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VENDOR PROFILE

Christian "C.W." Witt

BY HELEN HILL
STAFF WRITER

C.W. has deep roots with Street Roots. He was one of the earliest vendors in the 1990s when it was a fledgling paper called Burnside Cadillac. "I sold it on the move. It supplied my needs," he said.

C.W. ended up in the Pacific Northwest thanks to the infamous Columbus Day Storm of 1962. He was born in Minneapolis and barely remembers the small mom-and-pop ice cream store called Victory Dairy his father ran. When C.W. was 5 years old, his father lost the store and the family took to the road, traveling the country in search of work. C.W. and his brothers and sisters bounced along in a wooden box built onto the bed of their International Harvester truck, while his mother and father rode up front with the babies.

The family just happened to be near Portland when the storm hit. The cyclone-force winds (160 mph recorded on the Morrison Bridge) left thousands of homes in need of repair. "The truck had worn out when the storm hit," he said.

"They asked my father if he could roof and he said 'Hell yeah!'" C.W.'s father remained a journeyman roofer for the rest of his life.

When C.W. was in third grade, his father moved the family again, pulling a trailer over the then still rough and challenging Al-Can Highway. They lived in a fairgrounds parking lot for a time. "I remember my dad shimmying up the power pole to hook up an extension cord so we had

lights," he said. "My dad was full of wanderlust, he always wanted to see what was over the next hill."

C.W. inherited his father's love of the open road and as a result has led a unique life as a skilled worker throughout the Pacific Northwest. "I've had a really good life. I grew up in the land of opportunity, running heavy equipment when I was 17 years old. My life kept getting bigger and bigger," he said.

Hired at the tender age of 17 as a welder's assistant on the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, C.W. saw a lot of country from the North Slopes to the Brooks Range. "Alaska

is huge, like an ocean of mountains, you can't see the end." He remembers working out of Atigun Pass, sitting on busses being pulled up

mountainsides by a Cat machine in icy fog so thick you couldn't see out the windows. There were runaway rigs, grizzly bears and welding tasks in sub-zero weather, but the money was good and C.W. was able to put some by.

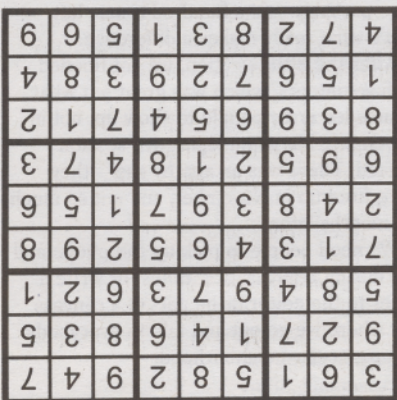
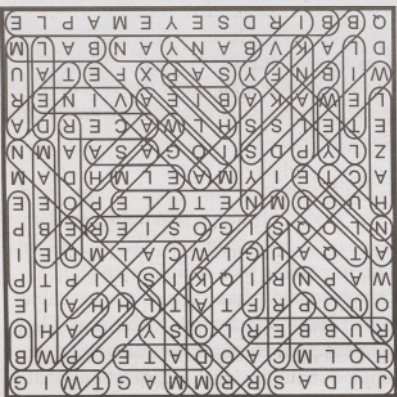
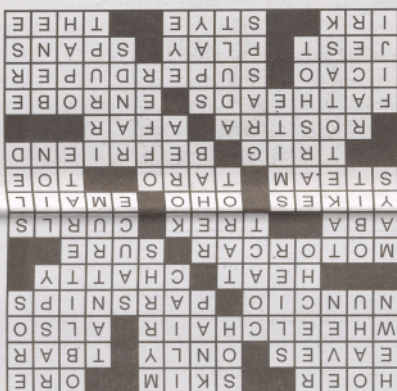
"I bought a piece of land 40 miles outside of Fairbanks near the Salcha River and built a log cabin 12-foot by 16-foot," he recalled. He married a young Alaskan Native woman named Patty. C.W. and Patty had three daughters: Sheri, Vanessa and Rachel. But Patty died of breast cancer when the children were still young. "I lost it. My older sister and her husband stepped in to help. I ended up working down in Portland again."

C.W.'s work ethic has always been exceptional. He's done everything from long-haul trucking to journeyman carpentry, roofing and cement finishing. "I'm a good worker. I can see what needs to be done next, and I can handle anything. I was the guy who would go anywhere and do anything. I've always been that way." He describes himself as a "multi-potentialite," a person whose skills and interests cover multiple fields. "It's been a blessing and a curse," he said. "I've had an interesting life, but I haven't been that stable."

C.W. has returned to Street Roots this past year. "It's my lifeline," he said. "Street Roots gives me a reason to clean up, take care of myself. It offers stability. I don't have to ask anybody for anything. I am providing a service and a link to alternative reading. I don't have to sell the paper, it sells itself." He doesn't have a specific spot; he sells the paper wherever he happens to be. Meanwhile, C.W. dreams of walking the final 76 mile leg of the Louis and Clark Trail from Portland to Astoria. He's completed most of the other sections from Missouri to Portland. "I'd like to take my time, enjoy the walk. Sleep in by the river and sit with a fishing hook."



Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



ON THE BRINK OF INSANITY JUST A BUMP IN THE ROAD/ A WALK IN THE PARK Part 1

by Leo Rhodes

Life's journey isn't easy
Depending on the path you choose
Or
When life slips you a curve

Life was hard
Now it's even harder

Energy drained
Self pity
Loss of hope
Anger
And many other emotions

Hating where I'm at!!!

Taking time to
Valuate options
Three come to mind

1. Self pity
Be miserable the rest of my life
2. Pull up my boot straps
And get out of this mess
3. Suicide

Answer is easy
I'm a fighter!!!

Life is hard
But
Nothing in life is easy

My war cry became
"Don't worry I'll be healthy
again
This is just a bump in the road
A walk in the park."