

All Them Alleyways

As hiding places for God knows what, alleyways reflect all that is American.

You never see anything of value laying around in alleyways anymore. Just items that no longer have a wanted place inside the house, in the front yard or in the shed.

Alleyways have become a kind of final resting spot for items no one wants to throw away. Might have some value down the road, you know. Might spring back to life. And be fixed. With a kick and a shove, that is, or with the fresh paint from a graffiti-fried youngster.

Alleyways also are used by people who wish to remain anonymous. The neighbors are certainly one group to avoid. So are the police. Or maybe even the private investigator who's reclining in a nearby car waiting for the

man with the relaxable, make-believe limp to come out and flex his muscles. And then be gone.

Some people think back with lore to far away lands or Americana-bred upbringings and try to remold alleyways to their liking. They post no parking signs and paint fences and place white rocks as property boundaries. And then guard against intruders who would like a taste from the old vegetable garden.

What they don't realize is that alleyways are for the tomcats and backdoor souls of the world, for the piles of the unwanted and for Uncle Joe and his wagon full of deadwood. In America that is.

—STEPHEN MAHER



Photos by Elizabeth Asher and Stephen Maher



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