

# Down Home

Practice makes perfect

**THE PRACTICE OF HOME:** Biography of a House, memoir by Charles Goodrich. The Lyons Press, 2004. Hardcover, \$19.95.

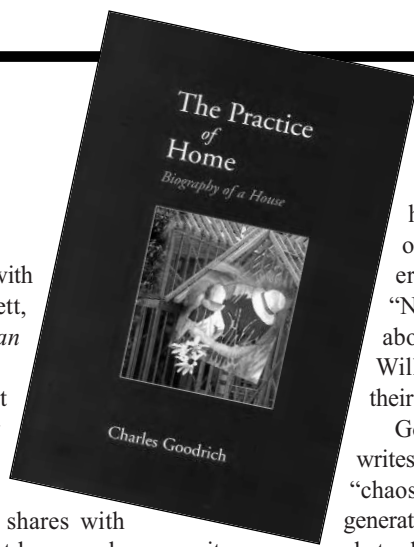
I grew so close to the voice of the narrator in this memoir of building a house and making it home, I felt as if I knew Charles Goodrich and his family and had been to their home. I have known men and women who've built their own houses, but none so resolutely honest as Goodrich about how he now mostly fixes up or redoes sloppy work he did earlier. Goodrich designed and built a wooden bungalow to which he and his wife, Kapa, have added a second-story addition and a big front porch.

Goodrich will read from *The Practice of Home* at the Knight Library Browsing Room

at 7 pm on April 19 with Carol Ann Bassett, reading from *Organ Pipe*.

Goodrich doesn't talk about the daily frustrations and pleasures of house building, rather he shares with readers his sense that home and community are part of a healing art anyone can practice. He notes that "the ordinary chores and the odd adventures of home can serve as the occasions of a spiritual practice" and proceeds to show us how.

The book contains short chapters, essays



really, devoted to subjects ranging from "Home Birth" — their son Elliot was born at home — to a memorable night on the lake with Kapa and several tail-slapping beavers in "Night Canoe." "Erratics" is about the 1996 flood when the Willamette River rose almost to their doorstep.

Goodrich enjoyed the flood, he writes, because it was a reminder of "chaos, the unpredictable and ever-generative wild." He continues, "And what a blessing it would be if I could learn to see my ordinary, everyday experiences that way. To feel my brain humming at the sight of a mason bee nectaring on a plum blossom, say. Or to sense the quivering of the infinite as I watch Elliot practice writing his cursive capital Q."

When Goodrich and his wife decide to let their lawn go back to native prairie grasses of pale ochre, sienna and rust, they don't anticipate that pernicious Nootka roses, Himalayan blackberry and "vicious little hawthorn trees" have their own plans.

"It was natural succession, and it was taking over our backyard! Succession, not into a picturesque natural woodland, not into maple or oaks, or even Doug firs — no, a thicket of thorns and brambles was sprouting up under my feet! For the first time I felt that diesel tractor idling behind me as, not an evil implement, but a trusty ally. I mowed with new purpose, the beautiful grasses just collateral casualties in a battle against nature barbed and shameless."

I wholeheartedly recommend spending time with *The Practice of Home*. Goodrich, who is also a poet, is a good reading companion and trustworthy guide. **EW**

**Book Notes** for April 7 through April 21: **Cynthia Whitcomb** talks about "Writing Movies: The Spine, The Heart, the Mind and the Spirit" at 6:30 pm on April 7 at the Baker Downtown Center. \$5-10 non-members Willamette Writers. ...Celebrate **Rumi** with poetry and music at 4 pm on April 9 at Tsunami Books. ...**Nick Salvatore** discusses his new book, *Singing in a Strange Land*, at 7:30 pm on April 12 in Room 175, Knight Law School, UO campus. ...**Bruce Holland Rogers** will discuss techniques he uses to craft award-winning very short stories at 5:30 pm on April 14 in Jackson's Books, Salem. ...**Jessica Morrell** teaches a workshop for writers of fiction, literary nonfiction and journalism from 10 am-4:30 pm April 16. \$60. (503) 287-2150. ...Lane Literary Guild sponsors a creative nonfiction craft workshop with **Charlotte Cook** at 10 am - 3 pm April 16. \$50 members/\$65 non-members. (541) 683-8680. ...Friends of Eugene Public Library Book Sale April 16 (9 am - 6 pm) and April 17 (9 am - 4 pm) at the Lance Country Fairgrounds, Wheeler Pavilion. ...Writer's Fair: "Making the Connection" brings together writer **Valerie Brooks**, fantasy writer **Bruce Holland Rogers** and editor, director of *Calyx*, **Margarita Donnelly**, at 1 pm on April

17 at the Eugene Public Library. ...Pop culture critic **Greil Marcus** speaks at 7:30 pm on April 18 at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland (1241 NW Johnson St.). \$10. (503) 227-2583... The Perpetual Motion Roadshow brings together poet songwriter **Ryan Kamstra**, spoken word artist **Liisa Ladouceur** and editor, publisher **Todd Dills** at 7 pm April 18 at Feinstein Museum of Unfine Art. ...Five local poets read from 7-9 pm on April 19 at the Eugene Public Library: **Ben Hubbard**, **Ce Resenow**, **Susan Kenyon**, **Jose Chaves** and **Joan Dobbie**. ...Portland's Annual Festival of the Book, **Wordstock**, takes place April 19-24, with speakers, stages, reading rooms, panels, workshops, music and more. Visit [www.wordstocfestival.com](http://www.wordstocfestival.com) for information. ...Poetry Slam readings begin at 7 pm on April 20 at Coffee House Café, 135 N. Liberty Street, Salem. ...Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, **Edward P. Jones** (*The Known World*) speaks at 7:30 pm on April 21 at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall in Portland. (503) 227-2583 for ticket information. ...Author, newspaper writer, and magazine journalist **Erik Larson** presents the 2005 Johnston lecture at 4 pm on April 21 in Alumni Lounge, Gerlinger Hall. Limited seating.

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