

Scraps of Paper

by Ed Edmo

it smells
like dried ink
i pull open
dusty old blue
shoe box
in attic

found folded
protected pages
of the past
spilled with tear-rusty
words:

mom says
it's for the kids
she stays

dad threatens
to go
to Idaho

mom writes
back on envelope
go

dad answers
for the kids
i'll stay

i remember
messenger older brother
carrying our future on
scraps of paper
somewhere i cried

A man in the
background
steps forwardBY ANN-DERRICK GAILLOT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Yesterday was one of those days," says Street Roots vendor Theodore Sears as we sit down to talk. He recounts how that day his cart full of his belongings tipped over and spilled out onto the sidewalk. As he bent down to gather his things, a man came out of his house and yelled at him, harassing him to "clean up his junk."

Theodore admits the event isn't a rare one for him. "A turtle carries its home on

VENDOR PROFILE
Theodore Sears

its back," he tells me. "Houseless people carry theirs in their head and their heart. Their house is what they carry with them."

Upon meeting Theodore, one of the first things I notice about him is his positive attitude, despite the disappointing event he relates to me. The next thing I notice is his collection of buttons he displays on his jacket. One proclaims his love for CB radio, another, featuring the cartoon cat Garfield, represents his love for comics. "Consent is Sexy" reads one. When I ask about it he says, "I thought 'Consent, yes! What a great concept' and consent is sexy." Another button represents his love for vegan chocolate — though he admits he is not a vegan.

Theodore describes himself as a "man in the background" who came from humble beginnings. He sees his life's experiences as what allows him to sympathize with others so easily and champion society's underdogs.

"I grew up with the concept already there to give back to people who have nothing at all," he says.

He credits his compassion as what first led him to buy an issue of Street Roots. It was on that day Theodore learned about the vendor program, paid his first visit to the



PHOTO BY COLE MERKEL

Street Roots office and registered as a vendor. That was nearly one year ago. "It's a nice way to meet people," he says about his job. "Be out, feel good about myself instead of feeling depressed about my situation. ... Working hard is good. It's all I've known."

He was born in Gresham, and says he has lived all over the state of Oregon. With a laugh he says of his home state, "It takes a lot of nut jobs to make a good pie and Oregon is a pecan pie." Even with all there is to love in Oregon, for Theodore, Portland will always be a favorite, especially now due to the city's growth and increased diversity.

"I'd say Portland is like one of those organic smoothies. It takes a lot of vegetables to make a good smoothie. It takes a lot of different people to make a good city. I think we've got a good thing going here, currently."

However, along with Theodore's obvious Portland pride come his reservations about its future. For Theodore, along with many others, Portland's unforgiving job market takes much away from its livability. "It's kind of like a battle of the fittest," he says. "Only the strongest will survive. That's how it feels in the job market sometimes."

A father of two, Theodore looks forward to helping start his own organization in the future. It would be a community-based organization that would empower neighbors to support one another in family matters. "It's neighbors helping families stay together." Additionally, he has recently gotten a part-time job as a handyman. If you are lucky enough to catch Theodore on his many travels around the area be sure to stop and say hi. A little kindness goes a long way, and as Theodore says, "We've got to be good to one another."



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All wrapped into one person



Vendors are regular contributors to
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poets and artists.

Look for your favorite vendor's writings
in each edition of the paper.

VENDOR WORK ADS

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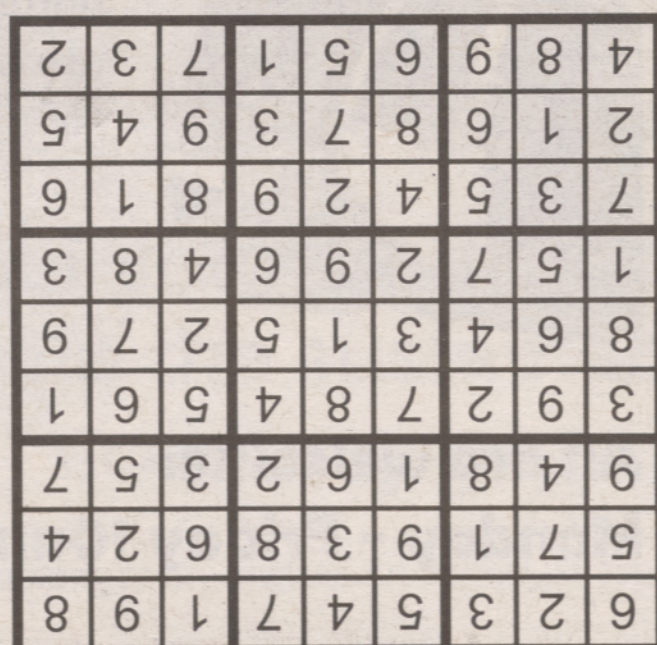
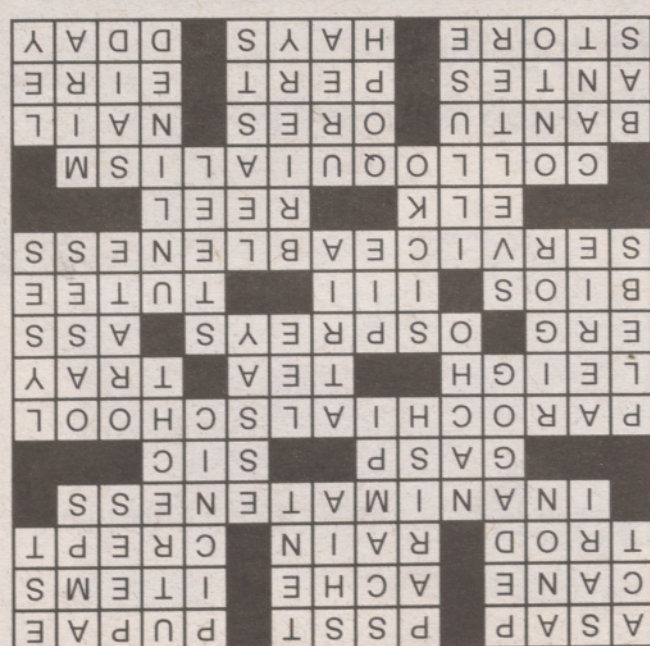
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Answers to puzzles on page 15



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