



Community Journal

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Elders in Community

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HAZEL TULECKE: PEACE ACTIVIST, GRANDMOTHER OF EIGHT

PHOTOGRAPH BY DENNIE EAGLESON

Elder: Master of Living

BY GAIL TAYLOR, GUEST EDITOR

With this issue of *Community Journal* we celebrate the friend, the teacher, the mentor, the elder. I see an elder as an unselfish guide who will take an interest in the lives of younger people.

Included in this issue are the joys and sorrows of intergenerational relationships, tales of rebels with silver hair, and poems celebrating the power and mystery of life and death.

Elders participate in community by unselfishly sharing knowledge with those who are younger in the hope that something good will be passed on to future generations.

There is also plenty of room in the world for “elders-to-be,” those folks who are far from the age of retirement, but who have cultivated enough self-confidence and self-mastery to share their knowledge with those chronologically younger than themselves.

I would like to thank *Community Journal* editor Don Wallis for giving me the opportunity to be the guest editor of this issue. While he may be a long way from being an “elder,” I consider him to be a teacher, mentor, and friend. His willingness to advise, challenge, and encourage writers of lesser experience is one way he builds community. The same may also be said of Marianne MacQueen, director of Community Service, Inc., whose mastery of the calendar and production schedule is awesome.

Each new day brings an opportunity to make a difference in the life of someone searching.

Enjoy!

Gail Taylor is a reporter and photographer for the Yellow Springs News and a published poet.

Community Journal invites readers to contribute articles about the experience and meanings of community.

(See back page for details.)

Themes for upcoming issues:

Fall 2001—Land and Community

Winter 2002—Community Activism

Spring 2002—Youth and Community

Needing Each Other

BY DIANE CHIDDISTER

I’m not sure why I invited Emily Clarke for dinner one evening a few years ago. Perhaps because I’d been feeling this hole in my life, and in my 9-year-old daughter’s, the sort of hole a grandma might fill. Like most of my friends, I’d fallen in love with Yellow Springs and chosen it as my home. Also like most of my friends, I had no family near—and truthfully, I’d never quite fit into the one that I had.

Emily didn’t look like the sort of older woman I’d be attracted to. She didn’t wear dangling earrings and swishy skirts and move through the world with assurance and grace. No, she was decidedly plump, her clothes out of date, and when she walked she barreled along, as if determined to take in each and every good thing the world offered—and to Emily, the world was chock-full of good things. Somehow, seeing her week after week at Friends Meeting, and hearing her read poems year after year at Women’s Voices, I thought she was someone I’d like to know.

I was right. And it turned out Em came with an extra! Her sister Dottie, at 85 ten years older than Em, with whom Emily shared each evening meal. So began our regular dinners with Dottie and Em.

That first night they were undaunted by our six cats—Emily, it turned out, was a world-class cat lover, much to my daughter’s delight. They thought my uninspired lasagna the best meal they’d ever had, my cluttered little house an enchanted cottage. They oohed and aahed over each dish, every detail, and by the evening’s end I was totally charmed.

Over the next year Dottie and Em became a cherished part of our lives. We shared occasional dinners, sometimes at our house, sometimes joining them at their nightly meal at Big Boy. Sometimes Em called in the evenings, wanting to read me her latest poem. At Christmas time we drove in circles looking at the lights in Raymar Estates, and in summer evenings we drove through fields of corn. Whenever my daughter appeared in a production—at Antioch School, or Kids Playhouse—Em came with me to watch, and proclaimed Hallie the most talented kid in town. We celebrated birthdays. We did family things.

I’ve never known two people who so loved the world. Dottie and Em loved birds and squirrels, and faithfully fed them each day. They loved clouds, flowers, the sky in general. They were always on the lookout for something new to appreciate, especially something in the natural world. Em loved people too, and she wrote poems in which all this love spilled out on the page.

And she loved us! She thought my hair was just fine even when it stuck out in weird ways, and she thought everything I ever wrote was wonderful. She gave my daughter the sort of easy, unconditional love that grandmothers give.

After a year, Em was diagnosed with lung cancer, and our relationship changed to one in which I drove her to chemotherapy appointments. Still, her good nature triumphed. She faithfully brought along *The Sound of Music* video and, while poison flowed through her veins, sang along with the

words. And, when on the day she moved to Hospice two good-looking young drivers came to fetch her, I caught her sneaking lipstick out of her purse, and putting some on—she always did like young men. When they loaded her wheelchair into the van, Em gave us a big lipsticked smile and a jaunty wave—a new adventure, she seemed to be saying, heigh ho!

Em died a few months later, nine months after her diagnosis. The last night of her life, I stayed with her at Hospice. She lay in a coma but still I sang lullabies into her ear. I don’t know which of us they were for.

Things didn’t turn out as I’d hoped. I wanted Em and Dottie—who died a few months after her sister—to be with us much longer. Still, they gave us models of lively, life-loving aging and courageous dying, as well as good company, wonderful memories, and unconditional love. Whatever I’d been looking for with Dottie and Em, I found it, and more.

I wonder if older people in our community know how much they have to offer the rest of us, especially single parents and those of us without family nearby. I wonder if there’s a way to let them know. I think we need each other. Don’t you?

Diane Chiddister is a short-story writer, newspaper reporter, and instructor at Antioch McGregor in Yellow Springs.

Elder: One Who Teaches

BY BOMANI MOYENDA

When I think of the word *elder*, my mind conjures up the image of an old man with uncombed silver-gray hair and a beard of the same color cascading down from his chin. His eyebrows are thick and bushy almost shading his deep-set peering eyes from the sun. His cheeks are lined with symmetrical wrinkles and his jaws are square. His deep stern expression projects a sense of profound wisdom honed sharp against the stones of bittersweet life experiences. Though he is small in physical stature there is something huge, ominous, and mystical about his presence. His posture is stately. He is Elder, Sage, Keeper of Knowledge.

I am always struck with a sensation of humility toward his image. I don't know what he knows. I haven't been where he's been physically or mentally. I experience a sudden urge to do something, but I'm never exactly sure what. I am moved by a sudden urge to be something bigger, something more significant than I am. I can feel my soul wanting to stretch me into a more meaningful existence. I am awed in the same manner I was the first time I stood in the middle of a huge university library gazing about at rows of books, shaking my head at the enormity of the things I didn't know. My mind opens up. My heart opens up. I am changed.

As the picture fades I return to the place where no such man exists and I am overcome with a sense of longing. Where is this man, this elder in my community? Why does this image invade my mind? What is this strange force that draws me and swirls my spirit so?

Maybe the real question is what is a real-life, present-day elder in this culture and how does one reach this status? In some cultures there are specific ceremonies, rites of passage that exist which educate men and women about their manhood, womanhood and their roles in their community. One knows both when and why they advance to the revered position of elder. Their path has been laid. Their lives have been structured by traditions and they have been systematically informed of their responsibilities to the community.

Given that such systems and structures are largely lacking and under relentless attack by freewheeling do-your-thing self-centered values that tend to pit youth against adults and vice versa, it is a wonder that anyone is even referred to as an elder in this culture outside of religious institutions. The term or title has practically disappeared from our everyday language. The very concept seems to fade with each passing day. The word "elder" has been replaced with "elderly" and spoken in disdain and pity. Those who would be our respected elders often become the Rodney Dangerfields of our society, ripened fruit subjected to the sourness of rejection and abandonment.

Fortunately however, there are those who recognize the need to hold up examples of those who, in spite of having the meaning of their existence minimized, have weathered the storm, developed and maintained a sense of purpose in their lives and a genuine interest in their community. There are those who have amassed great fortunes and through philanthropic

endeavors have touched the lives of many less fortunate. Volumes have been written about them and they deserve careful study. I will not bother to name any of them here. There are those who made gigantic sacrifices and dedicated themselves to political activism, grassroots organizing, and exchanged their freedom and sometimes their very lives in their struggles to effect changes that would lead to a true democratic society. We have such heroes locally and nationally.

At least one of the important functions of an elder is mentoring youth. That means one purposely places oneself in the path of (or alongside) young people in an effort to educate them regarding their role in the world and community, and to inspire and nurture their development. How does one become such an elder? You just do it. In this society it is left up to the individual to decide that it's the right thing to do. He doesn't wait until he has reached a certain age or a certain recognizable status in the community. The role isn't designated through any formalized process. He is motivated by his own set of values and love, and the desire to pass along certain skills. He recognizes that he has something unique to offer, rolls up his sleeves and sets the stage and goes to work helping young people.

My late father, Elmer D. Jackson, was such a man. He was a youth mentor long before the term became popular. He grew up in Springfield and Urbana, Ohio, where he was a star athlete in high school. Later he became a

Golden Gloves boxer and served in the army during World War II. He served in a segregated unit where he was subjected to physically fighting a foreign enemy and mentally battling character assassinations levied by his white countrymen. He returned home and was subjected to systematic discrimination; I'll spare the details. Despite (maybe because of) this, he decided to become a Boy Scout leader in Springfield and he did exactly that.

He wasn't a highly educated man in the sense of formal training. However, he taught himself six languages (not many around him knew this). He was a stout fireplug of a man at 5'7" and a chiseled 225 pounds. He had a great love for the martial arts and an even greater love for children. He combined the two and began to teach judo and karate to neighborhood kids and young adults. One of my brightest memories of him is how he used to come bounding in from work with his skin smudged with black foundry sand from his job at Morris Bean and Company. I'd hand him a big glass of ice water as he reached down and playfully pinched my nose. Then he would drink the entire glass of water slowly with his eyes closed. He'd form his big smile and say, "OK, now I'm ready to teach some karate."

I knew his big smile was there because he loved the idea of teaching kids. He loved talking to them. I remember watching him carefully deliver long lectures about the mental and spiritual nature of the martial arts to them along with the requirement of developing self-discipline. He did this tediously before he would teach any moves. Those who were interested only in learning how to beat up people didn't stick around long. Those who endured his lectures were captivated by his storytelling and his genuine love for them. He had a unique manner of smiling right through your heart, dodging the clutter and confusion brought on by adolescence. I saw kids and young adults be transformed from raucous wild characters I knew on the street into focused caring individuals right before my eyes.

Some would drop by between lessons to talk about family troubles, problems at school, or just to chat.

If he charged at all for lessons he never demanded to be paid and would never accept money from someone he thought could not afford to pay. Once I saw a young man try to pay him. Dad thought that he could not afford to pay. The young man persisted in handing Dad the money. Dad finally took it. Then he handed it right back to him. When the young man tried to return it to him Dad got real stern and said "Shut up. You paid me didn't you?" The surprised fellow shook his head smiling, then walked away without another word.

Dad moved back to Springfield in the late 60s and found another crop of kids to shine on. Some were fierce with bad reputations and criminal records. I watched them magically shed their mean skins somewhere between Dad's living room and the foam mats in his back yard. He was always teaching and always loving. He knew that love was missing in their lives and he had plenty of his own to share, which he did freely.

Students of his that I have stayed in touch with are college graduates with careers and families. When my spirit needs refreshing I seek them out and prod them for stories about Dad.

In his later years I would take him grocery shopping. What could have been a thirty-minute trip generally lasted more than an hour because there were always children in the store. He could not walk past a child without stopping and having a conversation. He would not move on until the child smiled back at his big wide grin. I finally learned to set aside two hours for the grocery run.

Whenever I am at my best in relating to kids I know it is because of watching Dad interact with kids. I rarely raised my voice at my four children because I had learned from him that it wasn't necessary. I always tried to find my warmest, most genuine way of

communicating with them. I try to do the same with other kids I encounter.

A few weeks ago I was sitting in a group consisting of kids who had become, let's say, court-involved. A friend of mine had asked me to help with the group because she knew I used to be a counselor. The 13-year-old boy seated two chairs over had become frustrated after sharing some of his family troubles. His face had become reddened and he was obviously distraught and feeling powerless to change some things about his family. I found myself feeling powerless for him. I asked myself "What would my dad do right now?"

The next instant I motioned for the kid to switch seats with the boy sitting next to me, which he did without a word. When he sat down next to me I put my left arm around his shoulder and we sort of instinctively leaned toward each other. Then without thinking I reached over with my right hand and in one motion cradled his head and gently pressed it into my shoulder. I heard him release a long sigh. We never looked one another in the eye but in that seemingly awkward moment I felt something in him softly melt away. At the same time I felt my breathing grow deep and slow. Either the room went silent or I just couldn't hear anything for a long moment. I remember feeling a warm sensation in my chest as if something was glowing inside me. I don't know why but I smiled and I saw other kids who were watching begin to smile too.

After the group ended the two other adults told me they saw the kid change, transform. They told me I had some amazing effect on him. I told them that I wasn't sure what happened and that "It sure wasn't me." Like I said, Dad is always teaching.

Bomani Moyenda is a writer, poet, and former substance-abuse counselor. He is a lifelong resident of Yellow Springs.



Hazel

BY HEIDI EASTMAN

As Hazel Tulecke's daughter, I'd like to share something of what her life means to those around her, especially her family. Hazel is 77, and she is mother of four, grandmother of eight. She is a former French teacher and counselor. She currently faces a three-month jail sentence for her civil disobedience at a School of the Americas (SOA) demonstration. The SOA is a division of the U.S. Army that provides training for Latin American soldiers and police in counter-insurgency warfare and methods of controlling unrest. Hazel and Bill Houston, her

husband, chose to disobey the No Trespassing rules knowing their actions were punishable by a prison sentence. They chose this action based on a desire to communicate the depth of their disagreement with the government's actions.

In Yellow Springs, Hazel is known for this type of political activism. She's been doing it for years. She has been involved in the Yellow Springs Sister Village project in Nicaragua, Movement for a New Society, Peace Brigades International (an organization that provides European or North American compan-

ions to citizens whose lives have been threatened in Latin America or other areas of unrest), and Alternatives to Violence Programs (working with prison inmates to learn new ways to handle conflict). She demonstrated for civil rights in the sixties, and against the Vietnam War, the B-1 Bomber, nuclear power, and the Pentagon. The work she does to bring about change in the "system" is her passion, and has brought her fame on a small scale in Yellow Springs.

But in our family Hazel is famous for the qualities that have touched her children and grandchildren. What

extraordinary seeds has Hazel planted in our hearts? I talked to some family members, and here is what we said:

Playfulness: "She has an unusual way of communicating with kids," said granddaughter Celeste. "She's amazingly playful for someone her age, and I admire that." Hazel herself readily admits her love of play. One of her favorite things about traveling to Haiti or Nicaragua is meeting children and getting to play with them. Here at home she has been teaching a weekly Spanish class to a group of home-schooled children, including two of her own grandchildren. The class consists of games, songs, and fun with the language, and is a high point of her week, she says. Granddaughter Marcianna mentioned Hazel's sense of humor with kids. There is laughter mixed with learning as the children play "corre, corre, el raton" (button, button, who's got the button) in her Spanish class.

Love of Adventure: Hazel's daughter Kim found inspiration in the way Hazel put herself at risk for being arrested for making a political statement. "She's taking her position in life, being older and retired, and making use of it," Kim said. "It makes me feel expansive in my own life." When Hazel herself was speaking of her pending jail term she said, "It's a kind of adventure, you know. In a way I'm looking forward to it." (Believe it or not, this was not an example of her being humorous.)

Resolve: Grandson Shan remembered a time when he was in high school and did not want to carry his bassoon to school a half-mile in the cold. "Hazel just picked it up and carried it the whole way there," he said. "That impressed me." Rather than debate the issue or try to make him do what she thought best, she walked, and he took notice. Her unstoppable nature has softened over the years, but she continues to hold strongly to her convictions.

Simple Living: Hazel works to keep her life simple, Kim noticed. "She removes unnecessary complexities and keeps moving toward



HAZEL TULECKE
WITH ONE OF HER EIGHT GRANDCHILDREN

simplicity." Granddaughter Jessica also mentioned Hazel's simple lifestyle. "Every single choice Hazel makes is based on how other people will be affected," Jessica said.

Much of this attitude comes from having seen first-hand how simply many people in the world live because they have to. Hazel reasons that if they have to, we can too. Thus you'll find recycled couches in her living room, a salad of wild lambs quarters on her table, and no car in her driveway. "Her garden is part of her simple lifestyle," said daughter Kari. "We trade produce from our gardens, and we also trade seeds and plants." So Hazel passes on the joys of gardening and simple living to the generations that follow.

Nonviolence: Grandson Nick spoke of Hazel's message of pacifism. With her Quaker roots she brought to the family a strong sense of the value of "speaking truth to power." At a recent family vacation at Cape Hatteras the evening's entertainment was the movie *Gandhi*, exemplifying the family's admiration for those

ideals. Two grandsons, Josh and Shan, have been active with the group Earth First, which works through nonviolent but active means to oppose clear-cutting logging practices.

Optimism: Josh reminded me of this part of Hazel. "That's the most important thing, I think," he said. "Because if you don't think things can get better, why would you want to work for change? Optimism is something I try to develop in myself." Another aspect of Hazel's optimism is her enjoyment of present circumstances. She is an incredible model for this. Every time I'm with her she shows me how to enjoy the blue sky, the breeze, the children—something, anything, and everything.

So that's Hazel, as she touches us all. I think she'll be just fine in prison, and we'll all learn a whole lot from her being there. In a way, we'll all be there with her.

Heidi Eastman lives in Yellow Springs, and enjoys in-line skating with her mother on the bike path.

Seniors and Community Support

BY RODNEY BEAN

Things are different for seniors. Communities that fail to recognize this can fail themselves in relation to their seniors. I do not say, fail their seniors; seeing seniors only as service recipients is a problem in building community. I want to focus on the following concerns: lack of inclusion for younger seniors and lack of support for older seniors.

Lack of inclusion can hinge on obsolete stereotypes, on looking at today and seeing only the past. Those entering retirement today, on average, enjoy better health, income, voting power, and interest in community, and have greater opportunities for continued work and for recreation. There have been great changes in these areas in the last 10 years.

Attitudes are different. We now find seniors less interested in special programming just for them, programming that segregates them from different age groups. They seem more interested in continuing to be active, contributing members of their communities.

A majority of seniors are women. They live longer than men. The changes in women's self image, sense of empowerment, type of employment, and role in the home that have been transforming in the last several decades are evident in the women coming of retirement age now. They are different; they want different things.

So, whatever stereotypes one may hold about seniors, it is time to reconsider. The distinction between seniors and others has diminished. Community service to seniors needs



SHARING A MEAL AT THE SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER

to focus on inclusion. Ask: Why consider seniors differently from others? Widen the circle so they can step in. Beckon when that is needed.

Lack of community support for older seniors can derive from underestimating family support. We have seen the growing trend of children pursuing lives away from the communities in which their parents live. This is not new. What many don't see is how this growing trend and the now busier lives for the children of aging parents combine to ill effects for Mom and Dad. The hit-and-run turbo-visit is on the rise. "I've scheduled a stop-over on my way to that conference in Dallas. I've got to arrange help for my dad." Two-career families, over-scheduled kids, having children later in life all add up to less time for the parent generation.

So, seniors with needs can

depend on family less than seniors once did. Communities can fill that void, can serve the needs family once served, if they see the need for what it is and see the role as one for them. Seniors have "informal support groups," friends and neighbors who help. This is community support. Support agencies for seniors use volunteers. Any of the ways volunteers help these agencies helps seniors. This is community support. See the need. Embrace the role.

Can one gain a rough measure of the quality of a community by its inclusion and support of seniors, by its mainstreaming and adoption of those wanting to be involved and those needing help? I think so.

Rodney Bean is Director of the Yellow Springs Senior Citizens Center.

Intergenerational Magic

BY JEFF SINGLETON

"Bye Jeff! Have a good summer! We'll miss you!" I sang out my reply: "Well, thanks everybody. Run fast, swim a lot, and stay up all night. Tell your parents I said you could! I'll miss you, too."

And I will miss them. Are these the same children who entered our doors last August? Those children were tentative, silent (except when crying for Mom!), so unsure of themselves. These children are vocal, confident, and seemingly ready to take on the world. What a transition.

In August of 2000, Friends Care Center in Yellow Springs became home to a preschool program serving the Yellow Springs and Cedar Cliff School districts. The program is a joint effort between the Greene County Educational Service Center and Council on Rural Services. During the school year, 24 young children, ages three to five, entered the doors of Friends Care Center, a nursing home, daily. A radical concept? An innovative approach to intergenerational activities? The answer is yes. Friends is one of only three nursing homes in Ohio to house a Headstart program.

The residents and children are fully immersed in daily activities together. Many opportunities are provided for relationships to develop naturally as part of the daily programming, and not necessarily as a planned or scheduled event. Many residents now volunteer regularly in the classroom or just wander in periodically throughout the day to observe or interact with the children. In addition, the children travel to different areas of the home each day for joint music,

story, craft, cooking, or gardening activities.

Many of the children are from low-income families. Many come from single-parent homes and the lack of family support is significant. Many of these children have limited contact with grandparents or extended family members. Conversely, many of the residents are distanced from their families and their opportunities to interact with grandchildren and great-grandchildren are limited. In many respects, a bonding has taken place. The children and residents have come to love each other as though discovering a new family.

Anyone who has ever worked in a nursing home recognizes the effect that children have on elders. A child's touch, a hug, can bring a smile to the faces of seniors who are not cognizant of their surroundings. A child's boundless energy brings a sparkle to the eyes of an elder. This is a magic that those of us who work in long-term care have come to accept. We can't explain it, but we know this magic is real.

Friends is part of a growing segment of care communities that have modeled themselves after the Eden Alternative Program, a concept that "strives to create an environment that celebrates living and nurtures the human spirit." Friends has adapted a "Human Habitat Model," which makes plants, pets, and children the axis around which daily life in the facility turns. While serving different populations, Friends and the preschool program actually embrace similar philosophies. Both strive to keep individuals in or near their home

community and are responsive to community needs and concerns. Individuals with disabilities are treated with respect, warmth, and acceptance. A focus is placed on providing a friendly, warm atmosphere that encourages and promotes the involvement of family members. Both are committed to maximizing opportunities for growth and development.

Our summer will be quiet. We will miss the laughter of children which has become a natural part of our day. We will miss the voices of children and seniors joining in song. We will miss the energy and excitement that fills the air just because of their presence. And we will miss the hugs, given generously and unconditionally to any and all who look like they need one. Yes, we will miss them, and I believe they will miss us, as well. We wish the children a glorious summer. But more than a few of us will be standing by the front door when the school buses pull up once again.

"Did you miss us, Jeff?"

"I sure did!"

Time once again for hugs. Time once again for the magic.

Jeff Singleton is the administrator of Friends Extended Care Center and Friends Assisted Living Center. He has worked in long-term care for 24 years, the last eight with Friends. He resides in Yellow Springs with his wife, Barbara, and two daughters, Autumn and Brooke.



MARY SCHUMACHER, OLIVER EDEL, SHIRLEY MULLINS

One Man's Gift

BY SHIRLEY STROHM MULLINS

The bus ride from Iowa City, Iowa, to Traverse City, Michigan, was long and tiring. My 'cello sat next to the window for protection from careless passengers hurrying down the aisle—often swinging heavy backpacks from their shoulders. An adventure lay before me and though I was a grown woman of twenty-two years, my heart beat faster as the destination grew closer.

From Traverse City, a little van marked Interlochen drove me, my 'cello, and large suitcase the first leg of the journey. My mind raced from one worry to another.

What if I wasn't good enough? My brand-new master's degree in performance did nothing to calm my nerves. Only one fact had put my body on that bus—a teacher named

Oliver Edel, a "master teacher" I had been told. Many times before, friends and teachers had spoken of this special place in Michigan. "You should go, Shirley. *Really*—you would love it." But I didn't go until the stars must have lined up just so or the reverence in my friend's voice as she spoke Edel's name convinced me.

Forty-four years have passed—a lifetime of family and music and friends—and yet, every August, my 'cello and I head for Interlochen. One man, a master teacher, had made a profound impact on a young woman's life, an impact that has been passed on through her teaching, writing, and speaking. In just a week, without one word spoken directly to me, I learned about the "holiness of his music." Beethoven's string quartets were the

core curriculum, and we learned by playing until our fingers were numb.

The words *elder* and *mentor* never entered my mind, but it was clear that something extraordinary had happened that week. I began to notice other people like Mr. Edel who were willing to share their advice and wisdom if one only asked. From 22 to 66 years is a long journey, full of pitfalls and difficult decisions. The way is made easier when we reach out to those elders we trust, those friends who are eager to help and willing to listen. There are the extraordinary few like Oliver Edel who help guide and shape our lives and careers, but there are many more waiting to help us in less dramatic ways. The advice freely shared could be how to raise beautiful roses, when to begin music lessons, or

As my father's mind and body deteriorated from Alzheimer's disease, some of his reserve toward me gave way. When I came home to visit, we talked more openly, and without the tension which had spoiled so many of my previous trips to see him. Our defenses gradually disappeared; the old competition was gone.

When he became too unpredictable for my mother to care for him, I sometimes brought him a cigar at the nursing facility—he had lost the physical coordination to handle his pipe—we would sit outside in the courtyard talking about how good tobacco tasted. Late one autumn afternoon we went for a walk out along the street. It was a mild day, and we didn't need our coats. After only a little ways, my father lagged behind, and then he stopped, pointing at the sky.

Clarity

BY BILL FELKER

"Look!" he shouted. "Look!" His mouth was open, his face full of wonder.

I looked at the sky, but saw nothing but normal coloration. Against the plain blue of the horizon, cirrus and altostratus clouds were pale gold and pink from the low fall sun. But it seemed as if my father were beholding the transfigured Christ. He

struggled to communicate in words the magnificence of what he was seeing and the utter delight it was bringing him, but his speech failed him. In a minute or so, he became tired. We walked back.

After that incident, I never felt any of the old estrangement again. And my fear of aging, although still strong, lost its edge. I no longer dreaded the possibility I might one day suffer from dementia.

My father's vision of the sky is the last memory I have of him. I often think about what it was he witnessed that afternoon, about what lucidity his disease might have given him, what dramatic aesthetic sensitivity and insight: and I wonder if I will ever find such clarity.

Bill Felker is a writer, teacher, and an almanacker.

how to talk to teenage sons or daughters. Mentors are everywhere, wanting to help us along the way.

My life has been enriched by such elders who have listened, held my hand, and cared. When Mr. Edel learned that I was frightened of retirement, he said, "Shirley, your work is not yet finished." These powerful words were exactly what helped the most. There is more for me to do! My life is far from over.

Mentors form a beautiful circle in our lives. Without warning, those who have received help and guidance one day are asked for help and guidance. Suddenly we draw on our experiences, our successes and disappointments, while listening to the questions. Now *we* are the respected elders, the ones giving and sharing. How and when did this metamorphosis occur? The mystery remains, and as young people and close friends share their dreams, hopes, and fears with us, we may feel inept, far from ready to give counsel. Nevertheless, we must try our best to make the

circle continue.

Our village is blessed with scholars, experienced tradesmen, artists of all disciplines, and those whose skills vary from growing vegetables to building houses to parenting.

By requiring service to our community, our schools have opened a world to these students who explore new and exciting areas of interest. Mentoring comes in all fields of endeavor though the name may change. Tutoring, guiding, and training all form bonds between people of diverse ages and backgrounds. One need not be a genius or possess a wall of awards to be an excellent mentor; we just need a willingness to impart whatever expertise is requested.

To this day, when I am stumped and frustrated, my mentor is just a phone call away. Oliver Edel, a master teacher, friend, and confidant, has helped children in Yellow Springs for four decades. He guided the English Trio—Ava English, pianist,

Mary Schumacher, violinist, and myself as cellist—through dozens of chamber music compositions, always insisting on the highest standards of playing and understanding. His teaching became an important part of our own work.

Others made the trek to Interlochen from Yellow Springs because they, too, wanted to share this experience. Jane Baker, Al Stewart, Gerda Oldham, Dick Puglia, Dorothy Hilbert, and Polly Case all felt the mystical power of music through this gifted elder and mentor. He has helped thousands of others and, at 93, continues to teach and share, for his work is not yet finished.

Shirley Strohm Mullins's career as an educator and advocate for school music programs has been her passion. She is known internationally through her writings, lectures, and workshops as she continues crusading for quality arts programs. Shirley lives in Yellow Springs.

Living Your Legend

BY PATTI DALLAS

Living Your Legend is a workshop I developed for elders, to provide an opportunity to explore and record their life stories. I would like to share some experiences of this workshop, which I recently led at the Friends Care Assisted Living Community in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Alberta Lewis: “People didn’t divorce at the drop of a hat.”

Betty Egart: “Kids were happier. They didn’t always ask for things. They created their own fun. We played games like jacks. In those days kids didn’t go to movies by themselves.”

Charlotte Drake: “Yes, families played games together for entertainment—like ‘Fruit Basket Upset’ (similar to Musical Chairs).”

Alberta: “When I was growing up in Yellow Springs, there was no village organization—no government to clear the snow, etc. My father rigged a wooden platform that dragged behind the horse to clear the snow.”

Charlotte: “During the big snow of 1950, men went to Young’s Dairy for milk (because the usual suppliers couldn’t get into the village). That gave Hap Young the idea of selling milk directly to customers—that’s how it all started.”

Alberta: “The Halloween Carnival and Parade was a big deal when we were young. Everyone dressed in costumes.”



BETTY EGART

Charlotte: “Kids and adults—everyone dressed up. There was a couple who raised chickens and one time the man came covered in chicken feathers! Music was also very different then. We had big band music, which everyone enjoyed. I think rock-and-roll ushered in the major generation gap.”

There was also talk of the Depression and World War II. It was generally agreed that the common experience of hardship brought out the best in people.

Alberta: “My father was a farmer out on High Street. We had about one-and-a-half acres, with a cow and chickens, and a horse-and-buggy. We didn’t suffer too much during the Depression. We always had enough to eat. My mother saved a lot and made all of our clothes. She always managed to help other families.”

Betty: “The few men who were around during the war would try

selling things door-to-door. My mother always bought things from them. I thought we would become poor from buying too much. No matter how young we were, we could *feel* that something was wrong, times were hard.”

Charlotte: “A lot of tramps came through town. My mother always gave them something to eat. I think they left some kind of mark on our house to signal to other tramps that they could get a handout there. In the Depression people worked together, sharing what they had. People cared for one another.”

Our life story is such an important part of who we are, and it’s rare that we actually have the opportunity to share it with others. Living Your Legend was designed to create a space in which people can share and explore their life experiences. This format can be used informally with parents, at family gatherings, or in any circle of elders. Younger generations can benefit from these stories as well. Collectively, we can discover so much about where we are when we learn about where we’ve been. Through the first-hand accounts of our elders, we can understand the richness of our heritage, and celebrate the unique flavors of our community.

Patti Dallas is the coordinator of Yellow Springs Community Television, Channel 13, and is currently working on a comprehensive video project, An Elder History of Yellow Springs.

Photo by Gail Taylor

Saving the Farm

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIN RUDDELL



Julia Cady (above) and Fran Goodman (left) were among the many members of the Yellow Springs Community who helped save Whitehall Farm from suburban sprawl.



Erin Ruddell is an aspiring artist who grew up in Yellow Springs and attends Antioch College.



Zagory family photograph

GRANDMA KANEMI, JESSICA, AARON, GRANDPA MASAMI

Grandpa

BY JESSICA ZAGORY

I will remember running away from you and into the frigid waters of the Pacific. I cherish the times I made you a sunny-side-up egg for your 4 p.m. breakfast and then rummaging through the mountains of books and papers in your study to deliver it.

You held my small hand in your large, callused palm as you walked me to Kindergarten. You spent Saturday afternoons planting yet another tree in the garden. I woke up with you at 5 a.m. for those English lessons on the radio. I had fun setting the table for dinner.

Your laughter on New Years will eternally ring in my heart. I will never forget the time you let me pick out my birthday cake, and then bought another one when I fell carrying it on the way home.

I haven't seen you since January 5, 1998. I know that you are well, and that you are happy at your home in Japan. Every night when I lie down, I think about you waking up every

morning in time for your lessons. When I rise up in the morning, I know you have just finished watching the evening news and are turning the light on in the study. I know that on Saturdays you work in the garden; once a week you ride your black bicycle down the steep hill to go to the bookstore.

You are the reason I started reading at an early age. I crawled in between your towers of books until I was old enough to walk with you to the bookstore to buy my own. I loved reading as much as you loved to teach me to read.

You inspired me to learn, not only in the classroom but when I was on my own. Not just from books, but from my brother and my friends. You told me that I could learn more from books than on television, but that I can learn different things in the pool or outside playing. Knowledge, you said, was food for the soul.

Thank you, Grandpa, for teaching me the love of learning.

Cy Tebbetts lives down the street from me. For as long as I can remember, he has been that eccentric old man who is always making jokes, and asking how you're doing. Cy likes to play tennis, as do I, and we get to spend some time together on the courts. His impact on my life is immeasurable, but not because he was giving me inspirational phrases to ponder, or trying to force me in a certain direction. Rather, he was himself. It was in this way that he was a hero. He gave me a vision of the type of person I might like to be when I have gained another 50 years.

Cy smiles a lot, and he has an unmistakable laugh. He is still active, both physically and throughout the community. He has a wife of many years, Ilse, and has raised multiple



Photo by Carl Bradtmiller

CY TEBBETTS

Definitely a Hero

BY CARL BRADTMILLER

children. However, his most inviting trait must be his personality. Cy is the kind of individual that anyone can just go up to and start talking to, no matter the time or place. If I am as intelligent, open, fun, and active as Cy is when I get to be his age, I will be quite happy. However, I'm sure I'll owe some of it back to him.

I could say that Cy is a mentor to me, and that would be true. However, like I said before, his guidance has been covert, and probably unconscious. His counsel has come almost solely from providing the opportunity for me to settle down and play some tennis whenever I need to, or go and listen to him tell a story. He has a fervent, almost luminous desire for life, but I think he also knows what life is. That's what I'm really trying to get at. Anyone who can help someone to figure out life is definitely a hero.

Our Heroes

Members of the Class of 2001, Yellow Springs High School, remember—with gratitude—elders who were significant in their lives.



Photo by Kirsten Bean

PHYLLIS LOGAN

The Places We've Been

BY KIRSTEN BEAN

Oh, the places we've been and the things we've done! I've known Phyllis Logan for as long as I can remember. She's always lived close by and she's become my pretend grandmother.

Our first adventures were to the laundromat, where we would sit together and Phyllis would teach me embroidery.

Other days we would venture out beyond Yellow Springs, to some new, exotic restaurant, or to the Iris Farm. When I was old enough, we went on longer trips, to places like Florida, or Michigan. We've strapped a canoe to the car like pros, and we've slept through nights in leaky tents together. We make excellent travel companions because we know how to be laid back and we're ready for whatever happens next.

The vacations have provided

welcome escapes from my life in Yellow Springs, and have created lasting memories, but it was the shorter trips that have meant the most to me. There is a footpath that goes from our back door to hers, and whenever I need to get away from things for a moment, her door is always open. Sometimes it's a cup of tea we share, or sometimes a meal, but often it is simply a friendly exchange, a "hello" or "how are you?"

I have always admired Phyllis, and this admiration only grows with time. She has taught me valuable lessons, and there is no way that I will ever be able to thank her enough.

Cocoon

BY DEBORAH STOKES

Say he lost it?
Wouldn't think he'd grieve so.
Guess he'll have to be like that thousand-legged worm
That lost that leg and commenced to
Getting round on them other ones.
Uh, huh, well, maybe not
Guess there's something to something missing
Guess where that something was
The sore place just don't heal.
Like when somebody loses a leg or arm and
Keeps on thinking it's there
'Cause that place just keeps on hurting
And every time he goes to walking, he falls
Or goes to picking something up, he can't.
Could be right discouraging.
Uh, huh.
Maybe he feels like a tree without a certain branch,
Them leaves just gone.
No more springing time there
Or what springs is like some kinda strange fruit,
The kind Ma Raney moans about.
Uh, huh.
Just some kind of barred down bird—
One too many clippings,
Sitting there in a cage
Getting handfed by the clipper
And don't even feel like hopping or feeding

No more.
Just sits there dreaming 'bout fat, sassy worms,
Like us right now.
Sitting here,
Sitting like that song says,
"Round the bee tree. Round the bee tree."
Waiting for some honey to drip our way.

Sorta like them Indians
That laid down on a prairie field
And got to dreaming 'bout long gone plains
Buffaloes and used-to-be's
And then got killed
And us dreaming past hurricane routes—
Blackskins, redskins
Dreaming 'bout wildebeests,
'Bout buffaloes and earthworms dreaming 'bout
Butterflies,
Uh, huh.
Been through that withering waking, too
Been belly up and bent knees down,
Had chained dog rage all over me,
But, I tell ya, sir,
We're still not rain-driven earth ones
Banking on dry fledgling winds
To direct us home.
Uh, huh.

Deborah Ellen Stokes teaches at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. In 1998 she conceived and implemented an ancestral wreath-laying ceremony honoring three leading African-Americans buried in Massies Creek Cemetery, Greene County, Ohio. These poems originally appeared in the book Dunbar: Suns and Dominions, published in 1999.

Tarbox Cemetery Road

BY DEBORAH STOKES

It's always blistering
On Tarbox Cemetery Road.
I stand in disbelief,
A sentinel to defeat.

And think this granite stone
Will be more prominent
Than the supple head and bed
On which he used to lie sleeping,
Dreaming, loving,

Making me stand here wishing
For the just one more time
Time—
Before the that's it forever.

It's always planting time
On Tarbox,
The earth giving
Receiving light or not.

I stand
A breathing memorial,
A living ornament,
A dazed testimony

Then kneel
Not knowing what to do
Wondering
Whether a primordial sin
(Whatever that is)
Has anything to do with
Why

I'm here
On a hill
Beside a road
Called Tarbox.

Pop Hicks: Another Great Man

BY GEORGE D. TAYLOR

Pop Hicks was the oldest person on the bus. He wore eyeglasses, had a beautiful set of false teeth, and a broad and disarming smile. He was well dressed in his shiny high-top brown leather shoes, brown striped worsted suit with braces, an open collar shirt, felt hat, and one of his best walking canes. Pop Hicks sat in the front of the bus with the adults—officials from Miles College and others who had planned the trip to Tuskegee Institute located 99 miles south of Birmingham, Alabama, our hometown. We children sat in the back, happy to be leaving our neighborhood to watch a football game between Birmingham’s Miles College and Tuskegee. At age 80, Pop Hicks had white hair that stood about an inch tall in front and tapered off on the sides. A guest of Miles College, he had influence; this trip was one of the few times that my brother, Raymond, and I would have granddad to ourselves.

When thinking about the role elders play in community, I think of my granddad. From him, I learned that living means more than getting out of bed in the morning, eating, going to work, napping, and watching television. Television news anchor Tom Brokaw recently wrote a book about America’s greatest generation. I named this piece “Another Great Man” because of my granddad and many other granddads whose life experiences were similar to his. Even though he never fought in a war, my grandfather was an active, productive citizen all his life. Memories of him continue to inspire me and move me to stay involved in my own commu-

nity and in the lives of my adult children.

I remember the big golden bus with purple trim pulling onto the campus of Tuskegee. It was a new bus that Miles College had purchased; and because of my granddad, I’m sure, we were among the first to take a trip in it. When we stepped off the bus, I was in awe of the campus. Its beauty and grace struck me—the old buildings that had been built by Booker T. Washington and his students; the red bricks that had been fired in the kilns there on the campus, the wide open space far from the city. This was a place, I felt, where one could think great thoughts, do great deeds, and breathe the fresh air of freedom. It was a sight to behold and a turning point in my life. I enjoyed the experience of being there with my granddad and my brother.

Miles College employed my granddad; it was his third and most satisfying career move before finally retiring at 88 years. His photograph appeared in the local *colored* newspaper, the *Birmingham Mirror*, because of a donation he made to the college toward the purchase of new band uniforms. He was the first person to make a monetary contribution. In the article, it stated that Granddad “seems much younger and gets around like a 40-year-old.” He was employed as a janitor whose responsibility was keeping the classroom buildings and the band room in order.

Traveling to the football game that bright Saturday morning was one of many experiences I shared with Pop Hicks. He was a sensitive and productive man who did his part to

keep the community alive and vital. During the most delicate years of my youth, my grandfather provided the support that my mother needed to make sure that my brother and I felt secure. He supported my interest in music, which gave me a sense of well-being. His high credibility with the neighbors added to my sense of who I was. This validation and identification fulfilled my need to belong and to be accepted.

Miles College’s campus was full of greenery. It was quiet and yet busy with the energy of life, people scurrying back and forth between buildings, birds singing, squirrels playing. During the summer, my brother and I would walk the campus lawn to carry my granddad his lunch. He could always be found out front of the main classroom building, on the steps, wearing his neatly pressed blue denim overalls, a plaid long-sleeved shirt, and an old felt hat with the brim turned down. As the band rehearsed, he would listen, taking a break to smoke a cigar or pipe and chat with passersby. To most everyone he was Pop Hicks.

Most Sundays after church, we would visit granddad at his home. My dad would drive my mom, Raymond, and me in his wine-colored 1947 Buick Special four-door sedan with white-walled tires that Raymond and I would have washed and shined the day before. When we would visit, Raymond and I would find Pop sitting on the front porch, neatly dressed, seated in his high-backed green rocking chair with his feet on the banister and his hands resting on the top of his head, greeting the neighbors



POP HICKS AND GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER, 1967

with a “Howdy, nice day isn’t it” as they passed by. He was a prolific reader of Louis L’Amour’s paperback novels of the western frontier, which my brother would also find most interesting reading.

Pop’s hobby was gardening. He loved red roses and white gardenias. A rose garden brightened the front yard and roses and gardenias filled half of the back yard. Next door to his home, at the top of 53rd Street and Avenue G, was wooded property owned by the local hospital. Its thick woodsy shrubbery made a perfect home for songbirds. In my granddad’s house, my brother and I would gather in the family room with Pop and watch television. His favorite program was a variety show that aired during that time called “Hootenanny” that featured folk music. Every now and then I’d look over and catch him patting his feet to the beat.

One time, my mom asked me to stay the night with my granddad because my aunt, who lived with him, had to go out of town. That was one experience. They didn’t tell me that the old man talked in his sleep. That night I heard some of the worst cussin’ and fussin’ I had ever heard come out of the mouth of any human being. We laugh about that even to

this day.

My granddad was a caring and sensitive man who seemed to understand the essence of living a complete life. Moreover, he enjoyed making it possible for others to live a quality life free of stress. When I wanted a bass fiddle, I asked my father for help. He said he didn’t have the money and didn’t see the need for me to have a bass fiddle. After all, what purpose would be served by my having a bass fiddle; I’d only be playing the devil’s music. Besides, he would reason, if we wanted to play a musical instrument there was a piano in the house and we could learn to play it. When I tried to repay my granddad for giving me the money to purchase the bass fiddle, he refused to accept it. It was his gift to me, he said.

A large collection of walking canes filled the corner of a room in my grandfather’s house near where he sat in his favorite reclining chair. Nearby was a round dark mahogany pipe holder that also held his Prince Albert tobacco with its rich aroma. To most everyone, he was Pop Hicks, a pleasant man with a great sense of humor who never displayed impatience. The only time that I remember seeing him cry was at the burial of his son Carlie.

There were many memorable moments spent with him, listening to his stories. Once he said to me, “Son, people will tell you that drinking and smoking is bad for your health. But you tell them that your granddad has had his share of both and that he lived a long life.”

Pop Hicks died in 1968 at the young age of 94. His wife, Mattie, died long before my brother or I were born and he never remarried. He raised nine children by himself, had ten grandchildren. I carry his name. I asked my mom once why she named me after my granddad. She said that she wanted to honor his memory. My only son carries his name; I too, like my mom, wanted to extend his legacy by keeping his memory alive.

Remembering my granddad and other senior citizens who were part of my early community life, I am reminded of how powerful and forceful an influence elders can be in shaping and enforcing community beliefs, values, and norms. Elders are windows through which the present generation can see forever and even find enlightenment.

The fact that my granddad was well regarded by the community and played an integral part in shaping so many lives as he toiled as an employee of Miles College is moving. His legacy of service to the community lives on through the work of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren whose life work, for the most part, is providing service to the community.

Pop Hicks was special. Indeed, he was another great man!

George D. Taylor, Ed.D. is founder and principal of Taylor & Associates, an organizational/management consulting service. He has served in executive leadership positions in the field of higher education in California and West Virginia. He is chair of the board of trustees of a private university in Los Angeles. He is the father of three adult children who live in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

A Legacy of Community Service

BY LAUREN HEATON

With the recent death of Mr. Harvey Roberts, the outstanding legacy of community service created by Harvey and Bertha Roberts has been passed on to a new generation.

Together the Roberts provided 32 years of home delivered meal services for residents all over Greene County, Ohio. They were two of the original Motor Meals coordinators.

The program was started in 1968 when the Yellow Springs Senior Citizens Center recognized a need to provide meals for the homebound, and challenged area churches to come up with a service plan to address the issue. Harvey, from the First Baptist Church, was named chairman of Yellow Springs Motor Meals. A year later Bertha became program coordinator to organize the meals and have them delivered.

Both the Roberts were near retirement from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and they were poised to serve the community. Bertha said community service was always in her nature. "It's just part of me," she explained. "If someone needs a ride, I take them where they want to go."

At first Bertha cooked the meals at her own home. The Roberts' initial five clients quickly grew with support from local churches, the Lions Club and other organizations, and individual donors. In the later 1980s and early '90s their route covered 150 miles a day, serving 90 to 100 people.

"They were out there every single day, regardless of the weather, the holidays, or anything else. They were really devoted to the people they served," said Yellow Springs resident



HARVEY AND BERTHA ROBERTS

Photo courtesy the Yellow Springs News

Shelbert Smith, a friend of the Roberts.

Motor Meals did more than provide meals for their clients. They provided a caring daily support system not unlike that of a family to monitor their clients' other health and comfort needs. The drivers checked on clients when they delivered their meals and informed the Roberts if the recipient was in need of more assistance. The Roberts kept a file on every client with information about health, living situation, and family contacts. They encouraged their clients to phone them should a need or a simple bout of loneliness arise at any time of the day or night. And they responded to calls at all those hours.

"All of our clients come under our ward – we begin to care personally for all of them," said Harvey in an interview last year, when he and Mrs. Roberts retired from Motor Meals.

Motor Meals was "more of a ministry for the Roberts. They took a

personal interest in the welfare of the clients and made sure all their needs were met," said Roosevelt Chapmin, director of Greene County Human Services.

Bertha has won countless service and volunteer awards over the years, including the *Dayton Daily News* Top Ten Women of '88 and the 1997 Area Agency on Aging Outstanding Senior Citizen award; Harvey has been dedicated to reaching every client in need, and both are strongly committed to serving the community. "We're just giving back to the community some of the good things we have received ourselves," he said last year.

"Many clients will miss the Roberts' personal touch," Roosevelt Chapmin said. "They provided more than just a service. They were a resource for the community."

Lauren Heaton is a freelance writer who grew up in Yellow Springs. She graduated from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, in 1998.

A Busy Volunteer

INTERVIEW BY AMANDA WILLIAMSEN

Anabel (Ann) Williamsen Stubbs lives in Bowling Green, Ohio, with her husband, Tom. Throughout her experiences of being widowed, living as a single older adult, remarriage, and relocation, she has remained an active community volunteer. And—she's my grandmother.

How long had you been married when Grandpa [W. A. Williamsen] died? We had been married 41 years. I was 60 when he passed away. I had just retired. I was the private secretary to the mayor and an administrator for the city of Maumee.

After your grandfather died, I had to get involved, had to make a new life, because most of my former social life was connected to his interests.

You moved to a new home at 62, and lived by yourself for the next 9 years. What was your involvement in the community of Maumee before he died? How did your involvement change over those next nine years? Before his death I was still working. So I was involved in the Republican Club and church activities. I did the neighborhood collections for what used to be called the March of Dimes but is now called Community Chest. I was the coordinator for that one year—a terrible job.

After his death, well, I jumped right into community work. I worked for the Red Cross, for the Salvation Army, Mobile Meals, and I volunteered secretarial work at the Chamber of Commerce. And also at the Maumee Valley Historical Society—more secretarial work.

That's a lot.

I also took care of you and Betsy [interviewer's sister] on occasion, and my great nieces, and I became a deacon at church—still am. As a deacon, I help care for shut-ins by calling them, taking fruit baskets, visiting them, sending notes, and I also send care packages to church-member college students a couple times a year. And I deliver flowers for these people at the holidays—poinsettias at Christmas, lilies at Easter—and I visit sick people after they come home from the hospital. I also learned to play bridge and I still play once a month there, with Aunt Fran [sister] and a couple other ladies.

Did you face any obstacles to becoming involved in the community? Well, yes, because basically I had been a pretty shy person and kind of stood behind Grandpa while he did it all. I just sort of followed on his shirttails. To have an interesting life on my own, I had to step forward and take the initiative to do things.

In 1997 you met and married Tom, and moved to a new home in a new city, Bowling Green. What ways have you found to be involved in the community of Bowling Green? Mobile Meals, the university women's organization, and the Hospital Guild, and a bridge club. And I've just recently taken a course to start doing Red Cross work again. And I've become pretty involved in Tom's church as well as mine.

Have you found many people your age involved in the same things?

Yes, it's mostly people my age who have time for the volunteer work. And I'm sometimes one of the younger ones doing this. There are people in their eighties. You can always ask another person you know to get involved with you. I asked the person across the street here, a widow, to go with me one day for Mobile Meals; she did, and enjoys doing that now. It's good for both of us to get out.

Do you have any special memories of your volunteer work?

The other day I delivered Mobile Meals to a little lady who's always sitting in a La-Z-Boy chair with her legs up, and they're swollen. Somehow her telephone had become disconnected, and I was able to plug it back into the wall. It was a simple thing, but she thanked and thanked and thanked me.

When I was out in Maumee, my sister and I once found an older man who had fallen down on the floor and wasn't able to get up. We called the paramedics for him.

I did Mobile Meals for 12 years in Maumee and was fortunate NOT to find drastic things wrong with the people when we got there.

What benefits and joys do you find in being so involved?

It's a very good feeling to know you're helping others and making their life a little more comfortable or happy. It makes me feel good if I can make somebody else feel good.

Amanda Williamsen teaches at Capital University, Dayton. She lives in Yellow Springs.

Activists for Community

BY BOB GLOTZBACH AND GENA VAN CAMP

We are an elder couple in our mid-70s, who have been together for 14 years, living and working as community activists for the last 12 in the small town of Glen Ellen, California. Both of us have had a long history of experiences in established intentional communities, in ones that were forming, and in groups and associations in mainstream towns and neighborhoods. Working cooperatively with others, finding a sense of place wherever we've lived, these experiences seem to have built on themselves and give direction to our lives. It is through personal experiences that we have learned to be more effective activists.

We met in 1987 in Santa Rosa, our county seat, in a group called "Community Networking Exchange." I have a background in anthropology and Bob in sociology, so when we exchanged business cards at the first meeting, there seemed to be a natural match. His card read, "Appropriate Sociologist" and mine read, "Creative Anthropologist." Both cards focused on the non-academic nature of our disciplines, emphasizing a "down to earth" interest in community-building as a way of life. How exciting it has been! We're like two peas in a pod, finding our true nature from the relationship we've had together.

We arrived in Glen Ellen in 1989, mainly because of circumstances; after all, it is a circumstantial community, not unlike most other places in America today. People have come and gone over the years, but we have stayed put, and most of our adventures have been right here in

town. We haven't taken the RV route nor traveled frequently to visit friends and family, although we have attended community conferences and bioregional gatherings. Too much happens here in town to go outside of it, and the work is both exciting and frustrating—yes, frustrating and occasionally discouraging at times, but that doesn't mean we don't have fun working on issues with other people.

Shortly after coming here, we started a not-for-profit business called "Regeneration Resources," and a friend made us a sign that reads "Regeneration Community Resource Center." We nailed it up on what was the pre-existing garage. The center has a large library featuring books and magazines about community, environment, health issues, organic living, and gardening. We have used the center for workshops and community dialogues. Next to it is a recycling set-up that models what a household can do to handle its waste stream. We've had kids' groups come here to see how it's done and how we handle our composting.

As activists for community we opened up a not-for-profit account in the early '90s, sort of a personal community investment fund, in which we deposit money from the sales of books and booklets from our self-publishing, mainly about Glen Ellen history and the town's institutions, and the revenues are used for community projects. We sell these publications around town and in the Sonoma Valley, and usually have a table at the annual Village Fair. Our publications have included a very local directory

that comes out periodically and features local services, non-profit listings, and local businesses.

We helped to form a town historical society in the mid-90s. I am on the society's board and the archivist of our permanent and research collections. These collections are now housed in our home, but we hope that a permanent place will become available in the future. The interest for a society came about in the early '90s when Bob constructed a set of exhibit boards that were taken to various venues around town depicting the town's history. He also obtained oral histories from many of the old-timers and published a book called *Childhood Memories of Glen Ellen*. This historical perspective has enhanced our feelings toward sense of place, and we feel it has contributed to others' sense of place as well.

As activists, we've been invited into our local grammar school for presentations, once as nature lovers talking about the town's creeks and environment. Last year, with the help of a neighbor artist, we constructed a beautiful time capsule into which the school kids had fun placing things they made. We challenged them to envision what the town would be like in the year 2049 when the capsule will be opened. How many will still be here in that year we do not know, but one can imagine how exciting it will be for those who are.

We have joined local groups and started some. I began a food co-op ten years ago, which is still going strong. We get together once a month, and once a year have fun planning an entry in our fair parade. Bob started a

Jack London reading group five years ago that still meets monthly at the local bookstore. The aura of Jack is always present; his doings around town early in the 20th century is often a topic of discussion.

The foregoing are examples of the kinds of community activism in which we have been involved. It's not always confrontational. We don't run around with T-shirts saying, "I am a community activist!"

Occasionally, flashes of real community shine forth with all the concentrated energy of any very small town, like the celebration at our annual village fair, or when people come together in a crisis, as during flood times and the Cannon incident of 1992, when our local symbol of place was sold to an outside collector. This Civil War cannon had been given to the town in 1905 and stood in place for almost 100 years. Families had brought their young children down to sit on it for picture taking. The community came together then and some of us even chained ourselves to it while others researched its ownership. Within weeks, we had convinced the county it was ours and its ownership was transferred to the Fire District. As is often the case with this example of ad hoc community, people went back to living their separate lives once the symbol was secure. Community activism, if it is to be effective, is for the long term.

Elders are ideally suited to finding roles for themselves as activists in their towns and neighborhoods because of the wisdom they can impart from their life experiences and because they often have more time than young adults who are working and raising families. It helps to walk the boundaries of place, to become familiar with its history, to envision what a real community can become.

Gena Van Camp and Bob Glotzbach, Community Service members, suggested the topic of our fall conference: "Acting Locally." They are researching a book on community.

We Need a New Vision

BY RAY OLDS

I am 76 years old. When I was growing up, many people damned capitalism. Many struggled to develop a vision of a more cooperative, a more democratic society. Many utopian novels had been written and were read by millions who hoped for a better world. My parents were seeking this vision and struggling to find ways to help create it. In 1940 we lived briefly in an intentional community near Hendersonville, North Carolina. In 1942 my parents moved to Gould Farm, an intentional therapeutic community in the Berkshires. That spring I had quit high school two months before graduation because I believed they were about to start drafting boys out of high school. I was a conscientious objector. I joined my parents and worked on the farm. My draft board gave me a farm deferment. The draft board offered me a deferment as a conscientious objector. I refused the CO status because I believed it discriminated against those who were not affiliated with a religion.

I was a rebel. I am still a rebel. I don't understand why more people don't rebel against the world we live in. Few people today make a rational criticism of the basic structure of our society, and most of us don't individually or collectively strive to develop a vision of a better society.

While I was growing up, many people saw socialism as part of a vision of a better society. Others developed and supported consumer or producer cooperatives. Arthur Morgan as a young man in a small town in Minnesota had a vision of a better society. His vision began with small

communities. At various times in his life he pursued this vision. He helped start Celo Community in North Carolina. Celo continues to be a viable experiment in building better community. He also started Community Service, Inc. The supporters of Community Service continue to pursue a vision of community.

But today, I find people are afraid to criticize our economic system. They seem to believe it is a waste of time to develop a vision. Some say they feel impotent.

I try to involve people in serious discussion about social problems and their vision of a better world. I recently led a discussion at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on *Our Vision of a Humane World*. There was a good discussion about the problems of our world, and expressions about why it is too late or a waste of time to talk about a vision. But those present were reluctant or unable to make any positive statements for our vision.

I miss the dialogue about a better future that once took place more than it does today. I understand the cynicism and feelings of impotence that are felt when we face the juggernaut of the entrenched power. But I am still not willing to give up on this world.

Ray Olds says, "I used to be an activist and protester, but now I no longer think that that is enough. We need to develop a vision." He lives in Yellow Springs.

Difficult Gifts

BY LORI ASKELAND

My family is lousy at receiving gifts. I fix this trouble on my Grandpa Vernon—old, stingy, grumpy, and mean. Father of seven girls, he longed for a strapping Iowa boy to take up the farm after him. But instead of a bouncing future farmer, my mother and her six sisters came, one after another—angelic bundles from the heavenly store, but in the wrong tint of pastel—bearing no receipt, utterly unexchangeable, and not a customer service counter in sight.

I remember my mother and her sisters as adults planning Grandpa’s annual Christmas gift, trying to find something that he both needed and wanted—some item they hoped, in fact, that he could specify, down to brand name, size, and color. But every year there was something wrong, and in the January thaw they would help him return the gift in exchange for something only slightly less disagreeable. Or, better yet, for Cash: crisp, hard, infinitely exchangeable. One year, the legend goes, he tore the bright wrapping from some daughter’s brave offering, took one look under the fragile tissue paper inside, and promptly handed the whole box back to the chagrined giver, without a word of thanks or regret.

He was a tough old bird. And so, eventually, the daughters guiltily took to just giving him the cash he wanted, although they never felt quite right about it, like they had copped out, cheated, offered him thirty pieces of silver.

But there’s a grumpy old Grandpa in my own soul, I’m afraid. The other day, I asked my daughter Alex if,

while she was going to wander around downtown, she would buy me some incense. Now, Alex is a joyful sprite; when she is asked to do a favor, her involuntary impulse is to do as requested, no questions asked, happy to help. If someone is teasing her, asking her to do something impossible or ridiculous, she will often start up to do it, realizing only when the laughter begins, both in herself and the rest of us, that her native generosity has been tweaked once again, in service of the family joke. So when I asked her to get the incense, she immediately skipped away down the street, her bright orange headscarf shining in the early summer sun, and returned an hour later.

With “the wrong kind,” and twice as many sticks as I asked for.

Now, the gracious thing would have been simply to thank her for her cheerful cooperative action, and perhaps to suggest, silently, to the disappointed part of myself that perhaps this new brand would be better than my usual kind (which, in fact, it was, as it happens). But of course that peevish old Grandpa in me simply had to point out to her face that what she had purchased wasn’t quite precisely the ideal embodiment of incense that I had imagined when I sent her on her mission. Why hadn’t she gone to the Head Shop I normally go to for incense? Why hadn’t she chosen a mixed bag of the six non-fruity, but not too spicy, fragrances that I happen to like? Alex’s cheery face fell, and only the grumpy Grandpa in me felt

any kind of satisfaction.

Point is, receiving gifts is hard. And I’m really not convinced, ultimately, that it *is* better to give than to receive. To receive a gift with grace is to seek the better angel of the soul who gave the gift. It is to decide to have faith in that better angel, despite a paucity of evidence that the angel even exists (let alone the possibility that the angel is dancing on the head of the Donald Duck pot-holder I received last year . . .). That faith, that grace, I have not yet mastered. And it’s not exactly gratitude, with its slobbering servility. It is a quiet grace that recognizes and kisses, like justice and mercy in the Psalm, the warm spirit of giving present in the exchange.

Now, that might be a wonderful place to conclude this essay, but I’m afraid the peevish Grandpa in my soul has not yet had his say. I began to write this piece, as so often happens in life, just a few days before my Grandpa Vernon suddenly died this past December, scooping snow in his driveway after a curmudgeonly ninety-one years of life on this planet. And so, of course, I have spent some time since then reflecting on his life, and my own inability to be fair to him. I wish I could claim to have known him better, and to say something warm and loving in his defense. But he was prickly, and I have too long cherished my righteous anger against him on behalf of my mother (and all unwanted girl children) as a symbol of The Patriarchy and All Its Wrongs



CONTEMPLATION
PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID WILLIS

Against Womankind.

So, here in my tearless grief—my grief for all that I still do not know—what insists on being told is the bald fact that my mom has always stated in explanation for who her father was, and the man he had become. When Grandpa was twelve, she explained to me, his own father, a man troubled with alcoholism and other dark sins, committed suicide. He hanged himself in the barn. Grandpa was the oldest boy, so he took on the burden of the family from that day forward. I suspect, now, that his father’s strange gift was the last he could receive, with whatever grace he could muster. How, after all, does one accept such a gift? How does one look for the better angel in a man who dared return the great gift of life to his Creator, and, in so doing, passed on all of life’s unexchangeable trauma, glory, and responsibility, to a boy of twelve,

ready or not?

A childish part of me, likewise, wants protection from the great exchange that is life. People do, unfortunately, sometimes give in order to hurt. Or they give, literally, thoughtless gifts. What then? Do you turn the other cheek and say, “Thank you. May I please have another?”

Receiving leaves us vulnerable. It leaves us open to being “taken” in the exchange. That kind of vulnerability terrifies me, as a woman standing on the cusp of the 21st century, the beginning of a millennium that my grandpa left behind, unopened. Maybe he knew that to be the receiver is to be a giver whose giving is not acknowledged. To give the gift of open reception is to give the gift of acceptance, like the earth that absorbs pure water, tears,

industrial pollution, a father’s blood—all, equally, no questions asked. It is to risk being violated, silently screaming. It is to risk the delicate torn flesh of a physical, spiritual, or emotional rape, the compromised immune system, and the final desolation of death.

That risk is the difficult legacy that our elders have accepted from their ancestors, and which they in turn must pass on to us, whether or not we are ready for its wonder and pain. Perhaps we do wrong if we expect very much more from them. For their acceptance of this risk finally gives the gift of life to us all—a gift that we can probably never completely acknowledge, or fully receive.

Lori Askeland is a writer. She lives with her family in Yellow Springs.

Director's Notes: A Visit to India

BY MARIANNE MACQUEEN

As an elder in his mid-70s, Arthur Morgan had the opportunity to mentor a young Indian man. In so doing he was able to fulfill a dream. This is a story of that dream.

Morgan met K. Viswanathan in the mid-1950s. Viswan was in his late 20s when he met Morgan during a visit to the United States. Viswan had his own dream—to create a better life for his people in rural India. He was gathering community development ideas to take back home. In Morgan, he found a mentor who shared his vision. A relationship developed between the two men that spanned the globe and lasted almost a quarter of a century until Morgan's death in 1976.

I had the opportunity to visit Viswan this year as part of a study group sponsored by the Antioch Company. The Antioch Company, founded by Morgan's son Ernest, is a Yellow Springs-based company with several sister plants. Lee Morgan, CEO and son of Ernest, wanted to investigate ways to build stronger ties with and support Mitraniketan, the community Viswan had created. During my time at Mitraniketan I saw the results of a life lived for and in community. I met with Viswan, now an elder himself, and talked to him about his life's work.

My first experience of India was in the Trivandrum airport and the one-hour ride to Mitraniketan by bus. "India is like a garland of different flowers—colors, shapes, smells—all tied together with a central ethos which is a string that runs through every flower," said Dr. Kurup, an anthropologist I met at Mitraniketan.

With windows open to the hot air (the temperature was in the 90s) the bus was filled with the sights, sounds, and smells of southern India. I was drawn into the experience of Mother India.

Mitraniketan is located in the state of Kerala, in southwestern India. It is beautiful. Located about ten degrees north of the equator it is a land of rolling hills covered with palm trees, banana trees, lush flowering plants and ... people. The villages are contiguous. Traveling on the narrow roads through the countryside means moving in a continuous stream of people, bikes, three-wheeled taxis, buses, heavily loaded, floridly painted trucks, oxen, and the occasional elephant. Tiny tea stalls line the road where men stand around visiting and reading newspapers. Old women crush granite into gravel with small hammers.

Dr. Kurup described Mitraniketan as a "premier organization that embodies the spirit of rural India." But it defies labels. It is a school—200 to 300 children from ages 5 to 15 attend classes and board there. It is a rural community development center that works with local craft persons and farmers to provide leadership, marketing, and skill-based training. It houses an agricultural extension center and has successfully developed techniques particularly suited to the needs of area farmers. Because there is such a low land-to-person ratio, farms must have high-yield crops in order to be financially viable.

Mitraniketan provides "popular education" and "participatory action research" opportunities in the tradition of the Danish Folk Schools, the

Highlander Center in the United States, and the South and Central American traditions. It has a health center that provides health services and education to the surrounding area. And it is a community.

At Mitraniketan I wandered the tree-lined paths visiting the various facilities. The trees—coconut and banana—are a result of an intensive reforestation process promoted by Viswan. Potted plants and flowers on low brick walls line the narrow roads at Mitraniketan. Brick buildings, beautiful in design, seem to grow up from the land. Ventilation is built into the structures through open brick latticework, topped with orange slate roofs or thatched palm. Inside, however, the buildings are dark with a few bare light bulbs for lighting.

I visited the facilities where people made pottery, silk, carved wood products, and palm fiber woven mats. I toured the antiquated print shop, a khadi (the homespun cotton Gandhi promoted) collective, a basket weaving collective, and the horticulture area that housed mushroom cultivation, various plant tissue cultures, and orchids. Mitraniketan produces rice, cassava (tapioca), rubber, pepper, orchids, and a variety of plants. I sampled the south Indian cuisine lovingly prepared by some of the young women. I listened to lectures by people who have worked at and with Mitraniketan over the years. I greeted the many children and young people who wanted to try out their English.

Viswan and I met in his living room. With its thatched roof and walls open to the outside it is *the* gathering

place. People are always passing through: Indian professionals, foreign visitors, extended family members, students. I talked with him about how he had come to found Mitraniketan. He credited his family with inspiring him. "My mother and father were almost 'untouchables' and when Sri Narayana Guru arose as an emancipator of our class/caste, our family became involved in this movement." As a teenager Viswan became active in the Gandhian movement for Indian independence. Becoming disenchanted with politics, he studied several Indian educational traditions. He was on a search. He wanted to make the lives of his people better. He wanted to find a holistic approach.

Viswan's radicalism had led to threats on his life and his family was anxious for him to leave the country for awhile. Aid came in the form of an offer to study at Pendle Hill, the Quaker study center near Philadelphia. Viswan began a journey that was to take him to the United States, England, and the Scandinavian countries. During this time he studied urban and rural education, and community development centers.

Morgan met Viswan at a Quaker conference and was so taken with him that he invited the young man to visit him in Yellow Springs. For 10 months Viswan lived with the Morgans, attended classes at Antioch, and read books from the Community Service library in the evening.

"How did Morgan help you?" I asked. Viswan replied, "He helped me concretize my vision. He influenced my thinking about community. Morgan saw into the future, that people needed to move toward togetherness rather than individualism."

When Viswan returned home he was encouraged to get a government job, to use his education to make money, or to leave India for a better life. But he chose to stay on his family's land. "I saw that people should be living together. That is why I decided to stay where I grew up and develop a good relationship with my neighbors."

Not knowing where it would lead, he began to look for opportunities to develop community-based education and economy right where he was. He was joined by some of his friends. First the children wanted to learn how to weave khadi. Then the women wanted to start a khadi cooperative. A nursery school was started. This led to an elementary school. Today the educational program spans nursery school through the "People's College" for young adults. "Mitraniketan is not artificial," said Viswan. "It is natural and has emerged over time. It isn't easy to work in your own place but it is worth it."

Even though the two were separated by a great distance, Morgan corresponded regularly with Viswan. Letters went back and forth from Yellow Springs, Ohio, to Mitraniketan in India. When Viswan first returned to India, Morgan paid off the family debt so that they could keep their land and Viswan could start his school. Morgan would offer suggestions and encouragement, helping Viswan keep perspective through the various trials he inevitably faced. Morgan visited a few times and the video "I See a Village: The Arthur Morgan Story" shows him and Viswan silhouetted against the India hills on one of his visits.

Today Mitraniketan (Abode of Friends) is a place where people of all religions can come together. It is a place that continues to evolve and develop new ways to help the people of the region live productively. Eighty percent of the students who attend Mitraniketan go back to live and work in their rural villages, rather than moving to the cities. In a nation where 75 percent of the people live in villages, it provides an effective example of rural community development.

Viswan continues to provide a leadership role at Mitraniketan and is sought as a consultant by the national government. But Mitraniketan is not

without its struggles. Traditionally in precarious financial shape, it has difficulty keeping teachers who can make much more money in government-run schools. Many of the small industries it has started have not been financially successful. Today, Viswan is in poor health. He is concerned about the future of Mitraniketan, but he is also hopeful. His spirit, as he grasps your hand and looks into your eyes, is infectious.

I asked Viswan what it was like to be an elder in his community. He replied, "Elderly people have always been respected in our community. Their experience is counted irrespective of their physical fitness. It is part of our culture. Their leadership abilities are better utilized in the community to guide the young generation. The generation gap may have some impact on the style of living in the changing society but, in general, elders are a vital part of a community in India."

"What has it been like to have been able to live out your dream?" I queried. He replied, "It is my firm belief and decision to remain in my village that helped me to identify myself with the people of this community in this area. I preferred to keep away from party politics or government jobs. Many thought it is a very unwise step I have taken; but I knew what I wanted and how I should shape my destiny. I decided to stick to my own conviction from which I never have deviated. Now—more than 46 years later—I am in it and with it."

Marianne MacQueen is director of Community Service, Inc. "The Friends of Mitraniketan" is a network that is developing to support Mitraniketan. If you would like to contribute, you may send a check to CSI earmarked for Mitraniketan.

Community Service, Inc.

was founded in 1940 by educator and engineer Arthur Morgan to help people improve the quality of small community life. It is a nonprofit, international membership organization.

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