

## AFTERWORD

Karl's vision of the world was huge. He cared deeply about community, social needs, youth, diversity and much more. He dedicated his life to peace, grassroots democracy, and creating commons, through which he demonstrated his belief that beauty and art belong in open spaces.

This book touches on many of these themes. While Karl's work and focus was on inspiring people to build commons, he wanted his aspirations and experiences to aid and inspire life-sustaining projects around the world. However, because he died before completing this book, Karl didn't have a chance to share many of the day-to-day details that I observed over fourteen years of marriage to him. I hope that recounting them now helps to elucidate how he accomplished all that he did.

Whenever Karl started a neighborhood project, he first noted unmet needs. Were safe playgrounds located too far away? Was garden space nonexistent? He sought out neighbors, and natural leaders in the community, particularly women and teens,

to get their input about needs and to generate solutions and tactics. Inclusiveness was a driving principle, and the reason why he contacted such diverse groups—churches, local social and arts organizations, businesses, and staffs of public and private agencies. Inspired by his commitment to progressive issues, peace, justice, and environmental groups often became involved in projects, either directly or indirectly.

Karl was constantly on the phone, on the street, in meetings at his home or office—all to further community efforts. Frequently he met people for meals or coffee. He was extremely hands-on and cherished the person-to-person contacts he made. People have said that his passion, warmth, and caring inspired their interest and efforts. In meeting and speaking with myriad people, he sought out their ideas and plans, always asking for feedback, help, and resources. He took input seriously and credited each person for his or her efforts. He followed through and stayed in touch.

In my mind, much of his success came from encouraging and supporting others to be creative and to have a voice in the design of their lives. In an era of Internet, text messaging, and the like, Karl maintained a very human touch that was key to his success.

As a population, young people and teens were very close to Karl's heart. He created places for them to "hang out" and opportunities for them to train in various skills, get jobs, and volunteer. He always sought their counsel in designing local commons. In the Melon Commons chapter, he noted the displacement of youth when he wrote, "Youth will be responsible in their community only if they have a vital stake in it." Thirty years later, things haven't changed much. I encourage you to study pages 112–115 in the chapter on Neighborhood Commons of the 1960s for reflections on urban open space that remain relevant today.

Karl had great appreciation for community land resources such as the Trust for Public Land. He focused on obtaining secure access to usable open space near housing for the sake of encouraging community and creating places of peace and beauty. In his introduction to the section on Lasting Commons he wrote: "A variety of government programs made derelict vacant lots available for the kinds of projects we envisioned." And in Washington, D.C., (1960s) while introducing the idea of neighborhood commons, he reported, "I initiated a land-bank inventory of potential neighborhood commons sites, selected sponsoring agencies and recommended

sites for development. I mobilized social scientists to document and evaluate the program and located volunteer labor, funding, and recycled or low-cost construction materials."

In designs for commons, he created options for flexibility of use and maximum participation of users. Designs had ecological features such as solar pumps, cob structures, Flowform fountains, and recycled materials. He encouraged artists and craftspeople and often made connections for them in the community that led to commissions.

Another important aspect of Karl's work was the creation of events and celebrations, which he often documented through photography and film. Karl paid a great deal of attention to aesthetics, including music, candles, flowers, food, testimonial boards, and displays.

As in everything, he made decisions collaboratively and in a nonhierarchical manner. Nevertheless, conflicts sometimes arose, and when they did, Karl took on the role of peacemaker, mediating and helping to resolve troubling issues.

Also important to Karl's philosophy is that one person or a small team should take responsibility for making all the contacts, educating, and following through. As Karl grew older and especially before his death, he made contact lists and created processes for others to continue his work. To this day, many projects flower and flourish without him.

May all those who love community and life-sustaining creations have huge joy and success!

—Nicole Milner