



Want to Leave a Smaller Footprint?

WEAR SMALLER SHOES. Yes, it's a lame joke, but it's the lame joke that gives this book its title. With all of the interest we see these days in saving energy and resources, and all of that talk about one's "carbon footprint" and "going green," few people point out the obvious: it works out best if you get by with less. And that's what this book is all about: it's about living your life using less energy and fewer resources, without adding more of both to get by with less. Does that make sense to you? It sure does to me.

So welcome to the world of living small. It has nothing to do with height, although, yes, I am short, and everything to do with leading a life of less conspicuous (and sometimes not so conspicuous) consumption. You need to know this right up front, though: This is not about sitting there all alone in a damp cardboard box, reading someone else's discarded magazines by the flickering light of an earwax candle. (And does that paint a dismal picture or what?) This is about living your life as you live it right now, but living it using just a little bit less. That's all I ask.

Yes, you are going to save some serious coin if you do even a few of the things in this book. It would probably take very few changes in your life to save the price of this book every month. With a little more effort you might possibly save the price of this book every week. Dare we hope for saving the price of the book every day? A daunting task, but who am I to rule it out? For many of us (yes, even me), savings are first measured by the money saved, and I don't have a problem with that. Money saved represents both energy and resources saved, and that really is an excellent way to track your progress.

This book is not about adding more things to your already full life. It's not about having to rush right out and purchase all the latest and greatest technology, all those wild and wonderful gadgets — in other words, buying a lot to save a little. Modern technology is a wonderful thing, but all of that modern technology takes both power and resources to build, install and run. (And, yes, to throw it away when it wears out.) This is not about that at all. This is about the opposite of that. This is about leading a simpler life. Your life, but simpler. This is more about planting trees than having to cut those trees down to make room for your new solar panels. Also, I see no reason to go into debt to save money. That seems somewhat counterproductive, doesn't it? And you paid cash for this book, right? If not, we need to talk.

Chances are you can live your life as you're living it right now, but use less to get it all done. You can use less power and water around the house, and use less fuel when you travel. You can spend less, and still keep your routine. All you need is a green routine. It takes surprisingly little effort to make a few changes that will, over time, save you quite a bit of energy, resources and, yes, money. These are things that take no more

time or effort to do, but pay off in the long run because you're using less as you do things just a little bit differently. And using less is better, right? Absolutely.

I'm not going to send you off to other books or web sites. You need not write for additional information. These are all easy things, simple changes, and they are all spelled out right here in this book. This is it: this is your blueprint for a simpler life and for saving yourself a bundle of time, energy and money. You can have your life and save it, too.

Ah, but what about me? How small are my shoes? I usually wear about a size 6½ or so, but you also need to know that, yes, I really do all the things I've written about in this book. This is my small life as I lead it these days, but I'm not doing this all alone. The lovely JoAnn, my wonderful wife of over twenty years, is just as zealous about living the small life (la vida tee-nee?) as I am, and she handles our extensive recycling arrangements with tremendous enthusiasm. And, yes, if you must know, she also wears smaller shoes.

I ride my bicycle to work, just as my wife both rides and walks to do much of what she does throughout her day. We also walk and ride for fun and exercise, but bicycles and foot power get us many of the places we need to go on a daily basis. That's not to say



Trees love it when you hug them.

we don't drive. We do, we just try to not drive *everywhere* and are always on the lookout for new places to *not* drive to. Walking out to dinner is a fun night out for us. (We're just a couple of crazy wild kids, aren't we?) My best friend called me a "green freak" a while back, but I don't really see it like that. These are just things we do — sensible changes we have made over time to live our lives the way we want to, and to save us time, energy, and money along the way. We still spend the money we save, but we spend it on things that are more fun. Paying the power bill is not fun. The less I have to pay there, the better.

You also need to know that we do not live all alone out in a cabin in the woods. We live in a perfectly normal house in the middle of suburbia. Our house looks like every other house around here. Well, mostly. There are those two green metal frogs bolted to the outside walls, and the two big carved Tiki idols. Oh, and the full-sized wooden bear on the front porch. Did I forget anything? Ah, yes: the big red steel mooring ball by the front door, a gift from JoAnn's brother, Cecil the sailor. Still, overall, we live in a normal, regular sort of place, surrounded by endless humanity for miles around. I'm out there mowing the yard and working in my garage like everyone else. Few people around us have any idea that our lives are any different from theirs. Few people know our deep green secret. Maybe they will after this book comes out. Oh, my.

I do honestly believe that the key to success in this is to, no pun intended, start small. There's no need to rush around and gut your house, throw out your old life, and start over with everything all at once. We sure didn't. (And we're still changing things in our lives to do better and live smaller.) Pick one or two things to change, easy things, and give them a try. If you like

how that worked out, add a couple more. If you don't like how that worked out, ask yourself what you can do that you *will* like. We all do what we can, but, yes, likes and dislikes are certainly a big part of it. Some things might take a little getting used to, but changes become habit over time. Small changes over time are the key to success, I think. Big changes are a real leap of faith, and much harder to get used to.

Looking back, I think we first started by recycling newspapers. Then we changed out a few light bulbs. I bought a little folding bike at the pawnshop downtown. Small things all, but each change led to more change, and now here we are: a couple of suburban green freaks. (Or so they say.) I still say we're fairly normal, and if you met us on the street, you'd have no idea what



Cycles and recycles, all in one

sort of lives we lead. I like that. I don't have to travel incognito. Not yet, anyway. Maybe it's not so much suburban green as suburban camouflage. Hidden green. Green does come in many shades.

I will say this, though, right up front: beware of "greenwashing." Greenwashing is what happens when companies try to sell you products by making them appear environmentally sensible ("green") when they are not. While you'll see it in all manner of commercial products and advertising, greenwashing is the most glaring these days in the automotive industry and their TV commercials. Let me just say this right here: a six-thousand-pound hybrid sport utility vehicle is not, in any way, shape or form, environmentally sensible. It's not green. It just isn't, and no happy woodsy TV commercial with little furry animals and soothing acoustical guitar music is going to change that. No motor vehicle is green, not even mine, and it really is green. (A dark, metallic green.) *C'est la vie*. The greenest vehicle you can buy is a bicycle, but even then, it sure used a lot of energy to make and deliver. About the only way you can truly "go green" is to go walk barefoot. I'm sorry. I'm not that green. Life is a balancing act. I have my limits. I wear shoes. Even if they're small.

You'll see that greenwashing being used to sell everything from huge cars to the smallest widget spanner. It seems as though everyone and their free-range organic sock monkey has something "green" to sell you these days. Green is the new black. Green is the new buzz word in marketing just about everything, and there's little in the way of law or conscience to stop advertisers from marketing leaking tubs of burning toxic waste as "green." *Caveat emptor*? You bet. Sometimes literally. Beware the greenwash. You've been warned.

There is, of course, also quite the opposite. It's entirely possible to be *too* green. Don't think so? Try reading these three words: recycled toilet paper. You had to have blanched at that one. I know I did when I first saw it in the store. I stared at those words for quite some time, trying desperately to make them say something else. They never did. Now, I know what they're *meant* to say. They're meant to say toilet paper made from regular recycled paper (as opposed to, say, post-consumer toilet paper), but that's not how it comes out. No pun intended. I'll have to give it a try someday. After they change the label. Or I leave my reading glasses at home.

Take all of this greening with a grain of natural sea salt. If you question the "greenness" of any product, do your research and find out more before you lay your money on the line. There are, as it turns out, a great many shades of green. Pick the ones that suit you and be as green as you want to be. Earth tones look good on you. Really.

Now here's the part of the book where I thank a few people for being such good sports. I know most folks don't care to read this stuff, and it's certainly not what you bought the book for, so I'll make this as quick and entertaining as I possibly can.

The first thank-you must, as always, go to my wonderful wife, the very lovely JoAnn Haynes. She not only tolerates me, but embraces our small green life whole-heartedly. She makes the runs to the recycling center and walks to the grocery store. She even goes out on bicycle rides with me. Now *that's* a good sport. Thank you, my dear. I love you.

Another large thank-you goes out to Ingrid Witvoet and everyone at New Society Publishers. They have been kind and gentle and enthusiastic. Without them, you would never have

heard of me. I thank them for letting me join their wondrous clan, and hope to never let them down. I am honored. Thank you, one and all.

Also, a tip of the waxed cotton cap must go to actor and activist Ed Begley, Jr. JoAnn and I were well on our way down the green path by the time *Living with Ed* came on TV, but we didn't miss an episode. Mister B. makes living green cool, and for that, I thank him. He also answers my email every time. What a guy. Thank you, sir!

Enough of this. On with the show. Let's get a little green and live a little small. You can do this. It's easy. I'll show you how, and I will promise you this right now: I will never sing "It's a Small World After All." Not ever. You're welcome.

And by the way, as I write this, today is Earth Day, April 22, 2008. Happy Earth Day to you.



This truck is green. No, really.