

Life on the road

Brattleboro author self-publishes memoir of 35 years of hitchhiking

By Caitlin Baucom
The Commons

BRATTLEBORO—Doug "Ten" Rose has made writing his memoirs a three-dimensional project.

His new book, *Fearless Puppy on American Road*, chronicles 35 years of hitchhiking beginning when he left Coney Island at age 15. Rose, now living in Brattleboro, intertwines accounts of his experiences with the extraordinary people he met on the road with his personal philosophies and adaptations of Eastern spiritual ideas into his own life and language.

"I have attended eight different colleges and universities," Rose writes in his foreword. "I've learned more in other people's cars."

"If you put the writings of Kerouac, Chopra, Hunter S. Thompson, Castaneda, Black Elk, Will Rogers, Gandhi, and a clown, in a blender with 500 lbs. of additional hallucinogens and a time machine, you would have the writings of Doug Rose," his Web site, www.fearlesspuppy.org, claims.

"This is not your typical book. 'I'm not a writer,' the easy and pleasant Rose says, laughing. 'I'm still surprised that people are responding to the work as a book.... I thought they'd be excited about the project, but I didn't know they'd like reading it so much.'"

Besides being an entertaining and exciting read, *Fearless Puppy on American Road* is intended to raise money for those who have helped him the most: "wisdom teachers of any kind, but especially the monks and nuns who really saved me," Rose says. "If it weren't for them, I'd have been in a really bad way."

Choosing a grassroots approach to publishing, Rose supplies buyers directly with his book, be they retailers or the general public. The middleman thus eliminated, he is free to donate more of his proceeds toward building Western-style accommodations near Asian temples, enticing a Western population of travelers year-round to visit these teachers.

The money raised from short-term travelers will in turn be used to support those studying to be monks and nuns. The guesthouses will also boost the local economy and retain local employees.

"I really hope it takes off," Rose says. "To try to set up a program like this here in America would cost so much... but over there you can build a couple of guesthouses for not a lot and get people over there."

To this end, Rose is interested in creative, social means of marketing and distribution.

Staging a number of readings and small benefits to sell books and raise additional money, Rose is hooking directly into the community and raising potential investors' interest in himself, his book, and his cause all at once. Rose has lined up not only bookstores, but other, less traditional retail settings like groceries and bagel shops to sell the book, illustrating his desire to engage readers on a level that moves beyond reading into the rest of their lives.

At a recent reading and signing at the Book Cellar on Main Street, the handsome Rose reads easily to a group of three women and a child.

"I'm trying hard to find G-rated chapters here for the kid," he says with a smile, leafing through the 444-page book.

He manages to find three appropriate chapters, with only a word substitution here and there. The girl listens, eating Oreos and staring at the author. She eventually leaves with her mother, so Ten moves on to more R-rated chapters.

Rose says people ask him why he doesn't just become a monk.

"Really, if I was a monk I could help some people... but if I do this, I can help a whole lot of people who will end up helping a whole lot of other people."

Rose leaves the reading to go to a benefit at the Mole's Eye for the Citizens Awareness Network, a regional anti-nuclear-power advocacy group, where he's worked as a fundraiser for several years. There, he read and sold his book amid live music and speeches (and beer), donating \$5 dollars from each copy sold to the Network.

In April, Rose will host similar readings at Village Square Booksellers in Bellows Falls, in Morrisville, in Hanover, N.H., and at the Tibet House in Manhattan.

"I am so grateful to everyone in Brattleboro for being so wonderful to me... for putting up with my inexperience," Rose says. "I've organized projects before, but I don't know anything about book publishing."

Rose certainly does have experience organizing projects: in the back of the book, published unashamedly from original news clippings and documents, he reproduces news stories about him from over the years when he was homeless, yet managed to help others while having little himself.

A young Rose smiles out from articles about Massachusetts for



DAVID SHAW/THE COMMONS

Brattleboro author and publisher Doug "Ten" Rose and companion.

Africa Month, which he organized for famine relief in Africa, and from an orphanage in Mexico he helped rebuild.

Rose wore a cardboard box for two years, to raise awareness and money for the homeless. A clipping from the *Congressional Record* documents Senator John Kerry presenting Ten's Africa Month to the President.

The appendix also includes commendations from the Gratia Society, Save the Children, and Greenpeace.

"Well, I think I hear the bartender calling me," Rose says with a grin, and the tall, "luckiest homeless man in the world," moves off to sell his book, network, make money for the causes he loves, and have a beer.

Doug "Ten" Rose will read at Borders in Keene on Saturday, April 12; Village Square Booksellers in Bellows Falls on Sunday, April 13; and at Apple Tree Natural Foods in Morrisville on Saturday, April 19. For more information and other readings, visit www.fearlesspuppy.org.

Local author creates index of children's books set in Vt.

By Caitlin Baucom
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NEW FANE—When Ann McKinstry Micou retired with her husband to a small cottage in Vermont, she realized that she knew nothing about the history, land, or people of her new home.

"I thought, *It's going to be such an adventure, a whole new culture to crack*," she says. "The natural way for me to learn about a state is through its fiction.... I found clues in the books and, having a rather passionate nature... I had to follow them up."

She took notes, as she always did, categorizing and processing by theme what she read.

"After it was entered into the computer, I realized I had a manuscript," she said with a laugh.

The result was *A Guide to Fiction Set in Vermont*, Micou's first such book, published in 2005 by the Vermont Humanities Council. The guide is a compendium of fiction set in Vermont from 1835 to 2005, with more than half of its authors having lived in Vermont full- or part-time. Each book is listed alphabetically by author and indexed in a variety of ways, such as by genre and town. With the descriptions she includes, Micou tries "to evoke both character and setting in a short piece... if there's one quote which evokes the work, I'll use it."

Three years later, Micou's new book, *A Guide to Fiction Set in Vermont for Children and Young Adults*, a natural companion for the first volume, is days away from release.

Micou has now read 925 books set in Vermont, of which 441

were written for the young. "I can't tell you," she says. "it was just like being back at 13, 14... the critical moment."

The idea for this volume had already occurred to Micou, so when she was approached by Grace Worcester Greene, the children's literature specialist for the Vermont Department of Libraries, it wasn't long before the book was in the works. Greene has written a foreword to the new Guide.

Micou says that she has been asked what surprised her the most about this new work.

"What surprised me the most in comparing my two books," she says, "was that a portion of the adult fiction was so much darker... while some of the children's stories deal with tragedy

— death, fire, flood — they are ultimately hopeful."

"A number of adult characters come to Vermont with a [...] myth about the land and are disappointed [...] while some of the children's characters come reluctantly and find the beauty," Micou says.

A Guide to Fiction Set in Vermont for Children and Young Adults will be available at bookstores and from the Vermont Humanities Council (www.vermonthumanities.org/index_files/Pages81.htm) for \$24. Individuals who purchase Micou's new book directly from the Humanities Council can purchase A Guide to Fiction Set in Vermont at half price.

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