We are what we have dreamt we would be. Sometimes we are even a little more. The Aboriginal saying is, “Ngaantatja apu wiya, ngayuku tjamu – This is not a rock, it is my grandfather. This is the place where the dreaming comes up…” Modern civilization is the product of the dreams of ten thousand generations. What comes tomorrow will depend on what we, and our children, dream today.

Utopian dreaming, as old as our ancestors, came by its name through the writings of Sir Thomas More, whose 1515 account of a visit to a fictional country, Utopia, coined the literary genre. In More’s classless agrarian society, everyone worked equal hours at whatever they did best and enjoyed equal rights and rewards. Clothing was plain, simple and practical, not unlike today’s Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites and Bruderhof, who began their own utopian adventure in Moravia in 1528. More’s Utopians exchanged homes every few years (as people do in some modern Mormon towns in Utah and Arizona) and ate in common dining halls (as people do in co-housing and kibbutz). Hereditary distinctions were unknown, and children lived within whatever household they chose, consumerism was strictly limited, and if an excessive surplus was produced, a holiday was declared.

_Utopia_ has most often been viewed through a social lens, but More’s vision was also ecological. “[River water] is carried in earthen pipes to the lower streets; and for those places of the town to which the water of that river cannot be conveyed, they have great cisterns for receiving the rainwater, which supplies the want of the other. … They cultivate their gardens with great care, so that they have vines, fruits, herbs, and flowers in them; and all is so well ordered, and so finely kept, that I never saw gardens anywhere that were both so fruitful and so beautiful as theirs. … Their roofs are flat, and on them they lay a sort of plaster, which costs very little, and yet is so tempered that it is not apt to take fire, and yet resists the weather more than lead. They have great quantities of glass among them, with which they glaze their windows. They use also in their windows a thin linen cloth, that is so oiled or gummed that it both keeps out the wind and gives free admission to the light.” (More 1516, Book II)

Compare More’s fictional visit to a vision for Melbourne that the Executive Director of the
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Sustainable Environment

(Cont'd from Page 1)

Australian Conservation Society sketched in 1990: “Our urban village, just a few kilometres from the city centre, is surrounded by a community forest and wetlands. Hundreds of us created this little wilderness in what was once a waste land. It is a public ecosystem that gives us recreational space and provides habitats for most of the plant and animal species that thrived here before Europeans arrived. The wetlands serve us and the swans, ducks and frogs. All our dishwasher and shower water flows into the swamp, and the grasses and reeds provide us with a natural purification system. The water is continually recycled between the swamp and our urban village apartment blocks. We’re working on a similar system for our sewerage, and we’ll use the water from that on our gardens.

In our apartment block we generate our own energy. We have a natural gas fired plant in the basement, and on the roof we have the tiles made out of photovoltaics. On the days we produce more electricity than we need, we simply export it into the national grid. Most of our appliances such as the fridge, TV and radio, use less than 25% of the power they would have required in 1990. Building regulations now require high energy efficiency, and many buildings are designed according to passive solar principles.” (Toyne 1990, 8)

At the end of the 19th century Edward Bellamy wrote a novel about a rich young Bostonian who hires a hypnotist to help with his insomnia. Unexpectedly, the man wakes up 113 years later, in 2000. Without respectable means of support, he becomes a history professor and pens an autobiography—Looking Backward, which, when actually written in 1887, swept Victorian readers off their feet. Bellamy managed to correctly predict future trends such as merger mania, globalization, substitution of credit cards for money, and consumer technology in food, music and leisure.

Fiction gives way to fact as parents strive to make their own dreams real for their descendants.
Colony, Bohemia Manor and Ephrata Cloister, North America has never been without living and breathing utopias, some inspired by More and Bellamy. At times concurrent experiments have numbered more than 5,000 in the United States. Many are ecotopian in their outlook, attempting, like More’s Utopians, to balance human needs with the regenerating capital nature provides. Fruitlands, Fellowship Farms, Little Landers, School of Living, Camphill, Emissaries, Tolstoy Farm, Drop City, Twin Oaks and Arcosante are among the more notable efforts to get back to the land in an ecological way.

North America does not have a monopoly on utopian dreaming, however. The Kibbutz movement that re-greened the deserts of Palestine in the 20th century was Zionist in outlook at inception, but more restorative ecology by the end of the century, with the Green Kibbutz Network leading the young towards a new set of goals. In Germany, the Ökodorf movement began in the early 1980s and quickly picked up adherents among Eurotopian youth in the aftermath of German reunification. In Scandinavia, co-housing, which sprang from social and economic objectives, gave birth to ecovillages, which added a filter of spiritual energy and materials choices to settlement design. The Eco-Village Network of Denmark (Landsforeningen for Økosamfund) was among the first to create a coalition of ecovillages, but it was soon followed by the Russian Ecovillage Network, the Ecovillage Network of the Americas and the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). By the end of the century GEN had more than a million self-empowered dreamweavers, in 15,000 utopian communities, as members, on six continents. The explosion of interest is breathtaking.

What are ecovillages? Generally they are small communities with a tightly-knit social structure united by common ecological, social or spiritual views. These communities may be urban or rural, high or low technologically, depending on circumstance and conviction. Seiben Linden is a zero-energy co-housing settlement for 200 people in a rural area of eastern Germany. Los Angeles EcoVillage is a 2-block neighborhood in inner Los Angeles. Sasardi Village is in the deep rainforest of Northern Colombia. What is common is a deep respect for nature, and humans as an integral part of natural cycles. Ecovillages address the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability in an integrated way. The characteristic that distinguishes ecovillagers from utopian writers is that villagers put their own lives on the line. Although influenced by utopian philosophers such as Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Rudolf Steiner, Arne Naess, Bill Mollison, John Seed, Ralph Borsodi, Helen and Scott Nearing, J.R. Rodale, and others, ecovillagers break new ground, learn as they go, and bring needed change to zoning laws, tax laws, building codes and social patterns, in support of sustainable human development.

Ecovillages embody a sense of unity with the natural world. The idea that we are part of Gaia, that there is an "Anima Mundi," is a significant step away from the mechanistic Cartesian paradigm which laid the philosophical basis for modern industrial society. The concept of Earth as a living organism has deep implications for our relations with all its elements, which become precious gifts and not simple raw materials at our disposal. The very role of humanity shifts from being the "master of the planet" to being its guardian, with responsibility for its protection as a beloved sacred entity.

A significant share of ecovillages have a spiritual focus related to specific creeds and beliefs, sometimes linked with official religions (like the Buddhist Sarvodaya movement which groups 11,000 rural villages in Sri Lanka), to spiritual guides (like Auroville in India, Damanhur in Italy, and Findhorn in Scotland), or to a mixture of faiths and spiritual practices freely woven into communal meditation spaces.

This is the optimistic future that has emerged in
Dreaming A Sustainable Environment
(Continued from Page 3)

the last decade of the 20th century. Ecovillagers have created self-help audits to measure lifestyle choices, open houses in city and on farm, design charrettes to train architects and master planners, websites and listservs to share breakthroughs with communities of interest, and cross-cultural networks to shorten the learning curves for everyone.

Yes, we need fewer people drawing down nonrenewable resources, and that means we have to address world population growth as a serious ecological issue. Yes, we need more trees and plants, scrubbing the atmosphere and sequestering carbon. Adoption of the Kyoto protocols will help. But that which you and I can do most, best, and first, involves simple lifestyle choices. Doing this as communities, rather than as individuals, we can make the transition faster, cheaper, and more fun along the way.

We have to teach our children to dream as if there can be a tomorrow. If they don’t, there won’t.

Albert Bates is author of Shutdown: Nuclear Power on Trial (1979), Climate in Crisis: The Greenhouse Effect and What We Can Do (1990), and eight other books on energy, environment and law. Retired after 25 years of environmental litigation, he teaches permaculture and natural building at the Institute for Appropriate Technology’s Ecovillage Training Center in Summertown, Tennesee. For current workshops see: www.thefarm.org/etc/ or contact: ecovillage@thefarm.org. This article was adapted from a longer article on “Utopianism” for the Encyclopedia of Environmental History to be published next year, and contributed to by Lucilla Borio, President of GEN-Europe, based on a talk she gave to the International Communal Studies Association in 2001.

Further Reading:

J.T. Ross Jackson, And We Are Doing It: Building An


PROJECT HOPE: 2001-2012
By Ingemar Wärnström

The HOPE project is aiming at empowering and making visible to the public, through the non-profit world, how the powers to change the directions of our civilisation are gaining momentum. It is obvious that it is not on the agenda of the present political and corporate worlds to initiate the necessary change. It must
come through the non-profit sector, where the motivation is compassion rather than profits.

What has to be done at this critical moment in Earth's history is nothing less than to move from fighting each other to helping each other, from greed to sharing. The time may have come when it is necessary for our own survival to make the huge shift from being competitive-based to becoming cooperative-based, that we turn from the mere striving for profit to the search for meaning, from commodifying nature to realizing that we are part of nature and must treat it with respect and care. This huge change might be the only way forward.

In different countries throughout the world, non-profit organizations have created solutions to most of the world's problems. For example, there are now a great number of eco-villages where people live in balance and harmony both with nature and with other people; there are new technologies that are safe and friendly to both people and nature; there are excellent forms of ecological agriculture; and there are also profitable business corporations based on the prime idea of supporting the society in which they act and on the growth and well-being of their employees. Many of these offshoots of the nonprofit sector are "pilot projects", which upon expansion-when given more attention and resources-will develop into the new cultural mainstream.

Additionally there is a new non-dogmatic science that brings us a more accurate understanding of life in all its aspects. Wise men and women of all times have told us that all life is interconnected. Now the new science confirms this and educational institutions have been established that teach these concepts! One of them, the University for Global Well-Being, established in 1998 has been supported by grants from The Lifebridge Foundation. (www.ugwb.org)

The world's annual military spendings are far more than the cost for solving all the major human and environmental problems facing us. The world's resources could surely be used in a more constructive way. The real enemies of humanity today are fear, greed and ignorance.

The problem is not lack of solutions, nor lack of resources. The problem is that the alternatives to the present destructive way of living is unknown to a majority of people. Let's tell the world about them!

The HOPE Project is offering the non-profit world a common face, a logo, making it possible for people everywhere to see and understand that there is a strong global power working for them, giving our planet a future—a power which they can support.

The HOPE Project is run by HOPE-WAVE Fund Raising Foundation in Sweden. We invite non-profit organizations, socially aware corporations and media, holistic educational institutions, and all people of good will, to take part in the most important endeavor ever, to change the direction of our civilization.

Ingemar Wärnström lives in Sweden and is the founder of The HOPE Project. For more information visit www.hope.se
“What will it TAKE!!??” demanded Wangari Matthis, speaking at this year’s opening of The Season for Non-Violence at the United Nations. What will it take to create a sustainable planet for everyone? How long can we go on poisoning our home, allowing our people to starve and ignoring the self-made crisis of global warming? As founder and leader of Kenya’s Green Belt Movement, Wangari has inspired groups to plant countless thousands of trees in Africa and has been jailed and beaten for her troubles. Yet she continues asking and planting. Wangari is recipient of the 2001 Juliet Hollister Award.

What will it take? That’s just it — Will. The will to dream, to change, and the will to create right relationships, with our families and friends, our co-workers, our animals and everything in us and around us - in short, our environment. It’s going to take not only individual, group and planetary goodwill, but the kind of political will embodied in a coherent and powerful demand that governments serve the welfare of the people, not corporate interests. There are many groups working to promote this active goodwill whose efforts are thriving and alive today.

Numerous citizen groups, secular and spiritual, are mobilizing for a forceful showing in Johannesburg, South Africa for the upcoming “Rio +10”, World Summit on Sustainable Development (see pg. 14). The Earth Charter (facing page), a blueprint for a glorious future, is gaining recognition and popular strength, and movements such as Another World is Possible, The TrueMajority Campaign (see pg. 13) and countless others, are demonstrating that people everywhere are putting aside their differences, joining forces and building sustainable movements.

Isn’t it astounding to contemplate that there are more than 15,000 eco-villages globally and this movement toward sustainable group living is vigorously spreading? (See cover article.) People are realizing they can create their own Utopias, lead meaningful lives far removed from the rat race and do it with minimal funds. By all accounts, folks are happier, meaningfully productive and are healing the earth, all at the same time!

Sustainable environment has to do with mindfulness and balance. Today we’re out of balance, between nations on one planet, with the kingdoms of nature and, with each other individually and collectively. It’s already been proven there’s enough arable land to produce enough food for the world’s population, but the distribution system is faulty. We need to fix this. It’s already been proven that the use of fossil fuels is destroying the climate, the air and the ozone layer, so why don’t we begin to use the available renewable resource technology? Wouldn’t encouraging right human relationships be a start toward the end of war? Wouldn’t the sharing of global resources begin to restore a measure of peace? What will it take?

As we approach the recognition that our very survival is at stake, the many and diverse movements toward sustainability are gaining momentum and practical expertise. This is clear. We must recognize our essential and shared divinity, not only as fellow human beings, but also as expressions of the interconnected whole web of life — ALL life. Our environment starts with us, we can transform our relationships and succeed in making this a wholesome and sacred planet. We can, and with joy and hope, we must.

“Each time a man (or woman) stands up for an ideal, acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he (or she) sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. And crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples can create a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” - Robert Kennedy addressing students in South Africa, quoted by Dennis Kucinich at the Democratic National Committee, May 25, 2002, Seattle, W.A. (www.thespiritoffreedom.com)

Barbara L. Valocore is President of The Lifebridge Foundation Board of Directors.
We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of the Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

EARTH, OUR HOME

Humanity is part of a vast evolving Universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life’s evolution. The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend on preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

THE GLOBAL SITUATION

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous—but not inevitable.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

To read the entire Earth Charter and to find out how you can help promote the principles set forth in it, visit www.earthcharter.org
EcoVillage Training At Findhorn
By May East

Since 1999, The Lifebridge Foundation has sponsored 11 Findhorn Foundation Ecovillage Training participants. Those participants were Elena Kraleva from University of Bulgaria, Mete Hacaloglu from Hocamkoy Project in Turkey, Tonyot Stanzen from Ladakh Women’s Alliance in Ladakh, Claudia Prada from Brazil, Hugh Adamson-Vineyard Victoria in Australia, Tina Agiortiti from Phokies Ecovillage in Greece, Ana Mironova from Russia, Maritza Salazar from the Universidade de Costa Rica, Karen Ohanjanyan from the Nagorno-Karabakh Committee in Armenia, Maat Kolmogorova from the Ecovillage Grishino in Russia and Jose Luiz Escoriela from the Ecovillage Network in Spain. Following are some direct quotes from those and other participants about what they gained from the training.

We are considering bringing permaculture in a synthesis with participatory development work and indigenous wisdom especially with regard to our grass roots leadership training programme for the Forum for Poor and Ethnic Groups inside Burma and our work with the Karen Villagers in Northern Thailand. - Jane Rasbash, Thailand

The highlight of the training was the balance between information and practice. It doesn’t matter if I live in a city, in a flat, what I achieved here was an expansion of consciousness and commitment. Being an urban dweller, I can also make a difference in the planet. - Margareth Nunes Osorio, Brazil

Often, the image we [in the East] have from the West is the one where people have no heart, soulless people. One of the great things I have learnt with this training is that there is heart, there is hope and the respect to the sacredness of all life in the West. It brought me a sense of meaning. I feel blessed and optimistic. May you have very much energy to spread this wonderful message not only to westerners but to the world. May all beings be free from suffering. - Tonyot Stanzen, Ladakh

The course gave me even more than I expected. Experiencing Findhorn community and information about other ecovillages helped me to look at our problems from a wider perspective. - Vasudeva Kirbiatiev, Russia

You have prepared for us a good field with good soil and we are the many different seeds that come from all over the world. We come to grow and we are showing our diversity, we are growing in one garden all together. - Maat Kolmogorova, Russia

The information was congruent with the setting and the community. We could be in harmony, balancing teachings and behavior, it is one of the few places in this world, where your consciousness feels in harmony with what your spiritual guidelines demand of the way you should live. The food that we ate, the way it was grown, how waste was recycled and the general style of living facilitated our ecological behaviour. - Maritza Salazar, Costa Rica

There was such a great cultural exchange, the highlight of the training for me was the action taken to begin to create our own network and enable us to stay in contact. - Michael Schneider, Germany

May East has lived and worked at Findhorn for many years. For more information about Findhorn and the EcoVillage Training, visit www.findhorn.org

The Second Annual Resurgence Conference
At The Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, NY
ONE EARTH
September 5-8, 2002 at The Omega Institute
Rhinebeck, New York

In September, 2001 just a few days before the September 11th attacks, more than 300 people gathered at the Omega Institute to discuss current global challenges with some of the world’s leading visionaries. The conference was a creative, inspirational and practical success. The second annual Resurgence conference continues to celebrate the “century of the environment” and is a call to action for a new kind of leadership. With speakers Thomas Moore—Paul Hawken - Juliet Schor - Satish Kumar - Janine Benyus - David Abram — Bill McKibben — David Orr– Cathrine Sneed Francis Moore Lappe – Gunter Pauli – John Todd & Charlene Spretnak

To register, call 800-944-1001 or email: registration@eomega.org

Co-sponsored by The Lifebridge Foundation
You might note that we have only three re-grants listed in the opposite column under the category of Environment. But many of Lifebridge’s grantee projects defy classification to any one particular category alone.

For instance, Resurgence magazine, listed under Arts and Culture/Print Media, (see opposite page), is devoted to the principles of sustainable living. Roger Blonder’s animated films (one of which, The Common Sense of the Wisdom Tree, has won many awards at festivals in the past few years), and Chuck Schultz’ documentary film The Rural Studio, both deal with environmental issues, though they are listed under sub-categories of Arts and Culture.

Similarly, many other re-grantees this year are organizations and individuals whose projects deal at least in part with environmental issues, regardless of discipline, venue, or category. Under Youth and Education, INIYA (Indigenous and Non-indigenous Youth Alliance) deals with a wide variety of environmental issues, as does Community Service oriented Ti Ospaye, located on a native American Reservation in South Dakota. The category of World Goodwill casts a wide net as well, with both CANHELP (in Sweden), which sponsors Project HOPE (see page 4), and Fundacion PEA (Foundation for Peace, Ecology and Art in Argentina) dealing directly with ecological concerns. And that’s what interconnectedness looks like!

Here’s some good news from other past and current grantees whose projects reflect the interconnectedness of all life: Andrea Sadler’s film, The Sacred Run, is now playing at film festivals around North America; No Niggers No Dogs, No Jews, (Primary Stages, NYC), was nominated for 10 Audelco Awards (given for excellence in black theatre); Christopher Eaves’ TrueMyth was named one of the top ten theatre experiences in New York by The Advocate magazine; Wangari Matathai (Greenbelt Movement) was recently presented with the Juliet Hollister Award by The Temple of Understanding; John Stowe’s Earth Spirit Warrior is now published by Findhorn Press; and Carmella B’Hahn’s Mourning Has Broken, will be published in England in the fall of 2002.

Larry Auld is Program Director of The Lifebridge Foundation and editor of The Bridging Tree. For further information on these and other grantees, visit www.lifebridge.org.
The Seventh Lifebridge Grantee Gathering - June 20-23, 2002

It takes a team to create these Gatherings: Kudos to the Wainwright House staff in Rye, NY, and the staff and Board of The Lifebridge Foundation. And special thanks to Puja Thomson for her "invisible" but truly effective facilitation as well as to Melissa Anne Wood for her lively and generous assistance in all things miscellaneous.

The Participating Grantees

Ibrahim Abdul–Matin  
The Active Element Foundation  
New York, New York

John Clausen  
The Hygeia Foundation  
New York, NY

Premilla Dixit  
Women's Int'l League for Peace and Freedom  
New York, NY

Nancy Ducuing  
Fundacion PEA  
Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

Christopher Eaves  
Actor/Writer/Producer  
Brooklyn, NY

Marian Franz

Tawanna Kane  
The Lineage Project  
Bronx, NY

Joan Steinau Lester  
Author, Fire In My Soul  
Berkeley, CA

Rizal Lozano  
Human Rights Activist  
Davao City, PHILIPPINES

Nile Malloy  
Indigenous and Non-indigenous Youth Alliance  
Oakland, CA

Avon Mattison  
Pathways to Peace  
Larkspur, CA

Shelley Mitchell  
Actor/Writer/Producer  
Mill Valley, CA

Amshatar Monroe  
SACRED SPACE: Where Indigenous Paths Meet  
Washington, DC

Steve Nation  
Intuition in Service  
Paekakariki, NEW ZEALAND

Roger Nelson  
Mass Consciousness Researcher  
Princeton, NJ

Carrie Oelberger  
The Jifunze Project  
Kibaya, TANZANIA

Wanda Phipps  
Yara Arts Group  
New York, NY

Nancy Roof  
"Spirituality & Reality"  
Lenox, MA

Shepard Sobel  
The Pearl Theatre Company  
New York, NY

Front: Larry Auld, Joey Lozano, Barbara Valocore, Jane Southall, Joan Lester, Shelley Mitchell, Christopher Eaves, Nancy Ducuing, Bob Silverstein, Melissa Wood


(not pictured: Ibrahim Abdul–Matin, Avon Mattison)
Sitting at water’s edge on the grass after everyone has left our Wainwright House gathering, my heart is full, nourished beyond expectation. How did the presence of twenty-five beings generate such electric energy? Carole reminded me before I left home to stay in my third eye during the gathering. It was easy, because a space was created to stay at that level of consciousness: our highest selves.

Everything around me sustained this emergence. For three days, we News Fasted. I, who normally read two daily papers cover-to-cover, feeling guilty if I skim, allowed myself nary a glance at a headline. Drummers on the lawn throbbed the beat of my blood. A gentle wind caressed arms and legs. Lush green of grass and leaves fed eyes. Ankles were splashed by waves in a secluded cove, as gulls flapped by.

That was background.

In the foreground, loving seekers and givers, all eager to meet. We were like excited first graders, wanting to know each other.

“What, you were born in 1940! Wow!” Eyes big. Unimaginable ancient history, strangely incongruent with the vibrant being standing in front of the young man.

“And you were born in 1977! When I was almost forty.” My eyes were equally big. We stared, mutually amazed by the spark of recognition flying between us. Over recent decades we’ve learned not to be surprised by those who come wrapped in different histories—“Wow, you’re...uh...kinda normal.” But finding friends two generations removed was new.

“I’m old enough to be your grandmother,” I smiled.

“My grandma’s dead. I never really had one.” The brilliant eyes hooded.

“I’ll be your grandma,” I said. “For real.” He lit up, and we sealed it with a hug. Some might not spot kinship in a young ex-football playing African-American Muslim and a blue-eyed Jewish-Lutheran lesbian granny. But we did.

The gathering was like that. Sparks flashed, as soul recognized itself in one after another of us, in the way humans have since time immemorial, except when pried apart. Connections grew organically.

“Do you have a WEB site?”

“No.”

“I’m a graphic designer. Let me know what you want.”

And on it went, generous offerings of self, or names of helpful contacts scribbled on bits of paper.

Group stories supported this bounteous spirit. We heard of German prisoners in 1940s Nebraska, befriended by guards after the example of a loving host family. We saw a staunch Hungarian ally, mentored by angels, in another true WW II tale enacted on a make-shift stage. Poems, stories, theatre sketches and music swirled through our days.

We saw videos of tribal Filipino farmers, their ancestral lands violently confiscated—while in front of us stood the beaming witness whose courageous camera had captured genocide and hope.
We saw photos of the future in ecovillages, where humans coexist with Mother Earth, and experienced beauty in Argentinean peace videos or stunning Siberian shamans.

Woven like a brilliant thread through it all, the glow of love, open hearts and laughter as we drifted in ever-changing little groups, like clouds that form and reform, rambling through the sky.

Together in circle we sang a Yoruba chant, led by a woman who learned it seeking her own ancestral home, and comforted each other when occasional bolts of hard personal news—an attack on a friend, the illness of a relative—penetrated our magic circle. Over meals we told one another of heartbreak and healing, and our most outrageous dreams.

“If you could have any superpower, what would it be?” a lunch-time questioner provoked reflection.

Back in the whole group we felt commonalties ricochet against our considerable differences, melting resistance, while slides of scientific “evidence” suggested what we knew: Gaia is alive. And conscious.

We heard creative strategies already in action to protect this One Life: legalize conscientious tax resistance (like C.O’s to the draft), strip corporations of legal “Personhood”, effect the United Nations at a spiritual level, teach meditation to incarcerated boys, create alliances of youth organizers. These tactics and more—from radio to theater, biography to poetry—nourished our inquisitive selves.

“Yes!” we said to each other.

“Yes!” we said to life. Lifted from despair at divisions roiling our earth, we held two small globes: a planet of nation-states, cut into colored bits; and Gaia, pure blue and green. Both real.

Finally, after sharing gratitude and insights, we circled around an altar, blessed artifacts of our work, and sat once more in a circle, reluctant to leave. Full, tears brimmed.

Then an announcement from our On-Site Manager.

“You do have to leave. Today,” she laughed.
No, my heart replied.
But go everyone did, except me, who remained one last hour to sit by the water and write these words.
Ben Cohen, (of Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream fame) has started a new organization called The True Majority. It promises to bring the same kind of wacky flair with a social conscience to the world of “e“-activism that Mr. Cohen brought to the world of ice cream. The TrueMajority website makes it possible for people to send faxes directly to their Senators, Representatives, and the White House for free—right from their PCs. All who sign up will then get monthly email alerts about progressive issues as they come up. Just by clicking one button in the email alert, a fax expressing your opinion will be sent to the appropriate governmental office. This is truly fast, free, and easy activism. Another aspect of The True Majority Campaign is putting a Parade on the road — a Parade that features a giant Pentagon piggy bank pulling a small “education” piggy bank, followed by a tiny “foreign aid” piggy to show current governmental priorities. Mr. Cohen and his band of merry activists have also built a traveling carnival of games (like “dunk the lobbyist“) that will be touring with huge music festivals all summer long. Watch for the Parade and the carnival games coming to your town soon!

True Majority highlights the following wide variety of issues both domestic and foreign:
1. Attacking poverty and world hunger as if our life depends on it. It does.
2. Championing the rights of every child, woman & man.
3. Ending our obstructionism to the world's treaties.
4. Reducing our dependence on oil to lead the world to an age of renewable energy.
5. Closing the book on the Cold War and ending the nuclear nightmare forever.
6. Renouncing Star Wars and the militarization of space.
7. Making globalization work for, not against, working people.
8. Ensuring equal treatment under law for all.
9. Getting money out of politics.
10. Closing the gap between rich and poor kids at home.

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"We live on one planet, connected in a delicate intricate web of ecological, social, economic and cultural relationships that shape our lives. If we are to achieve sustainable development, we will need to display greater responsibility - for the ecosystems on which all life depends, for each other as a single human community, and for the generations that will follow our own" - Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN, October 2001

Ten years ago, at the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, the world's Governments committed themselves to making major changes in order to achieve "sustainable development" - that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). Agenda 21 is the comprehensive global plan of action they agreed to for this purpose, integrating environmental, economic and social concerns - the "three pillars of sustainability" - into a single policy framework. It contains wide-ranging recommendations for action, including detailed proposals for how to reduce wasteful consumption patterns, combat poverty, protect the atmosphere, oceans and bio-diversity, and promote sustainable agriculture and forestry.

In August this year, the World Summit on Sustainable Development will take place in Johannesburg in order to review accomplishments and failures since Rio, to evaluate the obstacles to progress, and to agree on further action. Over 80,000 people are expected to attend, including heads of State and Government.

Preparations for the Summit are well under way: Through a participatory process, the issues to be debated will be agreed upon during a series of national, sub-regional, regional and global consultations with governments and other organizations. A global Preparatory Committee is holding a series of four meetings to prepare the agenda for the Summit and build consensus for its outcome. The second of these meetings was held in New York City, 28 January - 8 February. John Clausen and I attended, representing the Findhorn Foundation and the Global Ecovillage Network.

The UN HQ building was buzzing with activity, with several Side Events and meetings happening before, during and after the main sessions, as well as during the lunch break. Every morning there was a meeting of NGO's from all over the world, reporting back from other meetings and side events as well as discussing topical issues. There were always two chair people, volunteers from those present, one from the North, one from the South, one man, one woman. I found it quite moving to see all these different people working together for the common good (not to say that it was always easy!).

On the first day in the main sessions people were reporting back from various conferences that have taken place so far in preparation for the WSSD, such as on the themes of water, fisheries, desertification, climate change, sustainable energy. The report on Oceans was fairly typical: some important progress has been made, such as establishing an integrated global observation system, but it is nowhere near enough - there is no improvement in the condition of the oceans, 70% of coral reefs are threatened, as well as 80% of marine creatures. Global warming threatens tens of millions of people around the world, particularly the small island states who are already suffering from its effects.

On the second day, the main session met in the General Assembly Hall to hear reports from the Major Groups, as set down by Agenda 21: Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous People, NGOs, Local Authorities, Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Science and Technology, Farmers. Having this session in the GA was a mark of how far we have progressed, in some ways at least:: a security guard told us that in the early days "NGO" stood for "No Good Outsider". Now, here we were, speaking in the GA and entering into dialogue with Representatives from different countries, as well as the other Major Groups.

I was impressed and encouraged by the level of agreement and cooperation, at least amongst those who spoke, and the real dialogue that was taking place on this and the next three days. For example, Hungary asked Women and Youth for practical suggestions as to how they could be involved more in governance. The NGOs and Business and Industry agreed to work together on the issue of corporate accountability and better dialogue. Considering where we were thirty years ago, when I first began to realize the state of the planet and
environmentalists were considered cranks, this was like a dream come true. Yet the reality that was generally agreed upon is that, whatever our achievements so far, we have much, much more to do and we need to take action fast if it is not to be too late.

Two of the side events were on Ecovillages: In the first week Albert Bates from the Farm, [see cover article] assisted by John and me, gave an excellent slide presentation on GEN. In the second week, Dr Rashmi Mayur, Rob Wheeler and Biko Casini (also from the Farm) focused on some specific examples in Africa and India.

However, in meeting with representatives from the media they said they are not interested in covering the Summit. So it's up to all of us to spread the word, get involved and help to make it a success. On a positive note, Greenpeace told us at their side event that they are optimistic - they wouldn't get involved if they weren't - and they are making the Summit their top priority this year, with particular focus on global warming/sustainable energy and GMOs/bio/food safety.

Note: Since writing the above, there have been two further preparatory meetings: one in New York and a final one in Bali. Again, thousands of NGO representatives had a very fruitful time networking and creating partnerships for action. Unfortunately, the government representatives were unable to agree on some of the important issues, particularly concerning finance and trade, so that in the end, about a quarter of the document to be presented at Johannesburg was left in brackets, i.e. as proposed statements not yet agreed upon. While no country was blameless, the USA, as well as Australia, Canada and Japan, seemed the most determined to block progress. The general feeling now is that "no agreement is better than a bad agreement" and there's a greater determination to do everything possible to make the Summit a success. It also makes it all the more important for everyone who cares about the future of the planet to get involved.

—Frances Edwards represents The Findhorn Foundation and the Global Eco-Village Network at the UN. For the latest information on the Johannesburg Summit 2002, visit: www.johannesburgsummit.org, the official website of the UN Secretariat for the Summit.
The Lifebridge Foundation
Statement of Purpose

“Promoting the oneness of humanity and the interconnectedness of all life...”

understanding among all people by bringing to realization the concepts of one humanity and the interconnectedness of all life.

We support groups and individuals whose innovative projects reflect these concepts; whose work exemplifies a global vision, demonstrates a spirit of inclusiveness, and fosters transformative action in a changing world.

“The Lifebridge Foundation, Inc. was established in 1992 for the purpose of supporting organizations and individuals who, through cultural, educational, and/or scientific means, are dedicated to creating bridges of understanding among all people by bringing to realization the concepts of one humanity and the interconnectedness of all life.

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“Bridging the chasm between the spiritual and the so-called mundane...”

“Facilitating the integration of an emerging holistic consciousness into daily action...”

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