



talking sidewalks

voices. faces. stories. souls.

The Real Me

Richard Lambert

When you see me on the street don't look down on me. Open your eyes and see the real me. Look on the inside that is where I am. Not on the outside just because my clothes are in a sham. I am a person just like you. Just understand I have feelings too. I have a heart and a mind but rather than look you choose to be blind. I am me. Just take a chance to look inside to take a good look at the real me.



Karl Marks

For questions, comments, or to get involved, email talkingsidewalks@gmail.com

Read it online at www.talkingsidewalks.com

No Place Like Home

Allen Dubey

There is no place like home, unless you have no home and are homeless, in which case there is no place at all.

It's 3:30 am and so cold. Shaking my arms and jumping up and down in a vain effort to warm myself, I search frantically for small twigs, leaves, pine needles, and anything useful for kindling a fire on a small wooded lot near downtown. The temperature has been dropping steadily after dark from 40 degrees and is now holding at 29 degrees. I'm tired. Absolutely exhausted, dirty, and hungry, I claw my way through the brush, trembling from the cold, lighting match after match, looking for kindling. Dear God it's cold, I cry out! I'm wearing a T-shirt, long sleeve shirt, a lined wind breaker, pair of blue jeans, and work boots. With every breath I take the frigid air hurts my lungs. My body is so weak from malnutrition and lack of sleep, nevertheless, slowly I get together a small pile of leaves, pine needles and twigs. I have half a book of matches left of the two small books I got at the Quick Stop the day before. Now on my knees in a small clearing on the wooded lot near down town, I lightly blow on the small flame bringing life to the fire. I spend the rest of the night between gathering dead wood to keep the flames going and sitting near its warmth thanking God for fire and asking that the time pass quickly, that I may soon see the sunrise. A tint of gray in the sky to the east, I throw the last of the dead wood on the fire and move closer to its warmth, longing for the sun to rise.

It's now 6:30 am, the fire is down so small that what heat it is producing has little effect. Being able to see from the dim light of the oncoming sunrise, I kick dirt over the fire to put it out and begin pushing my way through the brush and small trees to work my way out of the small vacant lot. I head for downtown in search of some place open with heat.

McDonalds! Shivering uncontrollably walking through the door into the McDonalds, feeling the warm air encapsulate my body, I smile giving a sigh of relief. I go into the bathroom and turn on the hand dryer and stand there rubbing my hands together under the warm air.

Once warm, I wash my hands and face, comb my hair ,and try and brush what filth I can off my clothes. Walking out of the bathroom I take a seat in one of the booths in the warm dining area. I'm really hungry. I watch people watching me as they eat. I'm not eating. I have no money. What a sight I must be to the onlookers.

Intuitively I feel the uprising of the semi-silent persecution of my presence between the patrons of the McDonalds and the staff working there, all of whom are completely oblivious to my struggles. I know it's time I be moving on. I am reluctant to step back out into the freezing air.

I say a small prayer, sitting there thanking God I am alive and if somehow someday I may rise above this. I walk past the people sitting there in McDonalds, saddened by their look of fear at just the sight of me. I step through the doorway and out onto the street. There is no place when you're homeless, and there is no place like a home.



Marian

What the World Meant to Me at 6

Donna

Basically the world was a Big dream Land.
 You pretended to be anywhere or anything.
 You spent days at play. Not knowing any of life's stresses.
 You ride the Merry-Go-Round then the monkey bars.
 Then you swing, seems like for days.
 Then I think my most favorite part was going on the farm,
 one on one with the animals.
 Taking care, learning to take care of each.
 We had chickens, rooster, and also ducks, pigs and my favorite horse.
 The world was anything you wanted it to be at that age.

From going up a slide backwards to going to your
 pretend friend's house for a tea party and a sleep over.
 A world full of dreams and hope.



Cadillac Cowboy

Hurricanes

David Zachary Bridges

Hurricanes—I think a lot of people know about hurricanes, but only what they know about them through the media. The experience is quite different; quite unnerving.

The Sounds. The wind howls and is probably the loudest noise you'll hear, even over the occasional tundra. It is also the scariest part for me, at least. But the saddest and most heartbreaking part is the sound of your house creaking, moaning, and ripping apart to the tremendous force of the winds. It's probably one of the most helpless feelings you can imagine. The sound of your siblings, who sit next to you, crammed beneath the pillows and blankets in the bathtub, they whisper, "what was that?" too afraid to even muster up more than a whisper. You don't tell them it was the window shattering downstairs. People yelling for their loved ones.

The Sights. It almost always happens at night, so the sights come in the morning. All your possessions: toys, books, electronics, clothes, scattered and mixed with mud, water, sticks, or completely missing altogether. A look out the window, canoes and inner-tubes go by with all sorts of people, some going door-to-door, checking on the neighborhood, others going on about their desperate ways. Seeing water come to the 5th step of your stairwell, the whole downstairs destroyed and submerged.

The Feelings. The aftermath is the worst. I was still young, so my main concern was the loss of my personal possessions, but I knew change was coming. But I often remember Katrina, and I remember seeing my father cry. I believe that was the first and the last time. Now I understand what desperation really means. When all law, order, organization, etc. breaks down and is no longer effective or applicable, and survival mode sets in. Your emotions and mindset ironically will mimic the very mechanics that make a hurricane what it is. That's a real Hurricane experience.

Rainbows End?

DeAnn Jarman

There is no end to this ongoing circle of filth and disgust.

Life plays its dirty little game of lies and discord.

Chaos building, growing into mistrust and abuse.

Withered am I. Growing weary of the lie that the rainbow holds a pot of gold at an end that is unsustainable.

Luck existing only to the wicked hearted.

Slithering on their bellies like snakes with forked tongues and no backbones.

Alone am I. Shackled to a rainbow obtaining no color.

Grey matter existing only in my mind's eye.
A failure at luck and love!



Mark Davidson

Dead Ends

Donna

—Been on housing for over a year. Dead end. Section 8 no longer giving vouchers. My number was 167 when I arrived at homeless shelter then it got pushed back to 248 and has not moved from 248 in 1 year. Medicaid, appealing disability, no Medicaid. Joe, my case manager, and I appealed it all the way to a hearing in Hillsborough, NC, a year ago. Shelter attorney was to go to the hearing. When the hearing came up, she would no longer represent me, her excuse was she only does appeals. Did not get any information from attorney, who got letter of what was needed at this hearing. Just phone call to be there and date. Joe Coe went to hearing totally unprepared. Did not hear anything back. Now I'm to the point charity care is only good 1 year. Medicaid has been no help. My case worker for Medicaid, Mundy Lawrence, appeared against me at hearing for DSS, not for me or looking into possible emergency Medicaid. Dead end.

—Apply for employment. Only to appeal it to a hearing in Raleigh, NC. At this hearing you need \$275.00 to \$375.00 up front for a lawyer to take your case. Come on I live at the shelter. No funds for this. Had enough work in the quarter but could not afford lawyer. We train for job. State ran out of funds last year.

—Vocational Rehabilitation.

—Finally registered in class Sept. 27th, 2010. School starts. Putting a band-aid on problem. With my continual health problems, doctor appointments. I pray everyday not be absent or don't and can't finish. Same with returning to work force. Appointment continue. Doctor's medications mounting \$270.00 each month in cost. I have liver damage due to transfusion UNC gave me at the birth of my oldest child in Oct. 25th, 1981. And medications I had to take all my life. My immune system stays down. Germs and fatigue I constantly fight. This will hurt me when I return to work.

—Disability big joke. I am on my 3rd appeal can't file any more paper work till November 2010. Their rules. Been turned down and denied already. Will appeal again. Their doctors are for disability. To rule against anyone getting it. This what they do. I've been homeless over year now. Cause of the way this is set up. I under went manejo test. 2 just last week at my own expense. Applied for housing without job check stubs or disability. Doesn't work, must have proof of income. Dead end. No help while you're fighting Medicaid and or disability. In my own situation, there is no family to step in and take care of me, they're deceased. Shelter only helps for so long. Few months then you face being on street again. Where does this end?

—I've worked since I was 15 years old. Now that I need help I can't get it. This is a pitiful way to have the US treat their TAX paying citizens. Here in our own country. We need help from mayors, governors, Congress, White House, enough is enough!



Mark Davidson

Don't React

Anthony Lener

Don't lose your cool—don't react—it's not important. When I get angry, I'm not listening or thinking. I've taught myself to refuse to react with anger. When I run into rudeness, or stupidity, or a misunderstanding, the first thing I do is I don't react. I wait through those first few soft emotional reactions. I keep my mouth shut, until I'm thinking clearly—I figure out what is happening and put a quick plan together.

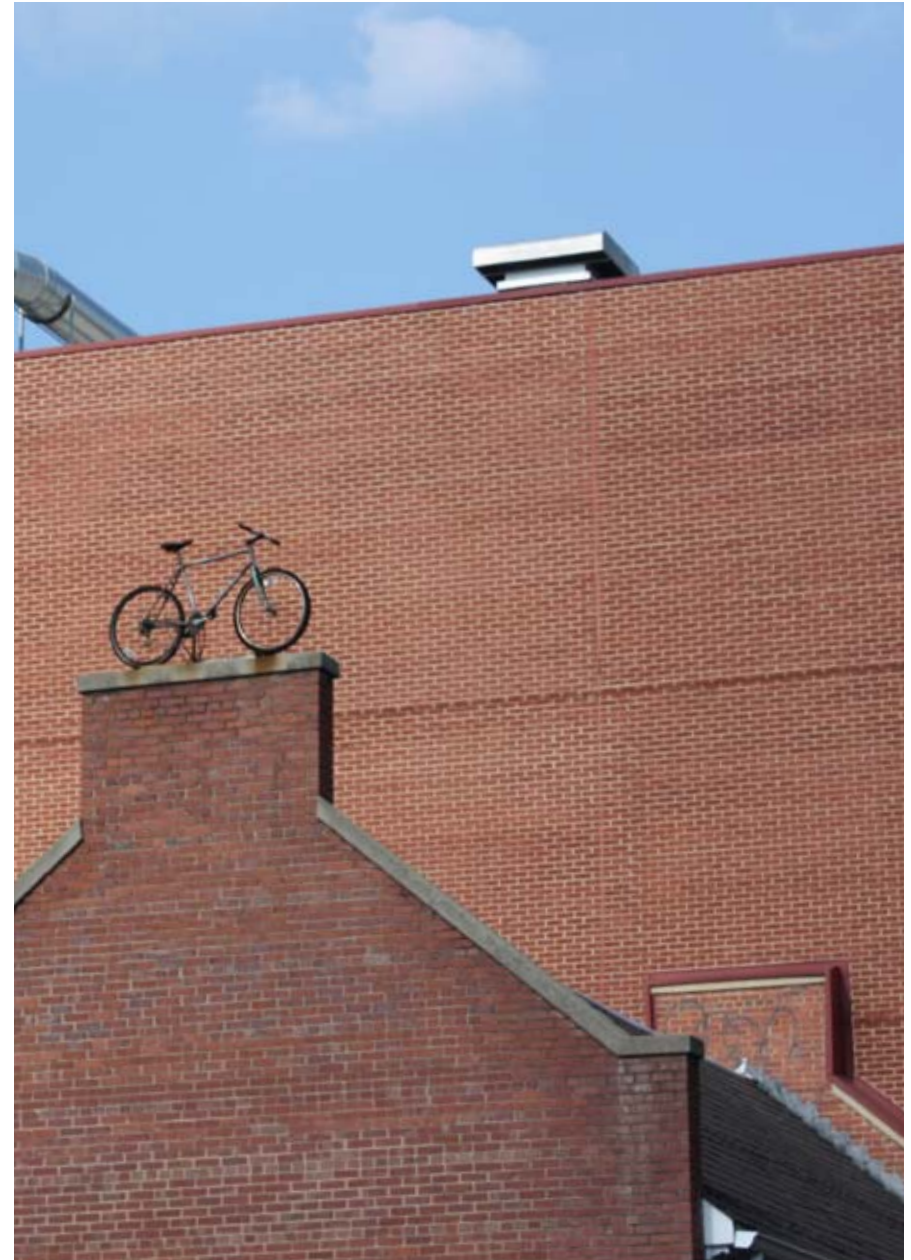
Success

Anthony Lener

In general people think “success” is when their ego is satisfied. People consider themselves “successful” when other people consider them a “success,” regardless of it. When I stopped worrying about being “successful” or being a “success,” and just focused on doing things well— doing things honestly and ethically—suddenly I was “successful.”



Karl Marks



Karl Marks

*Mark Davidson*

Lost Sheep

Michael Jenkins

I believe life is Hell, especially when you are homeless. A lot of people don't understand what homeless people go through in a lifetime. It's hard. People have a tendency to look at you a certain way.

Say you're sitting up there at Caribou, shooting the talk around. How you doing? What you doing today? You know just sitting on the block.

And some people, sometimes call the police. I understand sometimes the next bench over, sometimes people are drinking, getting rowdy. But I don't know why people want to call the police. You can call the police 1000 times, you can send 'em to jail; it's only gonna make it worse. Instead of talking to 'em like a human being, you go and call the cops. You don't have to call the cops because they're sitting on the bench. Benches for people to sit there. They done good to wake up that morning. They're doing good to be sitting there. You don't know what people are going through. Sleeping on the hard concrete.

We all sitting on the bench, having a decent conversation about what did you do last night. Did someone take you in or did you have to sleep outside? Did you make it to your destination?

So we talking about that and here come a lady with her boyfriend and another little girl and a little baby on her arm. And she use her baby on her arm. "Scuse me, do you have 50 cents? My baby need her medicine and I just need 50 cents more."

I'm not gonna let no baby not get her medicines. So I'm ripping and running now, trying to get her 50 cents. And it's hot. 96 degrees. But we get the money.

Turns out, she used the baby for f—ing cigarettes! I wanted to say, "Why you lie on your child to get more cigarettes? You telling me your baby need medicine and you're just trying to buy stinking ass cigarettes. You just lied on your child about something that don't have no value." That's deep. That hurt me—for her to use her child to get a pack of cigs.

I wanted to tell her, "Don't use your child for something you need." It would've made more sense for her to come up to me and say, "I need 50 cents to get a pack of cigarettes."

I sit on this bench everyday, I listen to people talk. I listen to people explain they problems. I'm waiting for somebody to say, "This is what I'm gonna do tomorrow to get out of this rut I'm in." F—k what you done and what you got f—ed up by! What you gonna do to better yourself and get back to reality? Tell me something that's good and positive.

Why not talk about something good, something to better yourself?

Why not go to church? Say, "Mike, I went to church, I had a wonderful time."

Do something Godly. God doesn't want you to be stuck in your rut. But you got to help yourself too. Sometimes you got to go through something to be something. Ain't you tired of living the way you living? I know I am.

Sometime I feel like crying for my people out here 'cause they're not trying. The Lord don't put you in the rut you're in. You're like lost sheep—need a shepherd.

Right now, a lot of lost sheep out there.

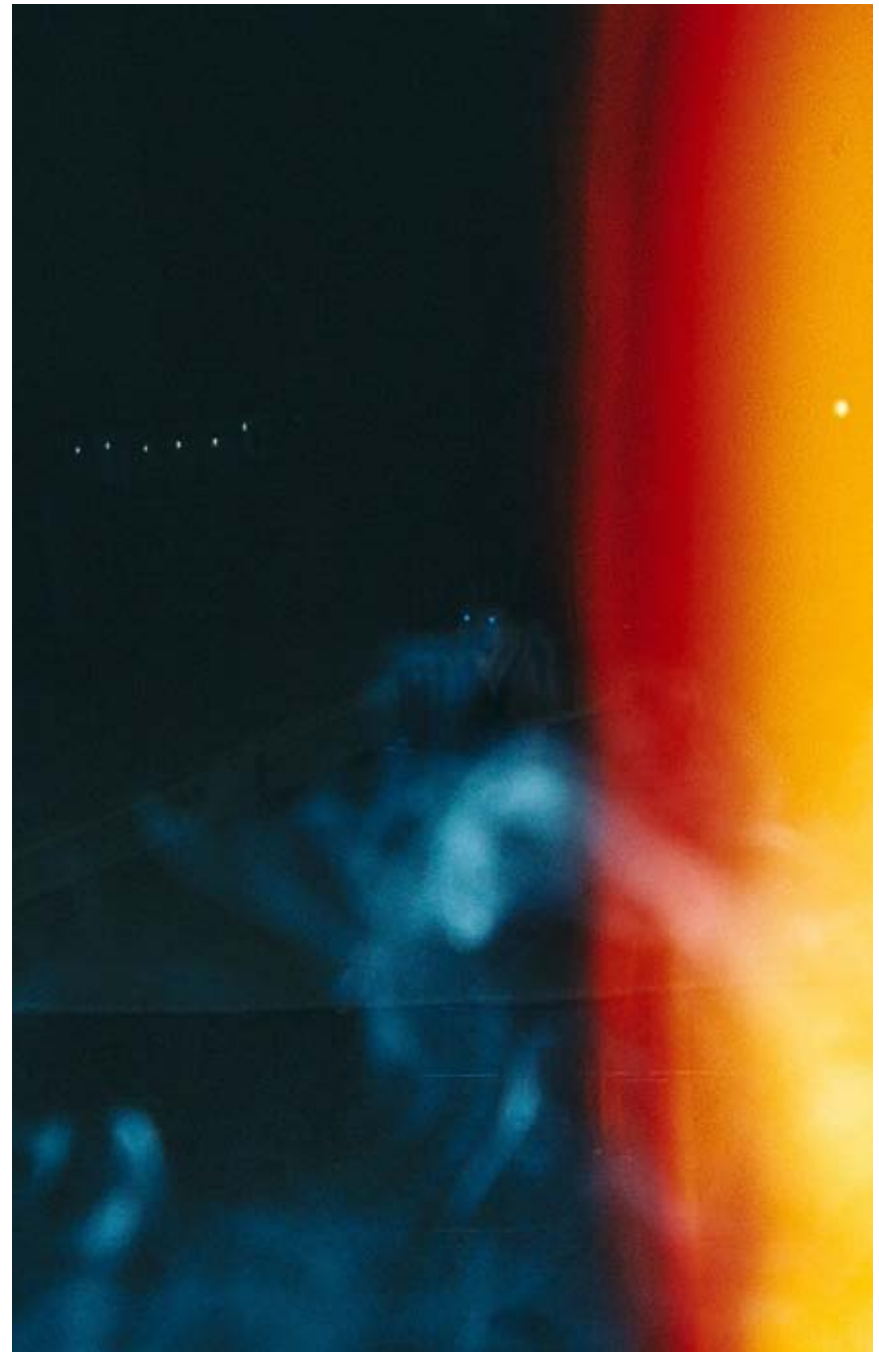
No Explanation

Joe

Family, I don't really know what that is.
 Friends, I ain't had that since I was a little kid.
 And every time I think shit going good,
 It gets f—ed up again.
 Reading the Bible and getting no understanding.
 Can I be forgiven if I'm still sinning?

I remember my dad, out f—ing his whores.
 What is he waiting for?
 His c—k to fall off?
 Too busy out smoking crack rocks to raise me.
 Went from a baby to a man,
 But sometimes I still act like a child
 Because I was raised by my own hands.
 Easily influenced 'cause I was always trying to fit in.

I remember when my mom died.
 It was a f—ed up surprise,
 But no tears came down my eyes.
 'Cause I guess I didn't realize the situation,
 Or maybe because she died so sudden,
 And without no
 explanation.



Mark Davidson

My Life as a Six Year Old

Dawn Sheppard

Walking home from school was one of my favorite things to do because I saw it as an adventure. I would stop in some of the different stores and visit with the people that worked there because I did not want to go home. I never knew what I would have to deal with.

This one winter day it was extremely cold and it seemed like the longest walk home. I stopped at a couple of places, the glass shop and one of the bars or IGA to get warm. When I finally made it home, there was no one at home. It was so cold that I started crying. It seemed like the tears were going to freeze on my face. My hands were so cold I thought that I would hit them and they would break.

I looked over at the library thinking that maybe I could go over and get warm. But then I would think, if I went over there my family might return and leave because they did not see me. I knew that it was nice and warm over there.

The longer I stood out there, the colder I was and the more my hands hurt from the freezing cold. It must have been about two hours that I stood out there waiting for my family. It was funny that my brother that went to the same school was not standing outside with me. Wondering where he could be and thinking was he as cold as me. At the last moment when I decide to go over to the library the car pulls in the driveway and everyone gets out of the car including my brother. So that is where he was at.



DeAnn Jarman



Karl Marks

Foosball

Mark Davidson

The competitive force and excitement of defending my two-time championship trophy for foosball becomes so intense, that my various tactics, blocked shots, bank shots, and fast paced shots come at ease. Far beyond just spinning the rods with precision and control, dribbling the ball between the men for a rifling shot sound of a shot gun blast as the ball disappears to score. Eyes focus upon an opponent's shot, only to block and return the same shot as a score.

Whether I play back men only or entire game, my only objective is to humiliate my opponent. Partners, however, relies on team effort, the pass to the front, the face back to the back with the wide open shot right up the middle. The bank shot at forty-five degree angle almost always surprises the opponent with the ball ricocheting between the defending men.

Foosball was a favorite pastime in my earlier youth, later to be traded for billiards, but that's another, but not quite as good, favorite pastime of mine.

Life with Parkinson's Disease

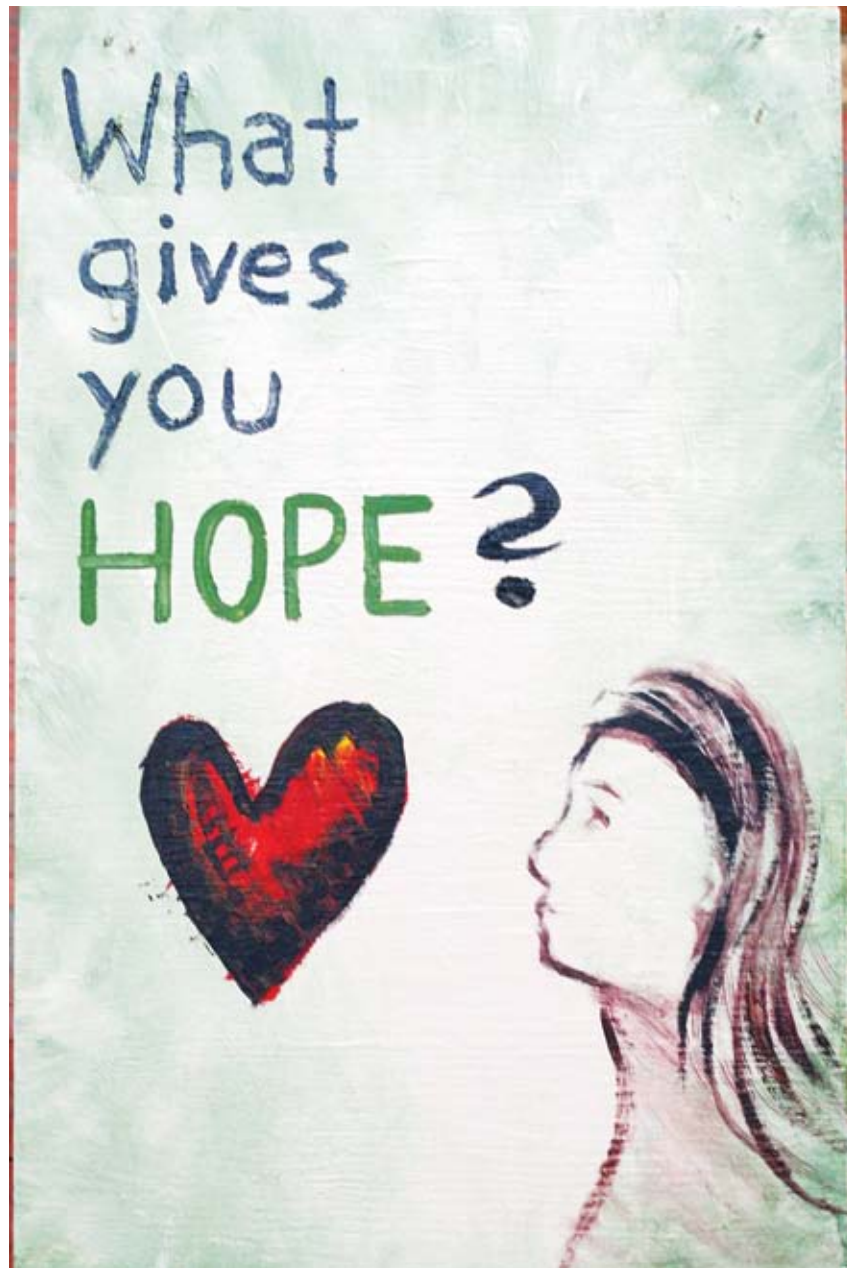
Cadillac Cowboy

I've had Parkinson's for 18 years and just now found out that it's caused by Agent Orange, which I was exposed to in Vietnam. Although it might be presumptuous to say it was caused by Agent Orange. The doctors told me it might have been Agent Orange, based on the birth defects my children had. Typically, the first three have problems and the fourth one's fine. I lost three children. I saw them die. One of my sons would have been 41 years old. One of my sons would have been 40. And the third one was aborted because there was a 75% to 90% chance of him being the same way as the other two—it was a medical reason. Losing a child is a very difficult thing to go through. But the fourth child was fine, just fine. The one who's living just turned 32, and he's 6'5", about 275 pounds—he's a big man. He played football his first year of high school, and he could have gone to college as well, but he turned it down. Some guy hit him in the back with his helmet real hard, and he said to me, "Dad, I know how you feel now." (I was having back trouble at the time. I had two back surgeries and three brain surgeries and infection after that, as well as a staph infection.) I'm proud of him. Very proud. He's not too proud of me. He has good reason. He's doin' alright, he's doin' fine.

To add to what Parkinson's disease can do to the body, it is a trouble of the body. It's hard to explain but your body freezes up, you can't move, so it's like being in a trance. And you lose control of your voluntary muscles because your body stops making dopamine and you lose control of your body, not your mind. Your mind is fine. And from outside appearances you appear to be okay. Dopamine is a transmitter that transmits from the brain to the involuntary muscles. You have to concentrate real hard. There's no cure for it. It affects the nervous system and artificial dopamine can be added artificially by pills. It enhances the gland and makes more dopamine. It's like a nightmare that never ends. The suspected cause is exposure to dangerous chemicals. That's about it.



Marian



Allen Dubey



Tanetra

A Letter to the Editor

Mark Davidson

As a homeless person, not hopeless, I fail to see the reasoning by the people opposed to the new shelter being built. Not all homeless people are thugs, drug addicts, murderers or rapists, but ones that have become that way with the fallen economy. And those with such addictions, whether drugs or alcohol, have the resources to overcome them. As for me, I'm a recovering alcoholic trying my best to change my ways and habits. The Community House is providing strength and courage so I can face each day. Chapel Hill is a beautiful town with its college and hospital. The people seem very friendly until homelessness comes up. Being stereotyped really bothers me because I am a good, honest hard worker down on my luck. I guess that's what pushes me harder each day, that and prayer, to get back on my feet, and become functional in society.

Saying Goodbye to my Best Friend

Mark Davidson

Dear Beer,

Around the surprisingly young age of fourteen, we were introduced and became inseparable for nearly forty years. Throughout puberty we trusted in each other, all the good and the bad times yet to come. When serious relationships came into the picture, you were right there for me. I trusted you'd get me through anything. When I got married and had children, I held on to our friendship, in spite of the distance you brought between me and my family. I promised my wife that things would change, but you were becoming the only family I had left. How in the hell could I desert you now? I needed you, so I held on to our relationship even more. Why, you were there for me when my father passed, throughout my divorce, and all the bad times I needed your support or comfort, you were there. People thought I was insane, and I was, with this obsession that you became upon me. At times, I thought I could moderate the times we spent together, only to find your existence became more apparent. You put me through legal difficulties and I became imprisoned for the times and crimes you bestowed upon me. You've cost me my very existence of rational thought and the comprehension of dealing with life on life's terms. I can't go anywhere; there you are, squeezing my life out and fermenting my every thought. You used me up and spit me out like there's no tomorrow. But I got news for you, we're through. I've got a new friend now, one that's true. One that I thank each morning when I wake, and one that I praise for blessing me with the courage to rid myself from your sorry ass. So in closing, if our paths never cross, it'll be too soon and Lord help you if you even try to pull me back into your grasp. With my new found friend, and the meetings I attend, you'll surely not hold onto me in your clutches ever again. One day at a time, and the Lord's help, I'm free and sober to live once again.

Never Yours,

Mark

PS. Oh yeah, tell brother Whiskey the same!

Good-Bye, Need Not Reply.



Tanetra

*Karl Marks*

“Ode to a Suicide Bomber”

Karl Marks

Buildings will fall,	Destroying all,
With a flash of light,	Within his path.
Unleashing god's fury,	Then perhaps
In all its might.	I'll make you see,
I was a boy	Eye for eye,
I'm now a man,	If it must be.
My ultimate protest,	I walk amongst you,
Give us our land.	But you fail to see,
Jew, Christian, Muslim,	This imminent sacrifice,
All of the book,	Taking you with me.
This you have forgotten,	The vest I wear
I'll make you look.	Across my chest.
And I like Yahweh	Will send out fire,
With all his wrath,	Then I will rest.

These bits of iron,	With loud bang
And ragged steel,	And brilliant light,
Tearing flesh	Killing all,
Though you can feel	Within my sight.
All the pain,	If only you
It is so real.	Had not forced my hand
Like so many tears,	And had given us
That we have shed,	Our own homeland.
With flash of light	There might have been peace,
Now bloody red.	It's not to be.
You take our lands,	For now I'm gone
It has to end.	And martyr be.
All the killing,	Spinning consciousness,
Women, children, men.	Toward the light,
Eye for eye	I fleetingly see all I love
And tooth for tooth.	Flash before my sight.
Perhaps this sacrifice	At speed of sound,
Will make you see the truth.	My existence ends,
Your police come	A statement made,
They were too late.	It just begins!
I pull this cord	
Accepting fate.	



Joe

One x One

Joe

This is the story of 2 brothers, one evil one good, we'll call them John and Johnny—

John grew up in the church, Johnny grew up on the block not giving a f—k.

While John learned to praise, Johnny walked through life in a maze not knowing what was next, but earned everyone's respect.

John was a straight A student, Johnny was a drop out.

Johnny was gunnin' and runnin' from the law, while John was trying to learn God's law.

John had a good job in a saw mill, while Johnny was selling crack, making big-faced bills.

John got married and had 2 kids, Johnny was trickin girls and got HIV.

John became a priest, Johnny got life in prison.

John and Johnny look in the mirror and see one another. They look just the same because they are one and the same. Ya'll probably confused right now but let me explain. You see, John and Johnny are the same person and these are the 2 roads that they can travel in life. Only who is John? He is my unborn child and his life all depends on me if I stay or if I leave. $1 \times 1 = 1$ so I have one shot to do things right or Johnny will end up in prison for the rest of his life.

Be4 I Die

Joe

Earth was god's creation but man's wickedness gave it to the devil,

You're right when you say hell on earth cuz we cursed it.

Like a rogue villain he whispers in ya ear, god forbid you listen—
but I did.

When I went through that Red Door with the red sun
the heat should have been a warning

I knew what I was getting into but I didn't think—
one more mistake to add to the list.

I proceed in, then I saw her

The devil in the red dress.

I let my temptation get the best of me

I listen to the voice in my ear, that fierce savage

Barbarious Beelzebub.

Jesus please manifest yourself in me

cuz right now I'm blind.

What's his motive

his order

his instruction.

I'm so gone I'm frustrated

motivated but by the wrong side.

The devil got me by the balls

All I can is fall,

god pick me up carry me

be4 I bury me.



Joe

Questions from Franklin

In a random survey of people on Franklin St. on August 22, 2010, Talking Sidewalks contributors asked the community, "If you could ask a homeless person one question, what would you ask him or her?" These are some of the questions people asked:

Where were you ten years ago?

Where are you going to sleep tonight?

What would you change about your life if you could go back?

What's preventing you from getting a job now?

What would it take to turn your life around?

Where did you get your shopping cart?

How do you manage to get by day by day?

How did you become homeless?

Upon reviewing these questions compiled from the community, the Talking Sidewalks contributors responded with some questions of their own:

What does it feel like to eat in your own kitchen?

—Trevor

How does it feel to have the comfort of choices?

How does it feel to decide what's for supper?

How does it feel not having a time limit when you go out?

—David

How does it feel to be able to hold your child?

—Anonymous

How does it feel to sleep next to a women at night?

—Joe

What are you going to do when most of the country is homeless?

—Anthony



Anthony

Untitled

Jeff Davis

Always aware and ever isolated, in the recesses of consciousness singularity prevails.

Togetherness, a cruel illusion which leads the mind astray from actuality. Stricken, as with disease, a split reality. One of informed self awareness and attached like a dreaded but necessary parasite. A seemingly necessary evil which contaminates inner truth. A cursed block to introspect, ever interfering with discovery.

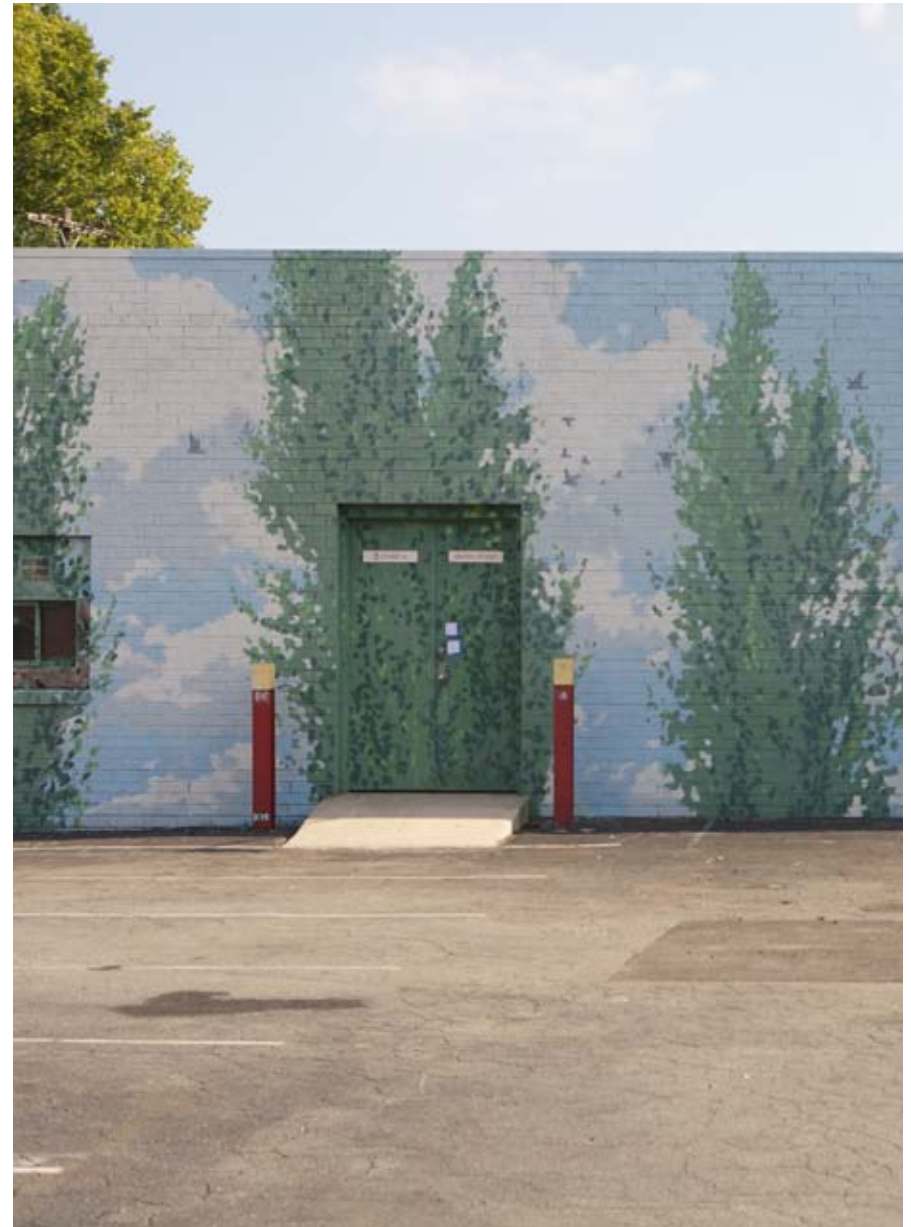
Oh to be alone.

Free from interference with my truth.

I don't want to be alone. Is THE truth unattainable? Is it allotted to only do battle for its discovery?



Robin



Mark Davidson

Silent Tears

Allen Dubey

I look out the window as people pass by from the IFC Shelter. I hope they can't see me and find out that I am homeless. I haven't always been homeless. I once had a job, but things can change, life is real hard. I walk around town, I really have nowhere to go so you have probably seen me going to and fro. Does my appearance make you leery of me? Do my frustrated actions make you question my sanity? What do you know of the sidewalks I've walked? My experiences I share are so far fetched, is it only talk?

So if you see me with my face in the glass of the IFC shelter as you walk past, think to yourself and ask deep within, if you can make a positive difference for those faces you see walking the streets. If your answer is yes, then stop in the shelter and give it your best. If you do happen to see my face in the glass, smile and wave as you walk past and help dry up my silent tears.



David Zachary Bridges



David Zachary Bridges

One Hundred Thirty Days Ago

Mark Davidson

One hundred thirty days ago, I decided to take a step towards a better way of life. A life I could not have imagined without becoming sober through the grace of God. Now, every step I take, He takes two, and I'm truly blessed. Seems I'm stuck on this issue, but by God I'm glad it's always on my mind. Better days and better ways; as long as I'm sober, everything's possible and positive. Thank God for being homeless but sober in Chapel Hill.

Inside

Richard Lambert

I feel so lost inside like I am taking a long lonely ride have so many feelings locked deep in my mind. I want so bad to let them out but know it would be enough to get straight tossed out. So they just get balled up and tossed aside. So now you will all know how I feel inside. I just know all my life I have tried and tried but even my own family has lied and my trust in them has all but died. Trying so hard to hold my pride. So there you go those are my feelings trapped so deep inside.

Life

Richard Lambert

Life can be fun or very shitty but also it can make you feel almost giddy. Everyday that slips on by might even make you sigh. Life is always there even when it leaves you feeling bare. Picking up the pieces may even be rare. Just don't let life bring you down and just sit there with a frown. Life can be happy all the while even if you have your own style. All you have to do is smile. Good times come and they go. Sometimes fast sometimes slow. But rest assured you can go with the flow.



Michael E. Wood



DeAnn Jarman

Across the Street

R. Michaels

I am one of the fortunate ones who has been released from the perpetual misery and hopelessness that was endured during the time I was homeless and dependent upon the Shelter for food and a bed. Through the mercy of family and friends I escaped the daily anxieties and doldrums of waiting for bed space on any given night, wondering if I would be sleeping on the streets or not. I was truly blessed to survive that ordeal and to come out of it with reasonable sanity is something I will never take for granted. The stares of people, avoidance of friends were just some of the things I won't miss. Yet it would be unfair to the others who have made that journey to not address the myriad of circumstances we encountered on the sidewalks of Franklin.

Perhaps the greatest problem is the loneliness one encounters both on and off the street. You find yourself constantly musing that you feel prepared for a new life, but fate's bullets hit you in such an overwhelming way, causing you to worry about what is and what is yet to be. At the end of the barrage, you stand (hopefully) alone, confused and literally dazed. After this resurrection I was diagnosed with throat cancer. If it wasn't one thing it was another! Sitting atop the pity pot you can get

a despairing look at the situation. As a recovering alcoholic (one of the main reasons I found myself mired in misery and destitution) thinking to myself, “Lord I have to put down the bottle, I’m trying so hard to fly right and do your bidding but now you saddle me with this?” “Oh gloom, despair and agony on me, deep dark depression excessive misery” (Thanks Hee Haw) I was lucky enough to have great family support—taking me to my daily radiation treatments and the chemotherapy stints.

So there I was, divorced (my wife had the good sense to get out), lonely, cancer ridden. During these trials and tribulations I found a stronger faith to see me through and a good friend who became my caretaker and invaluable ally. I was afraid of my reliance on my higher power, scared and wondering if I was asking too much from him and everyone else. They say good things come to all who wait.

Being homeless did afford me the gift of patience. Today, my cancer is in remission, the weight is gradually returning and things are looking better. Obviously I didn’t do all of this alone—after a special caretaker and much love, I find the problem I suffered through has returned—loneliness rears its ugly head again. I and others like me, who are starting over, desperately want a companion, a confidante, someone to share my new life. My past does haunt me sometimes, lowering my self esteem and confidence. The optimist in me says that I will find that certain someone, such is the attitude of most of the people you see on the sidewalks. We somehow have the innate ability to see the glass as half full. It’s not easy, but we all dig deep down to try to overcome and be productive.

So on the other side of the walk, problems come and go, you try to forget your mistakes of the past, which is very therapeutic, but only if you remember what they taught you. You realize that hope is more than just a concept and although your faith is tested—sometimes daily—it all resolves itself in the end. I still grimace at times when I reflect back on what I went through to get where I am today. As I look across the street, my heart and mind scream for my brothers and sisters who are in the similar situations that I have lived. Don’t give up, pray, find the way to overcome, you are extremely important and above all, you can do it!

So, my fellow travelers in this amusement park of life—my prayers are for all of us. My reflections of past and present are tied directly to all of you. Soon I’m sure I’ll see you across the street. Always be thankful for what you have and work hard for what you want. See ya across the street!



Mark Davidson

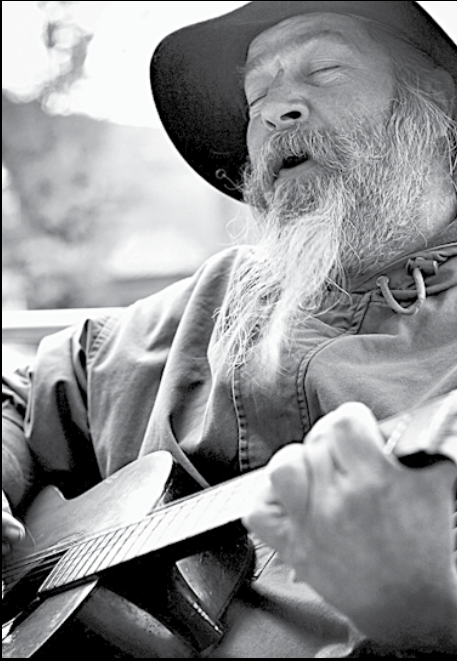
Move On

Cranston Hunter

Born too early into the world, my pain as infant through my eyes out-poured. Will I live, will I die, or will my life simply be ignored? As a phoenix, I rise from the ashes of death and try to achieve greatness with every breath. A mother who loves and cares minus the wealth. Although everything else in my life is in perfect health, I go through my teen years wondering if I should be here. As I break through walls of loneliness now at twenty-two, still not knowing what I should do. Except to know, to keep moving on until I’m done or until my life is gone, and after that even I will keep moving on.

For questions, comments, or to get involved, email talkingsidewalks@gmail.com

Read it online at www.talkingsidewalks.com



In Memory

No one ever knows what
tomorrow may bring.
The rhythm of your song may fade,
but your sidewalks on Franklin
will always truly sing.

Ron Moore
1952— 2010

*This issue of Talking Sidewalks is in honor and memory of Ron Moore,
who entertained, loved, and inspired the place and the people of Chapel Hill, NC*

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Cover photo taken by DeAnn Jarman