51
by Nathan Roper

Livin' on the streets at 51
First off, it ain't no fun.
Livin' from hand to mouth at this age
Brings on a new kind of rage

It's that inward fury that burns
Manifesting to an ulcer, it twists and turns
See, at 51 it's my fault and my fault alone
My fault I have no home

Can't blame the politicians
Or society at large, ya see
The blame rests squarely on me

Lack of planning and refusal to submit
There's a certain herb they say I gotta quit
Doesn't matter the heroin I quit
Doesn't matter when I quit herbs
My life turns to shit

Impulsive, no control of emotions
Losing bit by bit

Homeless at 51
Good god, just give me a gun

Leaving
By Kareem Ali

The breadth of your smile
Lingers
Past the well soaked Sunday papers

Beyond the unshowered nights
Your face appeared as a form of memory

Outside
The only sound I could hear
Were drunken bluejays
Whispering between themselves
While rising
On crutches of air.

Paper sales perfect fit for a man of words

BY COLE MERKEL
STAFF WRITER

Growing up in Las Vegas brings to mind images of neon lights, slot machines and 24-hour indulgence. But for Ron Sanford, whose father was a professional blackjack dealer, life in Sin City was, admittedly, "pretty normal."

"It was a mid-sized town back then," remembers Sanford. "We didn't live on the strip. We had a house." On weekends, though, Sanford and his friends had access to the Las Vegas Strip. They would visit Circus Circus casino. "That was more of a kid place because they had a big arcade. We used to play Asteroids," he says.

In high school, Ron was a three-season athlete, playing football, basketball and baseball. His football team won the regional championship the year Ron played middle linebacker and served as captain of the defense.

VENDOR PROFILE
Ron Sanford

PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

Vegas became a difficult place to live in 2004 after Sanford became homeless. "They had at least double the national average of homeless yet they had very few beds. The veterans and seniors would go before you." So, following family members who had moved to Oregon, Sanford came to Portland to play as a street musician. He played bucket drums and still carries drumsticks around, but has since gotten rid of his set. "Carrying them around is a hassle," he says of the drums. "I used to have two real symbols, it was a good set up that kind of disappeared."

Nowadays, Ron practices and entertains on found instruments. He uses his drumsticks to play on benches outside his sales location at Walgreen's at 1620 NE Grand Ave. He says he can get different sounds depending on where he hits the metal bench.

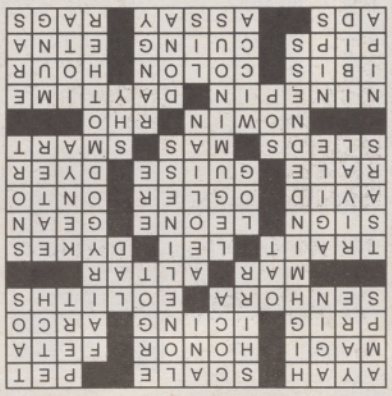
Divesting of his drums inspired Ron to become a Street Roots vendor. "When I lost my bucket drums I had to make some income," says Ron. "I knew people who did it and they said it's a good job. It was a pretty easy decision to make."

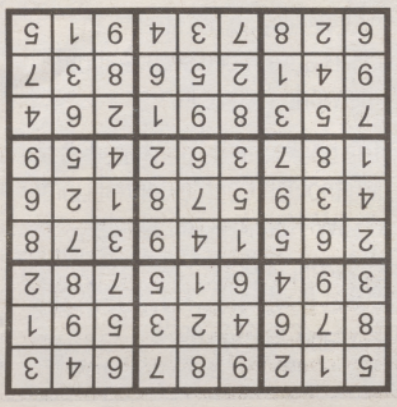
He likes that selling Street Roots gets him out in the community. "You get to meet people and be creative. You can use your own sales pitch, whatever works, and the paper is educational, you can keep up on local politics," he says.

"I think that's a good thing – to help a local charity, and you get a good magazine at the same time. It's less of a burden to the taxpayer instead of having the federal government do everything for you. That's what I like about the organization. It helps people on a local level."

Outside of Street Roots, Ron is an avid Scrabble player, often spending extended periods of time playing the crossword game online. Musically, The Beatles, Genesis and Pink Floyd inspire him. He also likes to spend time with his family. Ron has an older brother, sister-in-law and three nephews who live in Hillsboro, while his parents and sister reside in Coos Bay and another brother lives in Roseburg.

Answers to puzzles on page 15





VENDOR WORK ADS

Tibor S.: Available for any labor work around a house. 1-201-539-1888.

Cassidy Morse: Looking for work. Will do most anything, light and heavy. $10 an hour, four-hour minimum. References supplied. Please call 503-224-5398 or Street Roots at 503-228-5657

Laura Owens: Available for domestic-type work, cleaning, dog walking, etc. Please call Steet Roots, 503-228-5657 and leave a message for Laura regarding work ad.

CORRECTIONS

Street Roots strives for accuracy, but we're human. So we also strive to correct errors in our paper whenever possible. Please report any errors to our managing editor, Joanne Zuhl, at 503-228-5657, or write to joanne@streetroots.org

Vendor Wish List

Donations keep Street Roots and our vendors working by keeping our operating costs low.

- Socks
- Lil Hotties
- Paper cups
- Hygiene items
- Towels
- First-aid supplies
- TriMet bus tickets/passes
- Printer paper
- Toilet paper

www.streetroots.wordpress.com and Facebook too!

CENTRAL CITY concern

Changing Lives

Building Communities

Creating Opportunities

www.centralcityconcern.org
503-294-1681

Seeing new faces selling Street Roots? Each week, more people sign up to become Street Roots vendors and it's great to support new salesmen. Please make sure you buy from badged vendors, confirming that they have attended the vendor orientation and are authorized to sell the newspapers. Your vendor will thank you!