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to shine the spotlight on others that led her to create the "Stories From Our Village" project. Kay, too, is a member of the village, a homeowner on New Columbia's North Haven Street.

New Columbia was built between 2003 and 2005 on the site of Columbia Villa, a barracks-style housing project originally constructed for Kaiser shipyard workers during World War II. After the war, the Villa became permanent public housing for 462 low-income households forming a unique community that is often remembered warmly by speakers in the "Stories" project. But in the eyes of Portland's mainstream media, the Villa came to be seen as a home for crime and violence and a locus of gang activity. In 1988, it was the site of Portland's first fatal drive-by shooting, which took a 17-year-old's life.

In 2003, the Housing Authority of Portland undertook a massive redevelopment of the site, launching a social experiment aimed at uplifting a community of diverse nationalities, ages, incomes and races. The project faced skepticism, scathing criticism and massive logistical challenges, not to mention a \$152 million price tag. Hundreds of families were temporarily relocated, the existing buildings were razed, and everything from below the ground up was replaced. Only some long-lived trees were lovingly preserved. Two years later, New Columbia was ready for occupancy.

With double the housing stock, a new public elementary school and Boys & Girls Club, the site mixed several market-rate bungalows in beside subsidized multifamily housing units. Critics doubted that those who could afford the bungalows would choose to live in the midst of those who couldn't. Front porches opened onto public spaces designed to foster connection between neighbors. Ten years ago, New Columbia opened its doors.

It's on her front porch that I meet Kay, a youthful grandmother with spiky red hair, po-mo specs, and a wide smile that crinkles her eyes. The sun is out, unlikely for Portland in January. It's almost nice enough to convene on Kay's comfy-looking wicker loveseat, if it just weren't quite so cold.

Inside, Kay's place is full of light and books, plants, art, and color. She seats me at her dining room table, gives me a glass of water and takes a chair opposite. She asks how long the interview will take. I tell her I was thinking maybe an hour. She says she was hoping for a bit less than that — she needs to save time to prep for the ESL class she teaches at the Community Center. I tell her I'll try to be snappy and press "record" on my cellphone.

Jon Ross: *How and when did you find your way to New Columbia?*

Kay Reid: I moved in in 2008. I had a certain price range and certain things I really wanted, like a fenced yard, a kitchen I could enjoy, a place I could have friends over. And OK, I fell in LOVE with this neighborhood and this house. So it was a totally easy decision for me.

J.R.: *I notice you didn't say anything about a sense of community in your criteria.*

K.R.: That has become VERY important,

'STORIES FROM OUR VILLAGE'

The next readers' theater event is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. May 21 at the New Columbia Community Center, 4625 N. Trenton. To obtain a copy of the first edition of "Stories From Our Village," contact Kay Reid at janykayreid@gmail.com.

but it was not originally one of the reasons I chose to move here. I knew I would want to interview people in the community, but it's not why I made the choice.

J.R.: *You looked forward to learning about your new neighbors?*

K.R.: I have been interested in people's stories since I can remember. On my block growing up — my brothers and sisters were older, and there weren't many other kids — I would go out on the street and invite people to come to our house and have dinner and talk. I was just interested in hearing stories.

J.R.: *Where was this?*

K.R.: Kentucky. I was born in Mississippi, and I lived in the South the first several years of my life.

J.R.: *And when did you come to Oregon?*

K.R.: I first came to Oregon in, oh my gosh, 1959!

J.R.: *What was your family like?*

K.R.: My parents' names were Birdie Lee Hill Reid and Erlis Audrey Reid, so you know they're Southerners with names like that. Daddy was hard-working and very difficult. Mother was very Southern and conservative and charming. They were pretty religious.

J.R.: *What did your father do for a living?*

K.R.: At the end of the Depression, Daddy was trying to make a living in cotton, as a lot of men were. It was extremely hard, and he ended up schooling himself in safety and electricity. So things improved.

J.R.: *On the list of your publications, I see the monograph, "Recollections of Fae Dougan," published by the Friends of C.G. Jung Elder project. I'm guessing that, putting "Southern, conservative, religious upbringing" next to "Friends of C.G. Jung," you must have diverged in some ways from the religious norms of the South.*

K.R.: I did, and in different ways. I simply knew, as a little girl, that God wouldn't send people to burn in hell forever. I knew it. I first became interested in Jung when I got ahold of "Memories, Dreams, and Reflections," and that would have been a long, long time ago. So I left the Christianity I was raised with, but later in my life, I did become Catholic. I was very attracted to the ritual and to symbol —

J.R.: *Two aspects of religion that Jung celebrates.*

K.R.: But I was also very attracted to the great social justice tradition in Catholicism.

J.R.: *A fundamental part of Jungian analysis has to do with learning to integrate the dark and light in ourselves, the conscious and the unconscious.*

K.R.: I'm very interested in *holding opposites*; that's how I think about it. I've had to hold a lot of opposites in my life.

J.R.: *How did you begin recording the stories of others?*

K.R.: I actually began in high school when I interviewed a German exchange student for the school paper. The title was "Klaus Comments." Some of my jobs along the way gave me opportunities also, although not officially as a story gatherer. The impetus for my first big project was my friend Frank Fromherz. He and I were

brainstorming about some of the people in the Catholic tradition that have done really great work — not just for Catholics, but for all of Oregon — that have changed society for the better, like work in labor and civil rights. Boy, we needed to capture some of that. So we created a project called "Legacy of Hope," interviewing Catholics who have worked for social justice.

For training, first I connected with Dr. Jim Strassmaier at Oregon Historical Society, who was extremely interested in the same tradition. And then Dr. Charlie Morrissey; he used to come to Portland every year and teach an intensive oral history workshop. I took that, and I started interviewing. It's been pretty constant since the early '90s. Someday I would love to get back to "Legacy of Hope." The interviews are complete, but there's no book. I've had a few small things published, but it's an unfinished work really.

J.R.: *You've also published work about Native Americans?*

K.R.: I did a lot of histories of tribal people. The Portland State project I worked on, "The Great Tribal Leaders of Modern Times," wasn't focused on art, culture and history so much as how the tribes build economic power, sovereignty and leadership. We interviewed 40 some leaders across the country.

J.R.: *Does that orientation toward the present rather than the past apply here at New Columbia?*

K.R.: I'm very interested in how people preserve their own culture and adapt. Talk about holding opposites: a lot of people in

this community right now are *really* holding opposites. I'm talking about the refugees in this community — their kids going to school, needing to do well in the American school context, and yet the parents so desiring that their children also retain their traditions.

J.R.: *So what are the nuts and bolts of your project? You work with kids —*

K.R.: We trained them in how to ask questions, how to get releases, and most of them really enjoyed it. A teenager and I would interview together, and then we would transcribe the interviews, make selections, show the storyteller the final selections, so he or she could OK it, then write them up for the booklet.

J.R.: *And then the reader's theater — do people read their own stories to an audience?*

K.R.: Some of the actual people want to read their stories. Some of the young people who gather the stories want to read them.

J.R.: *The sense I get is that everyone participating is kind of humanized by the experience.*

K.R.: I think learning stories about neighbors does that. You know, sometimes people don't know how to get to know their neighbors.

J.R.: *What value do you think doing this has for the storytellers?*

K.R.: I think for many of them it has been like a retrospective. It's been helpful for their lives, an opportunity to remember. Sometimes it's heartbreaking.

Once, on another interview project, one fellow, a professor and a writer, told me, actually on his deathbed, "Don't put it off, Kay." He said, "Do *not* put off what you want to do, because before you know it, it will be too late."

That was pretty heartbreaking, because at that point, there was no chance he could ever do what he had dreamed to do in fiction and short stories, and he died not long after. It was good for him to say that, and he knew it was good for me to hear it. So on the human level, I have learned so much. I've been *taught*.

Taught catches in Kay's throat, a little snag, a word with unexpected barbs. I push stop on my cellphone recorder and see that she's generously given the whole hour after all. She tells me a little more as she walks me to the door: the next "Stories From Our Village" will be finished in May, and she hopes to publish a book of poetry about her Southern roots within the year. And as if that weren't enough, she and a colleague, Susi Steinman, have just formed a new nonprofit called Portland Meet Portland.

"We'll pair up newcomers to Portland with longtime residents," she says. "Not so much so the established people can mentor the newcomers; it's also so the newcomers can mentor us."

We shake hands at her threshold. "See you soon," she says.

Outside, a little fog has rolled in, gold in the late sun, a mantle laid across North Haven Avenue.