his wife lived instead in a

very small tent trailer parked in the driveway. It drove his wife crazy!

Tim regularly left our village to sell hundreds of his meat-turning barbecue tools, towing their home, the tent trailer, behind his van. He left his angered wife behind to live in an overstuffed storage locker, a divorce waiting to happen.

Tim hired me to work small festivals with him in Yuma, Arizona. At night he drank and stayed up until 4 a.m. watching TV on a satellite dish he set up under the freeway overpass where we camped out. The road trips were bizarre as he drove like a maniac, talking of wild conspiracy theories. I went with the flow, yet quite relieved to return to our gentle community of artists.

SC sometimes struggled to make decisions for months. Few residents showed up for monthly meetings. Honestly, I couldn't see much future living in this village, as I was not ready to retire in a dusty collection of endearing misfit Americans hiding out while just barely within the US borders.

I preferred the border city of Palomas, Mexico (just three miles away) to SC, where Campbell's Mexican wife lived. Occasionally I rode a borrowed bike there to shop, and enjoy the food in haphazard eateries, making acquaintances with the kindly Mexican folks who adored their children. They all seemed so reasonable and "normal."

Mexico was a fantastic contrast, reminding me I wanted more community than Solar City offered. By May the days were already hot. Since I still owned a remote cabin in the wilds of high mountain Colorado I realized it was time to go north for the summer. I hitchhiked a ride with a member fleeing the heat. There I could live without rent at my pine nut orchard and consider what community I might try next.

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center

For many years before the New Mexico adventure I returned twice a year to Tassajara. At the dead end of an 18-mile, steep, dirt road through the Ventana wilderness lies a Buddhist monastery that feels as distant from mainstream life as it is beautiful. During the summers the Zen Buddhist



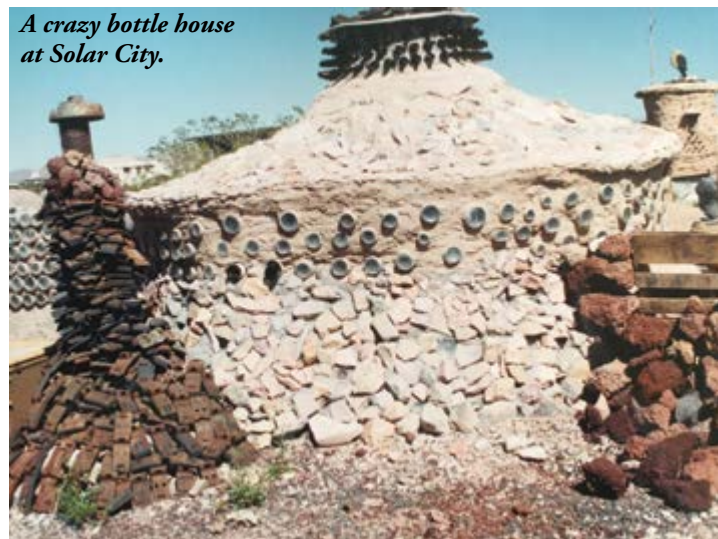
Author at the flower gardens in Tassajara.



Friendly members of Solar City add more concrete to their underground home.



Mark Campbell filling papercrete forms.



A crazy bottle house at Solar City.

Photos courtesy of Philip Mirkin

monks open their gates to welcome visitors to a sacred land where native Esalen Indians soaked in the healing hot springs for thousands of years.

Summertime retreatants came to rest, renew, and enjoy the fantastic vegetarian meals that the monks dished up. When the summer visitor season ended it became a closed monastery once again. Volunteers like myself were welcomed for up to a month on either end of the visitor season to help with the immense work preparing for visitors and then preparing for winter after they left.

During the freezing winter most of the monks took a vow of silence during daylight hours, spending up to eight hours a day in the Zendo meditating silently. It was a truly quiet refuge from the rest of California's speed and high-cost materialism.

I became part of the Tassajara family as a seasonal volunteer worker, during the two work periods (pre-and post-visitor season), over a decade. Around 25 of us volunteered six hours a day. I delighted in this unique cultural world hidden in a cul-de-sac deep in the coastal range of Central California's Big Sur.

For years I did whatever was asked: scrubbed toilets, cleaned rooms, dug ditches, often changing jobs on a daily basis, where needed. Eventually one regular job became working in the extensive gardens and greenhouse. The beauty of flowers added needed color to the austere world of the Soto Zen monastery.

Few would choose to live there as music is not allowed. Value was placed on mindfulness not speed nor pleasure. Each work season my soul took a rest in contrast to the contradictory world outside. How sweet it was to be part of a community with a definite focus: communal meditation, respect for all life, and the precepts of Zen philosophy.

The fluctuating group of kind people, in an egalitarian community, appealed greatly. We all shared a gentle bow as we passed each other along the sandy path. Sometimes a slow five-

minute walk from the hot springs back to my shared cabin took 20 minutes, stopping to bow to each person. There was nowhere we had to be quickly, although everything was on a tight schedule.

Our days began at 4:45 a.m. when the designated Kokio of the day rang a bell in the blackness of morning waking us for meditation. After walking in total silence we sat again in total silence, our tired eyes barely open, gazing at the wall in traditional Zen meditation. Trying to stay awake, focused on your breath and not your ever running thoughts (or back pain) was a mission. If this doesn't still your soul I don't know what will.

Evening meditation was also optional for us guest workers; we could rest with only the sound of the wind, bells, and a wooden "roll down" (a call to Zendo) in the distance. Hot coffee and tea waited in the shaded courtyard below the dining hall. The sound of the creek rushing directly below us under the sycamore and ash trees was enchanting. Steep canyon walls and impenetrable brush surrounded us.

Each day, after a delicious vegetarian breakfast, we gathered in a massive circle, all of us standing and facing each other. Announcements followed: evening lectures, maintenance projects to begin, lost and found articles, people's needs for rides out of the wilderness, and then finally, the request for volunteers on a dozen projects. We each had one day off per week.

I loved this morning circle when we also welcomed newbies, and said goodbye to workmates, students, or monks. Even the Abbot, a strong woman who led us modestly, shared this equanimity. The fragile and kind humanness was evident in each of their faces; compassion grew. I saw beyond their exterior as we stood shivering in the cold morning twilight before the sun reached the bottom of the canyon.

I felt a sweet, joyful camaraderie in achieving our tasks, whatever they be: repairing a cabin, laying irrigation pipe, clearing the creek of fallen limbs, sweeping or shoveling. Some monks washed dishes daily for over 100 people. Society at large treats dishwashers clearly at the bottom; I gained respect for dishwashers outside of this refuge as well.

Other guest workers became friends; some returned each year as specialists, like trained carpenters who contributed a great deal to the village. Others like me were general hard-working hands one could count on to pull their weight. We enjoyed solid work amidst the bothersome flies on hot afternoons or bundled up on freezing mornings. We all remained equal.

During mealtimes we shared the stories of our lives. Deep friendships were forged. Students stayed for six months or more. Even monks opened up freely: Luminous Owl shared a photo proving he was once a bearded "Deadhead." Others remained in a monkish repose and attitude.

One special day when working on a culvert outside the village and up the dirt road, a 25-year monk named Carol did something forbidden inside the village: she played a worker's guitar while singing, something she hadn't done in decades! A magical moment of sweet rarity: it surprised her more to hear her own singing voice than it did us.

The verbal silence felt soothing rather than uncomfortable. We simply did what we were supposed to do: peacefully contribute to this close-knit, finely tuned community.

In conversation I found that many of us struggled as Tassajara truly tested each person to face themselves. The place challenged our preconceptions and assumptions of "outside" life and our own pasts. As a result of our intense closeness and the simple truth of our interactions, relationships sometimes began here. However, they were discouraged as another distraction from the intense Zen work at hand. Each of us confronted "our ancient, twisted karma" and messy lives.

The common thread that ran through these weeks was a sense of clarity, mindfulness, integrity,



Tassajara common space brings people together.



Community restrooms at Solar City.



Creative building interpretations in the New Mexico desert.



Monks and students enjoy tea break in their work clothes at Tassajara.

commitment, and focus. Rarely was someone asked to leave for breaking this order, but it did happen.

For the monks our work period was the most relaxed time of the year. It stood in contrast to the extremely austere winter when they were hard pressed to complete daily tasks and maintenance. Hence our need to prepare. Imagine black-robed monks shoveling snow.

The summertime was also challenging for the monks and students who had to keep their vows in sharp contrast to the paying visitors who came to soak their city bones in the hot springs. Visitors drank the wine they brought in, absent-mindedly forgetting where they were, a monastery. The times I hiked in from China Camp in the summer I found loud New Yorkers and Californians trying to impress each other in a place where no one cared about such things.

So many fond memories of being there: Soaking alone in complete darkness under star-filled skies. Hiking through the wilderness to the river narrows where waterfalls and pools beckoned us to throw off our clothes and all the nonsense from our minds, to dive into the cold water, then lay naked on the rocks above. Making hidden stone sculptures for the monks to find. Listening to ancient chants in English or Japanese while I sat in impassioned silence in the Zendo. Digging irrigation ditches with laughing acquaintances. A chance two-minute meeting with my future girlfriend, April, who later traveled to Colorado to my remote personal hermitage.

Amongst the most powerful and salient memories were the very long, quiet minutes when time seemed to stand still for me. Each day before bathing I stood all alone in front of the simple altar at the entrance to the hot springs bathhouse. There the reflection in the glass showed me something wonderful and rarely noticed: I could see myself as an integral part of everything I was within, not separate from the world as an identified being, but wholly of the scene—a reminder that I am not at all distinct as a separate being in this world, but entirely a part of all that surrounds me. At those moments there was no duality; I was not separate from anyone or anything else, or indistinct from the forest. My self-identity briefly vanished. It softened the self-absorption that can occlude the mind. Compassion grew.

I especially loved working in the gardens where I've spent more than half my total of 10 months there. I eventually became deferred to as an efficient, reliable senior gardener. What a pleasure. Maintaining the herb garden, planting seeds, or transplanting baby flowers from the nursery, I knew what to do; I learned much from those elders who passed their experience down to me to then instruct garden novices. Year after year we witnessed the flowers we planted bloom in beauty.

As guest workers we were allowed a more relaxed freedom with time to get to know one another. We talked candidly, joked, and deeply listened, often growing closest to our assigned roommates. Reading was encouraged; excellent books were available in the small, cozy library.

We were not encouraged to hurry, but rather to do each and every small task and large job **mindfully**. We cut vegetables very slowly; to cut yourself was indeed mindless. Sometimes we walked at a snail's pace, as a walking meditation, or stood still for an hour.

The Abbot bowed to every one of us. I did not sense the hierarchy. Expert builders were deeply respected as artisans, but were not above anyone as they fashioned unique handrails and custom doors, constantly beautifying and maintaining the aging wooden cabins where we slept without much furniture. Within the simplest cabins there was only a Japanese tatami mat on the floor and a kerosene lamp, perhaps a chair on the porch above the sometimes roaring Tassajara Creek.

Another year my girlfriend April joined me for two weeks. As a couple we were lucky enough to get one of the luxurious stone cabins that had a huge soft bed and a fireplace to keep warm on the freezing September nights (none of the buildings had insulation). Otherwise, the luxury of Tassajara Zen

Mountain Center was in its tranquility, food, society, and the ancient healing waters.

I was honored to be encouraged by the Abbot to live in Tassajara long term. I stayed behind to fight the 1999 Kirk Creek Fire (98,000 acres burnt surrounding the village). We had evacuated nearly everyone to the San Francisco Zen Center for their safety; it looked like the village would burn as trees flamed on the hilltops and rolled downhill towards us. The smoke nearly enveloped us.

My old friend Lourdes and I volunteered for the skeleton crew risking our lives to remain there in support of the CalFire firefighters, and prison inmates (90 of them) as we helped defend the village from flames on three sides. I felt no greater honor or duty.

After each work period I hitched a ride back to uncivilization. Relationships deepened on the ride home, crawling up the crazy, twisting long dirt road. A sweet camaraderie we shared, our rejuvenated selves carried forth, excitement building as we re-entered the mainstream world.

The noise and speed gradually increased. Being in a car after three weeks was strange enough; hearing the blare of television at lunch in Carmel Valley Village was a strange alien sound. We knew the serenity of where we had been. We continued to bow, even though in this wealthy wine community and in far-flung cities we felt entirely out of place. Yet for weeks the feeling of respect remained. We were forever changed.

Returning again each year I felt absolute joy seeing these beloved friends knowing we would work and laugh again bonded in the depth of beingness, true community, and the gentle kindness and respect we shared with one another.

Tassajara remains arguably the most wonderful community I've ever been a part of in 35 years of world travel.

Karaka Casu, New Zealand

Not too long after Solar City I moved to New Zealand. I first met Tom, a founder of Karaka

Casu in northern NZ at the 2005 Ecoshow in Auckland. We met respectfully as part of a panel of five experts discussing sustainable building in the NZ building world. As a main speaker I also gave a daily program of hands-on workshops teaching Hybrid Adobe.

Tom invited me to teach a series of workshops at his village. I knew about this place already as it has a famous vegetable stand and shop that operates on Highway One north of the “Big Smoke” (Auckland).

I always loved going there and thought it would be great to live there. The two-to-four-day workshops went very well with eager participation from volunteers and attendees. Tom suggested I remain there in between workshops and help him with some projects as a consultant

The more egalitarian, interactive, and focused we are on shared labor, the stronger and more long-lasting a community seems to be.

and designer. At one workshop we tore down a crumbling outhouse made of cob and rebuilt it using the exact same earthen material (true on-the-spot reuse and recycling) adding a few ingredients to form a much stronger Hybrid Adobe and composting outhouse. Strong, funny Maori women decorated it with sculpted spiders and Maori words. The workshops succeeded and I made many new Kiwi friends.

The community vibe was great during the workshops as members came by to see what was up, but living there was quite a bit different. Each member or family owned an approximately one-acre lot with fruit trees, vegetable gardens, or some animals; some just had a big house. Effectively it was more like a subdivision, with a profit motive, as ownership was sometimes seen as merely an investment. Some members commuted to the big city and then flipped their property (like other big city folk they were sometimes called “JAFAs”—Just Another F*cking Auckland, in the local slang).

There were very few regular meetings for the whole village, other than a potluck that was not always well attended. Some land was held in common as a reserve, but the community center was seldom used except for workshops and special events. So I really didn't get to meet most of the people that lived there.

In the end they had no designated place for me or other volunteers to sleep or live (for more than a night or two) other than a 14-foot trailer parked on the one narrow road coming in, with no electricity. I was quite a bit disappointed that this large, wealthy community, with large homes, of-

fered little provision for volunteers other than a cold, moldy, dark trailer. Not much of a warm welcome.

Nonetheless, I took part by volunteering hard work, and sometimes attending a weekly music jam of only four people. Little by little I realized that it was an intentional subdivision. Many people worked online or commuted to Auckland. The draw for me and other volunteers was to the famous shop. And also to Kathy, Tom's wife, whose warmth and knowledge as a famous permaculturist was legendary (she held the largest pre-European seed bank in NZ).

Since the accommodations were impossible to work or get comfortable in, I maintained an apartment in Whangerei north of there where I could have a proper bathroom, bedroom, and work area. Of course commuting in my Toyota meant splitting time with another city and this village life.

Things changed rapidly with two strange occurrences. The huge mixing machine we spent many weeks building for Hybrid Adobe was purposefully destroyed by the owner of the local concrete business. Then Tom suddenly sold his business to Richard, a wealthy member who showed no interest in running it, much to my dismay as that was the vehicle for my sustainable building panel design work. That shut me down as neither one put any further energy towards our project in a rather backhanded method to abandon our partnership.

Then one day Tom sat me down in a tiny café in another hamlet and let me know that they had sold the farm, but he still owed over 50 people a lot of money besides me. He told me coarsely that I would never be reimbursed for my effort or loans and I should expect this shitty situation. Sorry, mate.

Definitely the opposite of community.

Tom and Kathy quietly and quickly fled the next week to a remote part of NZ where his creditors could not find him. They just vanished. Many of us were literally S.O.L. (shit out of luck).

The intentional subdivision suffered greatly as one of the founders caused true embarrassment due to the deceit, excessive borrowing, and financial disgrace. Despite having given months of volunteer work, I had very little to show for my strong efforts. With no reason to remain, I moved to my place in the nearby city.

Beware and be aware.

Contrasts to Fiji Organic Village (FOV)

Fiji Organic Village has been extensively covered in recent issues of COMMUNITIES, notably issues #171, #172, #174, #179. Rather than repeat myself, I use aspects of FOV to provide contrast. Briefly, I cofounded the ecovillage with the local chieftain and his extended family at their strong request. We also built a traditional-style village homestay (like a backpacker's lodge) and sustainability education center that succeeded for five years before I moved to the US.

Whereas Solar City (SC) was a collection of adorable, obtuse artists, dissimilar to each other and society, doing whatever they liked, members of FOV were a distinct culture of mostly ethnic Yasawan Islanders following cultural traditions. Respectful of elders and old-school traditional lifeways, it was very clear how we would interact and honor each other, similar to Tassajara in the clarity of its micro-culture, sharingness, and common kindness. Yet in Fiji there was immense joy, music, and kava.

Having an agreed-upon concrete focus (religious, permaculture, or otherwise) and set of guidelines as to behavior does provide order, camaraderie, and cohesiveness, as opposed to unfocused Karaka Casu (KC) or SC.

Karaka Casu included about anyone with cash enough to buy a plot, and Solar City welcomed anyone at all, with or without cash or a commitment. In contrast, both Tassajara and FOV welcomed people on a trial basis with their contribution to the community in personal, direct, ongoing, and concrete ways. Important was labor given, compatibility, and respect shown to the mores and values of the micro-society. Gift giving, income, food, and material sharing were the glue that held FOV together, like most traditional societies. We all sank or swam together. Those who continually lazed about, didn't share properly, or were disrespectful or racist were asked to leave our southern end of the island in Fiji's Blue Lagoon.

Plots of land were purchased at SC and KC, with volunteers welcomed but very little provision was made for them. Membership was principally based on land ownership and some monthly contribution. In Fiji the land is held in common with personal garden plots (yams, etc. for trade and gift giving) assigned annually based on effort from the previous year. At Buddhist Tassajara, no one had land rights of ownership or control that they could exclude others from. We were all welcome to enjoy nearly every part of the place; even longterm monks' lodgings changed regularly. Basically everything was shared in Fiji and Tassajara; little was shared at SC and KC other than the designated common areas. Sharingness is perhaps the telling signature of true community.

A common sense of engagement and full participation was always evident at FOV, while diversity was welcomed and appreciated. Tassajara welcomed all people's diversity but was much more strictly governed by strong precepts one must follow to remain there during or past the work seasons. It was a monastery, after all. Rule breaking was dealt with, as opposed to SC or KC where you could do whatever you wanted, strange as it may be, behind the closed doors of your own private spot. Shared accommodations were the norm at FOV and Tassajara, and getting to know your roommate or neighbor created familiarity, and closeness. No man or woman is an island.

Perhaps most importantly, all meals were shared with nearly every member at both FOV and Tassajara. Everyone could speak around the circle when we joined each evening at FOV, and everyone's voice was heard, just like at Tassajara. Sharing food is often the societal glue that holds everything together and joins people across nearly every land-based society.

People rarely ever shared meals at the other two, except at weekly or monthly potlucks. Those rare meals took an outsized importance as it was often the only time you would meet your neighbors. The poor attendance said even more about the community, that it could exist without much interaction. Clearly SC and KC resembled more or less neighborhoods with some infrastructure or land in common, but they were not true "intentional communities." This in fact begs the question, what fits that definition, and what belongs on the ic.org website?

These contrasts have everything to do with the cohesiveness and longevity of each community. Certain cultural guidelines or controls for acceptable actions may inhibit personal and aberrant behavior, but contribute greatly to a culture of shared values. For intentional communities to flourish (and not by property values or return on investment) it becomes evident that an agreed-upon focus is absolutely imperative. Indeed extreme individualism has everything to do with the violence and division in the United States' mainstream society.

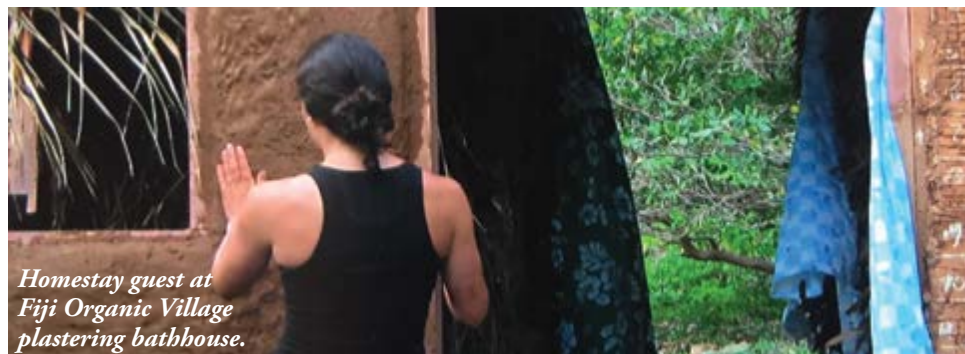
Conclusion

In general it seems the more food, objects, and values (especially trust) that are shared, the greater the strength, resilience, and unity there is. The more individualistic or suburb-like these communities are, the more they are prone to alienation, internal division, deceit, or collapse. I've seen this in at least three other communities not mentioned that were based on money and not values—they completely disintegrated as a result of desertions or ended in lawsuits with complete dissolution.

In evaluating the health and vitality of a prospective community to join, one must consider how much is shared, what the focus is, and how much emphasis or reliance there is on money. Questions to ask: Do a few members control decisions? Is success based on the leadership or wealth of a single person or founder? These can be red flags.

Truly it seems that the more egalitarian, interactive, and focused we are on shared labor, the stronger and more long-lasting the community will be. 🌿

Philip Mirkin is the founder and executive director of the Fiji Institute of Sustainable Habitats (www.SustainableFiji.org), now partnered with the Fiji Government, and the cofounder of the Fiji Organic Village. He is also founder of Hybrid Adobe International, which designs and creates new building materials and architecture to respond to climate change. He has designed ecovillages in Fiji and New Zealand, and is currently designing hurricane-resistant natural shelters. Philip has led more than 120 workshops in sustainable building at University of California Santa Cruz, The Institute for Solar Living, the American Institute of Architects, and many other locations. Since 1981, Philip has led annual humanitarian aid relief expeditions around the world. He has also authored several books including The Hybrid Adobe Handbook. He can be reached at philipmirkin@hotmail.com.



Homestay guest at Fiji Organic Village plastering bathhouse.



Residents and students at Fiji Organic Village on the way to church.



Women and children of Fiji Organic Village.



Building a traditional home at Fiji Organic Village.

MANY SHADES OF GREEN:

Establishing a Culture of Sustainability in a Diverse, Developer-driven Expatriate Community

By Nermin Dessouky, Angela Sanguinetti, Alan Meier, Sarah Outcault, and Richard Tutwiler



The central spine of the community showing the divided waste bins, biodomes, and solar roofs.



Residents biking as a form of internal transportation inside TSC.

We were driving [and] saw a big sign that read “The Sustainable City,” so we checked it out. The main point that attracted me was the community. I did like the solar panels to offset my carbon footprint and the waste segregation system, but I believe that sustainability is about having a community and sharing things. My main reason to live here was [its] intention [to be sustainable]. —Eva¹

We knew moving to Dubai was going to be a big change. We started doing our research to see how Dubai can satisfy our lifestyle that focuses on less consumption and organic food. I typed “organic Dubai” on the browser and a place called “The Sustainable City” popped up. —Angie and Mark¹

Angie and Mark are an American couple. Eva and her husband are Dutch. Like many other residents of The Sustainable City (TSC), these two expatriate couples sought a community in Dubai that would align with their values and support their desire for a sustainable lifestyle during their time in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). With an average summer temperature around 106°F and a population that is 90 percent expatriate, building a community in Dubai, let alone a sustainable community there, can be a challenge.

The Sustainable City (TSC) is a five million square foot (46 hectares) planned community in Dubai, UAE. Construction started in 2013, the first residents came in December 2015, and by May 2018, 90 percent of homes were completed and occupied. Residential units include 448 townhouses and 50 detached villas in five neighborhood clusters, plus 89 apartments in a commercial plaza.

Although TSC is a large developer-driven community—not resident-led and -managed like a typical intentional community—many of its residents share common motivations for living there. The developer has promoted a vision of sustainability—evident in the community’s name—which has attracted like-minded residents with over 90 different nationalities. This has created a sense of community around common values resembling that of intentional communities. In

this way, TSC integrates aspects of intentional community within a developer-driven planned community model.

We are a team of researchers from The University of California, Davis, and The American University of Cairo, investigating ways to promote a culture of sustainability in planned communities. We have been studying TSC for three years and observing how the community has been evolving over time. It is our assertion that although TSC is a large-scale developer-led community, it illustrates the ways in which the “intention” of a community is integral to sustainable lifestyles. We will discuss how some aspects of TSC’s design and management promote, or present challenges to, the community’s culture of sustainability.

Community Design

Just by taking a five-minute walk in TSC you realize that it is more than just another large-scale residential development. Standing in the middle of the green spine, you can see solar panels atop all the roofs (40,000 panels to

1. Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

be exact, which generate 10 MW of power), biodomes which enable urban farming despite the extreme heat, convenient recycling stations around every corner, and streets with no cars—just people walking, cycling, or riding shared electric buggies. Parking is located along the periphery of the community. TSC also has an onsite greywater treatment plant to provide water for irrigation and water features. These are just a few examples of sustainable design at TSC.

Some of these design features attracted residents for reasons other than their relevance to sustainability, and thus TSC drew residents with diverse values, not merely those looking for a sustainable lifestyle. For example, the promise of lower energy bills (thanks to each home's photovoltaic panels) is a significant draw since electricity is a huge housing-related expense in Dubai. The pedestrian-oriented walkways and restricted car access are very attractive to young families because they allow children to play outside safely. Residents whose decision to move to TSC was driven primarily by reasons such as these, which do not relate to environmental benefits, present a challenge for promoting a culture of sustainability. However, some of these residents grew to value sustainability through exposure to the physical features at TSC. For example, one resident who was not initially interested in sustainability upon moving to TSC noted: "Fast forward...[I am] 1000 percent more on board." She credited the change to being able to "actually see things happening in front of you," e.g., "learning about recycling and solar panels."

Unlike typical intentional communities where residents participate in community design, all systems and infrastructure in TSC were already in place before residents moved in. This lack of participation in design, compounded with diverse cultural backgrounds, means education about design features and systems is very important to achieve the intended impacts for sustainability. For example, a Dutch couple we interviewed was accustomed to even more extensive waste-sorting, whereas the idea of sorting at all was a novel idea for a Jordanian family. Getting all households to use the sustainability features properly requires various types of outreach in a place like TSC.

Community Organization and Management

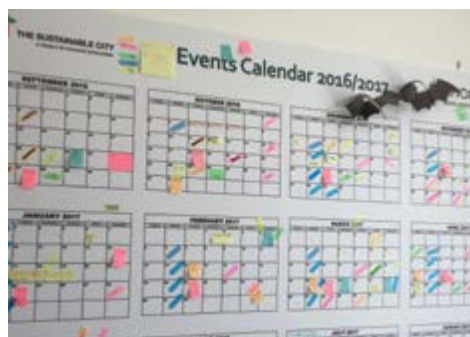
TSC organized many educational events to orient residents to sustainable design features and systems. However, they may not be well-attended, or frequent enough to catch newcomers. One resident explained, "The information is not really clear; if you are really interested and you ask

around you get the information. They don't do presentations regularly, so people who moved in later missed the initial presentations." Even residents who are fully committed to the sustainability vision still need more guidance and expect the management to provide it. One resident suggested, "It would be good if there was a TSC manual on how to live sustainably, e.g.

A Dutch couple we interviewed was accustomed to even more extensive waste-sorting, whereas the idea of sorting at all was a novel idea for a Jordanian family.

what kind of washing powder to use, so it is greywater compatible...how to save water, save on the use of the AC, etc."

TSC has also organized many social events (e.g., movie nights and sporting events) to promote a sense of community among residents. Social events often center around topics related to sustainability, such as garden walks and an Earth Day celebration, leveraging the shared values of many residents to strengthen the sense of community and pro-environmental norms. Partly as a result of these efforts, TSC has been relatively successful in terms of building a sense of community despite immense diversity, as illustrated by these resident quotes: "Here I know 50 families. Everybody says hello



Photos courtesy of authors

to each other”; “The place is very multicultural—like-minded people coming together. There is a sense of being on the same wavelength.” This sense of community, along with the supportive physical environment, bolsters the culture of sustainability at TSC. One resident explained the constant process of striving for sustainability as a community: “We are all growing together, learning and making mistakes.”

TSC management assumed a strong role early on in terms of organizing events to educate residents and cultivate a sense of community between diverse residents who were new to the community (and often new to the country as well). However, this degree of management involvement in community activities does not seem to be economically sustainable, as indicated by a decline in management-led activities and the introduction of small fees for participation. Unlike most intentional communities where residents volunteer to collaboratively manage themselves, TSC management must be paid. From the perspective of management, the early efforts were intended to plant a seed for a more self-sustaining community in the future. On the other hand, it set a precedent for residents, such that the decline, or cost, of social events later on came as a disappointment. That said, there are important resident-led initiatives, such as a widely popular moms’ group and running group, that help support community cohesion in TSC. This quote is also illustrative: “I started a Yoga class. I do it for myself, to get to know the nice people. Those kinds of initiatives—just stepping out and doing a thing—people eventually are responsible [for building the community they want].”

TSC’s innovative sustainable design strategies and strong role of management in promoting community and sustainability make it unique among planned communities, and in some ways comparable to intentional communities. These features are critical in promoting a culture of sustainability at TSC, but they also present challenges—namely that some design features attract residents who do not value sustainability and the role of management as community builder is not economically sustainable. These challenges also reflect the absence of some key characteristics of intentional community—e.g., participatory design and management. Attracting a wider pool of residents than the typical intentional community can also be perceived as an opportunity, as it helps in mainstreaming and promoting the values of a sustainable lifestyle to a wider audience. TSC’s vision and flexibility, along with the high turnover of expatriate residents, creates an intriguing opportunity for a living laboratory to provide lessons in building a culture of sustainabil-

ity in many types of communities. The story of TSC will continue to unfold, revealing how a developer-driven planned community can foster shared values and sense of community that seem vital to a culture of sustainability. 🌱

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Art projects made out of plastic waste in TSC.



A community compost bin for residents to dispose of their organic waste.

Four Ganas members in a personal discussion.



Courtesy of Ganas



Discussing a community issue at Ganas.

Nadette Stasis

TURNING IT AROUND: Culture, Compassionate Inquiry, and Transformation in a Community

By Michael Johnson

I have described my community Ganas (on Staten Island, New York) to many people, but I don't think I have ever done as good a job at getting to the heart of the matter as did Arthur Jullien, a young Frenchman who had lived here for several months a couple of years ago. He did so in a wonderful letter, which included the following:

"I appreciate Ganas for many reasons, I'm not sure I can list them all, but to me Ganas culture is more than a community culture, it's also a culture of self-questioning, self-doubt, and reflection. A desire to see things from many points of view and to want to find the best in everyone.

"Many times, while I was in Ganas, I saw someone doing something, saying something that felt so mean, violent, aggressive, misplaced, hurtful, or careless. But one minute after, one hour after, one day after, I saw the same person doing something so beautiful, gentle, thoughtful, sweet.

"That's the beauty of Ganas for me. None of us are perfect, but we all have something really beautiful in us, and we try to find it to develop it, and to find the beauty in others too.

"In Ganas, I love to find people who share a desire to question themselves and are willing to take time to solve problems if something comes up. People who are willing not to drop it and say 'this person is stupid!' but actually try to understand, and spend the time that it takes to actually do it.

"It's precious, not to give up on others, but to try understanding them. Thank you, all of you."

I can't really improve on that. What I can do though is to say a little bit about how we have succeeded as well as we have at what Arthur picked up on. How we have provided the necessary support and resources for working with the worst aspects of ourselves, even in some cases transforming destructive zero-sum patterns into win/win ones?

Overall, Ganas has been able to do this rather successfully due to the fact that we intentionally developed a transformative community culture and have been able, with a lot of work, to sustain it for 38 years. Our community devotes significant time and energy for interested people to learn to hear and understand each other better so they can join with one another at deeper levels and in more loving ways. Since this kind of thing doesn't just happen, we have put in a lot of work to learn how to bring this about and to sustain it.

Here I am going to focus on one particular process that lies at the core

of the success we have achieved. Although we have never given it a name its objective is very clear: helping people move out of being caught up in what we call the **blame-and-punish paradigm** and move into what we call **compassionate inquiry**. The former is the mindset most of us flash into when some kind of fear or rage gets triggered. It embodies our zero-sum tendencies: the other(s) are wrong, have offended me (us), and should be punished. It is a major source of much of the persistent negativity and polarization many of us get trapped in.

Compassionate Inquiry, on the other hand, engages both our intelligence and compassion when we get caught in a stand-off so that we can begin to work towards resolution and healing. Several of us have learned how to facilitate the movement from tense conflict into the combatants finding out from each other *what was happening* from each other's perspective, and *what each wants*, and from there into *what all of us can do about it*. Many others have become skilled at being able to support and contribute to this work. Most of the learning has happened over the years in and through our Planning Session, which happens five mornings a week.

Here's an example. Some time ago we had a young man come to the community—let's call him Chris—because he was in a difficult transition in his life and we needed another worker in our furniture store. He was in a very unhappy period of his life, hardly social at all to the point of never eating dinner at the community table, and unpleasant to be around. He had no interest in the inner work we were doing. He was difficult to work with and bad moods often affected his work performance. The manager and staff were nearing the point of firing him. When the manager told him this, he erupted in a fury saying no one was giving him a chance, threw his keys on the front desk, shouted names at people, said he never wanted to come back to the store or the community, and walked off. Now that left him in a big jam. He didn't have enough money to go anywhere, and didn't have anywhere to go to boot.

The next morning we asked Chris to come to Planning to work out his next step. He came full of fear, regret, and humiliation. We began by trying to find out what had happened from his point of view, and it became clear how difficult it was for him to talk about himself in any way. We kept exploring, gently. Slowly bits and pieces of his personal predicament came

out, but nothing was coming together coherently. This was leaving him frustrated and dejected. At one point one of us really got what was going on for him. Not objectively, but empathically in terms of how he was experiencing himself and his whole situation at work and in the community. She spoke this to him beginning with “Chris, is this what you are trying to say...?” She was spot on, and Chris, stunned at first, started to come to life.

The rest of us could see that he was discovering what was going on for him for the first time through what she had picked up and gave back to him. He began getting somewhat animated and engaged, and enough of his story came out so that everyone was getting a sense of what he was going through. As this unfolded the energy in the room shifted. While we continued talking with him, the furniture store staff and managers went outside to consult. They changed their decision to fire him, came back in, and said they wanted him to come back to work. After that we worked out a plan for him to continue with us for the next few months it would take him to be able to move on to his next thing. And that gave us time to find a replacement.

Compassionate Inquiry is not a Ganas creation. It’s a universal human method, deep in our cultural DNA, for solving problems and resolving conflicts. It involves opening one’s ears, mind, and heart in genuine good will. We usually don’t know exactly how we are going to get there or how the openings will come about. It becomes a creative process where one can begin drawing upon her curiosity in order to find out what was happening for both the other(s) and one’s self that hadn’t yet come into awareness. Once she and the others in a particular conflict begin to shift from the blame-and-punish mindset, they start opening up. That tends to become contagious. Giving and receiving feedback begins to run into less and less resistance, and they begin to collectively review what happened.

As this dialogue goes forward the exploration tends to move organically into finding out what is wanted by each *and* the overall situation. As tensions lessen the participants can begin to genuinely touch the experience of the other(s) in her or their complexity. Finally, participants begin seeing a path to follow for resolving the conflict to the satisfaction of all parties. Or not. In the latter case, they can get to a point of realizing that resolving the issue at hand will take a lot more time and work. Sometimes the best we can do is for those involved to agree to disagree and figure out how they can coexist with that.

It isn’t just this process, however, that enables us to get to positive outcomes as we did in the case with Chris. It was and is our *personal and collective capacity to develop and use that process*. We developed this gradually, internalizing it individually and institutionalizing it in our culture, by working through many work and relational conflicts whenever something triggered zero-sum defensiveness and the individuals were willing to move into their vulnerability. At our best we can use the triggering event to explore how one got triggered and how one could learn to manage that trigger. These explorations are like archaeological digs: slow, tedious sometimes, fascinating, and rich in discoveries.

They have also led to most of the truly transformative changes individuals have made. Collectively, as our practice evolved we became more and more aware that each of us—he in his way, she in hers—could do a lot to manage one’s fears and defensiveness. We’ve learned to see the blame-and-guilt paradigm as one operational system within us, but not an essential part of our self.

One of the most transformative moments of my life came during a time I was sinking deep into that negative paradigm. My girlfriend at the time and I were going through a bad patch. I was taking a couple of days to repaint my room and she had offered to help on a particular day. Things had gone particularly bad the day before, and when she came into my room it was clear

from her dress she wasn’t going to help. We were both charged from the day before, exchanged strained greetings, and eventually got into being nasty with each other. She left and I went on painting feeling miserable and down.

A few moments later one of my housemates came to the door of my room, and asked how I was doing. I knew he had been in the nearby TV room and had heard everything that had gone down. Just his asking that question pissed me off:

“What do you mean ‘how am I doing?’ You heard the whole damn thing!”
“Yes, but you don’t have to feel bad about it.”

Now that really pissed me off, and now I was more than just feeling bad. I was building a rage. “What are you saying!” I yelled back at him. “You know what went down. Why are you being such a jerk! How could I not feel bad about it!”

He stayed calm and patient. “Yes, I heard the whole thing and I know the whole back story, too. But really none of that has to make you feel bad.”

I was right on the verge of venting all of my rage at him, but his wife came up and said, “Michael, he is right. You really don’t have to feel this bad about what happened.”

This stopped me enough for a ray of perspective to slip in. I went silent and took something of a deep breath. I knew they cared about me, knew me well, and were savvy about relational stuff. We had been through a lot together. After a moment I was able to mutter, “Okay. I’ll give you 15 minutes to hear you out, then to hell with you both.” So they had helped me to shift out of my negative *reactions* somewhat, enough to *respond* to their invitation.

In the middle of listening to them I began to recognize their line of thought. Then to get its meaning. It felt like their words were prancing right into my heart and mind. As this began to happen something began to shift in my body. My rage began to seep away, slowly at first and then rapidly, but with surprising ease. It even felt familiar. Suddenly there was a bright shift throughout my being. She had just said, “We always have a choice as to how we respond. No matter what happens.” And all of me started going, “Yes! Yes! Yes!” I wasn’t thinking or speaking that to myself. It was pulsating through me. It was like I was being that yes.

Our Planning Group was able to sense Chris’s suffering and reached out to him from our love and skill in facilitating compassionate inquiry. My friends did the same for me. I believe both stories give us a look into the heart of a transformative community culture: the uniting of love, willingness for real positivity, transparency, agency, and skillful intelligence within and between its active members. This is what Arthur picked up on in his short visit.

And the work never stops. Recent situations are now calling on us to get a whole lot of new information about gender and race issues we haven’t had to deal with in the past, and to use that information to help with a lot of introspection and change. 🌱

“What do you mean ‘how am I doing?’ You heard the whole damn thing!”

Michael Johnson has been involved in group dynamics and community organizing since 1973. He cofounded the Ganas intentional community in New York City in 1980. It is based on cooperation produced by open communication and an empowering approach to accountability. It is still thriving. He has been researching, writing, and organizing in the cooperative/solidarity economic movement since 2007. He blogs and is published at Grassroots Economic Organizing (geo.coop), and is a coauthor of Building Co-operative Power. He is currently at work on a book that draws on all his life’s work, Growing Democracy: a cultural strategy for taking our love and democracy to new levels.

Growing at Ganas

By Jessica Curtis



Courtesy of Ganas

Birthday celebrations are big events at Ganas.

The culture of community at Ganas has helped me grow. I moved in because it seemed familiar on the website, and indeed it was comfortable. But I wanted to be integral, a reliable cog in the practical machinery of community, as well as an observer. I joined Ganas in 2002; the members who were already old-timers then hadn't thought of making a community but only of experimenting with relationships and trying to make a society that would not have holocausts in the future. Interesting.

I brought with me the sense of not belonging. At Ganas I expected that if I did what was wanted I would belong. But I continued to feel "outside." Ethnic identity? Nope, Ganas has people from all over the world, many of whom were clearly "in." So what was keeping me "out"?

Ganas has two hours of meetings five days a week, concerning both practical planning and interpersonal and personal issues, and I attended them. Years of very rough interactions followed. But I stuck it out. What helped?

Through Feedback Learning, a system to facilitate self-directed change developed at Ganas, I learned to identify my reactions as separate from and not controlled by the event or stimulus that preceded them. For instance, if someone insults me, they are not making me angry, I am making myself angry about the insult. We can take control of our reactions and decide to change them; not easy or quick but certainly a life-altering insight and skill.

A Nonviolent Communication (NVC) class on empathy was given over many months by a Ganas member skilled in that discipline. Now at least I know that empathy is not some magic talent but a learnable skill. Knock off another frustration.

A longtime Ganas member said once to me that I was as "in" as anyone. I decided to believe him. Proactivity wins out after all.

Over my 16 years at Ganas I've had much opportunity to observe others, both in their idiosyncratic habits, the feedback they get and their re-

sponse to it, how they fit or don't fit into the group, and what they actually contribute. I learned how to make a suggestion and though it may be shouted down at the time, recognize that if it is brought up successfully by someone else, maybe weeks later, that is also a contribution on my part.

After years of attending to the consequences of my behavior, I learned that feedback is a gift and one doesn't need to become defensive. Nothing bad will happen if the feedback-giver thinks they are right, even if I disagree. Arguing with them was likely to prevent me from hearing them. The defensiveness of others now stands out to me and I want to assure the defensive person that feedback is not an attack, and even if it were, one can just take it for what it's worth and move on. How liberating! And how it makes it possible to see the other's point of view, as if a new window onto the world had opened!

I've had multiple opportunities to contribute, mostly not very successful. Note-taking during meetings (in the end we have stopped taking notes). A not-so-appropriate series of jobs including carrying the garbage down to the street for collection and driving the transit truck between our various business locations and the houses, both of which were too heavy for me but I hung in with them for a long time. House cleaning, which was too lonely.

Then I asked to be a cook, and that job has stuck. With cooking for 80 people twice a week I can make a needed and wanted contribution, I can make the food I want to eat and nourish my fellow communitarians. I have a good relationship with the housekeeping manager who does the shopping and her assistant who plans the week's food schedule. People like my food. So my ambition of being an integral part of the community is realized at last. 🍷

Jessica Curtis, a 16-year member of Ganas (Staten Island, New York), is a retired visiting nurse, hoping to become a science fiction writer.

The False Dichotomy of Urban Life versus Community Life: SMALL COMMUNITY CULTURE WITHIN BIG CITY CULTURE

By Leon Tsao

Potluck gathering for members of several intentional communities in NYC.



Courtesy of NYC Community Living Facebook

New York City is to me a magical city, a land of many occupational, creative, and social networking opportunities. It has many unusual and diverse events, and a pulsating energy that cannot be found anywhere else. I love NYC culture.

Ganas, a NYC-based intentional community, is to me a magical community, an intimate home-sweet-home, a spacious and quiet multi-house living area with gardens and 70 non-blood-related “relatives” to come back to after a day in Manhattan. I love Ganas culture.

Many people pitch big city life against community life. There is a kernel of truth behind this dichotomy of cultures. It seems obvious on the one hand you have aspects of a capitalist, independent, anonymous culture, and on the other hand you have a socialist, interdependent, intimate culture. But I feel like this dichotomy is largely self-fulfilling prophecy. I believe that both cultures can coexist, and one person can enjoy both.

I was born in NYC and spent most of my life in the NYC area, inculcated in its particular city-life culture. I love the city, but deeply felt something significant was missing: community. Ganas, a NYC-based community, personally offers to me a healthy and happy balance to NYC life. On the other hand, NYC is a healthy and happy balance to Ganas life.

I emphasize personally, because I know it is not the same for everyone. Some people prefer rural intentional communities and are very happy there. For me, I have tremendous respect for these communities, but if I were to live in them, I would find them stifling. I love big city life.

I believe the dichotomy of “big city versus community” is a self-fulfilling prophecy because often when people come into the city, it is largely assumed there are many necessary sacrifices one needs to make in order to live there. Some of these ideas include: you will live in a scrunched space. You will not know your hundreds of neighbors well, even if they are in the next building over or even down the hallway. You have to be largely reliant on yourself. You are going to live away from nature and be in the midst of a concrete jungle. If you want to live in the vibrant city and seize its opportunities and endless list of activities, it’s believed, you cannot have community life, and visa versa.

These sacrifices are real, but that is simply because that is how society is unthinkingly set up. Let us reimagine big cities. If more people choose to live communally in cities, they can actually have more space because space is shared. The city, especially NYC, can have more room for greenspace if people share living space. You will have neighbors you have closer relations with if public space can be redesigned to be communal. The list goes on. Thus, you do not have to sacrifice what a city has to offer in order to live communally. We can eradicate loneliness and wastefulness typically found in cities if our imaginations are brave.

In society, we often confuse what is necessary with what is simply the unquestioned norm. Ganas and other urban communities stand as stark examples in which tradeoffs between city and

communal life are significantly reduced. I hope the larger intentional community movement can support their efforts, because it is much harder to establish communities there than in rural areas. This is in part because urban society has not yet understood the value of them.

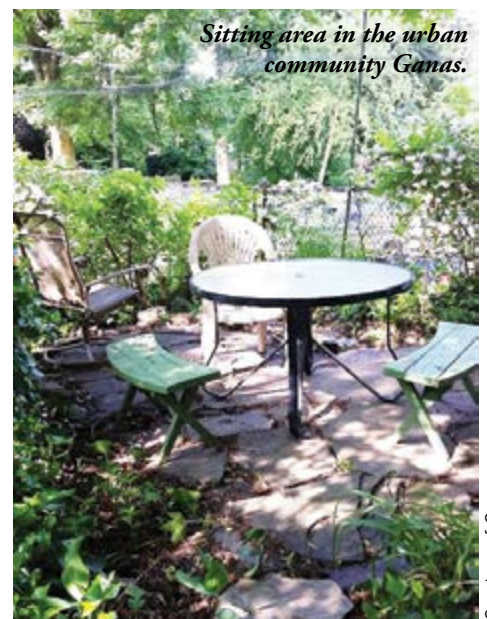
In time I believe people will see how intentional community is an effective means to fill what is missing in urban life, and in the future they will sprout across cities everywhere and cities will be redesigned with communities in mind as viable options.

My hope comes from one memorable moment, when I was walking by Ganas with a friend from outside of the community. He does not know we are passing by an intentional community. People from the community warmly greet me with open arms and chat me up, addressing me by name. My friend appears astounded, saying, “Why Leon! This is so unusual in the city that all the neighbors know you by name. What a pleasant and wonderful surprise! How did you manage to do this?”

Indeed, it is pleasant and wonderful, and I want people in the rest of the city to have the option to have neighbors and life like this too. 🐾

Leon Tsao is a psychotherapist and life coach interested in psychological well-being and positive group environments in intentional communities. He lives in the NYC-based community Ganas, loves the people there and the community’s focus on communication and relationships, which feeds his interest in psychology. He loves to play guitar and sing and sit on one of the porches in Ganas, observing the cats go by.

Sitting area in the urban community Ganas.



Courtesy of Ganas

CREATING THE IDEAL INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY (OR REVITALIZING AN EXISTING ONE)



I, Sahmat, grew up in intentional communities and have lived in 10 of them. I have been so dedicated to Community with both humans and Nature that I've been called "The Community Guy". The communities I grew up in shared a fairly strong "sense of community". I call this deep and sustained sense of community "Common-unity" because it's a state of unity we share in common, with the unique individuality of each human and each species still honored. It's this state of Common-unity that I've found most valuable in life and to me it's the main reason for living in an intentional community. When a group is deep in Common-unity together, there's a shared sense of love, joy, and peace that tops any other group experience.

However, I've found that in all the communities I've lived in, the sense of community is not nearly as deep and sustained as it could be. It's precisely this lack of Common-unity that is the root cause of the catastrophic global suffering of racism, wars, child abuse, abuse of women, environmental and species destruction, etc. So the ultimate goal is ending global suffering through "Global Common-unity": the spreading of Common-unity throughout the world by forming a global network of Common-unity-dedicated Communities.

So I've spent my life learning how to create Common-unity-dedicated communities that share true Common-unity: a deeper and more sustained sense of community. There are two keys to starting a Common-unity community (or moving an existing community into deeper Common-unity):

1. The first key to Common-unity is for everyone to be "Common-unity-dedicated" as their top common priority. This doesn't seem to be the case in any existing community, which results in focus and energies being bled off into other priorities. So maintenance of Common-unity doesn't get enough time and energy.
2. The second key to Common-unity is to learn "Common-unity Skills"; skills that must be practiced to maintain Common-unity: Speaking from the Heart, Empathetic Listening, Emptying of Ego-attachments, Conflict Resolution, Consensus, Heart Wound Healing, Cooperative Housing, and Cooperative Economics. Modern culture does not teach us these skills.

We at the Alliance for Global Community have developed free workshops that train you in these Common-unity Skills. The workshops contain the Sharing Circle process developed by M. Scott Peck, a Nature connection exercise developed by John Seed and Joanna Macy, healing exercises developed by Byron Katie and Richard Moss, and exercises in creating Cooperative Housing and Cooperative Economics. We've tested various versions of these Common-unity Skill Building workshops over the past 25 years, and we've found them to be quite effective in teaching Common-unity skills that can help maintain Common-unity. If you'd like to start a Common-unity-dedicated community, or if you'd like to bring more Common-unity into an existing community (perhaps through a Common-unity sub-community or "pod"), you need to learn or improve these Common-unity skills as soon as possible.

To find out how to sign up for a free public Common-unity Skills workshop or schedule a free workshop for an existing group or community, please go to my website thecommunityguy.org There you can also find out how to get a free copy of the book "Skill Building for Global Common-unity".



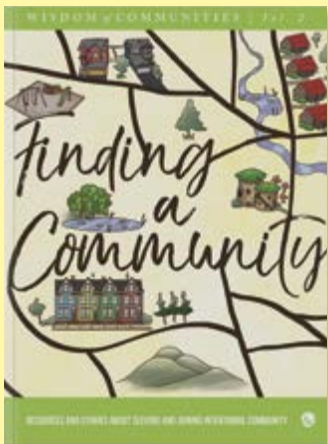
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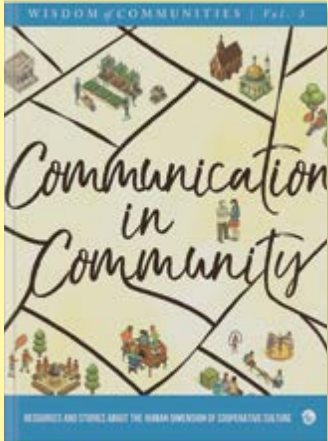
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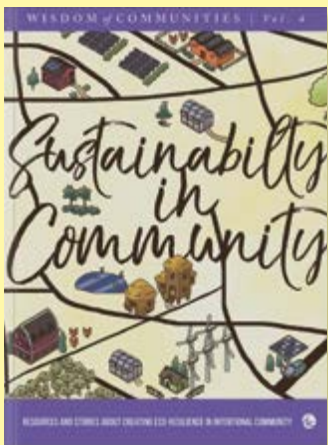
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THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #182 - Spring 2019 (out in March) is January 28, 2019.

The rate for Reach ads is... Up to 50 Words: \$25/issue or \$60/year; Up to 100 Words: \$50/issue or \$100/year; Up to 250 Words: \$75/issue or \$200/year. If you are an FIC Member you may take off an additional 10%.

You may pay using a credit card or PayPal by contacting Gigi online or over the phone using the contact information above. Or, you may mail a check or money order payable to Communities with your ad text, word count, and duration of the ad, plus your contact information, to: The Fellowship for Intentional Community, 1 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Box 23, Rutledge, MO 63563.

Intentional Communities listing in the Reach section are also invited to create a free listing in the online Communities Directory at Directory.ic.org, and also to try our online classified advertising options. Special combination packets are available to those who wish to list both in the magazine and online.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

LOST VALLEY EDUCATION AND EVENTS CENTER is seeking new potential residents—especially those interested in taking on leadership roles or passionate about gardening—to join our sociocratically-run, permaculture- and NVC-oriented intentional community and aspiring ecovillage on 87 acres, 18 miles from Eugene, Oregon. Please visit www.lostvalley.org. Contact us at: sitemanager@lostvalley.org or 541-937-3351.

THE VALLEY OF LIGHT is a community of cultural creatives that rests along the New River in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. With over \$2 million invested, our 22-acre campus is debt-free and includes 3 homes, 8 building pads, campground, barn, garden, "Peace Pentagon" conference and community center, and other amenities. We share our campus with The Oracle Institute, a charity that operates a spirituality school, award-winning press, and peacebuilding practice. We seek co-founding members in five Paths: Native (farmers and landscapers); Scientist (we love geeks!); Artisan (artists and builders); Peacemaker (teachers and activists); Oracle (spiritual students). Please visit www.TheOracleInstitute.org/about-our-community & PeacePentagon.net. Contact Katie@TheOracleInstitute.org.

55+ COMMUNITY, DURHAM, NC - Village Hearth Cohousing welcomes LGBTs, straight friends, and allies. Building 28 accessible, energy-efficient homes clustered on 15 beautiful acres. Only a few left. Starting construction Fall 2018 in culturally vibrant progressive Durham for move-in late 2019. Come on by! www.VillageHearthCohousing.com

ROCKY CORNER COHOUSING, THE FIRST IN CONNECTICUT! Here is what makes us unique: We are the first cohousing in southern New England, the closest to NYC. We are 5 miles from the small vibrant city of New Haven where political action and fine arts are thriving. We have been using sociocracy as our governance and decision-making model since 2012. We use permaculture principles to decide how to use our land. Neighbors can garden and farm together as much or as little as they want. We will own our individual energy-efficient homes and co-own organic farmland and a beautiful common house. Here are some of our values: We strive to create a neighborhood that is supportive and inspiring for individuals and families. We support people of all ages to enter, stay and participate in the community throughout their lives. We value our children as members of the community encouraging their participation and leadership. We work cooperatively for mutual benefit. The community promotes the physical and emotional health, safety

and security of our members and guests. We make space in our lives for play and artistic expression. We encourage continual learning, skill sharing and teaching. We consider the Rocky Corner community, the wider human community and the health of the Earth when making decisions and choices. Does this speak to you? We have Affordable and market-rate homes for sale that will be ready to occupy in spring 2019. Construction has started. Come join us now! Find out more at www.rockycorner.org.

D'ACRES PERMACULTURE FARM AND EDUCATIONAL HOMESTEAD seeks enthusiastic, motivated people looking for long term residency to further our mission of building community and living sustainably. Located near the White Mountains in New Hampshire, our 200 acre property is home to large vegetable gardens, countless fruit and nut trees, an abundance of flowers and herbs, pigs, chickens, alpacas, rabbits. We also have direct access to a vast network of mountain bike and cross country ski trails right out our back door. Opportunities abound for building your own enterprise; blacksmithing, fiber arts, bee keeping, food products, traditional arts, draft animals, the sky is the limit at DAcres. Check out "The Community Scale Permaculture Farm" the book that gives the full story. Visit www.dacres.org.

HUNDREDFOLD FARM IS A 10-HOME COHOUSING COMMUNITY NEAR GETTYSBURG, PA. Our custom designed energy efficient single family solar homes are surrounded by 80 acres of fields and forest. Community gardens and a greenhouse provide organic produce year-round. Four ready to build lots start at \$75k. Come grow with us! www.hundredfoldfarm.org

COHOUSING A LA MEXICANA! Located near Ajijic Lake Chapala, 3 Acres are now being developed with new homes. We stand for Sustainability, Community, Multiversity and Aging in Place. We are seeking quality VISIONARY and ADVENTUROUS members/investors to embrace and help us transcend this shared dream. Contact Jaime Navarro at info@rancholasaludvillage.com or www.rancholasaludvillage.com

SPIRITSONG COMMUNITY - We are a small community of five people wanting to be ten people looking for new members. We are located in Napa county, CA. We live on 37 acres of mainly wooded land 2 miles up a dirt road. We have several structures available for people to live in. We are off the grid of the Internet, we have organic gardens, and a small dairy herd. We have a non-dogmatic interest in Spiritual Awareness. Contact Rory Skuce 707-965-3994 or middletownmassage2@yahoo.com

COWEETA HERITAGE CENTER AND TALKING ROCK FARM are located in the mountains of Western North Carolina in a beau-

tiful and diverse temperate rainforest. CHC is looking for others who would like to join together to form an Intentional Community embracing the principles of Voluntary Simplicity and Healing the Earth and Each Other. Simply put, we wish "to live simply so that others may simply live." It is a recognition that nature provides us with valuable services and resources that we can use to enrich our lives. Utilizing local resources, appropriate technology, and working cooperatively, we can discover creative ways to meet our needs as "directly and simply as possible." Come join Coweeta and learn how to live lightly on the land and enjoy the Earth's bounty! Contact Coweeta for more info or to schedule a visit!! Contact Paul at coweeta@gmail.com.

DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE is an intentional community and educational non-profit focused on living, researching, and demonstrating sustainable living possibilities. We live, work and play on 280 acres of lovely rolling prairie in Northeast Missouri, and welcome new members to join us in creating a vibrant community and cooperative culture! Together we're living abundant and fulfilling low-carbon lives. We use renewable energy, practice organic agriculture, share vehicles, utilize natural and green building techniques, share some common infrastructure, and make our own fun. Come live lightly with us, and be part of the solution! www.dancingrabbit.org or 660-883-5511 or dancingrabbit@ic.org.

COMMUNITIES FORMING

RALSTON CREEK COHOUSING ARVADA CO - Imagine an energetic group of eclectic families who value treading lightly on the land. They come together near Old Town to design a vibrant common house and 20 private dwellings. Envision a modern three story building with an outdoor courtyard in a rural setting with urban amenities. What if this whole urban village called Geos was powered by solar and ground source energy (net zero), had a community garden and a view of the mountains. Picture being near a creekside bike path with 300 days of sunshine. It heads to both the light rail and open space parks. You unplug your electric car, hop onto I-70 to ski and come home to relax with a glass of wine and dinner with friends. www.ralstoncreekcohousing.org

LAND, HOUSES, AND REAL ESTATE

LAKEFRONT LOTS IN BC CANADA AVAILABLE FOR SHARED COMMUNITY VISION - Lakefront lots for owner-occupiers and investors are located in the Lakes District on a remote lake with drinking water and an abundance of fish and wildlife. Each lot has an extensive lakefront and is large enough for a small community. There is no zoning and therefore no building restrictions. Some owner financing available. For more details, see <http://www.canada-farm-ranch.com/spirit.html> We are also offering an opportunity to join an Intentional Community Project on an organic, lakefront farm in this wilderness area. For more details, see: <https://www.ic.org/advert/intentional-lake-community/>

COSTA RICA FARM FOR SALE BLUE ZONE NICOYA PENINSULA: Utilizing natural landscape design, permaculture and organic principles this pristine 100 acres farm on Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica is ready for new stewards. Over past 24 years owner has lovingly restored, planted and prepared the land to a rich and thriving state. Property includes: two houses, a 1500 sq ft multi-purpose building with washroom facility; artesian spring, view building sites and more! Farm is poised perfectly as a retreat center, intentional community, eco-development, and/or food forest. Endless options exist.Located in the heart of Nicoya Peninsula mountains, Refugio de Los Angeles farm is approximately 2 hours drive from Liberia International airport in Guanacaste. Nicoya's Pacific coast is a picturesque drive through undeveloped rural countryside; the beautiful beach of San Francisco de Coyote is just a 35 minute drive away... There are plenty of farm properties available for sale in Costa Rica which lend themselves toward a variety of developments; few, if any, hold the type of idyllic space as this very special piece of land. Price: \$875,000 USD Contact: simplelivingbydesign@gmail.com or Call WhatsApp in Costa Rica: +(506) 8994.4601 (Central Time Zone) Details, photos, videos: SimpleLivingByDesign.com

LAYTONVILLE, MENDOCINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. Newly Renovated Three-Bedroom Green Home For Sale on Two Acres. All permaculture bells and whistles onsite, ready for move in, workshops, Airbnb rental, lots of extras. Please see website for more information: <http://mendocounty-greenneighborhoodhomeforsale-laytonville.com/> Beautifully restored hardwood floors, custom woodworking,



Something for everyone — exploring cohousing, forming groups & mature communities

- Bus Tours & Open Houses
- Pre-Conference Intensives
- Multiple Tracks: Building It - Living It -Sustaining It
- Facilitated Discussions
- Networking Opportunities

May 30 - June 2, 2019

Early Bird Registration Opens January
2019.cohousing.org

We'Moon 2019: FANNING THE FLAME

This astrological datebook is a best-selling moon calendar and visionary collection of women's creative work, now in its 38th year. *We'Moon 2019: Fanning the Flame* sparks our passion for revolutionary change. Full color with week-at-a-glance format.

Binding choices:
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WM19CM
for 15% off

We'Moon on THE WALL

A beautiful wall calendar featuring inspired art and writing, astrological information and interpretive articles.

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Bill Kauth & Zoe Alowan Kauth
bkindman@mind.net 541.482.2335



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)



PDC in Anton Panama

Includes facilitated classes, tutorials, room & board at our guest house, plenty of time to practice your designs plus permanent access to online resources & support from permies from around the world. *Held quarterly*

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March 17, 2019 — 4 wks, \$750

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redwood siding, grid-tie solar and solar hot water, new roof and septic, wood burning stove, outdoor kitchen with cob oven, outdoor solar shower, permaculture landscaping, greywater, deep reliable well with filtration, large barn, and more! One mile outside of town, easy walk to public schools. Three additional parcels available.

EARTHAVEN ECOVILLAGE, 2 apartments for sale or rent at Cohousing Neighborhood near Asheville, NC. Off-grid, timber-frame, passive-solar home in the heart of our village. Efficiency (288 sf) for \$40k and 3BD (1152 sf) for \$125k. Includes all infrastructure (utilities, gardens, orchards, common house, etc.) Details at <http://www.reclaimingwisdom.com/apartments-for-rent/>

SERVICES/OPPORTUNITIES

HOUSEPARENTS/COWORKERS: The Lukas Community seeks a compassionate, hard working couple or small family to live with and help care for our developmentally challenged residents and to participate in our therapeutic programs. www.lukascommunity.org/join_us. Send resume and cover letter to Kristen Stanton at lukas@lukascommunity.org or The Lukas Community, PO Box 137, Temple, NH 03084.

INNISFREE VILLAGE IS SEEKING ONE-YEAR RESIDENTIAL CAREGIVERS to live, work and play in community with 40 adults with disabilities. Experience the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains on our 550-acre farm in Crozet, VA and build lifelong friendships and memories. Together we bake bread, weave scarves, raise chickens and lifeshare! For more information, visit www.innisfreevillage.org/volunteer or email nancy@innisfreevillage.org.

TO CELEBRATE 45 YEARS OF BUILDING INTENTIONAL URBAN SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY, Morningland Monastery in Long Beach, California will offer a few work/study opportunities for those interested in Monastic Immersion. We are an offline lay monastery dedicated to 'simple living and high thinking' through meditation, service, study, and ceremony. All faiths welcome. Our practice is Maha Anu Ati-Yoga, an ancient yoga for spiritual awakening. Open houses, retreats, digital detox, and special events offered monthly. Applicants for Monastic Immersion must complete an interview process. Call 562-433-9906 or write explaining your interest and what you can contribute to our community. "Environment is stronger than will." -Yogananda. offline. unplugged. real. Morningland Monastery, 2600 E. 7th St, Long Beach, CA 90804

THE ECOVILLAGE INSTITUTE - The purpose for EVI is to enlighten the whole of the human experience. All our programs take place at the heart of Cite Ecologique of NH Ecovillage. To learn more, please visit our web site www.evi.life or call 603-331-1669. "Live Free and Inspired"

FREE NATURAL BUILDING INTERNSHIP IN MOAB, UT! Join us for our five-month internship, where 16 interns will work together under natural building instructors to build two straw bale homes from foundation to finish. Homes are built for low and very-low income residents of the community. Housing and food stipend provided! Seasonal internship dates are typically February 1st - June 30th, and July 15th - December 15th. Contact us directly at coordinator@communityrebuilds.org or (435) 260-0501. More info at www.communityrebuilds.org

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES, WORKSHOPS

NEW WEBSITE TO ENCOURAGE ARCHITECTS AND GROWERS TO BUILD AFFORDABLE SELF-RELIANT NEIGHBORHOODS. At age 77, I live in an Ecovillage. As a young man, I couldn't have afforded that better option for raising my daughter. I created this website, www.sirno.org, to encourage top-down, replicable ecovillage models for this generation.

WISDOM OF COMMUNITIES - SINCE 1972, Communities magazine has been collecting and disseminating the lessons learned, and now we're distilling them into a new 4 volume book series on the following topics: Starting a Community, Finding a Community, Communication in Community, and Sustainability in Community. With over 300 pages each of hundreds of our best articles, this series is intended to aid community founders, seekers, current community members, students, and researchers alike in their explorations. Available in print and digital format: www.ic.org/wisdom

STOP working for money. Walk away from the rat race... and work for Love instead, in a growing Christian community!

Go to: youtube.com/AVoiceInTheDesert and search for: **Happy Homeless**



Cohousing provides the community we need to thrive while ensuring the privacy we enjoy.

CohoUS is a national non-profit raising awareness of the benefits of cohousing and supporting the development of cohousing communities nationwide.

We link people with the resources they need to create and nurture cohousing communities while helping them connect and share with each other.

www.cohousing.org



The Valley of Light A Community for Cultural Creatives

Seeking Farmers, Builders, Techies, Artists, and Activists

The Valley of Light is located along the New River in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. With over \$2 million invested, our 22-acre campus is debt-free and includes 3 homes, 8 building pads, vegetable garden, barn, chickens & goats, campground, trails, labyrinth, kiva, medicine wheel, and many other amenities. We share our campus with **The Oracle Institute**, an educational charity that operates a spirituality school, award-winning press, and peacebuilding practice.

Become a Founding Member of our Evolving Campus

One of our founders manages the **Peace Pentagon**, where we hold retreats and our community meetings. Another founder created **Manna**, an alternate currency for social good. We are seeking more social architects involved in progressive and cutting-edge movements!



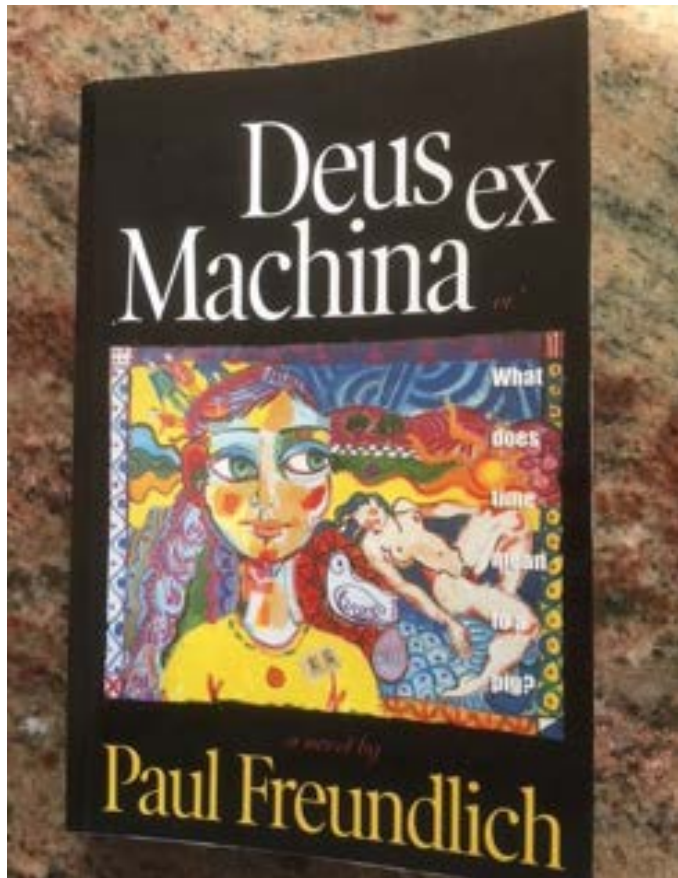
www.TheOracleInstitute.org
www.PeacePentagon.net
www.Mannabase.com



88 Oracle Way
Independence, VA 24348
276-773-3308

November, 1963. In the middle of the Pentagon's grey corridors, the inner courtyard is a green haven for civilians and military on their lunch break. On a crisp fall day, an attractive young matron waves to her naval lieutenant husband. It is 12:15 pm, and Kay has nothing on her mind except the small picnic basket she has brought. Along with the rest of the United States, she is oblivious to preparations in a Dallas office building, perhaps on a nearby grassy knoll, which at this moment remain suspended in time, subject to intervention and choice, if...

If we only knew then what we know now...



Plunked down in the middle of the 20th century, reverted to his childhood body, but his memory intact, Joshua Leyden takes a run at revising his own life, and changing a future that needs some tinkering.

“Held me every step of the way. A great read, challenging ideas, fascinating and seductive.”
– David Kahn, Harvard Faculty.

Consider two trains heading in opposite directions, but stopped in a station. While the trains wait, it is possible to change between them. Transferring passengers would then head down their own timelines, reviewing past images incrementally. So it is with memories. So it is with dreams.

“Wonderful, touching characters, reworking our fate.” – Hazel Henderson, Economist.

Each night, the sun went down, Nora to bed, and Josh prowled around her soul, searching for a key to unlock their mystery. While Nora slept beyond a narrow wall, Josh fought the need to break on through to the other side – replaying every mistake he'd ever made in either life. Rising, hitting the brandy, writing in a notebook lest the typewriter wake the girl. He couldn't even feel sorry for himself when he knew Nora had it far worse.

It's about time: A love story, both provocative and playful...

Paul Freundlich, Founder of Green America and Dance New England; for a decade an Editor of “Communities”; filmmaker, essayist and activist has created a journey that transcends time and reworks reality.

Available from Amazon.com [search: Paul Freundlich]

BEST OF COMMUNITIES BOOKS – We've distilled the most insightful and helpful articles on the topics that you—our readers—have told us you care about most, and have organized them into 15 scintillating books. Learn about Starting or Visiting a Community, Consensus, Good Meetings, Making Agreements, Solving Conflicts, Cooperative Economics, and more! Available in print and digital format: www.ic.org/best-of-communities

SAGEWOMAN magazine, celebrating the Goddess in Every Woman, still going strong after 30 years. **WITCHES&PAGANS** magazine covers Pagan, Wiccan, Heathen and Polytheist people, places, and practice. 88 pages, print or digital (PDF). Mention this Communities ad for a free sample. 503-430-8817, P O Box 687, Forest Grove, OR, 97116. www.bbimedia.com.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA—CENTER FOR COMMUNAL STUDIES (CCS) – The Center for Communal Studies (CCS) was created in 1976 as a clearinghouse for information and a research resource on communal groups worldwide, past and present. Located on the campus of the University of Southern Indiana in Evansville, the Center encourages scholarship, meetings, public understanding and learning about historic and contemporary intentional communities. **ARCHIVAL RESEARCH COLLECTION:** We invite researchers to use the Center's Collection of primary and secondary materials on more than 500 historic and contemporary communes. Our Collection is housed at Rice Library and has over 10,000 images and a reading room with an extensive library. Online resources may be found at <http://www.usi.edu/library/university-archives-and-special-collections>. Email the archivist at jagreene@usi.edu for information. **REGIONAL RESEARCH:** The CCS is part of a rich array of historic communal resources within a 30-mile radius of Evansville that includes the famous Harmonist and Owenite village of New Harmony. New Harmony's Workingmen's Institute Library and the State Museum collection also offer unique research opportunities. **PROGRAMS:** The CCS sponsors lectures, conferences and exhibits. The Center will sponsor a Communal Studies Minor in the USI College of Liberal Arts beginning fall 2019. **WEBSITE:** The CCS website (<http://www.usi.edu/liberal-arts/communal-center>) serves scholars, students and the interested public. **CENTER PRIZES AND RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANT:** The CCS annually awards a Prize of \$250 for the Best Undergraduate Student Paper and a Prize of \$500 for the Best Graduate Student Paper on historic or contemporary communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias. Deadline for submission is 1 March. The Center also annually awards a \$2,000 Research Travel Grant to fund research in the Communal Studies Collection. Applications are due by 1 May. **LOCATION AND CONTACT:** The CCS is located in Room 3022 of Rice Library at the University of Southern Indiana. Evansville has a regional airport with jet service from Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and elsewhere. You may contact the Center by phone 812/465-1656 or email director Casey Harison at charison@usi.edu.

FREE GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES at Tree Bressen's website: www.treegroup.info. Topics include consensus, facilitation, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on! Articles, handouts, and more—all free!

FRIENDS JOURNAL is a monthly Quaker magazine for spiritual seekers. Our mission is to communicate the Quaker experience in order to deepen spiritual lives. Read Friends Journal in print and online. Watch short interviews with modern Friends at QuakerSpeak.com. Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter and receive Quaker stories, inspiration, and news emailed every Monday. Thank you for reading!



Founded in 2010, WolfStone Ranch is a licensed nonprofit animal shelter that has so far saved the lives of over 250 dogs and cats. And now I want to form an Intentional Community with Kindred Spirits as passionate and committed as I, to help me expand WolfStone Ranch into a **SPIRITUAL RETREAT CENTER FOR PETS... and their people!**

WolfStone Ranch's overall goal is to become a deeply spiritually-based, passionately activist community dedicated to making the rural Midwest a much more compassionate place for all the animals (and people) who live in this region.

First, please see my online ad at www.ic.org/advert/wolfstone-ranch... and then check out my website, wolfstoneranch.org.

DIVERSITY is crucial to the success of the new WolfStone Ranch. Therefore, I am enthusiastically seeking people of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual identities... and religions that do not practice torture or sacrifice of animals. (Being a vegetarian is required.)

IF YOU RESONATE WITH MY VISION for WolfStone Ranch, then you will be welcome here! Prospective members may be invited for a one-week work and visioning stay at the ranch.



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Life's Little Victories: Twin Oaks Version



Dessert

The dessert on the steam table that everyone else thinks is disgusting tastes delicious to you.

Twin Oakers have been known to make some very "creative-tasting" desserts. We also dumpster-dive a certain amount of food. Between those both, you never know what might make an appearance at dinner, or if you might find it to your taste...



Ditto O&I

One of the communards you admire most fervently dittos your O&I comment.

The "O&I" Board (Opinions and Ideas) is where people can post a proposal to change something in the community. Proposals are written on clipboards on a big board, and any member who wants to can add their comments, expressing their enthusiasm or concerns about the proposed change. If you've written a comment, and someone else agrees with your perspective, instead of writing their own repetitive comment, they can just "ditto" what you wrote.

Last Minute TOR

You catch the tripper with a last-minute TOR.

We have members whose job it is to go shopping in town for the group. To order an item, you fill out a "Twin Oaks Requisition"—T.O.R. for short. Ideally people put their TOR in a day or so before the town trip happens, but sometimes you have a very last-minute craving for your favourite junk food or you just have forgotten, and you can try to catch the town trip before they drive away.



Unpleasant Conflict

The member you've just had a horribly unpleasant conflict with announces that co is leaving the community (for unrelated reasons).

The sign of a healthy community is not whether or not there is conflict—since conflict is an inherent part of living together—but rather how the conflict is handled. Ideally the two parties will talk about what happened and find resolution, but sometimes it's just a relief to be able to let something go if someone leaves.



A longtime member of Twin Oaks (Louisa, Virginia), Valerie Renwick published a 'zine (Life's Little Victories: Twin Oaks Version) including the artwork above in June 2017. She thanks Keith Knight, for the initial inspiration for Life's Little Victories (kchronicles.com); Lindsey for organizing the study group where most of the artwork was done; Brittany for technical assistance; and herself, for stepping outside of her artistic comfort zone to do this project.

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