



WELCOME to the collection
and the collecting
...feeling and responding
to the value of people
without the wealth of money.

THE SUCCESS
OF FAILURE

**AMERICAN
STREET
PHILOSOPHERS**

Steve Wilson and Friends



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AmericanStreetPhilosophers.org

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Cover and book design by Nina Noble Design
www.ninanobledesign.com

ISBN:

Library of Congress Control Number:







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AMERICAN STREET PHILOSOPHERS

THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE

feeling and responding
to the value of people
without the wealth of money



WISH LIST:

1. Sanity
2. Home
3. Food
4. Friends
5. Music
6. Art
7. LOVE

AMERICAN STREET PHILOSOPHERS

is a visiting, an understanding, an appreciating and ultimately a resolve for our dilemma.

“Rather than dismiss, relocate, complain
...the plight of poverty is a metaphor
for what our culture is becoming.”

“...sobering and inspiring.”

This, and more, from

AMERICAN STREET PHILOSOPHERS

is expanded in
www.americanstreetphilosophers.org
and the ongoing series:

THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE

(a Kirkus Best Books of the year 2016)

WE'VE BEEN THINKING...AND IT WORKS

THEM IS US

KEEP ON, KEEPING ON....

THE 'ELSEWHERE' OF RISING EQUALITY

FYI

Thanks for investing time to consider thoughts from
“often invisible Americans in all their vibrant humanity.”

Their words, my photos, uncover the success of failure:
domestic, financial, healthcare, societal, moral;
little money, recycle sheltering, trickle-up poverty,
bull-n-bear NIMBY’s, welfare politics, responsibilities.
And environmental concerns—dozens for thousands.

A national embarrassment and an international catastrophe.

Self-helped failure, corporate greed, life-style choices,
but “the times they are a-changin’.”

Globalized compassion.

Environmental sanity.

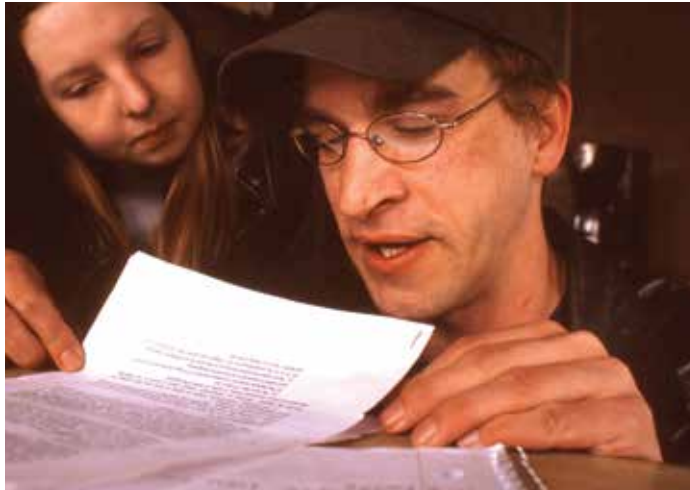
‘Upper-class homeless’ words and photos to city, state, country
agencies, to churches, to universities, to museums, to activists
and advocates, to libraries, to NGO’s, to HUD and to the million,
seven-hundred thousand houseless Americans.

Anecdotes for surviving

Authors’ Introduction







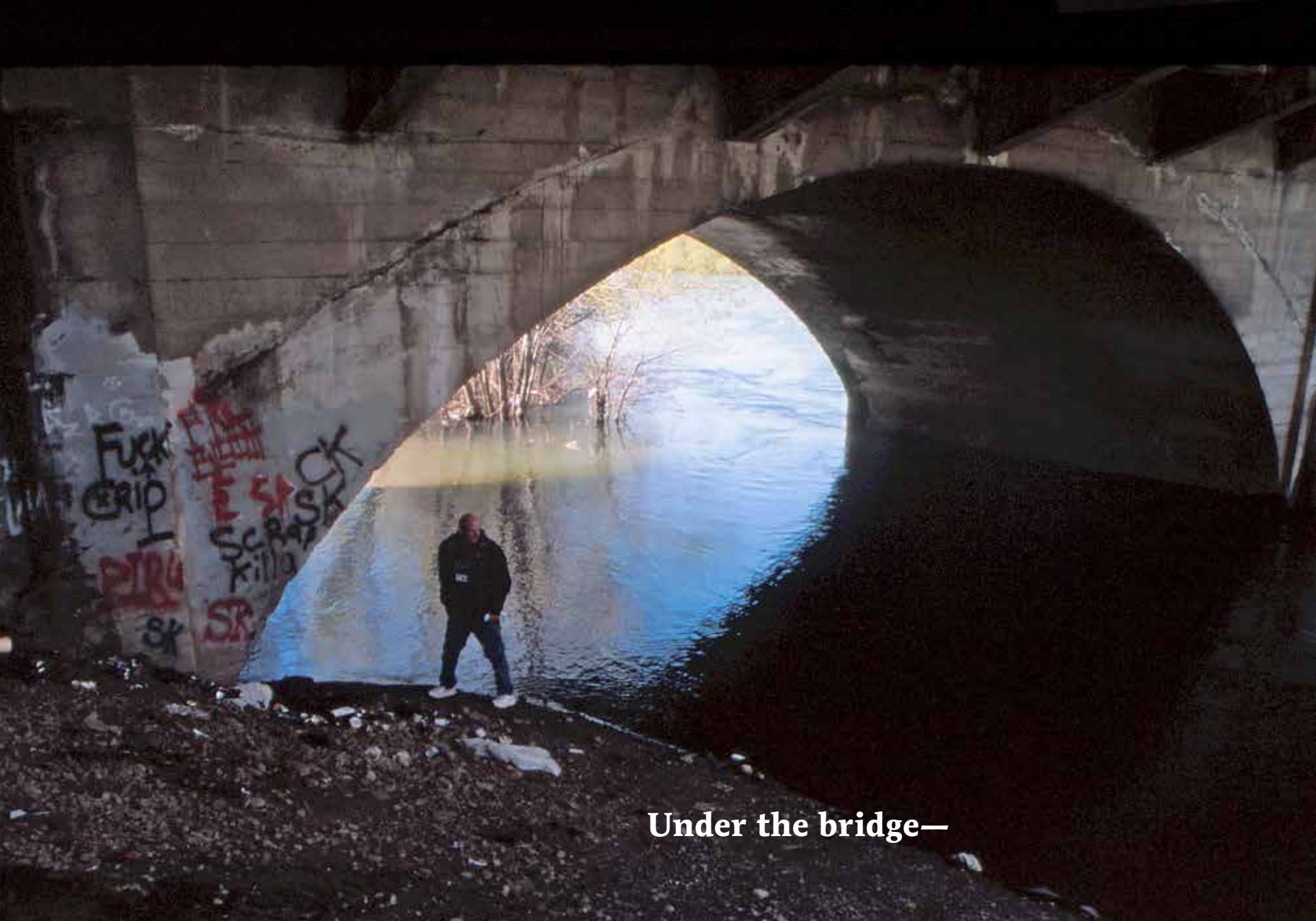
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Affordable shelter—



Under the bridge—




Commute by light rail—



Play for pay—





A dark, moody photograph of a city skyline at dawn or dusk. The buildings are silhouetted against a sky filled with large, dramatic clouds. The lighting is low, creating a somber and atmospheric scene. The text is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

“On the street you find out.”

5 AM: homeless sheltering in Seattle
overnight, illegally in Alaska viaduct
BNSF waterfront railway tunnel,
a piece of Warren Buffett billionaire
Berkshire Hathaway holdings.



It's morning in overcast Seattle.

The concrete and asphalt of Seventh at Cherry and I-5 ramps are above, below, before, behind, and on both sides of me.

Six sides of concrete and asphalt.

“This is not a residential neighborhood.”

Victoria is housekeeping her 3' x 5' 'cardboard condo' home and storage. She continues... “...I can show you, if you want to go.

It is dangerous, really dangerous. The path is narrow between concrete barrier and speeding traffic.”

Close by is City Hall more government federal, county, city, local district, departments, compartments offices, banks accomplishment, demolition.

Sirens and squeal trouble and frustrations orchestrate the random roar of city in motion.

24/7.



Later I talk with Victoria's neighbor, Charles. His space tidies with an order that invokes the magical. His eclectic possessions includes a display of old *National Geographic* magazines. One with the lead story and cover photograph by me. We discover, then reminisce about a mutual friend with ties to Seattle's African-American community and the old *LIFE* magazine. Charles knew him in Seattle as 'Gordy'. I knew him in New York as Gordon Parks, revered photojournalist, author, composer and film director. “Yes, there is a story, a long story, a very, very long story...sometime we'll talk.” Charles reaches for his broom. Storying is set aside. “So much traffic, so much grit and dust, I sweep this section of road every few hours so we don't breathe it.”





STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
07160

“Equality is a work of freedom.”





“Diversity is the ‘truth’ of community.”



Occupy Opportunity

On corners flying signs
summarizing life.



In alleys leaving yellow puddles,
eating dumpster food.

On the street at night half alert
sleeping between cardboard,
clothes and whatever
pack, bag, shopping cart
maybe car or van,
...little money and no home.



Necessity pays attention,
sums experience,
wounds, breaks, destroys...
or creates
STREET PHILOSOPHERS.



Ingredients are simple,
understandable, enforced.
Recipe your choice.
Come, share the collection
and the collecting:

Nutrition, Shelter, Welcome...










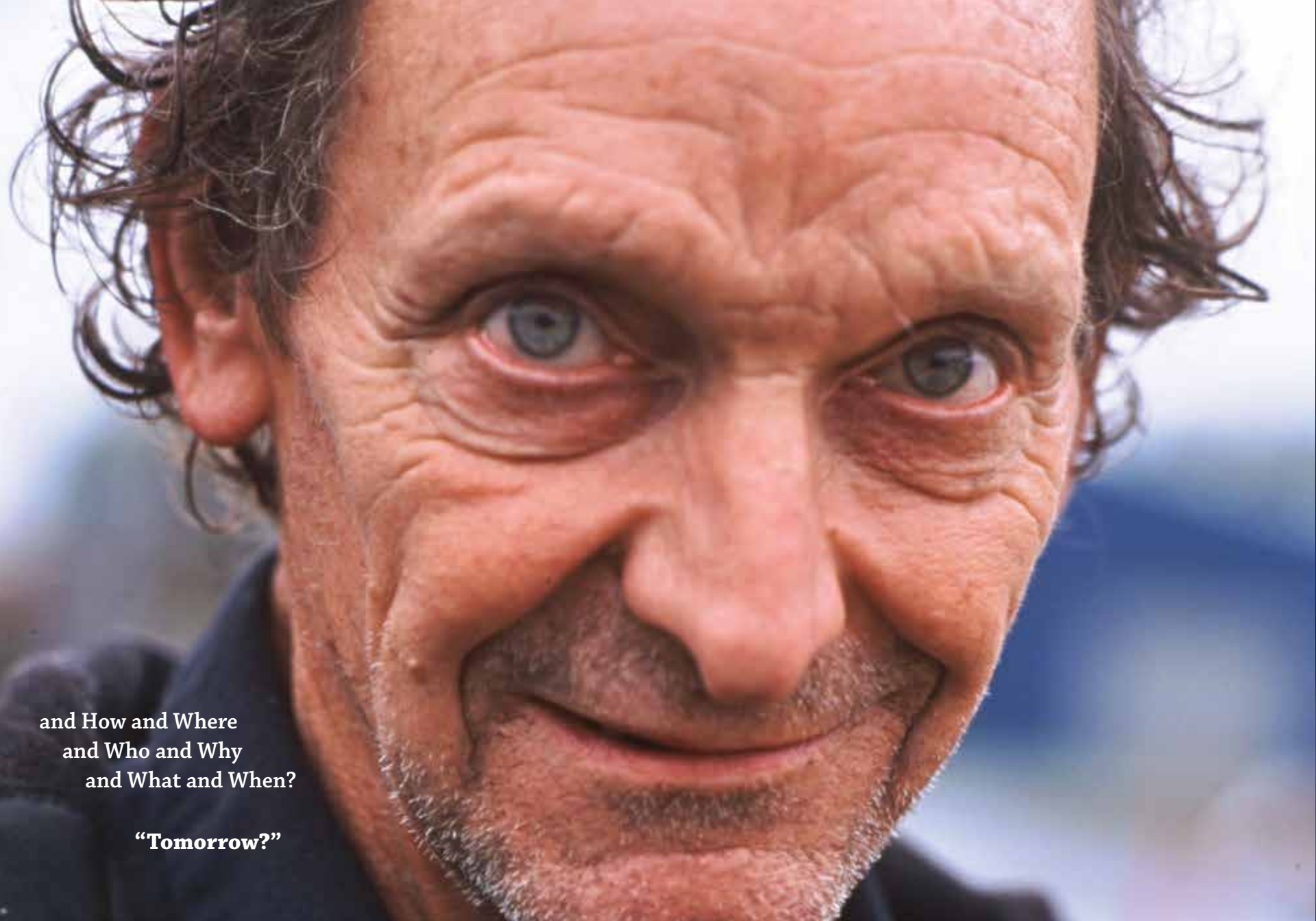








**“...letting go of the past
kinda frees my future.”**

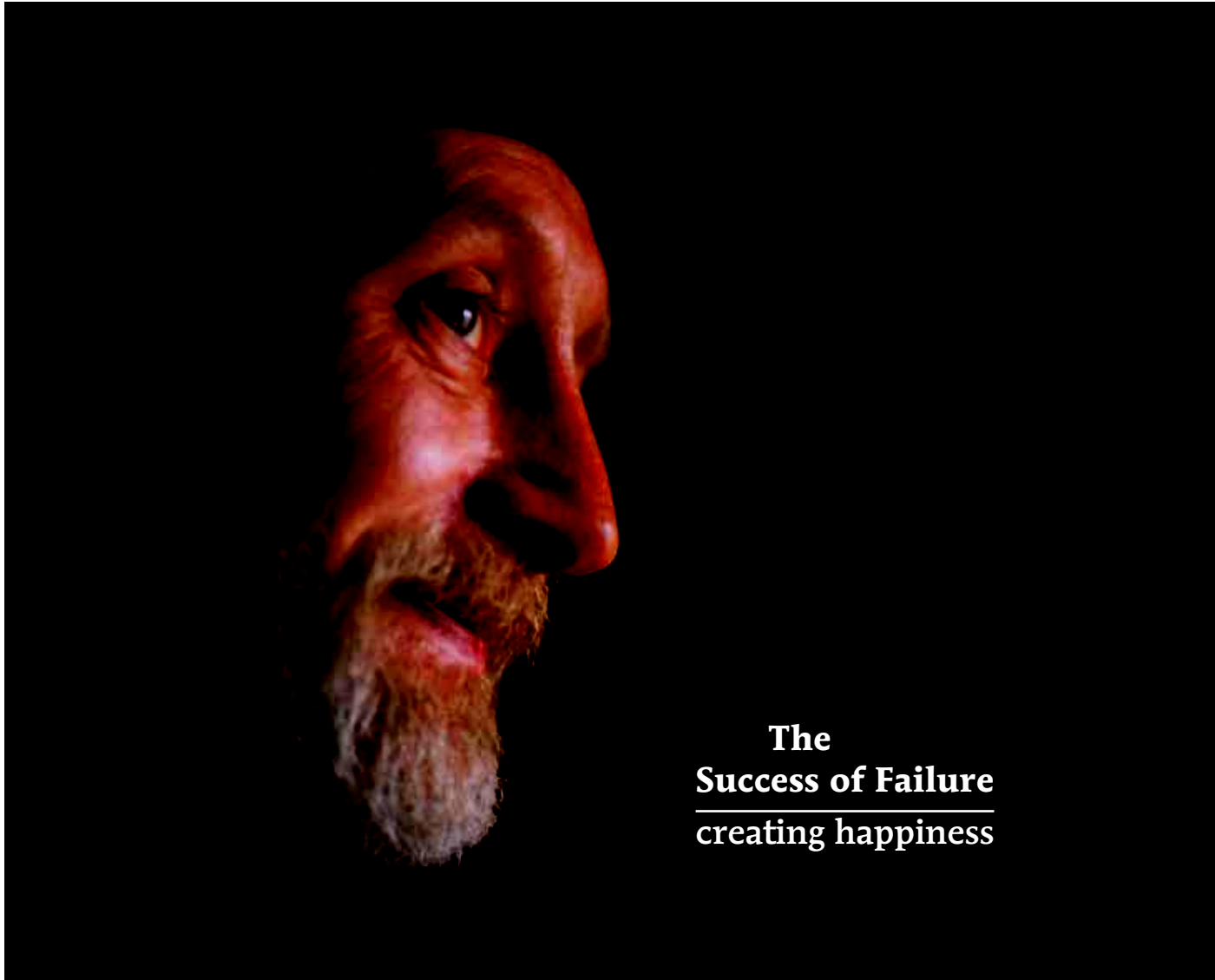


and How and Where
and Who and Why
and What and When?

“Tomorrow?”



“If tomorrow is...”



The
Success of Failure

creating happiness



physical aspects

SOCIAL ASPECTS

social ownership

self-governing

residents want to protect

a place to be









Jon Boy's quik Village fcts:

1.3 Acres West of PDX

“The Village happened
at the right time:
the Portland City Council,
the location,
potential inhabitants -
all energized to happen,
to succeed.

“First, tents on plywood on top of pallets.

“...rats...rats...rats.
You couldn't imagine the rats.
Rats **everywhere...**

It was impossible.

The pile of dead rats was
three feet in diameter and a foot high,
but we overcame.

“On this 125' × 294'
piece of asphalt
we built 42 homes
with recycled building materials,
about twenty bucks a square foot.
Each on its 20' × 20' lot.
Each no taller than 13'6"
which means 'portable'

and 18 'cat-accessible inches'
above the asphalt
which means no rats...

“Zoned as 'campground',
code compliant and
fire marshal inspected,
sixty, plus or minus inhabitants,
no background check required
'Old time is no crime',
self-govern with bylaws
birthed from consultations with
the U.S. Bill of Rights and Constitution,
the UN Bill of Rights,
the Talmud,
the Bible and
the Koran.

“...it was impossible.
It was absolutely impossible,
but **WE DID IT.**



For me, this project began

thirty-five years ago, inversely and vicariously; by which I mean I was a spectating participant at housing's top, not bottom. We had funding to make *Credit Card: Earth*, a documentary on Man's use of the planet...too much 'Nature' was becoming 'natural resources'. We could 'make a statement'. We interviewed dozens. Kristy Comstock, the nine-year old daughter of the mayor of Palo Alto, summarized and clarified:

*"We have a house is as much bigger than we need,
but we like it, and that's the problem."*

I opened the film with that quote. Skip forward thirty years.

I am doing a magazine series on small residential architecture: house boats, tree houses, gypsy wagons, etc. Jeff and Samara, my Oregon building and brewing local knowledge suggest I go to Portland's Rebuilding Center.

"They know eco-conscious small home owner-builders using recycled material." I go. They know. And that afternoon I'm a couple hundred yards west of Portland International Airport.

On an acre of asphalt parking lot, squeezed between the city's dusty composting facility, a jail, United Van Lines' warehouses and Sunderland Avenue...a confusion of tarped 2 × 4 and plywood 10' × 12' "boxes" cuddle inside a chain link fence. A sign says, Dignity Village.





FAMILY IN NEED

2 year old Living In
ANYTHING Helps

GOD
21e 55

While enjoying a chopped cabbage,
lettuce, celery and olive salad
in Tom and Dorothy's kitchen,
"...with a bit of horseradish?"
I query Tom about children in poverty.

"...once and future poverty?"

Yes. A future that looks
with eyes of apprehension
at uncertainty.
A home?
A bed?
Shoes and extra fries?
Life in the 'hood'?
A friendly hand for the long walk?
...and those ten servings of vegetables?

"I'm not sure I can put it into words,
that sense of one's humanity
in connection with someone else;
to be of use to people
with no need to protect
oneself against others.

"...kids...adjust...it's troublesome
the momentum of the low income life style.
It's hard to know
how the parental legacy will play out.
Having children is a hopeful response of the organism.

"You wonder. What's going to happen
to kids raised on the street, in cars and camps?
With minimal shelter?
What's their response to that parental legacy,
their no fixed abode?
Why shouldn't their response be,
'Get an infinite amount of stuff...'
Fairness!! Why?"

Where and how will be their contentment?





**We've been thinking...
and it works**



“Brains are all different...
 how they work with their histories.
 When our gate opens and closes **ideas come and go.**
 When you help things happen, comes kindness.
 Being kind brings happiness.
Happiness brings unity...







"...is it wonderment at new things?
 To think the new.
 To live the new.
 To get up off all fours and look at the horizon?
 ...and what about friendship?
 Can they truly access the supreme value of friendship,
 lasting friendship in a perishing life?
 If the Universe aims at richness
 then the uniqueness of individuals is prime.

 "And if we really pay attention
 doesn't that have something to do
 with being friends
 and the possibility of tenderness?
 ...extending to tenderness for the planet?

Isn't it through our relationships with others,
 our quest for continuity, for knowledge,
 for friendship, for love?"

(Tom, a consummate artist,
 taught Art and Philosophy
 in China and the US.
 This discussion's qualifications?
 Father, grand-father and friend.)

"How does friendship happen?
 ...a choice without expectations?
 ...your own responsibility to be
 the best person you know how to be
 because if I'm of no use to myself
 how can I be a friend to you?

"It's the underlying duty of friendship, isn't it,
 ...to maximize your humanity?
 Being the most you can be
 is tantamount to being a friend.

"I believe group organisms evolve with friendship:
 development, richness, variety,
 all shouldered by the group
 because unique is unique.

**That evolution of friendship
 is greater, more important
 than any things I could own or collect."**



**“Though not as eloquent as we think we are,
we don’t blame mirrors for our ugly faces.”**

**“I don’t think of myself as the kind of person
who must end a discussion with pepper spray.”**

Stories

in rain-blotched, coffee-stained
 journeys in diaries, and poems on pads:
 hopes and hurts, dreams and disappointments,
 insecurities and honesty...
 summaries and understandings
 by and about street people,
 often with “more grace than pain.”

Voice of the Upper Class Homeless

Notes: Pic/Name/Prod./Poem/Opinion/
Homelessness is a rapidly growing
We need to write the national
state or municipality, etc.

Community Social Events Meets Concerns Events
FDA approved to address high blood pressure
rapid growth of homelessness
CEC

Indigenous

Collaborative participation unlike any successful organization
What did I learn?
The Village
ASDA Mackee is quoted as saying a "self help micro housing"
thing of helping every individual's strengths not by them in
their own ways -

Hope's Dreams

Learning on every one's strengths and pursuing it
Get out of the village at base level
Before employing an outside mediator
should be available for that best level benefit
and all through the up & down times
Such as Dr. Heather Mackee herself
and successful member
of a three board committee

Understandability, Trustworthy can be applied to an
political groups & municipal organization

Observations

RAIN WALK
Catholic Hospitality
Food Homeless Specific
Neuro-Agr
Classes
Community
As you go (Street) have
observed the village
Some descriptions
challenge through our
in recording photos
village who is in its
community

Philosophy

If you don't live by
your own expectations you
will default to a false's
path of dysfunctionality
Basic opportunity
We have to advance to a
Homeless solution to
Homelessness is the homeless
Self-Reliance
Distributive
What makes it work
Don't forget the
Chicken Soup for the
Feeling Fine
Change yourself not others
Holds the things with passion
Board Reintegrates into main
dignity of council post decision
costs to be debated
to the lack of monitoring
See Participatory Action Research with
Dignity Village by Dr. Heather Mackee
5. Provide an equal number of members
6. Continuation of the in-home mentality
and misdirecting for the process

Politically

judicial, legislative
executive
(or) governance
council members
Board Reintegrates into main
law Res of Dispute
dignity of council post decision
costs to be debated
to the lack of monitoring
See Participatory Action Research with
Dignity Village by Dr. Heather Mackee

An Action for the
Empowering of the
Community

Human Element

What
Habitat
Sec
Alc
Food
Change

Age is
not
the
only
factor
who
are
old
enough
to
be
in
the
class
of
homeless

Some descriptions
challenge through our
in recording photos
village who is in its
community

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5. Provide an equal number of members
6. Continuation of the in-home mentality
and misdirecting for the process





KIRKUS REVIEW:

AMERICAN STREET PHILOSOPHERS

Steve Wilson and Friends

THE SUCCESS OF FAILURE

A moving pictorial study of the meaning of home and an implicit critique of society's conception of the good life. Wilson, a photographer and documentarian, shot and talked to people in homeless settlements in Oregon and Washington, sussing out the hard-won insights of these "American street philosophers." Despite the tenuousness of their camps of cardboard boxes, sleeping bags, and the odd tent hunkered beneath bridges and overpasses that constitute their only shelter against lowering skies, their poetic musings keep

returning to a crucial theme: the importance of community.

"If the universe aims at richness / then the uniqueness of individuals is prime," notes Tom, a former philosophy teacher, but he also believes that the "evolution of friendship / is greater, more important / than anything I could own or collect." It's a poignant reminder that the loss of connection to other people, even more than the loss of a house, is the central tragedy of homelessness.

The second half of the debut book therefore explores Dignity Village, a settlement situated in a

Portland parking lot where some homeless people have regained permanent shelter in the form of 42 tiny houses built from cast off and recycled building materials and supported by donations and residents' sweat equity. It's a slightly preachy place — "solar and wind powered," with composting toilets and organic gardens — and its ethos is one of austere self-sufficiency.

Writes resident Paul C., "Welfare begets welfare.../ strips dignity, self-esteem, self-worth, self-reliance," while Ed G. counsels an almost Buddhist renunciation of

the material world as the path to freedom: "The more you have the more you want / and you stay unhappy because / there's always more to want." But autonomy is as much a group as an individual enterprise to judge by Wilson's appealing photos of Dignity Villagers cooperatively building houses, staging barbecues, and painting their brightly colored sheds with cat murals to beautify the neighborhood. Even more captivating are his portraits of people which bring to life these often invisible Americans in all their vibrant humanity.

An introductory letter

We are glad that you are here and we want the time that you spend here to be as pleasant, comfortable, and productive as possible. This is a community based on love and respect, for others and us. We try, as much as possible, to keep the “rules” to a minimum, trusting that people that share the Village will use common sense and basic courtesy in relating to others. We have five basic rules that we have established as fundamental to the survival and success of the Village

1. No violence to yourselves or others.
2. No theft.
3. No alcohol, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on the site or within a one-block radius.
4. No constant disruptive behavior.
5. Everyone must contribute to the operation and maintenance of the Village.



(Total 10 hours per week unless in school or show proof of employment.)

There are other rules, of course,

but five are the basis for the others and will be firmly enforced. Violation of these can result in permanent removal from the Village.

We are a membership based, 501 (c) (3), non-profit community organization. Each member of the Village has a vote and is encouraged to participate in the self-governance that is the cornerstone of the Village. The membership as a whole elects a Village Council whose responsibility is to make decisions relating the business issues of Dignity Village Inc.

The Board of Directors consists of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasure, as well as other members of the Council. We may elect not less than 3 or more than 25 Councilors to serve a one-year term. The Board offices are elected by the rest of the Village Council (or Board). Village Council, membership, and various committee meetings are open to the public and anyone not removed for rule violation is welcome. All Villages are encouraged to attend. Membership meetings held on the first Tuesday of

the month at 18:00 (6:00 PM) are mandatory.

Most of the Villagers have their own stoves. You may cook on the wood stove in the common area or use Village Bar-b-cues. Everyone is expected to clean up after him or herself. Donations come into the Village on a regular basis. The Donations Coordinator handles donations and all donations coming into the Village must be logged in and recorded for tax purposes and the proper receipts issued before ANY items can be distributed. It is the responsibility of the Donation Coordinator to see that items are distributed in a fair and equitable manner (i.e. Members first, than residents, guests, and outreach). Clothing, food, and miscellaneous items are put on the donation tables. High demand (or "big Ticket") items must be signed for and are available at the donation structure during normal hours. It is not the intention nor the responsibility of Dignity Village to provide each Villager with everything needed to live here. We encourage you to go down to Life Center, work for a couple of hours, and get what you need. You can leave your requests with the Donation Coordinator, and if it is something we accept, she or he will let you know when it comes in.

The office is located directly in front of the main gates. In the office there are computers, telephone, fax machine (local only) and message

board. Phone messages are posted on the board. Notifications of meetings and all official Village notices are on the council chamber message board located on the council chamber door in the common area. A current bus schedule is on the wall to the right as you come into the common area and at the guard shack. Mail is picked up daily by a designated individual.

1. Some of the rules that apply to the office are as follows:
2. No yelling, or profanity in the office. People are making calls to family, jobs, courts, doctors, etc. and loud or obscene talk in the background is inappropriate.
3. Phone calls are limited to 10 minutes unless it is Village business or special arrangement has been made.
4. Computer time is limited to 45 min. per person except on approved Village business.
5. Please clean up after yourself.

Violations of these rules may result in restrictions of the office use being imposed. If you need help setting up an e-mail or need help with the computers, ask the Office Manager for assistance. Do not download anything from computers without the help of the Office Manager. Do not open any e-mail from someone you do not know. This can infect the computer with a virus.

Port-a-let (toilets) are by the mail gate. They are serviced Monday,

Wednesday, and Friday.

The Shower building is across from the office up the ramp (along with the gray water disposal and dish-washing station at this time) An on-demand propane water heater heats the water. We have a limit of 20 minutes for the showers. Please pick up and wash out the shower when you are done. Guests for outreach may shower from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

There are people in the Village who work different hours and not everyone follows the same schedule. Because of this we have a "quiet hours" policy from 10:00 PM to 10:00 AM. This does not mean that you are not allowed to speak in a normal tone or use a radio or TV. It means that you must KEEP THE NOISE LEVEL DOWN during these hours. Repeated violations of this rule constitutes constant disruptive behavior and will result in disciplinary action before the Village Council.

Exception is, of course, construction. Construction may begin at 8:00 AM.

It is the responsibility of Security to maintain the peace and safety of the Village. If a situation arises that requires intervention by security, do not interfere or get involved unless Security personnel on duty request assistance. You are to allow Security and Board Officers to deal with the police. Remain polite and do as they ask in a timely manner.

“I just want to be me.”

Dean, in hand-written words:

“I lost all.

All.

“I experienced the bottom.

My everyday picture
was homeless, questionable future.

“I had to become flat out honest with myself
...and with others.

I had to earn forgiveness for myself
...and others.

I had to learn the simplicity of life
...to discover, respect and enjoy the kid in me,
...to find beauty in every form,
...to find a passion and earn life.



“The honesty became liberating.
Knowing the consequences came to me,
I had the freedom
to be as irresponsible as I wanted.
I could be anybody I wanted to be.
I could use my middle name.
I could invent a name.
I could be anonymous.

“I was not content with myself.
I wanted to like me for what I was,
with all my faults and perceived faults
and the mistakes that are part of growing up.

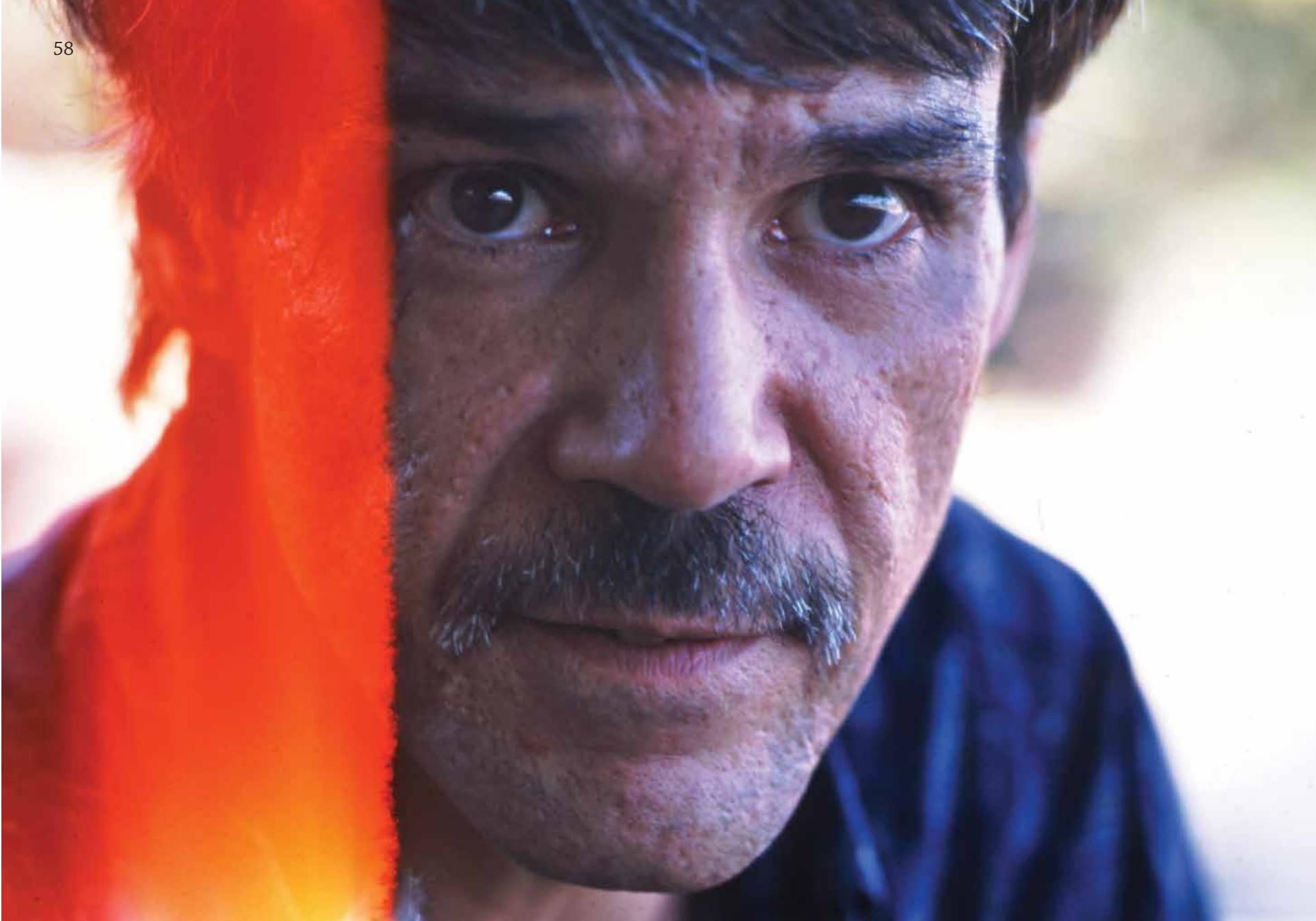
“I found out I just wanted to be me.
I want to use my own name
but I’m tired —
Tired of maintaining my morals and manners
with those without.
It’s taxing me.

“When did caring become a liability?

“I’m tired —
Tired of giving the benefit of the doubt,
then doubting the benefit.

“When did a loving heart become a disability?”

“I see me becoming my self.”





Whitefoot, follows his Security Log entry with

A Contemplation

“...And if I go while you’re still here,
know that my spirit still lives on,
vibrating to a different measure,
behind a veil that you cannot see through.

“You will not see me.
So you must have courage
and great faith.

“I will wait for the time
when we can talk and laugh together
as good friends should;
both aware of each other.

“Until then,
live your life to the fullest.
And when you need me,
when you’re tired, lonely and afraid,
remember,
just whisper my name in your heart
and I will be there.”

“Dignity Village Membership Introductory”

“**What we do** is based on love and respect for ourselves and each other...

We seek to create a green sustainable urban village for those who are seeking shelter but are unable to find it... in a stable, sanitary environment free of violence, drugs, theft, disruption of peace, and alcohol, until they are able to access housing.

What do you want or expect from Dignity Village?

What can you contribute or give back to Dignity Village?

To stay in Dignity, you must agree to, and follow our five basic rules. Remember?

1. No violence to yourselves or others
2. No theft
3. No alcohol, illegal drugs, or drug paraphernalia on-site or within a one-block radius
4. No constant disruptive behavior
5. Everyone must contribute to the operation and maintenance of the Village. A minimum of 10 hours are required per week.”

Dignity Village
Portland, OR

Ben's
summary sketch:

They Come and Go

They come in damaged
and they leave damaged.

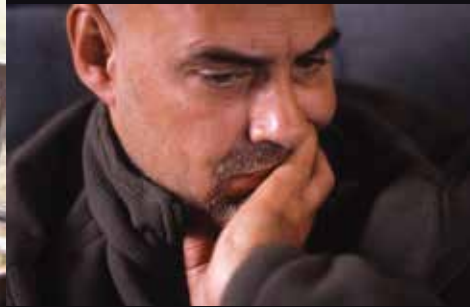
They come in...
...and they leave.

This place works...






**...It's not
how tough the times are;
it's how you meet the challenge.**







I ask Ben about
compromise:

What Happens?

“Compromise?

“...that is exactly what happens
when you get kicked too many times
like we’ve all been kicked.

“It’s way too easy
to make the mistake of getting used to it.
T – Time doesn’t do that.
T – Time does not have a
single
cubic
ounce
of compromise
...nor do I compromise my principles.

“...by the way, there’s no such thing as a cubic ounce.

“So go fuck yourself
and fuck your compromise too
while you’re at it.
...and remember to use a condom,
you wouldn’t want to get a disease
that’s even worse than
COMPROMISE.”



“A lot of poverty?
A lot of struggle?
A lot of attitude?”

“...more pregnancies,
...more children.
Welfare.
What’s the underlying social message?”

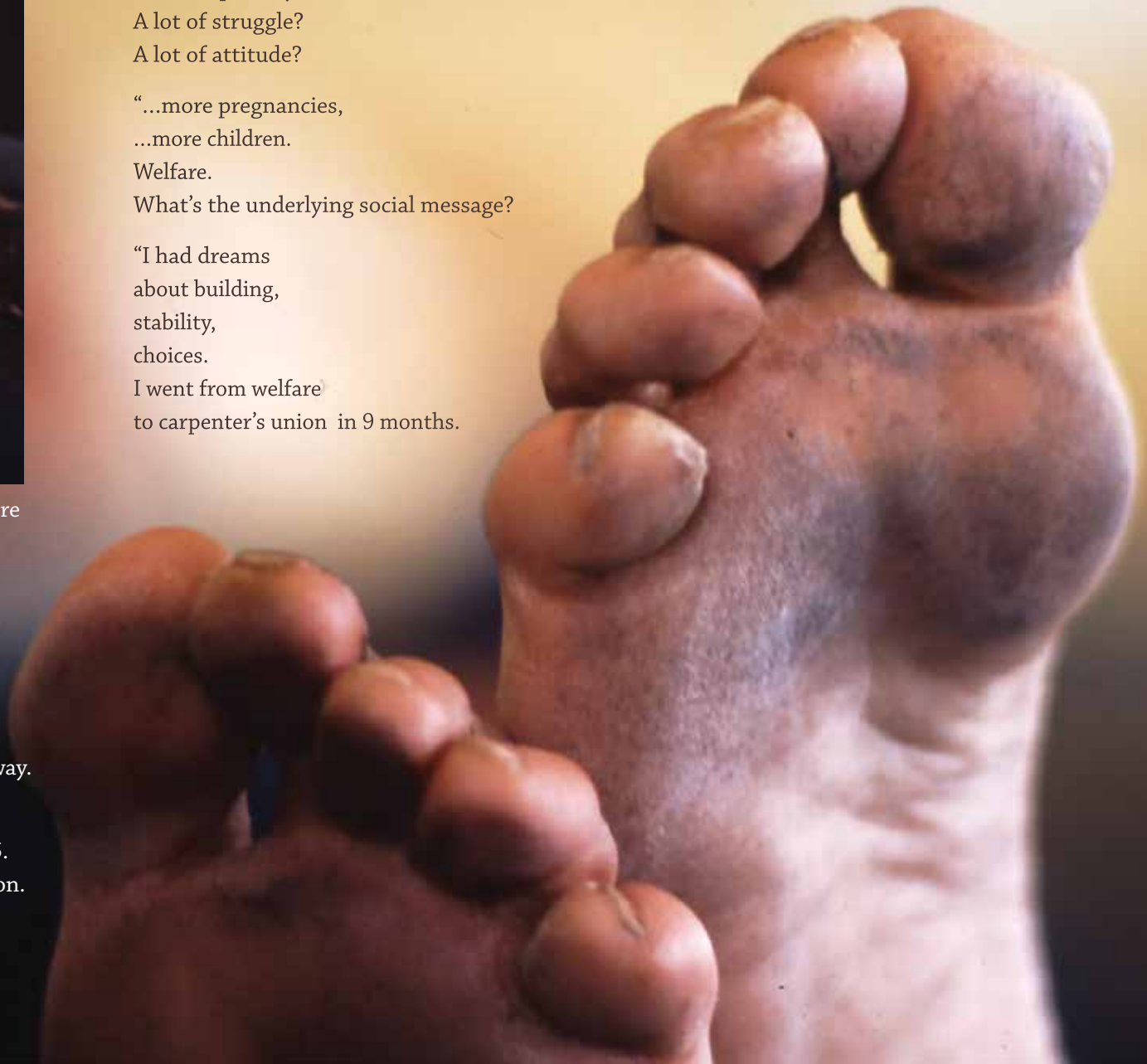
“I had dreams
about building,
stability,
choices.
I went from welfare
to carpenter’s union in 9 months.”

Michelle shares then and there
here and now.

“I saw a lot.”

“I ran away from home
when I was 13
to a string of Catholic homes,
each a short stay, then run away.
Always run away.

“A group home when I was 15.
Promiscuous...Pregnant...a son.
Abusive step-parents.
I don’t know how to put it.





“Just being:
Working in construction and building
while having an intimate relationship with nature
contributes to my turmoil.
I feel the turmoil and carry the conflict: trees/lumber...

“...lumber/trees.
On deforested hills
a trickle becomes a stream becomes a gully
and trees alongside the road are left
to hide the horrific truth!

**“Greed with a bull shit sweetener!
Is that how to sustain a civilization?”**



The Ride Comes with Story

“You meet the nicest people on the bus.
It’s the truth — but that’s not all.

“It doesn’t matter about how nice they are
or why there’s even a bus.

What matters
is that YOU are not behind the wheel
stuck to your cell phone,
or your extremely dull repetitive
agonizing tortuous simple thoughts,
or the distracting ambient hum-jumble
of perpetual unsolvables.

“And it doesn’t even need to be a bus.
It could be any transpo,
any, as long as YOU aren’t driving.

“Driving enslaves.
Passengerism liberates.

“Under the sort of unwritten code of the West,
except on Mount Hood
where it’s the code of the mountain,
you see someone who needs help
and you help.

I think ‘humanity’ is a word that applies here.”

...with Ben it happens.



“A guy picked me up
thumbing down from Government Camp.
He was 81 in '09, be 89 now, 25 years my senior.
Obviously never smoked.
You can't be an 81 year-old ski bum and smoke.

“He was a German.
Anton Schmidt, the only WW II vet
I've ever talked to
and he was on the 'other' side.
By 1945 the German army
was taking anyone with a pulse
and they conscripted Anton Schmidt, age fourteen
and his dad, age 45.

“Anton was in a mountain division
which is how he learned to ski.
(Give them Nazi-ass bastards credit —
they gave Anton skiing lessons!)

“In the spring of 1945 Adolph H. suicides himself,
so Anton's military career will be brief.

“Anton's war experience is miraculous:
he comes off the mountain, on skis,
to get his next assignment.
He is told orders aren't ready yet;
go home for the weekend
and report for duty on Monday morning.



“He follows orders. And when he gets home, damn if his dad isn’t there — some back-wood town in the Bavarian Alps. ...and here is where this story gets unbelievable screwy and why I’m telling it to you.

“The British army captures his town that very weekend and his war, all sixty days of it, is over.

“His whole family made it through that debacle completely unscathed. He said he never sheds a tear for old Adolph, political psychos, slippery money, or national fascism.

“His name wasn’t really Anton Schmidt, but I know who he really is. The dude was an engineer. Did some of the work on the Fremont bridge... our bridge, our old sleep-under bridge. “Be seeing you...

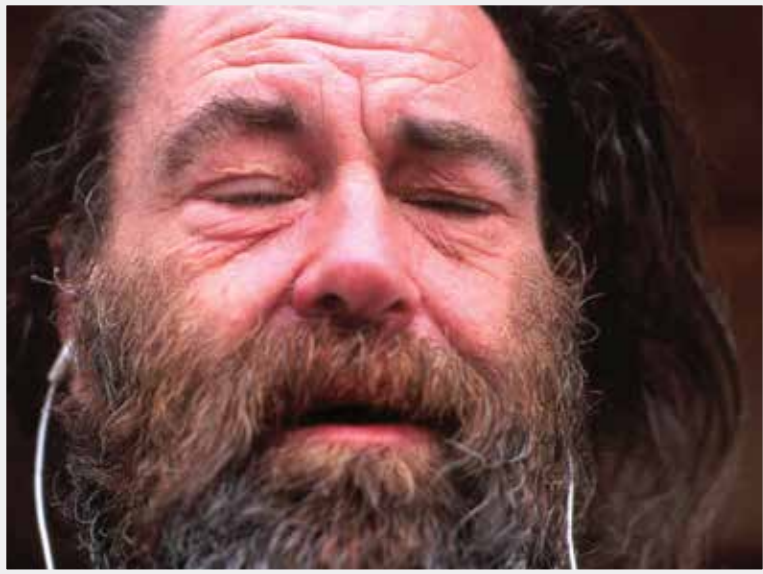
...then tell me your story.”





Why is What and Who





Dave S, a returning Villager
confronts

Depression:

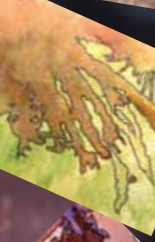
“The memory of my mind
is a warning beacon,
the rhythm providing
an odd sort of comfort —
feel everything
yet feeling nothing.

“A roaring silence consumes,
invites surrender.

“I pull the last piece of resistance
from my pocket and light its wick
hoping it will last until dawn.

“The roar of silence wanders away
saddened by my perches of another day.
‘I will be back’, it says...
...hoping for another host.

“I feel a heaviness in my hand,
spread it on the ground,
examine the pieces
of my broken faith.
I can’t bring myself
to throw it away
for even in its broken state
the pieces are beautiful.



“I fold it,
put it in my safest and deepest pocket
and hear the old man in my head:
‘David, you must seek your tools
and repair it.’



“The blinking beacon
reminds me it is time to move on.

“Another thought uncomfortably enters my head
crying softly of its captivity.

‘Not yet,’ I whisper, ‘it’s not safe.’

“Maybe tomorrow.”



篤愛親仁



...drawings in pads,
words in books
and words on wood,
Notes of thoughts
on rocks and beads,
creative whatever
...and a laptop.

Creative Whatever

September 2014
Dave S father's garage
2nd floor workshop.
Dave's new living/
working space
overflowing with
creative whatever,
organizational attempts...





Paul C and I talked about Dignity Village and a day later the “Professor” handed me a sheaf of notes:

“I’m Crazy...Trust Me...”

With no particular order of importance the up and down observations and philosophy of a sporadically homeless person eating, breathing and living at Dignity Village.

Can a carpenter do brain surgery?
...or a politician solve homelessness?
I don’t think so.

Welfare begets welfare... strips dignity, self-esteem, self-worth, self-reliance and sense of control.

Welcome to enthusiasm for Village success, with ‘self-help micro-housing,’ with self-governance with treasury and judiciary, Sergeant-at-arms, CEO and a majority of Villagers with minimal ‘jailhouse mentality.’ And an involved outside board of researcher, observer and Village alum to broaden the wisdom and mediation.

And for each of us,

consult our own expectations of self
And measure by them.

Utilize and uplift individuals' strengths
and be kind to deficiencies.

Embrace a collaborative sense of participation
and promote self-worth.

Know, but don't defend shortcomings.

Don't forget the past.

Learn from it.

Leave it.

And keep it in the past.

Welcome social events: meals, music, movies,
presentations and outings.

Get out of the Village
at least once a week,
preferably overnight.

How true am I

to my opinions, observations and philosophy?

After two days outside the Village,

a few (2-9) cocktails and getting laid,

I have satisfied Item #6...ten more to go!

Laughter. FDA-approved to reduce high



blood pressure, stress, insomnia, tension, anxiety, depression, anger and occasional vertigo with side effects of optimizing self-esteem, self-reliance, self-worth and overall feel good.

And my perspective about Village failures?

Negative presence toward positive direction and accomplishments.

Destabilizing what historically worked for the Village.

Focusing on other’s faults and festering wounds reopens scars, slows healing, and emboldens the feeling of ‘unwanted even by the unwanted.’

Accepting ‘jail house mentality’: intimidation, disruption, loud voices, the ‘no snitching rule’, misdirection of fault, missing files, lost meeting minutes, amendments, procedures, by-laws; protocols and rules not updated or posted in plain sight ...and endless excuses, excuses, excuses with justifications, and justifications... Confusion, chaos and tension.

Yes, we are a legal entity and, Yes, we are self-governing.

Simple rules, enforced, self-help micro-housing, collaborative participation sweat equity (\$35 a month and 10 hours a week); social events.

Here, you are: nuevo homeless, sporadic homeless, or professional homeless ...and whatever you did on the outside, stays on the outside.

Our over-indulgent self-gratification works in a dysfunctional way and self-medication numbs the immediate ill, but raises the greater hurdle.

Observing the ‘rain walk’ of pets and owners I reflect upon hopes and visions, their outcome never what we dream as we play out the hand we are dealt.

Life is forever a work in progress. My 28-years-ago-vision,

the outcome hoped for, saved in a youthful poem, did not predict today. It makes me feel good however.

...and now it is time to complete this chapter of my Life.

The commute? The cul-de-sac? The corporation?

The credit cards? The clock? The calendar?

Voluntary slavery in a life collecting ‘stuff’...?

...or?...





I'm listening to Melissa A,
homeless and on her first
visit to the Village.

Stop, Look and Listen

"You're down, broken.

You've done it.

You don't trust yourself.

You need to be your own hero

but that's days and weeks away.

"I shouldn't be here

but I've made bad decisions

...and every time I chose the wrong thing

it got deeper and more difficult

...living in 'mud' instead of different.

"I know I can reach it.

'It' is purpose,

competence and energy,

understanding and happiness -

so many things

and when they're all put together

they bring **stability**.

"Whatever they are

is what I'm trying to become.

“First time I fell
 I lay there and cried.
 Second time I knew
 it was going to hurt.
 Third time, I asked,
 “Why am I falling?
 Self-destruction?
 Heart aches?
 Relationships?
 Motherhood?”

“I can’t figure them out separately
 but it’s getting easier to get back on track.
 When I fall,
 all my life experiences and lessons
 pad and protect me.

“Twelve years ago when I,
 when my son was born
 I had purpose.
 I had allegiance.
 But I made mistakes I can’t take back.
 Can I show him I care?
 Can I show him what I’ve become?
 I talk a good talk.
 It all makes sense up here, in my head,
 but I can’t walk it.
 I make a million excuses for myself,

for my reactions to things,
 for how I spend my energy.

“All the discussions,
 all the past I need to give up.
 I look at myself and wonder.
 Am I’m putting on a mask:
 ...happy adventuress
 ...or bitter, dark and alone?”

“Tears, sadness, anguish.
 Every time I’ve been alone
 it’s been a result of tragedy.
 Am I always going to wear that jacket,
 trying, pretending to be something I’m
 not?
 It’s choice, over and over and over again.

“With no skill to ignore it, to walk on,
 I create my own demise.
 I need to stop, look and listen.
 To be aware.
 I’m not quiet, looking for what I want:
 looking for love,
 ...for not being hurt;
 ...to be soft and peaceful.
 But life comes in forms that are unexpect-
 ed,
 and always tempting.

...I’m wondering,
 coming and going.

“OK, how do I put this?
 Addictions: alcohol
 ...now exercising
 (6 days a week, 4 hours a day)
 I replace one addiction with another,
 living in our culture’s addiction to Comfort.

“I want to be obedient to myself.
 I want control.
 But how?”





I organize my stuff.

I get clean.

I throw everything in the trash:
all my paraphernalia in the trash.

It's a choice I'm comfortable with.
But it only works when I quit
polluting the waters of my life.

"I forgive me

but I can't forget.

Do I have to live in that dump?

I'm moving forward.

I want to stay focused.

It's choice over and over and over again
to be with loving, kind, helpful, patient people.

To take care of our place.

To respect this land that is borrowed.

Martice and Recycle

Martice agrees,
“If I’m not good in sunshine,
why do I say to the person
who can’t comprehend,
‘Where do I fit?’

“They don’t care
because they have the power,
bossing me around as if I’m an animal.
It don’t work that way.
I was looking to work;
I wasn’t out in the swamp.
...know what I mean?”



“It’s
3rd person
singular present of be.”
(Oxford American Dictionary)

...And the meaning of *is*:
“what’s what and where’s it at,
here and now.”

(Roget’s International Thesaurus)

Tonya’s tutorial for
itinerant literary learning:

This Book Thesaurus

“In the dumpster
I found a paperback called Thesaurus.
It had all these cool words:
nouns, adverbs, adjectives and verbs —
but no story.

“Cool words but no story.

“I did a story with my words,
then changed my little words to big Thesaurus words.
It makes a story for Thesaurus.

“My story is ‘WTF?’”

Don't be afraid of the 'F' word



What The Fuck?

Existing alongside contrasting cognition of the com-manage...

Discretionary adaptations

that are contingent to environmental congruity

need to be contemplatively construed

to try and insinuate consequential amity

or conviction to conciliate conjuncture.

Might! Fatefully effectuate requital or

conceive fortuitous ambiguity.

Incensement led by addlepatented conventions

will perpetually be chance.

If we counter change this auspicious conundrum

with infallible tutelage

then will unascertained mentality enhance?

Might! It is then imperative to humanity's contention

for enraptured pertinent existence.

We must ascend to be ascertainable.

...observance to convivial edification.

We must discombobulate the ascendancy of 'precedent.'







“Eight people had gone out

and set up tents that first night.
Days, now historic, became nights
became fights became discussions
**became sixty unwanted people,
unwanted even by ourselves,
working together to make us what we are:**
I, I, I, and me, me, me
became
us, us, us and we, we, we.

“Our concept of the Village
was to make people interact every day.
Every rule was based upon the Golden Rule.
The bylaws were done under the Fremont bridge
each on a roll call vote of the 150 people:

- change our mind set
- relearn work ethics
- reacquaint with education
- distinguish wants from needs
- share kindness and fun.

Tim, ex-Village CEO and
eight-year resident talked.
I wrote.

“Throw-away kids

living under the west end
of the Fremont Bridge
on dirt owned by the state.

“16 December 2000
The state demanded the city evict.
The Village was a necessity.
“We could build scratch from recycle.
We needn’t worry about cops
or thrown stones.
We were privileged.”



“I ask for the ‘what’ details.

He responds with a list of classes, workshops:

“sensing not being separate”

“communicating with authentic connection”

“quelling of emergent fires”

“self-awareness—honest, trusting”

“participate in creativity”

“opportunities to trade talents for dollars.”

“A Village of clarity, charity and education
for the people passing through.”

Attitudes and perspective?

“Yes, attitudes and perspective.”

“Separateness is the tragedy.

“Undercurrents from human interactions not being
dealt with.

Just a lot of people behind a fence, not a community.

The physical realm a can of sardines

and the sardines in the can are bickering.

“Ask about the purpose of the Village?

The Village experience needs a paradigm shift.

Homeless come out of a muddy puddle

and need a whole new shining...Enlightenment.”



**Saturday, February 18, 2012 at 2 pm
in The Commons, Dignity Village.**

Remembrance of Steve O's Life

"Steve O"

(Stephen L. Jarvis)

Born: 28 Nov. 1956

Portland, Oregon

Died: 3 Feb. 2012

Dignity Village,

Portland, Oregon



*“Family isn’t always blood.
It’s the people in your life
who want you in theirs;
the ones who accept you
for who you are.
The ones who would do anything
to see you smile
and who love you,
no matter what.”*



It was a gathering together of blood family and Villagers, creating years of shared memories from a quiet life tragically ending in alcoholic self-destruction.

Two friends who had known Steve from his birth recounted heart kindness, fairness and strong work ethics. The mother of Steve’s children spoke, siblings spoke, in-laws spoke, children, grand children, grade school buddies, high school mates, each offered a shared and joyful ‘Steve moment’ ...and honesty:

“Lost touch...no word...and we lived just across the river, not twenty miles away.”

“I would give anything for the moment to tell him, ‘Dad, I love you.’”

“We hadn’t seen him for years...time just passed.”

“...for more than a decade, hadn’t heard, didn’t know.”



Twenty or so Villagers
whose friendships with Steve O
were shy a couple weeks of two years
contributed their painful, tearful reflections.

For Dave S this death reignites his own past.
unites his death with Steve O's.

"I told Steve O several times,
'you're losing Life to alcohol.'

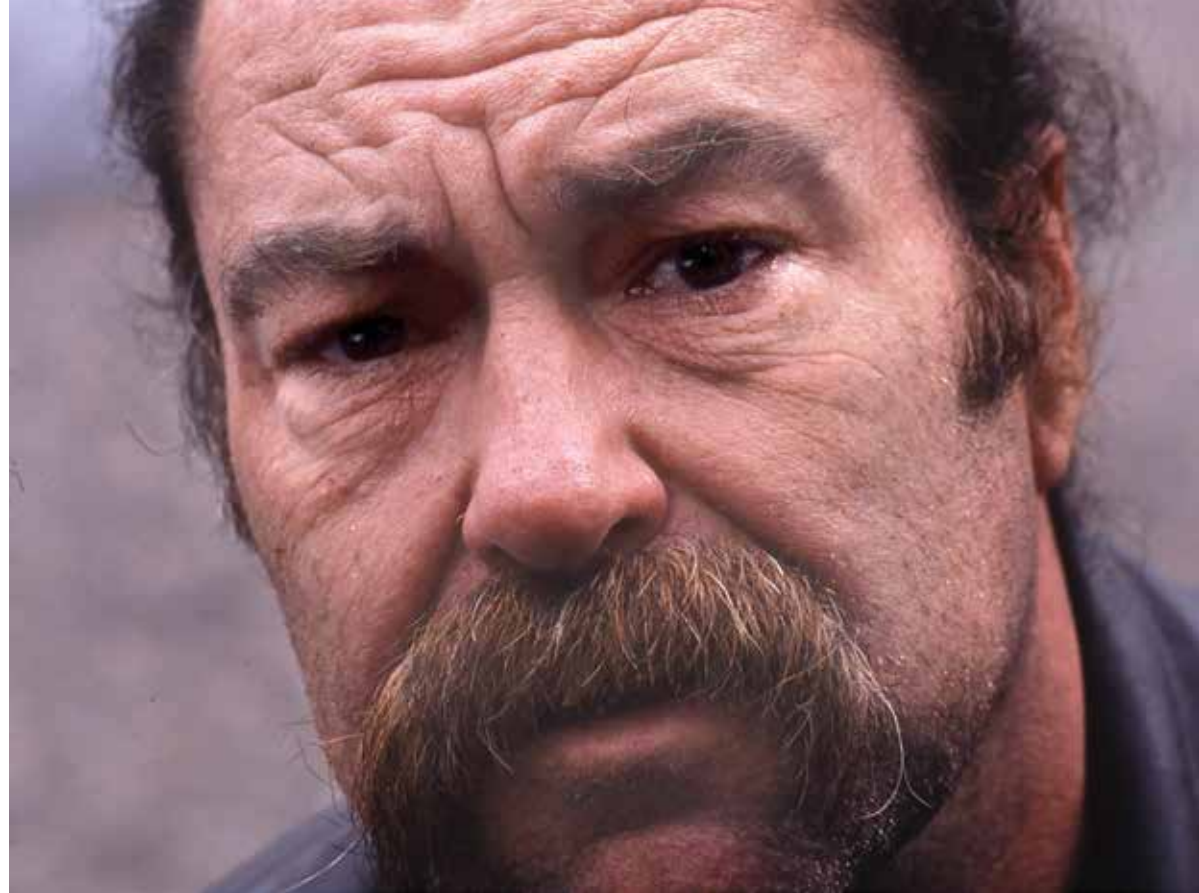
"Steve O's death is motivating me.
I don't want to go down like that.
Unsupported, unloved. I couldn't blame Life.

"That people can feel that lonely, that isolated,
says something that is difficult to hear.
Alcohol's couple hours of comfort,
its shallow mask of relief...
...even a 'functional alcoholic'
energy zapped, love and trust betrayed.
The difficulties. But I can succeed.

"It is the sense that I have a lot to offer the world.

The 'end-program-button' is not an option.

Steve O reminds me,
keeps me from committing to that awful end.
Pain that just swallows you,
makes you wonder, when will sparks get you?
I get really, really low."
BUT...





**“So much of life is hidden
between the worlds of
denial and desire,
faith and fantasy.”**





“It takes me a few minutes
to get my brain inside my head.”
Tami’s thoughts organize.
A Villager, Michelle, and I attend.

Trying to Figure Out

“You don’t get a choice,
you just get born.
We’re alive. We’re walking around.
We’re trying to figure stuff out.
We’re not really able to ‘get it.’

“When you come out
you realize what hasn’t happened.
That organ, the lung, doesn’t breathe.
It’s the muscles that learn to breathe,
...it’s a whole library
I’m trying to understand.

“I’m changing.
I’m still a negotiation
just being myself.
...there’s a whole bunch going on.

“What the hell is going on?”

“Trying to figure out
how to get absolutely perfect.
It’s a simple motivation.



“...and yesterday matters,
I haven’t figured out how to go back in time
and then to go camping.
At night.
Without somebody coming up to you
grab you, pull up
and you’re five steps away from being safe.
We all must be safe
and that includes every life on the planet







“You could go back
and re-plan it
to find paradise for everyone
and nobody’s upset
because paradise is so cool.

**“To be wild and still be calm,
...that’s liberation.**

**“...to become light
and be so connected you are everything,
...that’s paradise.**

“...and that’s important:
when trees are gone we’ll suffocate.
Trees give oxygen.
Without oxygen it is impossible to survive
...it hurts, the pain is severe and then you die.
I just want everyone to be alright.





RVing in a southwest Oregon regrowth forest,
with story and music
with music and story.
And when people communicate
it works. A real blessing.


A Recollection: Jim M

Jim M, with companion dog Jake,
summarized for me their two-year plus
resident membership at Dignity Village.
“It was a blessing.

“When I first got to the Village
a competent bunch of people
were running the place.
Dignity Village offered a sense of security.
Dignity Village offered a sense of community,
Villagers didn’t argue about petty shit.

“ Dignity Village is a great idea.
For those of us coming off the street
Dignity Village looks real good.”

Jim does music and words:
“When I was four I started playing drums.
Nearly drove my folks crazy.
They got me a guitar...with lessons,
until I told my teacher I didn’t want to play
Mary Had A Little Lamb.



“By high school I was doing solo and concerts with a couple good players. We traveled, played, traveled, lots of applause. Recording...Contracts. It was great fun. Money...Decisions...

...management...

...bad decisions.

Life happened,...the street...the Village.

“When I came the Village was a blessing. When I left it had become close-minded. I felt like I was walking on eggs. Wise people didn’t have a voice. VIC (Village Intake Committee) took in people with few brain cells left in their crackheads. I don’t miss a thing about the Village. When I left if a bus ran over one or two I’d clap.”



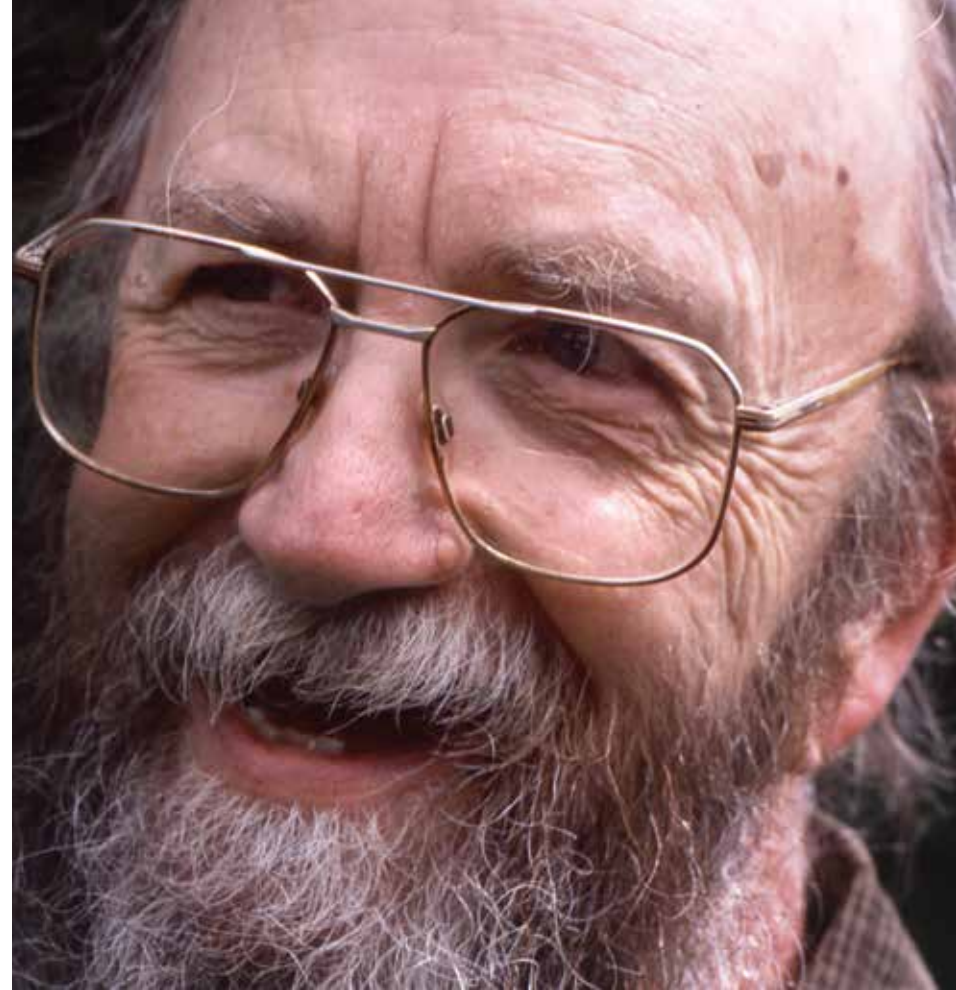
Tim, a co-founding alum of Dignity Village, reminisced homelessness for me as we toured his new home and garden.

A Recollection: Tim M

“The street’s a terrible place to live.
Kicked around, harassed, bullied,
living without, unloved, forgotten,
dumpster-diving ‘mystics of malcontent.’

“You are expected to feel worthless,
like you did something wrong.
We don’t need labels
to be put into classes.
With just our thinking we could change.
We know we could change.

“We know about:
always waiting,
always listening,
always alert,
out on the street
flying signs,
sleeping in a cardboard box,
sleeping with your shoes on—people steal,
sleeping on mats 6” apart—germs, sickness
going to a restroom, a luxury,



standing in line by 3 to get a bed at 7,
the cost of education barrier,
the getting a job necessity,
...and nutrition and exercise
and self-respect and confidence.

“We know there’s something better out there...
...it’s lonely on the street.
Yet you get to know yourself.

“You learn to live without,
to take care of yourself,
to respect money,
to value cast offs.

“We found out sheltering is big business,
millions of dollars
made off the backs of the homeless.

“We wanted to build a community
that would work together;
not a party place
for the downtown homeless crowd.

“While putting Dignity Village together
we found out who our friends weren’t and aren’t.
By starting the Village
we were all considered domestic terrorists:

Shorty
Jack
Ibrahim





J. P.
Rob
Tom
JadaMae
Gaye
and me.



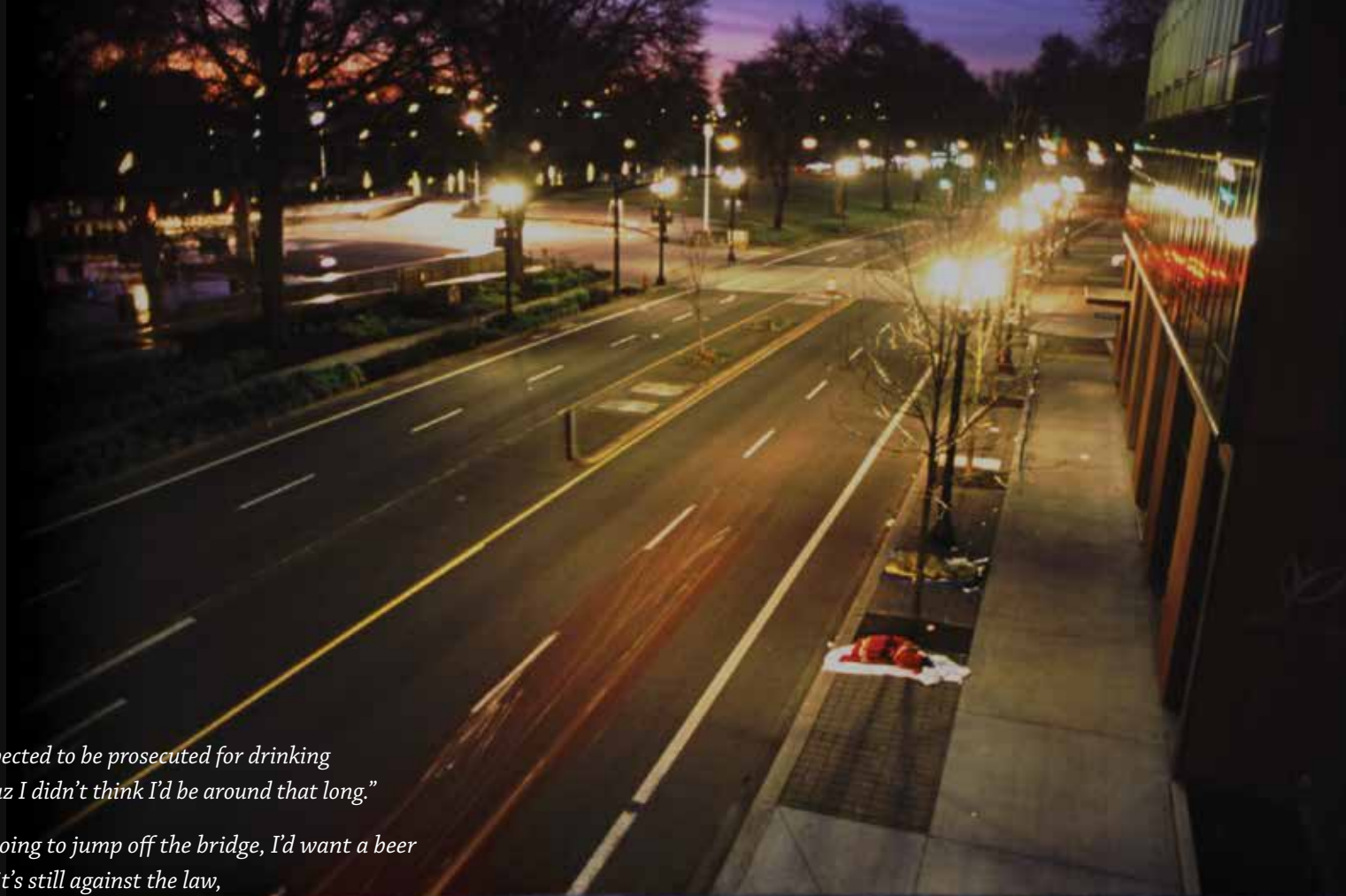
“In doing for ourselves
we learn failures can succeed
and success gives self-respect and dignity.

“Village alumni are home owners
and homeless advocates,
a construction exec and a restaurateur,
a law student, an art manager, a writer,
back-to-collegers, elder care-givers
and managers of homeless shelters.

“When a temporary reprieve is needed,
at twenty dollars and forty-hours per month,
Dignity Village works.

“And what do I miss most since leaving the Village?
After growing up in a family of eight kids,
then Village tarps and tents echoing interior sounds,
I miss most the camaraderie of morning coffee
...and the bickering.”





“You see Officer, I never expected to be prosecuted for drinking a beer on the way down, cuz I didn’t think I’d be around that long.”

“I see your point. If I was going to jump off the bridge, I’d want a beer on the way down too. But it’s still against the law, and I’m going to have to give you a ticket.”



Ben reviews, "I had finding a bathroom anxiety, riding a bus anxiety, finding a place to sleep anxiety, getting a seat anxiety, wet feet anxiety. Most mental health professionals confirm that depression and anxiety go hand in hand. Some would agree that with serious long-term depression, psychosis is just around the corner...or was it the last corner?"

"I don't understand that stuff. What I do know is that things get pretty weird.

"Even in reduced circumstances you hear folks getting all high and mighty leading me to the inescapable conclusion that one of our most basic social wants is the desire to feel superior.

**FEEL SUPERIOR TO ME
FOR FIVE MINUTES....35 CENTS
ALL DAY PASS.....\$3.00**

"It's the only sign I ever flew,
for about ten minutes.
Lots of laughs,
no money.

"On the sidewalk at the Chinese food joint I found a keychain. It looked memory-laden. Expensive like. With a friend's help and Craigslist lost and found I managed

to get it back to the rightful owner. I feel like I'm ready to go hand in my second class citizen ID and ask for a regular one.



"Thoughts are coming.

We have Gandhi as a cooking show guest but he keeps grabbing little bits of food and the chef slaps his hand. Gandhi says, 'Sorry, just coming off hunger strike.' At the end, a long elegantly appointed table, but stuff is missing from every plate..."



Poverty and poetry
 so much history together,
 step and stumble,
 scholarship with homelessness
 though all is not 4.0 — a cement mattress,
 a dumpster breakfast and pee in a bucket.

Rocky's Poverty-Poetry Moment

Sometimes the homeless...Listen-up you 4.0s

Poverty-poetry words share life,
 examine understandings
 and summarize the essence.

Rocky wrestled community college algebra to the mat:
 the sums of cubics and linears, binomials, quadratics.
 ...to the mat with 'knowns and unknowns,
 unknown knowns and known unknowns,'
 "Was that Cheney or Rumsfeld?
 Whichever, war crimes were committed,
 whole families were killed."

Pride quickens excitement:
 "I got 'A', 4.0 and when the instructor asked,
 'What did we learn in his class?'
 Most wrote about equations/solutions. I wrote,

"Heart and desire overcome age and homelessness."

“It’s not harmless
to not reason.”

Early foggy morning
Ed G volunteers

A Solo Conversation

“People just cripple their way through life,
...over inflate self-importance,
feel the need
to hide from themselves,
fail to adapt
and hate us in the poor community
because we can adapt.

“Wear out your shoes
and then comes the truth.

“A rather long time ago
Darwin said, ‘adapt or die.’

“The more you have the more you want
and you stay unhappy because
there’s always more to want.
Hobble hobble...hobble hobble.

“Cripple, cripple
go around in a circle
baby-thrower.

“People have their problems
religion integrates them into society.

“Help is randomized.

“Party too hard
Lose the job
Drain the wallet
Panic
Booze and drug crutches
spiral down into homelessness.

“Belief systems
come and go:
in good times — work,
in bad times, ‘No, not you.’

“Belief systems’
verbal weapons
tear into people
crippling their way through life’s
eventual crash and burns.

“Life does not inevitably bite you in the ass.”

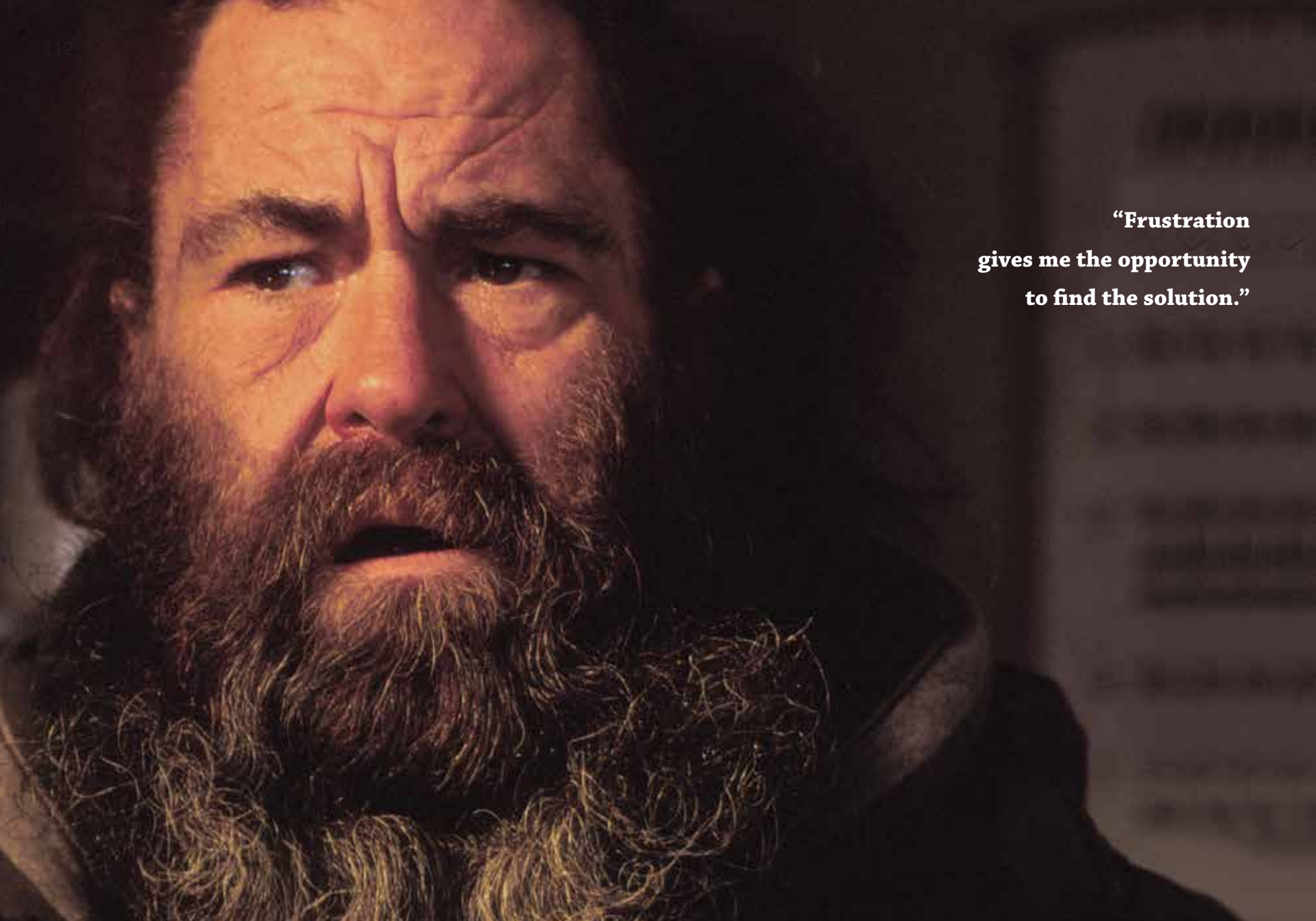






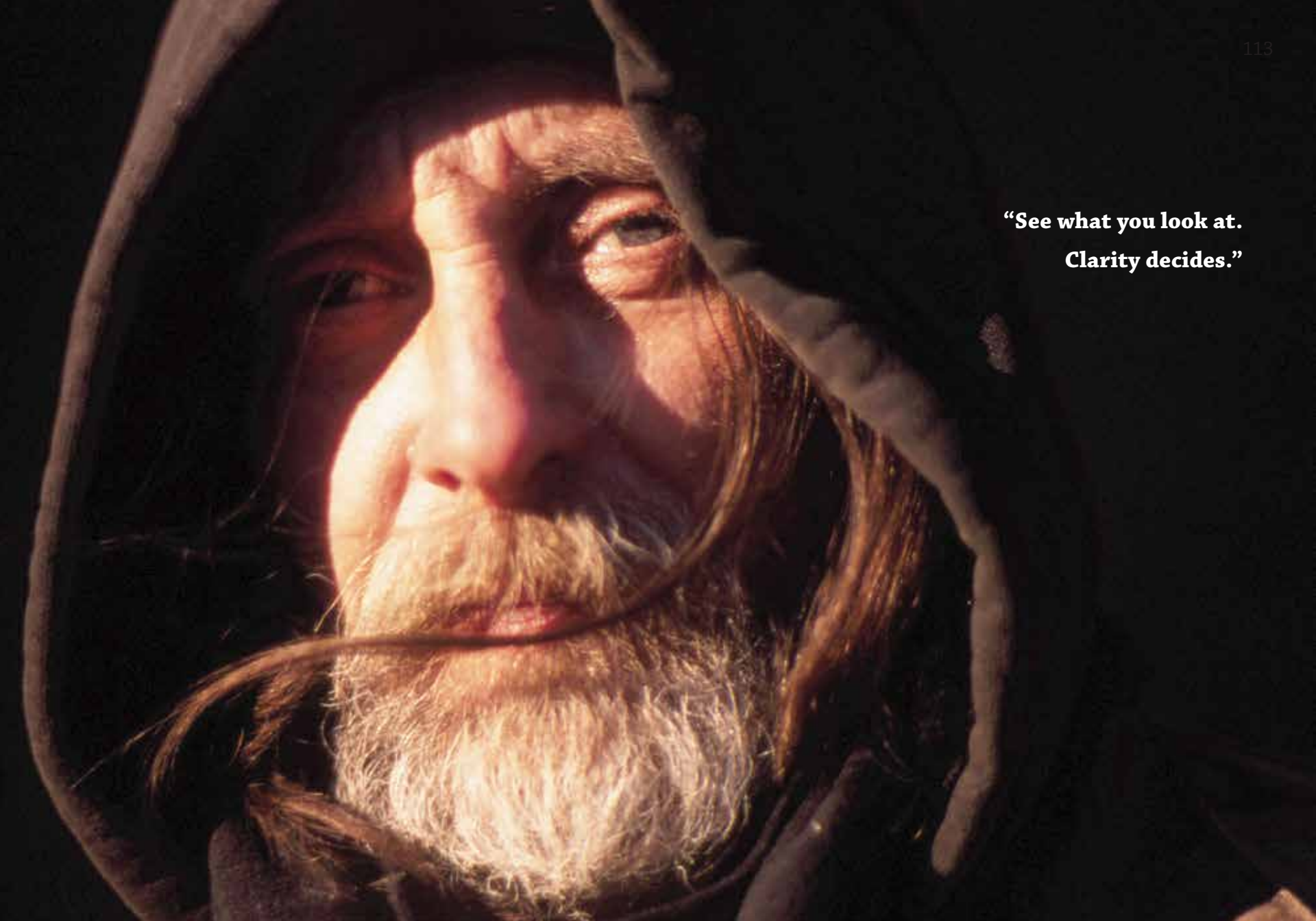






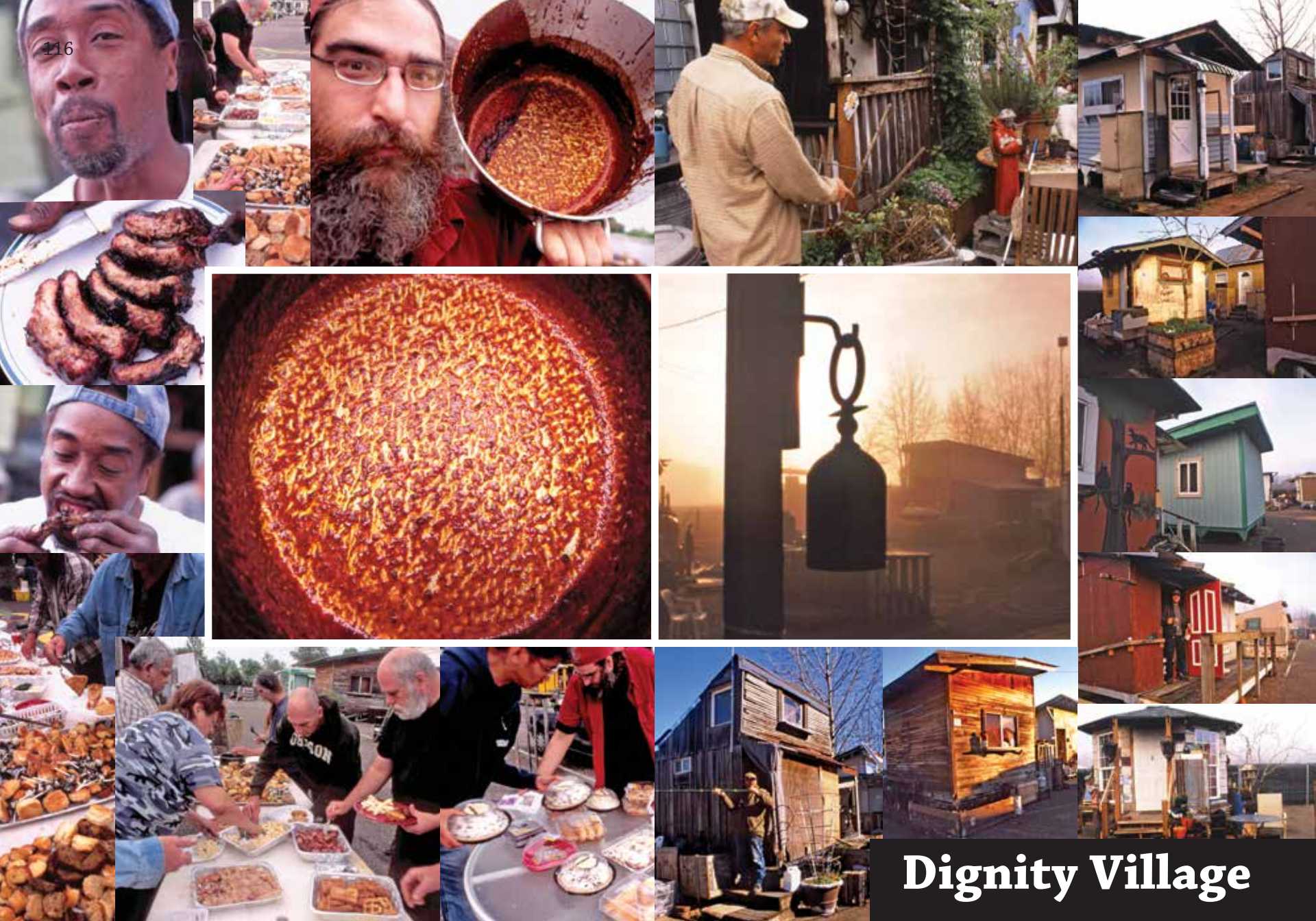
**“Frustration
gives me the opportunity
to find the solution.”**

**“See what you look at.
Clarity decides.”**









Dignity Village



Dignity Villagers

Mandatory Membership Meeting:
Council Elections

16 December 2010, 6:00 PM
at the Commons, Dignity Village.

The Annual Election – 2010

“...he said...she said”

“Yeah, but...”

“...on the other hand...”

For weeks

a voluntary sign-up for candidacy
has been posted at the Security Shack.

The official sign-up sheet.



Tonight the membership elects
council members
for the coming year.
Opinions have been expressed.
Negatives and positives challenged.
Campaigns and visions finessed.

The Commons is packed.
Christmas lights cheer,
the wood stove warms
and 41 Village members jostle
to cast their vote:
Privilege and responsibility.
Candidates are reconsidered.

“Handed out ballots
to all members present
also Whitefoot, on security.”

Ballots marked,
collected,
tallied.
Within the hour results are
announced:

Jon Boy
Rick
JD
Dave S
Lisa L
Niki
Lisa C

A new council has been elected.

“The new council adjourned
to the office,
to choose the new
board members.
They reconvened
to the Commons
to announce the new board:
Jon Boy, as chairperson,
JD, as vice chair,
Lisa L, as secretary,
Lisa C, as treasurer.

“Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM”

Tonight,
41 Villagers...
**“Of the People,
By the People,
For the People.”**

‘IT WORKS’





Dignity Village at Sunrise

**“...do not feel obligated to believe
that the same God who has endowed us
with sense, reason, and intellect
has intended us to forgo their use.”**

—Galileo Galilei



**If *Nature* is God's conversation —
what is your reply?**



Dignity Village 24/7 Security Log

It is Friday, 1 pm

Welcome Sharon Seventh-day Adventist

Thoughtful Activity

...the new steps DANCE:

Take care of Earth,

take care of Life

and how about the children

we didn't invest in...

**With joy and spirit
invest in children
before they acquire
a bunch of dying,
before tragedy strikes.**

Build with them a shared vision
of welcome, of home, of safety, of love
so they may thrive though civilizations struggle.

People cling to belong
to the old divisive, expansive,
society of external gratifications.
Globalized, the World is suddenly smaller.
We now; each to do fairness.

**If them's who grabs, gets,
greed will divide, will destroy.**

Humanity depends on Nature.
Productivity depends on natural resources.
Continuity depends on fit and balance
...empathy, compassion?
...caring, sharing?
...passing on genes mindfully
with respect for all life.

And doesn't happiness involve wholeness?
...a real sense of purpose?
...thoughtful activity?
with outreach to encourage 'trustworthy'?
...to nurture a World sense of We?



"I want you to be you.
Have you figured out what that is?"

"United by Spirit, Bonded by Name"

Benson Technical High School

Friday morning Amy and Tim took the Tech-Geo class to Dignity Village so they could understand how the structure they are building will be used and to also visit the occupants of the Village. The students also got to meet Melissa who will be living in the structure they are building.





His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama Environmental Summit is hosted by Mitripa College.

The Larson Legacy made bus fare, lunch and tickets to the Dalai Lama's presentations available to Villagers.

It is Saturday.

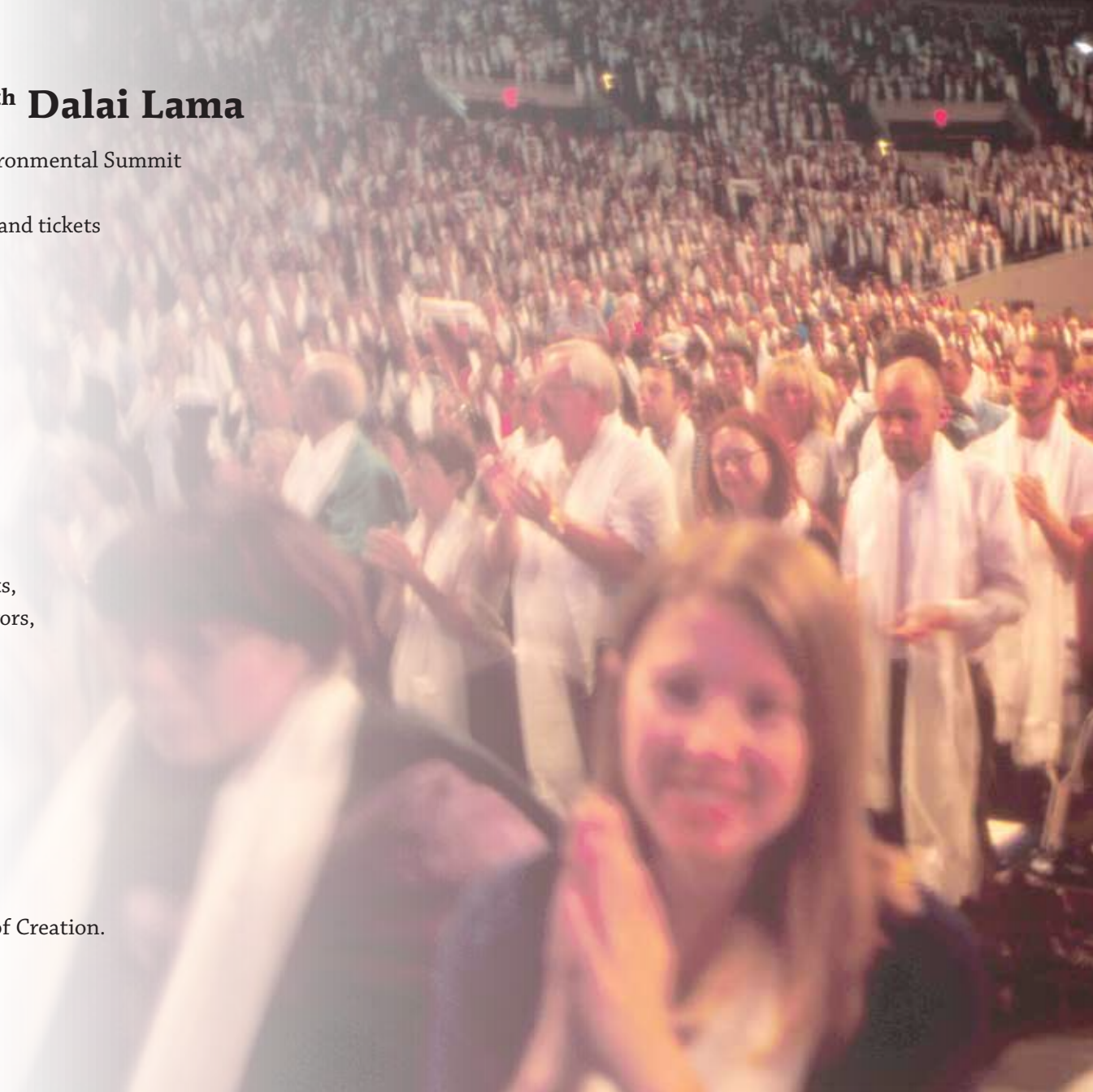
A handful of Villagers board the 8:45 Tri•Met arriving Veteran's Memorial Coliseum to join the pre-conference enthusiasm and confusion.

Connecting between science and faith are concerned citizens, environmentalists, journalists, and Buddhists of several flavors, perhaps 11,000 in total, including 11 Villagers.

The Dalai Lama is welcomed, and welcoming.

"Brothers and sisters,
from our inner garden to the Universe
happy experience is the basis for Unity.
A habit of happiness....love toward all of Creation.

"Tibet is a culture of compassion.





“Compassion, that sense of concern for others comes not necessarily from a religious person, you will find the same qualities in all people. The same opportunity to produce something wonderful.

”Loving kindness is the way for others to be happy. What we want is unbiased love. What we want is unbiased compassion. Increase and nurture these basic values.

“Unity through kindness”

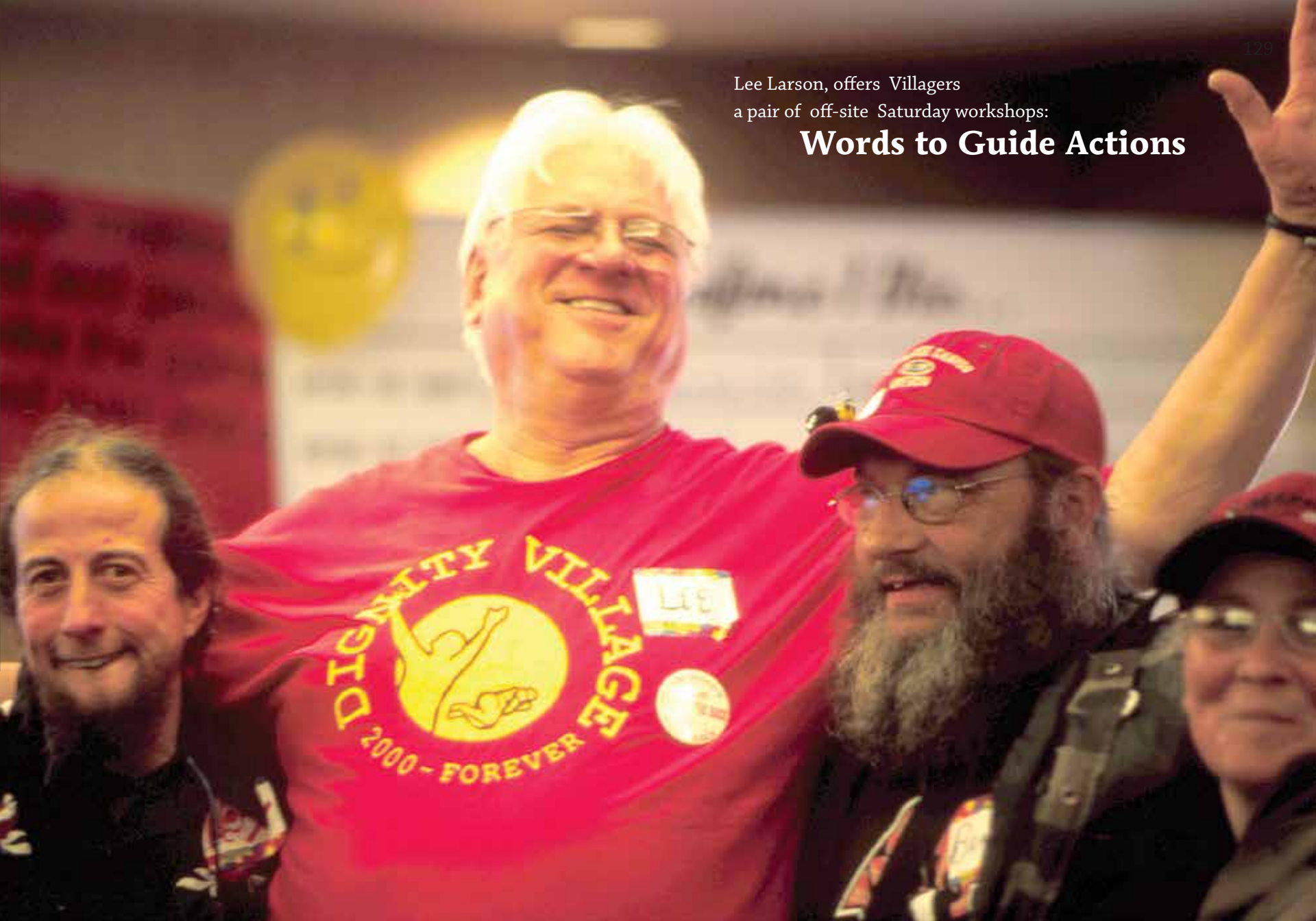
It is classic Dalai Lama as are the concerns:

“Nothing easy. Must be some moderation. We are a social animal. All neighbors come together, smile and nice words but inside not happy. To get happy physically you must get happy mind. Ruling class too much exploitation. So therefor, anger out of a sense of concern. “A sense of strong self shows willpower, is very positive. Worldwide scale must start with individuals. Individual awareness of ecology, lots of education. Combination of desire and compassion comes from biological factor we do as individuals.”



Lee Larson, offers Villagers
a pair of off-site Saturday workshops:

Words to Guide Actions





Dignity Villagers scrutinizing Dignity Village.

The past examined, the future visited.

Thoughts, phrases, words and

question-and-answer conversations optimized.

Curiosity. Anticipation. Challenge. Opportunity.

Jan and Lee finesse postings

condensing lists to their essential core.

A Dignity Village vision statement emerges:

Words to guide actions.

Games, laughter

...and free lunch.





KEEP IT
BITTY
MIDDERS



“...seeing their faces and listening to their stories
which lead to action, to participation, to commitment
...an expression of our compelling need to live as one.



“Let us remember the Golden Rule:
‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’

“...I do not underestimate the difficulty that this involves.”

Pope Francis' speech
to the United States Congress
September 24th, 2015

“...if people can’t talk, they can’t think about our economy, democracy, humanity. I traveled among intentional communities in Nevada, Alaska, in Oregon, SquareOne, in Seattle, The Jungle. I was allowed to listen. I reached a lot of people. A lot of people who don’t trust our society, don’t trust its morals and the empowered. I listened to discouragement.”

Ptery’s words are schooled and street-smart. I query about Dignity Village.

“I don’t know. There are lots of different minds, lots to discover, appreciate where they’re at. There are lots of walls between people, physical walls of abuse, of fighting, of fairness, of money, of screaming without listening.

“Look at the sky, the generosity. Sense the sharing, Though the culture is selfish, encourage individuals.

“In concept, sustainable may be the way to go. Too much profit enchants,



distracts from community awareness of basic stuff: shelter, food, water, caring, sharing, welcome. In concept this might be the way to go but our past has made many barriers. And some don’t see opportunity, while others won’t embrace change.

“I’m educating myself about activities that are beneficial to the climate, that work with nature. I’m motivated listening how we’re all connected: globalized compassion. Yet ‘they’ aren’t with us because ‘they’ have a different goal.

“I don’t know... Influence comes a little at a time and sometimes sideways, by appreciating where people are at, by encouraging individualism and honoring what we don’t know. There may not be **magic**, but there is **mystery**.

“It’s hard to figure out where leadership comes from. Learn to inspire, to understand myself and others, help restore the Earth.”

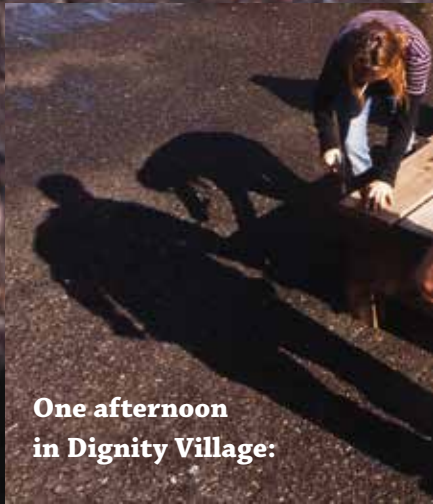


...But if—









**One afternoon
in Dignity Village:**

The Miracle of Rusty Nails

Wordless thoughts
shuffle across wet asphalt,
body vacant, bent, defeated.
Life lost her.

With reason, or no reason,
what does it matter?
Bottom is bottom.

A stack of recycle lumber
infested with rusty nails —
“more metal than wood,” Jay grumbled;
slipping the claw of his hammer under a nail
...he gave her hand to the hammer.



All afternoon she pulled and twisted,
“making real lumber
for making real houses...”

“...real lumber,
real houses...”

Now evening comes
...with a smile.

Rusty nails
in 2 × 4s and 2 × 6s
gifting the pleasures
of self-esteem.

...I call it “The Miracle of Rusty Nails.”

“Success...”

“Money doesn’t always measure success.
Insignificant things can sometimes have wonderful value.
Who can’t comprehend free-cycle or a gift of fresh organic produce?.
In today’s world of ‘copy,’ unique is...well, unique.

**“Success is being able
to make spontaneous,
anonymous gifts.”**



Rocky, Rick, Ruthie, Melissa and Martice,
Tonya, Tom, Laura, Ben, Ptery and extremely Dave,
...quite a lot of stuff to ponder and meditate upon.

To wrap, we need focus:

First, what wonderful faces! Definitely up close to the human condition without gloss, glamour, ornamentation, or pretense. What we look like when we're really up against it. Not just a sudden setback, but in a big way and for the long haul...through our own fault or through the workings of a system that can be incredibly unfair, uncaring, even cruel. And, often, how tough and resilient we are in coping even at the bleakest level.

Second, how quite a number of these folks recognize the extent their own flaws have helped to bring about our own grim condition.

Third, comprehensive, damning, and accurate indictment of inequality, inequity and our society's 'values' informs and educates American Street Philosophers.

**“Why is our society plagued by wishful thinking,
by short-sightedness and by insatiable greed?”**

“Wear out your shoes:
responsibility, equality, education,
caring, sharing, courage;

then comes:
compassion, humanity,
kindness, understanding
and creative attitude communities.”

AMERICAN STREET PHILOSOPHERS





It's happening

**“Keep on,
Keeping on??”**



Living the Agreement – or Not

Gather together,
encouraging people
to speak for themselves.
Honest and open.

Listen with respect, honest and open,
follow through with kindness, caring, fidelity.

Share the stories.
Walk the talk.

Discuss the temptations.

Discover what I can do with myself.

Collected from diversity
talents join together a random 'family'
creating community
— mostly.



**"We is why,
We is how."**

**"It's not harmless
to not reason."**

**NOW IS HERE
TOMORROW IS MAYBE**

*"It's not how tough the times are,
It's how you meet the challenge."*

**"We are a group of people
forced to learn 'community.'"**

**"The evolution of friendship
is greater, more important
than anythings I could own or collect."**

**"Thoughts need weeding
Like plants in a garden."**

**"We must discombobulate
the ascendancy of precedent."**

**"Life does not inevitably
bite you in the ass."**

**"...to be wild and still be calm
that's liberation."**

**"The more you have
the more you want
and you stay unhappy
because there's always
more to want."**

**"...to become light
and be so connected
you are everything,
that's paradise."**



"What's what
and where's it at
here and now,"

"Tragedy and comedy abound."

"...the freedom to be responsible -
Use it or lose it."

"I want you to be you.
Have you figured out
what that is?"

"Wear out your shoes
and then comes the truth."

"Share the stories,
discuss the temptations.
Discover what I can do with myself."

American Street Philosophers

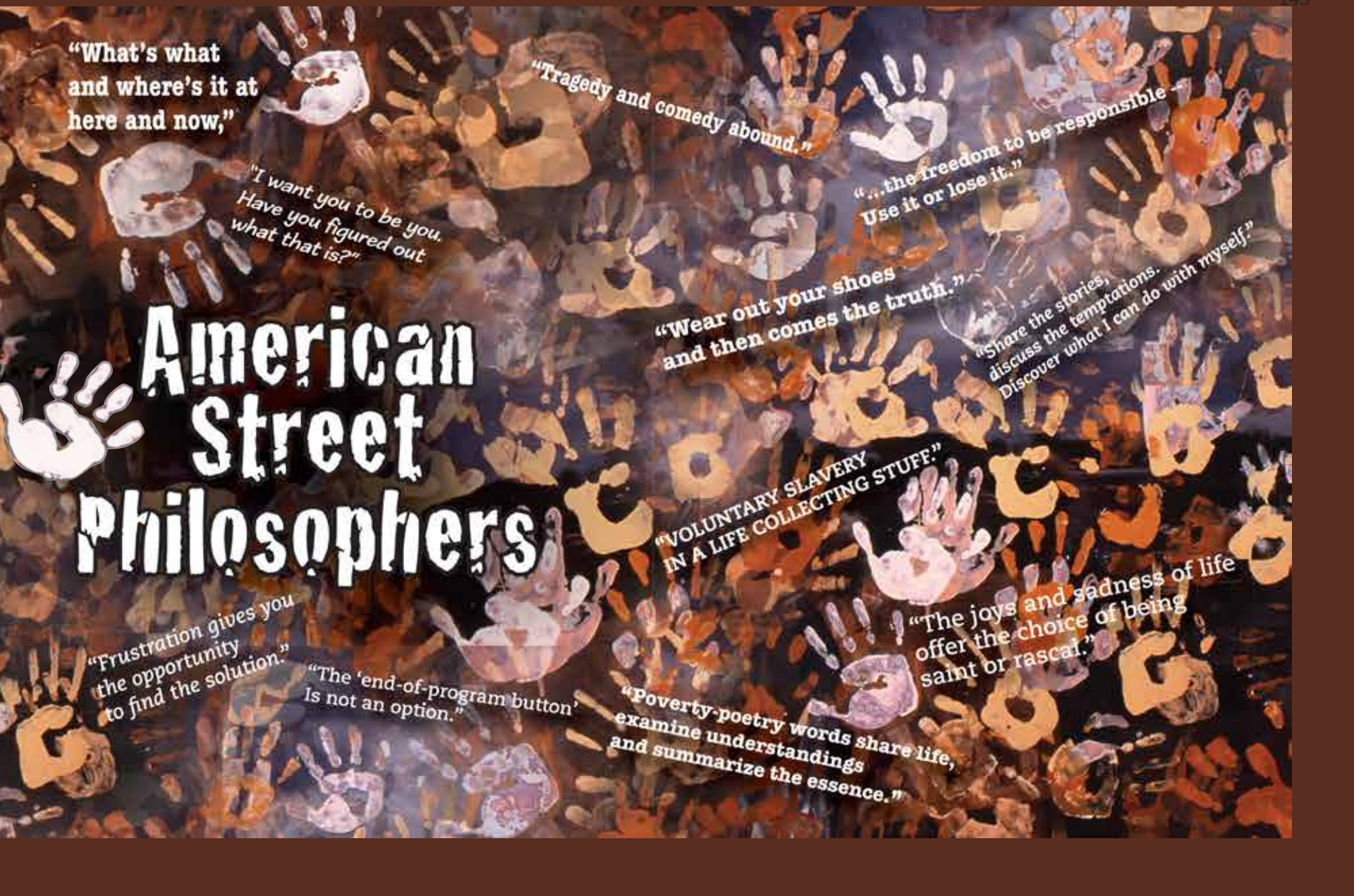
"VOLUNTARY SLAVERY
IN A LIFE COLLECTING STUFF."

"The joys and sadness of life
offer the choice of being
saint or rascal."

"Frustration gives you
the opportunity
to find the solution."

"The 'end-of-program button'
Is not an option."

"Poverty-poetry words share life,
examine understandings
and summarize the essence."



IN APPRECIATION

We hopped a boxcar on the southbound freight...going miles, doing curiosity. More adventure than transportation. Back home, a week later, I overheard, “They’re not bums and hobos they’re gentlemen-of-the-road.” He was seven. Now he’s a g’v’ment man with title, lab and a couple university degrees — curious, thoughtful and caring.

Thanks to street philosophers, ‘upper-class homeless’, Dignity Villagers welcoming tomorrow’s outsourced, downsized, foreclosed, evicted newbies. For welcoming first nighters thankful for dumpster left-overs, for smiles gifted with that first spontaneous *help-money*. Appreciation and thanks for hanging on and for sharing your little and not much.

...the “just hanging on” **standing in food lines,
working the dumpsters,
wives peeing behind bushes,
kids sleeping under bridges.**

the “little and not much” **energized to build their own villages
in our own cities
with their own hands.**

Thanks for recycle lumber and straightened nails and Walt’s birdhouses made from Tiny House lumber scraps recycled from contractor-builder trims — three recycles away from tree farm or forest. Welcome songbirds to Walt’s houses, egrets to the slough, crows on the field, geese in the sky, gulls above the river, diversity and neighborhood and family and welcome to Eugene’s OpportUNITY village and Square One, Olympia’s Quixote, Seattle’s, Abbotsford’s, Spokane’s, Bellingham’s, Denver’s, Dallas, Phoenix and the many ‘elsewheres of rising equality’.

Hello again trains and buses, streetcars and airplanes — and having a ticket. To teaching and learning and kindness. To innovative self-governing, and the bike trailer built from a crutch and golf cart and Tonya’s story for Thesaurus. For smiles and nods and looking in the eye, knowing and not knowing, memories and forgetting, friendships and privacy, time or no time and “Old Time Is No Crime.”

Welcome couchsurfing musicians crafting yesterday’s stories today for tomorrow’s chapters of us...poetry as performance and videos in the Village Commons with wood stove heat thanks to Ed K’s firewood crew. Welcome conversation and caring, friendship and sharing and the Five Basic Rules.

Hello to responsibility and generosity, inspiration and involvement. Thanks Lee for belief, for Larson Legacy support of Dignity Village again and again, and yet again: Lee's momentous commitment, expectation, frustration, love and disappointment. Thanks to Marc L and to Oregon's Supreme Court and the City of Portland, Sally Erickson and JOIN's Mark J and Katie...to 'Annie Haul' and donations. To Jack and Ibrahim, Shakedown Street, "Four Amigos" and Tim and Shorty, both Laura's, Jon-Boy, Whitefoot, Tami, Sharif and Martice.

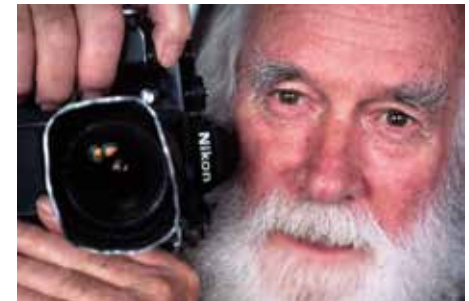
Thanks to Jason and Leslie, to Tom O and Aaron, Ilze, Lee and Fred Sears, Dorothy and Tom S's late night thoughts. To F-3's, Provia, Panda Labs, Jackson, Bruce and Holly's E-6 cardboard mounts. To T&C Photo and Tim's ready in an hour. Thanks for Toyota R 22s and 32 mpg - high fives with Rob and Ray, Allen and Joe at Island Center Auto...and Ann's gourmet-garden, one-burner feasts; New Season's 'Delivery Diesel Dennis' mostly organic, nearly fresh Friday fruits and veggies and Central Market's Gabriele: medium soup, seaweed salad, almond milk, ice cream, bananas and blueberries...and Greg Keyes MD: cardio-cholesterol exercise health-care crew and Mark Fisher's "sweat-equity- counts" crew and Nina, Dmitry, Dave, Matt, Kevin and Ann for reads with occasional... With love and appreciation beyond measure for my kids, their mom, grandkids, spouses and partners, and Molly wielding the editorial pencil our mother skillfully wielded on our behalf for 40 years:

"Omit unnecessary words."

Welcome to street librarian Laura's 'helpful words' STREET BOOKS bicycle-library and Street Roots' vendor/columnist Big John in Texas. Thanks to Jeana/Donna, Melissa, Mary, Tonya, Ben, both Cindy and Randy, Tim and Jim, both Mike's, Mitch and Debbie, Niki and Beckie, Angela, Dean, Gary. Sheri and Walt, Liz and both Lisa's...Pat and TC. JD and Ruthie. Caryn, Jessica, Paul. Ed's both G and K,. Ken's S and M, Chris and Oscar and Elsie. Shannon and Jay, Sharon. Richard and the three Steve's, both Larry's and Joe and Bob, Savanna, Sue, David and the three Dave's, Allen, Gina, Louie, Susan, Dennis, Jennifer, Jen, both Brad's, P and G, Ishmael, Ptery, Carel, Danny. Stan and Scott, Marci, Darryl, Tracey, Rick, Chuck, Dread, Glenn and Kamela. Thanks Rocky and Kevin, Austin, Justin, Dustin, Reg, Mark, Sean and Shawn and Rich and Rick, Sandora, Dylan, Eileen, Bobby, Sam, Kimberly, Amanda, Josh, Nancy, both Brian's, Nate, Monica, Brandy, Brady, Chris, James, Ray, both Margaret's, Thom, Tumbleweed, Maryellen, Paula, Teenya, Dirk, Jeff, Betty Jo, Heather, Karen
...and Godspeed Gaye and Fred and Steve O and Tom S and Dave W.

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AmericanStreetPhilosophers.org

Steve Wilson
Portland, Oregon 2007



Dean talks
from a folded sheet of paper:

“It all started harmlessly enough,
at the age of four or five, I suppose.
The age when there’s nothing sinister
about a total stranger
dropping artificial vegetables
into your out-stretched pillow-case
while you coyly hide your identity.

“It’s ‘All Hallows Eve’
...and YES, I’m talking about Candy Corn.
Just talking about it makes me weak.

“It’s nobody’s fault.

Parents didn’t know the danger
of the little triangles,
cleverly colored yellow, orange and white.
So real.
But better!

“In moderation
I was able to walk away.
Then I found myself
shamelessly trading
my best “fun size” candy bars –
Just to get a taste of the corn, Man.

“Friends, over the years. they knew!
They smelled the corn on my breath!
But you just can’t talk sense
to a user of the cob.”

“My name is Dean.
...and I eat Candy Corn.
“...it’s gonna be okay.”



Some Helpful Background:

N. Anderson

University of Chicago Press, 1923

The Hobo:

Sociology of the Homeless Man

J. Blau

Oxford University Press, 1992

The Visible Poor: Homelessness in the U.S.

A Braum & D Burnes

Westview Press (Boulder, CO), 1993

A Nation in Denial:

The Truth About Homelessness

T. Cresswell

Reaktion Books, 2001

The Tramp in America

T. Frank

Doubleday, 2001

***One Market Under God: Extreme Capitalism,
Market Populism, and the End
of Economic Democracy***

Ben Hudson & Laura Moulton

Perfect Day Publishing, 2021

LOANERS

The Making of the Street Library

D. Harvey

University of California Press, 2000

Spaces of Hope

D. Lewenthal

Cambridge University Press, 1985

The Past is a Foreign Country

J. Miller

Harvard University Press, 1994

Democracy is in the Streets

D. Mitchell

Guilford Press, 2003

The Right to the City:

***Social Justice and the Fight
for Public Space***

J. Spradley

Little Brown, 1970

You Owe Yourself a Drunk:

An Ethnography of Urban Nomads

Ian C. MacMillan & James D. Thompson

Wharton Digital Press, 2013

The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook

Pressure Test, Plan, Launch and

Scale Your Enterprise

Expanded Edition

