

A Tale From the Ramp

by Bronwyn "Banshee" Carver

I fly a sign
On a freeway ramp I stand
My dignity and pride
Tucked tight in my throat

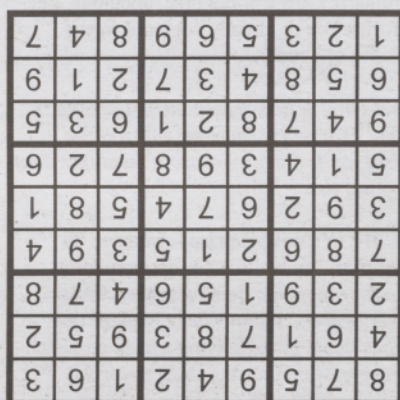
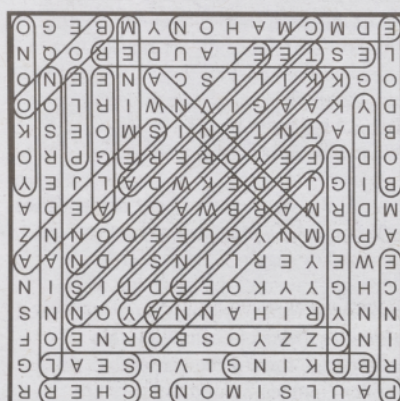
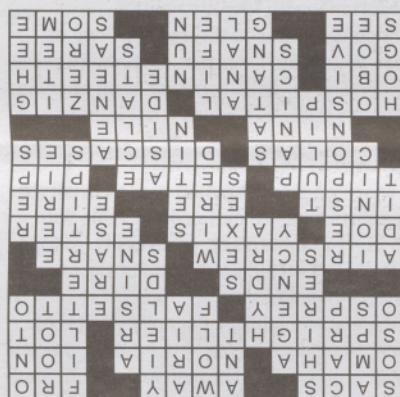
My eyes greet drivers
Behind vehicle windows of various steel
Hardly a smile passes lips

Stopping sign pause look
Out at me faces of
Compassion, sadness, smugness, glances
Snuck sideways-quick! Look away

It's the pity though
This I just cannot bear
They look at me but
They do not see me

A dollar passes window open
Our moment as human to human
Passes.

Answers to Page 15 Puzzles



VENDOR PROFILE

Kris Brown

BY HELEN HILL
STAFF WRITER

Kris Brown is an ambassador of alternative thinking who travels "wherever the wind takes me."

Traveling gives him a sense of wonder and confidence.

"No matter what city I go to, it's a new experience to survive in that city, and it's given me confidence no matter where I go I'll be OK," he said. "I've always had a sense of wanderlust. My father was in the Navy for 21 years. We moved every four years."

But perhaps even more than traveling, Kris loves learning, philosophizing and trying out new ideas and skills. He spends as much time as he can in the public library, several hours each day. He researches such things as sacred geometry, bush crafting, mushrooms, edible plants and philosophy.

"If I can learn, stay educated and never stop learning, that's the key to not being miserable," he said.

"I've been reading Henry David Thoreau and a lot of older philosophers. A lot of that makes sense to me. What was happening back in the 1850s is still happening today with property ownership, how hard it is to own property. How capitalism works, the haves and the have nots," Kris said.

"I like the way Thoreau put it. He said when you go into a native village, you can't tell who is the chief; everyone lives equally, but everyone has a job and a purpose; they have work to do.

When you live in a capitalist society, you can tell who has power and who doesn't. It's a lot more clear. So who is more civilized?"

Kris has been trying to live a civilized life, above all. He keeps a neat camp and, like a Boy Scout, leaves no trace behind.

"I'm up at 6:30 or 7 a.m. every day. I deposit everything I've left behind in the garbage. I make sure I am not visible. That's why I'm never kicked out of places," he said. "I've learned to be respectful. I call it urban camping, just pack it all up. But I like the woods because I can stay more hidden. I like big trees. I feel peace by them."

Helping others is another creed Kris lives by.

"If someone needs help, if I can offer any kind of assistance, I will. I've actually been able to help more people with this lifestyle than when I had a house and a car and a job," Kris said. "Our modern society

doesn't make any logical sense to me. I don't want to contribute to it in the way they want me to."

Kris wasn't always a wandering philosopher, carrying everything he needs in a neat backpack. In his 20s, he had a home and a car, and he was a door-to-door salesman. First he sold magazines, then steaks and seafood.

The last hourly wage he had was from Walmart.

"My family is a Walmart family," he said. "My stepmom has worked there for 15 years. I don't believe in the hourly wage system, someone telling me I'm only worth so much a day no matter how much work I put in."

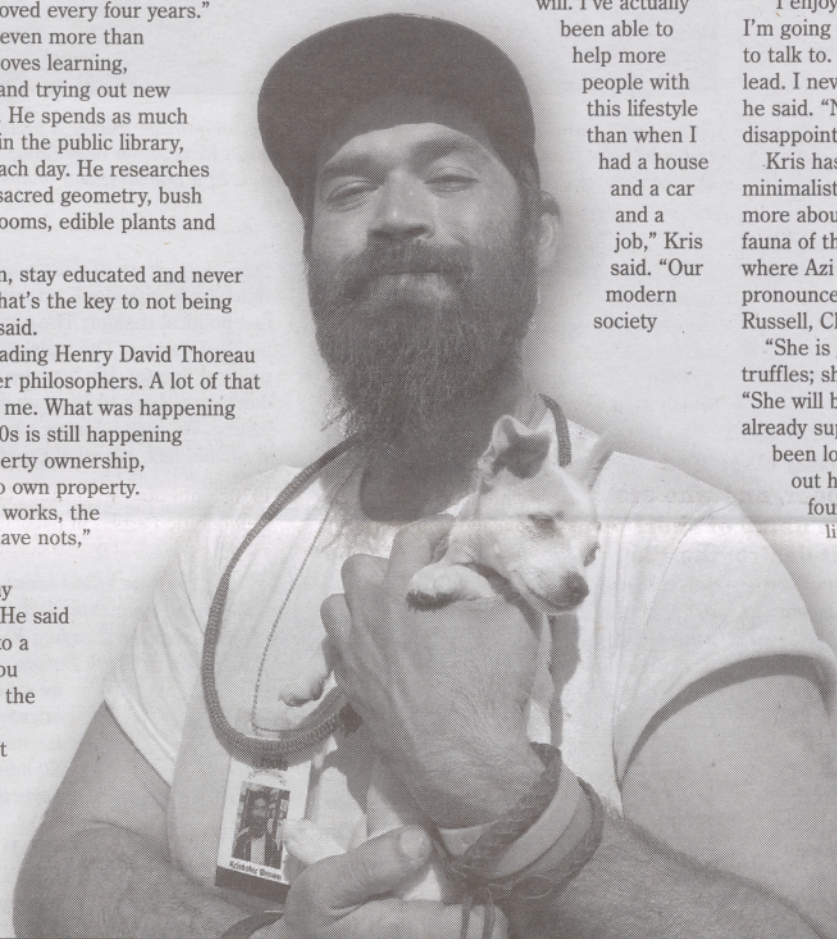
That's what Kris likes about Street Roots.

"I enjoy not knowing how much money I'm going to make that day, who I'm going to talk to. That's what I like about the life I lead. I never know what's going to happen," he said. "No expectations, no disappointments."

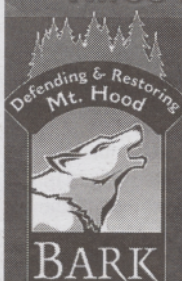
Kris has become as much a naturalist as a minimalist. He is passionate about learning more about edible plants and the flora and fauna of the Pacific Northwest. And that's where Azi comes in. Azi (the A is pronounced like the A in "apple") is a Jack Russell, Chihuahua mix puppy.

"She is good at finding black and white truffles; she can hunt mushrooms," he said. "She will be good out in the woods. She is already super smart at 11 weeks old. I've been looking for a dog since I've been out here. It's been a blessing since I found her. She was the runt of the litter; no one else wanted her."

Kris and Azi sell Street Roots at the corner of SW Second Avenue and Columbia Street, near Waterfront Park. You can stop by and discuss Thoreau or sacred geometry with them, if the wind is blowing in the right direction.



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