



Squash, kale, and potatoes thrive where cars once parked—in Jan Lundberg's former driveway.

# Depaving Paradise

Jan Lundberg tore up his driveway to make way for a garden. Is California's Highway 101 next?

BY LAIRD HARRISON

**Y**OU'D PROBABLY AVOID JAN LUNDBERG ON THE STREET. With a pant leg stuffed in his sock and a black bowler hat perched over his ponytail, he looks like the sort of person who might grab your lapel and warn you of the Second Coming. In fact, his goal—an end to all new roads and parking lots—sounds just about as imminent. But when you sit down in his

cramped storefront office and listen to him talk, it's the SUV-driving, forest-chopping, mall-building mainstream that looks nutty.

Bit by bit, human beings are covering the globe with concrete. "We think if new roads are stopped, a lot of good things will follow from that," Lundberg says. Suburbs would stop spreading into farmland, and farms would stop spreading into forestland. Wildlife could roam more freely, without being cut off from food sources and breeding grounds. There would be fewer cars, less water pollution, less global warming, less oil drilling. "If we had a paving moratorium, people would say, 'Okay, we can't build out, let's build in.'" Toward that end, Lundberg started the Alliance for a Paving Moratorium, setting up headquarters in the college town of Arcata, among the California redwoods.

There, his anti-road campaign is achieving some results. At his suggestion, Arcata tore up half a parking lot at its waste-treatment marsh, which doubles as a bird sanctuary, and allowed wild vegetation to reclaim the land. Then the town depaved part of a city street and closed another to cars. Lundberg's group and others lobbied successfully against a planned road through the Mendocino National Forest. Allies in other cities have followed suit, blocking roads and turning driveways into gardens. Admittedly, these are small strides, but Lundberg sees them as the beginning of a mass movement: "We think that ultimately everyone will jump on this concept. We're going to pull the rug out from under the car."

It's a 180-degree turn for a man who started out about as far inside the auto-industrial complex as you can get: in a Mercedes, wearing suits and ties, reporting gas prices for his family's petroleum trade magazine, the *Lundberg Letter*. He had servants and a yacht. His father died in 1986, and Lundberg left the family business

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## [ PROFILE ]

after a disagreement. (His sister, Trilby Lundberg, who runs the company now, declines to comment.) Casting about, Lundberg finally turned against the entire industry of which his family is a part, setting up an energy-conservation institute near Washington, D.C. "It certainly was a dramatic departure," says George Baker, a former Lundberg employee.

But Lundberg saw the move as less a departure than a return to his original path: As a student at the University of California, Los Angeles, he had campaigned for environmental causes. "I joined the family business at a time when things were very, very difficult for my father," he explains. "But I didn't want to be part of the problem anymore. So I decided to put what I'd learned to use for the environment."

Lundberg quickly tired of the logrolling and backroom deals in Washington. "Lobbying is practically a waste of time," he says. Environmentalists who expend their energy saving a grove of redwoods here, a puddle of wetlands there, are missing the big picture, he decided, because "it's industrial growth itself that's undermining our survival."

**I**N 1991 LUNDBERG MOVED TO Arcata, a Green Party and vegetarian stronghold that celebrates All Species Day, and started the Alliance for a Paving Moratorium. Here the group—which has three paid staff members—has set about putting its beliefs into action. The alliance plants organic vegetables along the Mad River and brings them into town in pedal-powered carts. Lundberg has spent time in jail for organizing bicycle rallies that blocked highways.

The alliance now claims 160 institutional members, including the Rainforest Action Network and the Earth Island Institute. Its newsletter, *Auto-Free Times*, circulates to 15,000 readers. "They're part of the anti-sprawl folklore," says subscriber Larry Bohlen, co-chair of the Sierra Club Challenge to Sprawl Campaign in Washington, D.C. "I hope they'll grow in exposure."

Not everyone shares that view, of course. "Asphalt has its uses," says Brian Sobel, a former member of the city council in Petaluma, south of Arcata. Sobel would like to improve the area's traffic situation by widening Highway 101, the artery connecting the two towns to each other and to the state's big cities. Land-use laws are the way to control sprawl, he argues. "It hasn't worked to make people's commutes so horrible they stop driving."

In response to such thinking, Lundberg has tried to make his own life an example of just how feasible life without cars—and other energy-grubbing machinery—can be. He parted company with his last automobile in 1989, turning to a bicycle for most of his transportation needs.

**Get to the End of the Road:** Contact the Alliance for a Paving Moratorium, P.O. Box 4347, Arcata, CA 95518; 707-826-7775; [www.tidepool.com/alliance](http://www.tidepool.com/alliance).

Shortly afterward, he did away with his television and refrigerator. Then he tore up the driveway of his house to plant squash, kale, and potatoes. And last year, for good measure, he sold the house as well, planning an itinerant lifestyle.

The changes haven't come without cost; two marriages have gone the way of the appliances. On the other hand, among Lundberg's most devoted followers is the eldest of his two daughters, 19-year-old Spring Lundberg, who came to live with him when she was 8. She can remember craving a car in her preteen years, but gradually her father—who called her a conformist for getting A's in school—won her to his alternative outlook. She never did learn to drive. In the fall of 1997 she was pepper-sprayed during an Earth First! sit-in at the offices of the Pacific Lumber Company. She now spends her time working odd jobs and wandering from one demonstra-

tion to the next. "I've gotten arrested more than he has," she says.

More and more, Lundberg's life is beginning to resemble his daughter's. Dedicated to the purity of his vision, he has refused money from the natural-gas and electric-car lobbies. Sometimes that means he has to scrounge meals from Food Not Bombs, a left-wing charity that dishes out soup in Arcata's public square. Soon he plans to leave his organization in the hands of his lieutenants and hit the road, singing with his band, the Depavers, and lecturing about the evils of autos. The farther he gets from his former high-stress, high-powered life, the happier he seems to be. As he prepares to pedal off down Highway 101, he believes he's on the road to the future. ▶

*Laird Harrison is a freelance writer based in Oakland, California. He writes for Time, People, and other publications.*

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