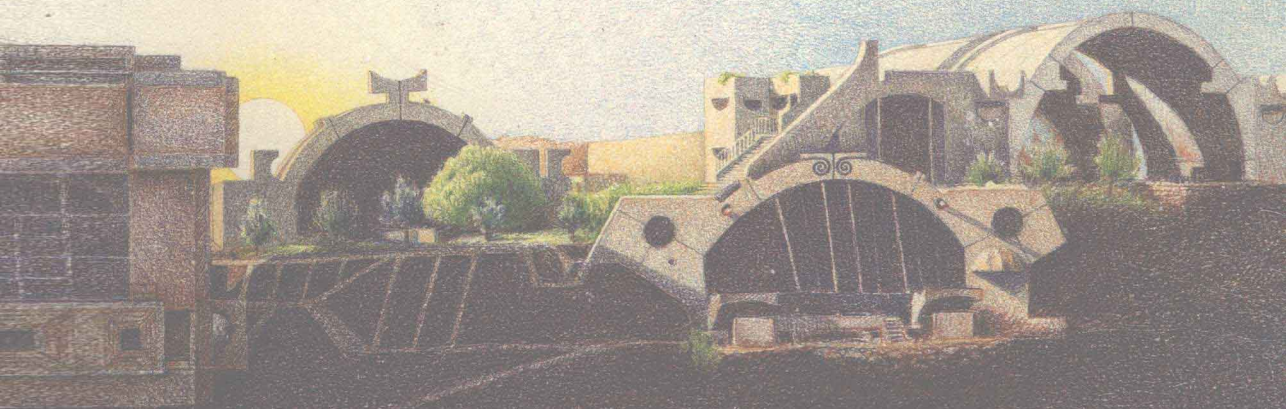


# BUILDERS OF THE DAWN

CORINNE McLAUGHLIN  
GORDON DAVIDSON

Community Lifestyles  
in a Changing World



Foreword by David Spangler



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# **Builders of the Dawn**

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in a Changing World**

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**By Corinne McLaughlin  
and Gordon Davidson**

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in a Changing World**

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# Dedication

This book is dedicated to the *builders of the dawn*—the courageous pioneers of the new communities who are inspiring us with visions of a positive future for humanity.

# Foreword

This is a needed book. Having worked in adult education for many years dealing with such topics as the development of intentional communities and the relationship of such development to spirituality, personal growth, and human relations, I have long wished for a comprehensive book on these themes. That is what this book is. In fact, the authors have done such a complete job of covering this topic, there is little left for me to add.

This book appeals to a wider audience than those living in an intentional community or contemplating joining or creating one, for it is about much more than just community living. It is about empowerment and creativity. Specifically, it is about the power we all have, whether we express it through a community or not, to envision the future we want for ourselves and for humanity and to make a positive contribution to the emergence of that future.

As we come into the last fifteen years of the twentieth century, the dominant feelings for many people are fear for the future and helplessness to change what is seen as humanity's destructive bent. Clouded by the dangers of nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, and international tensions, the world's destiny appears bleak. Worse, there seems little that anyone, least of all the average citizen, can do to change the situation.

At a time when humanity needs clear thought and creative action, such helplessness can lead us either to violent actions born of frustration or to apathy. Either way, we diminish the chances we have to move successfully through the dangers of our time. We lose the sense of our capability to change. We lose our sense of power. We abdicate our potential to make a difference in the world and to affect the course of human history.

To me, this abdication of potential is our greatest threat, the one that can trigger disasters. It consigns our future to those whose vision is at best limited to images of survival and selfishness instead of growth and the well-being of all our world.

This book is about people who refuse to make such an abdication. That they do so using the community as an expression of their creativity and vision is in some ways a secondary issue. The true story is that they are rejecting fear and helplessness as guidelines for their lives. They invite the rest of us to do the same, whether through the medium of intentional community or through some other expression of our potential.

There are many reasons why people create communities. These include enhanced economic power, security, the pleasure of living together, a shared ideology. In the last twenty years, I have observed communities forming for the additional purpose of exploring and empowering options for a better future. Findhorn is one of these, and this book lists others.

Such communities often call themselves "new age," suggesting that they will be laboratories for researching and testing the inner and outer components of a new cultural vision. These communities often do not look for or expect permanent membership, other than having a body of "core" individuals who provide continuity. They are more like learning centers where people may come, live for awhile, and then return to the larger culture.

What do people learn in such places? What do they go away with? There are the traditional skills one can develop in community, such as enhanced understanding of the dynamics of human relationships. These skills are well described in this book. However, community members also learn the power of their intentionality: the power of their imagination, their vision, their will, and their love to create a new order, a new society.

In short, these communities become training places for creative participation in the unfoldment of the future. They are schools for change, for transformation, for the exercise of "voluntary history," as the authors of the book *Seven Tomorrows* put it.

Such "schools" or communities do not have all the answers. They are not the only sources of vision for an evolving society. But they are antidotes to feelings of helplessness. They

demonstrate that people can do something to make the world a better place. Once people experience that fact as a personal reality, they are free to leave that specific community and continue to practice their creative work in the larger community of humankind.

Thus these communities nourish the power of intentionality itself. At their best, they offer us the realization that we can go beyond the boundaries of the familiar and explore new territory. We can innovate. We can be, in the wonderful word coined by Walt Disney, "imagineers."

As we learn this, we can move beyond the limits of our intentional communities and into the community of intentionality, the community of human and planetary aspiration and commitment towards the emergence of a healed and healing world.

David Spangler  
November, 1983



# Acknowledgments

We'd like to thank all those many community members whose spirit fills these pages for their time and patience in answering our questions and showing us around their communities. Without their openness and cooperation, this book would not have been possible. And our appreciation goes to fellow Sirius Community members whose dedication and hard work helped to create the context that gave us firsthand experience to write from.

We'd also like to thank Judith Bergman, Nancy Fisher, Cheryl Gray, Anna Hemingsley, Sue Kennedy, Tom Klein, and Katy Wolf for their help with typing and with collating community names and addresses for the Resources section. We're grateful to Peter Caddy, Jeff Fishell, Donald Keys, Michael Marien, Beldon and Lisa Paulson, and Mark Satin for reviewing early copies of the manuscript and giving feedback; to John and Libby Farr and Zell Draz for providing quiet places to work on the manuscript; and especially to Joshua Mailman and Richard Perl for finances and resources to enable us to visit the many communities and write about them. We thank John White, our agent, Caroline Myss and Shakti Reiner, our editors, and Jim and Chip Young, our publishers, for their invaluable assistance.

And thank you to all the communities that gave us additional photographs to use: Findhorn, The Pathwork, Sevenoaks (Tom Cogill) and Phoenicia, Chinook, Renaissance, High Wind, Living Love, Terre Nouvelle, Kripalu, Spring Valley, Yogaville, The Farm, The Bear Tribe (Tom Hammang), Esalen (Kathy Thormod), Twin Oaks, Arcosanti (Ivan Pintar), and Auroville. (Other photos were taken by us.) On the cover of the book is a drawing of Arcosanti, one of the communities featured in the book. And thanks to everyone who gave us support and encouragement while we were writing the book. We love you all!

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## Introduction

*Know the new that seeks birth within you. . . The world moves into a new cycle. . . Come forth, you builders, and build the new heaven and the new earth.*

—DAVID SPANGLER

This book is based largely on our combined personal experiences of living in intentional communities for more than twenty-three years and visiting more than one hundred other communities over a fifteen-year period. The two of us have lived in everything from the hippie communes of Haight-Ashbury to radical political communes; from shared urban households of professionals to rural spiritual communities. For several years, we both lived at the Findhorn Community in Scotland, which had a particularly profound effect on us in our personal growth and in in-

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spiring us about the effectiveness of community as a strategy for social transformation. In 1978 we co-founded Sirius Community on eighty-six acres in western Massachusetts as a non-profit educational center to communicate new ways to transform self and society.

From our perspective, intentional communities seem to catch glimpses of a positive future for humanity and then build new forms to express that vision. They stand on the edges of culture, watching the horizon, awaiting a new dawn.

These Builders of the Dawn are building not only new social structures, but, more importantly, new people. They are learning how to change fear, selfishness, and conflict into love, cooperation and sharing. These Builders are pioneering a positive response to societal ills and demonstrating the attitudes and values needed to restore a sense of community to our lives, wherever we live.

To us, the new intentional communities are one of the map-makers for humanity's journey into the future. They function as research and development centers for society, experimenting with new approaches to problems of inflation, pollution, energy shortages, job alienation, unemployment, and rising health care costs. Many ideas and techniques being developed in communities are directly applicable to urban and suburban life, like reducing living costs while enhancing the quality of life and the sense of being surrounded by friendship and support.

The impact of the community movement today is not due to one particularly successful prototype of community but rather to the diversity of new communities and the strength of their combined innovations in so many areas of human life, from new techniques for conflict resolution and good communication to alternative forms of energy and health care. These workable solutions to real life problems have wide appeal.

To study communities is to examine in microcosm the problems, and some of the solutions, in creating a new social structure for humanity. Many different personality types live together in a given community, and they may even share certain values. The main task of community living is to create unity out of human diversity. Communities educate people in a cooperative way of life, with new attitudes and values, in an environment that enhances personal growth.

Living in these communities is a powerful training in the art of relationship: learning to live as an inter-related part of a whole system, balancing the needs of others with one's own. This "whole system" awareness is a much needed skill in today's world—in families, in businesses, and in international politics.

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*Learning to live as an interrelated part of a whole system*

Community living teaches us firsthand the reality of the interdependence of all life. We learn to be good stewards in caring for things that belong to the whole community (or the whole earth) as we would care for our own possessions; we learn how to circulate resources and share with others less fortunate; we develop tolerance for differences and learn how to resolve conflicts peacefully; we focus on giving and producing, rather than on just receiving and consuming. It is this "community awareness," so often lacking in people today, which is needed to create a world that truly works for everyone.

Communities are thriving in the '80s and have a new maturity and sustainability, unlike the communes of the 1960s. Most communities are not manipulative, crazy "cults," as the media likes to label all non-mainstream religious groups. The majority are very down-to-earth and non-fanatical.

Each community is formed for a specific purpose—political, spiritual, educational, or scientific. Most offer a specific service to society and have a different atmosphere than do those that are focused just on meeting the needs of their own members. Most are working towards the creation of a better world and/or towards personal growth and development. Rather than being utopias, a "heaven on earth" where all problems have been left behind, communities are involved with an ongoing process of working to attain certain ideals.

Communal living is taking many forms today, from the simple cooperative households of urban areas, formed mainly to reduce costs, to the more complex and committed communities of



*Working towards the creation of a better world*



rural areas, where members share common values and goals. Today, most groups prefer to call themselves "cooperative households" or "communities," rather than "communes," to distinguish themselves from the stereotyped "hippie crash pad" image of communes of the '60s and to emphasize the return to the spirit of good neighborliness implied by the word "community."

Many diverse lifestyles and values are represented in the new communities. Some have a very communal focus, pooling all resources and living together in one house; others offer more individual space and resemble a new kind of village. Some communities follow Eastern spiritual paths; some follow a "new age" spiritual path; others follow no spiritual path.

Members of one community (Sparrow Hawk in Oklahoma) feel that seven different prototypes of communities (based on the concept of seven rays of energy) are being built today as models for the future: some are a new type of ashram, serving God's will; some are educational communities, teaching, caring, and supporting people; some are centers of philosophical experimentation; others are creative communities of artists and poets; others are technological/ecological; others are monastic in a devotional pattern; and still others are oriented primarily towards concepts of ownership and finance.

Community means different things to different people. To some, it is a safe haven where survival is assured through mutual cooperation. To others, it is a place of emotional support, with deep sharing and bonding with close friends. Some see community as an intense crucible for personal growth. For others it is primarily a place to pioneer their dreams.

*Deep sharing and bonding  
with close friends*



This book does not present an overview of all types of communities. We did not visit communities that are, in our opinion, highly authoritarian and manipulative and create an extreme dependence and passivity in their members. Nor did we include those that are mainly survivalist and very hostile to their neighbors, stock-piling guns for "protection," as these seemed to represent the worst aspects of society as it is today and were not an inspiring alternative.

We also did not visit the older traditional religious communities. We were drawn to those communities that share certain "new age" values like ecological concern, personal growth, and planetary awareness, which are discussed more in depth in Chapter 1. We have included only residential communities (where members share the same house and/or land), not groups who experience a strong sense of "community" through their shared work or values, as we found that actually living together creates a particularly strong focus for studying the areas we are interested in here.

We visited only those communities that are open to the public as demonstration centers of their way of life and are not afraid of publicity. Many of the urban communities are shared households that are not open to the public. Although the majority of communities in this book are rurally based, there are important exceptions, such as The Movement for a New Society in Philadelphia and the Institute for Cultural Affairs in Chicago.

While we could not include all of the new communities we would have liked to, we have presented a representative sample. We have concentrated mainly on American communities, as this is what we are most familiar with, although we have included a few examples of communities in other countries to give somewhat of an international perspective. Not all of the examples presented in this book would necessarily define themselves as "communities," but each consists of people living together for a common purpose, sharing certain values and resources, and cooperating with each other.

We focus several chapters on the innovative and interesting aspects of thirty different communities, but we don't give a complete description of any community individually. We hope this approach will give an overview of the fascinating range and depth of communities today.

Unlike bureaucratic institutions, communities often change rapidly from year to year, depending on who their members are. The information included in this book is accurate (to the best of our knowledge) only as of this writing (1985). We are not able to

guarantee that someone will find exactly what is described here if s/he visits a community in the future.

Why study communities? Aren't they just "utopian dreams" or "the rebellion of society's misfits"? Far from drawing only misfits, today's communities include some very brilliant and creative people. Innovations being pioneered by community members are relevant to problems facing our world today. We'd like to communicate these new approaches to people in the mainstream.

The impetus to write a book on communities has come from several sources. We have strongly felt the lack of community spirit and good neighborliness in society as a whole, and we've wanted to help address that deep inner need for human connectedness by pointing the way to some solutions.

Also, for the last seven years, we've been presenting all over the country a slide show on thirty new age communities that we've visited. We've given a workshop for hundreds of participants on building communities and have repeatedly been asked by people to put all of our material into book form so it would be available to others.

When we did extensive research to locate textbooks for a course on Alternative Communities that we taught at American University in Washington, D.C., we discovered that almost nothing is available on communities of the late 1970s and '80s. Most books focus on the communes of the late '60s and contain nothing on how to start communities. There are few books written by those actually living in communities, perhaps because people are too busy actually living the experience to write about it! For us, trying to write a book in the middle of a busy community was a tremendous challenge.

Information on today's communities is lacking even in books with comprehensive overviews of the new consciousness today, such as *The Aquarian Conspiracy* and *Networking: The First Report*. Today's communities are a very well-kept secret!

In the last year, we have received increased requests for information about our community. It appears that as the world political and economic situation worsens, as pollution and poisoned wastes spread, and as people respond to a need for inner peace and spiritual growth, the interest in communities grows proportionally.

It is our sincere hope that this book will be useful to many kinds of people:

—those already living in communities could benefit both from the mistakes and successes of others in community

and from the feeling of support and affirmation which this book might provide.

—people who are interested in starting communities might benefit tremendously from the chapter on “Guidelines for Building Communities,” since it is based on interviews with many successful community founders and long-term community members.

—those who are studying communities in academic settings and public policy and corporate think tanks are interested in successful innovations in all sectors of society. Many communities, including our own, have been visited by college classes.

—those who like to stay informed of current trends on the leading edge of human activity can appreciate a comprehensive overview of communities today.

—most importantly, those people who are experiencing personal crisis, economic upheaval, or the need for inner change in their lives and who are searching for new solutions and alternatives to the mainstream approach will be inspired with the hope of a more positive future, both for themselves and for society, by seeing successful models of communities that express human caring and cooperation, as well as more economical living. This book will be helpful in selecting a community that matches a person’s needs and interests.

—and finally, the general public has been given a lot of misinformation about communities by the media’s labeling all alternatives as “hippie communes,” or worse yet, “cults.” The most extreme and controversial alternatives have been played up, and the more sedate and successful ones have been ignored. We hope to reduce the fear level about communities by providing helpful guidelines for distinguishing the true “cults” from the good work of honest communities.

This book offers a more personal, immediate, and firsthand account of what it’s like to actually live in community and why it’s such a powerful experience, eternally challenging on every level and deeply rewarding. As community members ourselves, we had the advantage of more honest and in-depth interviews with members of other communities than reporters and sociologists have been able to obtain. People trusted us, knowing we would understand them and accurately represent their thoughts. Many community members and founders we interviewed were friends we have come to know through our networking projects

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