what the villa people do with their citizenship once it has been activated. Do they use it to protect their own resources and privileges or to help remedy the neglect of the city block dwellers? Celebration is the kind of place where active citizens were already well represented in the population. Their zeal was further energized by perceived threats to their property value and their children's education. But would this citizenly vigor ever extend beyond the town limits, and if so, how far? At this point in time, the center city was barely on their map, least of all on their minds.

Earlier suburban newcomers like the Levittowners had moved from urban neighborhoods, and were more likely to empathize with those left in the inner-city neighborhoods. By the 1990s, this would no longer be the case. The majority of Celebration residents had lived before in suburban places and few had any extensive familiarity with center-city life to draw on, outside of jaunts to enjoy the museums, restaurants, and nightlife. In addition, the widespread perception of Celebrationites that they had sacrificed greatly to come to town did not help arouse their will to sacrifice for others. Celebration was the last place that Osceola County folks would associate with sacrifice, let alone trials and tribulations, and yet I would discover this was the self-image of many of their new neighbors in ZIP code 34747.

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KINDER, GENTLER GOVERNMENT?

"Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence."
—Thomas Paine

"Walt wasn't against people voting; he just didn't want them hanging their dirty laundry out. . . . I don't agree. I don't disagree." —Michael Eisner

Everyone has made a sacrifice to be here." This belief was an article of faith among Celebrationites, and everyone paid lip service to it. Sacrifice was seen as a built-in condition of pioneerism, stressed routinely in Town Hall newsletters and drummed home in the annual speeches by clergy and managers on Founder's Day.

This perception of selflessness had even helped persuade some retirees to come to Celebration rather than to one of Florida's adult communities. In this category were Jim and Jane Clayman, whose home on the pioneer row of Teal Avenue was crammed with art and artifacts from their working lives in Peru and Brazil and whose porch rockers had once stood on Jane's mother's porch in Kentucky. The Claymans had been attracted by the many young parents they saw at the lottery who seemed willing to forgo creature comforts for a worthier cause.

"We'll be eating peanut butter and jelly," one of them had said to the couple, "but this is what we want for our children."

Conveniently, perhaps, from both the residents' and the developer's point of view, the pioneer spirit could be invoked to explain away encounters with adversity: the hardships endured by residents while waiting, as long as two years, to move into a finished home; the Pyrrhic victory over the builders; separation from kith and kin in other parts of the country; the financial burden of stretching for a mortgage and meeting all the bills; the frustration of living through the growing pains of the school; denigration from the press; and resentment from locals prejudiced against Disney. Witnessing at public meetings, especially school related, often began with a proviso like: "After all we have been through . . ." In this town, everyone was expected to show some evidence of personal sacrifice, and not just as a gesture toward community spirit. One refugee from an upscale condo canyon north of Miami explained to me that she "had learned to live without Neiman Marcus" (though she was still within shooting distance of Saks, at the Florida Mall). The upside was that she had found that the "civil servants are more civil here than in South Florida." One parent, especially active in the PTSA, told me she believed the school "should recruit teachers who had the kind of value system that could embrace the personal sacrifice" that came with their low salaries. In response, I found the schoolteachers often wore their taxing workload like a badge of honor, while at other times they used it as a shield to deflect the reproaches hurled by parents. Especially deep sacrifices were professed by single parents who had given up the kernel and pith of their personal lives for the sake of their children's education and betterment.

With all of this talk about sacrifice, I might have been excused for inferring that I was living in a training camp for humanitarian workers rather than one of the wealthiest towns in Central Florida. I thought I had surrendered a fair chunk of my own life to go and live in Celebration (among other things, my year out took a fatal toll on the relationship with my girlfriend), but this noble impression would have to be downgraded. Compared to the ordeals of my fellow citizens, my own burdens were a trifle. Living amid so many accounts of great hardship, I needed a regular reality check. Every so often, I would motor out of

town in pursuit of places where poverty and hardship were as conspicuous on the ground as Spanish moss was on the trees. In Osceola's trailer parks, Orlando's ghettoes, and all the twilight districts in between, people might have thought they had gotten a raw deal, for which they might have paid dearly. Yet they would probably not have chosen to describe their lives as a condition of self-sacrifice. Sacrifice goes by other names when it is not buttressed by the sense of entitlement that often percolated through Celebration.

But Central Florida's less privileged had one dubious advantage over the Celebrationites. If you do not have the option of living in a pricey, planned community you do not have to agonize over whether to restrict your freedoms in order to abide by the rules. Of all the sacrifices faced by Celebrationites, this was the one that generated the most commentary from outsiders, and the least reflection from residents themselves.

The hundred-page "Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions" signed by all homeowners, and the less weighty, but substantial, document signed by tenants like myself, were generally referred to as "standards" implemented to guarantee the physical upkeep of the houses and streets of Celebration. If these restrictions were of negligible concern to residents, they loomed larger for folks who decided not to move to Celebration, including some who had placed highly on the original lottery draw, and many others who had investigated residency through Celebration Realty. In the course of the year, I ran into several who had decided that the rules and restrictions were too much of an imposition on their personal land use. (Small lot sizes, lack of privacy, and the jitteriness about the school figured among the other reasons.) The chance to build this community would effectively be limited to those willing to regulate their conduct, and perhaps curb their liberties, to safeguard their property values.

One resident, a middle-income manager from a working-class background, explained to me one day that working-class people "don't share the same civic culture as us" and "because they value their freedom of expression too highly, they would not tolerate the deed restrictions." He figured he must "sound like a jerk for saying so," but his comment was little different from the nightmare neighbor scenarios conjured up by-

many others of unruly, low-class folks with trucks, rundown '83 Buicks, and washing lines in the yard, not to mention garish colors on their window frames.

The "Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions" are common in planned communities (these days, many bankers will not issue loans without them), but, true to form, Celebration's rulebook got special attention in the media and was widely cited by outsiders as evidence of the company's totalitarian control over residents. One section, in particular, would become quite famous in its own right:

> 6a) Unless the Board of Directors otherwise agrees, the only acceptable coverings that may be affixed to the interior of any windows visible from any street, alley or other portion of the Properties are drapes, blinds, shades, shutters and curtains. The side of such window coverings that is visible from the exterior of any improvements must be white or off-white in color.

Town Hall clocked more phone calls about this one rule than all the others combined. Brent Herrington reminded townspeople, in a Town Hall newsletter in the fall of 1997, that he intended to implement the rule: "I have noticed a couple of residences where the owner has installed colored window coverings, and, unfortunately, these will need to be corrected." For once, at least, the derisory response around town partially echoed the mockery of the media, especially since the warning was accompanied by Herrington's opinion that the colored drapes in question were "icky." Most residents knew that one highly visible window, in a Longmeadow home, had been in violation of the rule for several weeks, and the owners' initial decision to hold out had become a cause célèbre. Since the rule was regarded as a little excessive, many townspeople saw this resident's red drapes as a flag of liberty. In general, however, Celebrationites were quick to fault Town Hall for not cracking down sooner on offending residents. In this town, the developer was perceived to have better taste than the residents, and so homeowners were not happy when management was lax about enforcement.

In response, Herrington encouraged residents to take pride in Town Hall's personal touch. In most planned communities with homeowners associations, negligent residents are sent a formal letter of warning. In

kinder, gentler Celebration, they receive an informal phone call. This technique belongs more to the code of friendly customer relations—Disney's field of expertise—than of an inflexible bureaucracy. As far as governance went, everyone understood that the basis for the town's restrictions, perhaps even its "sense of community," lay in the bedrock desire to maintain and promote the value of property investments. It was in bad taste, and antisocial, to remind anyone of this, and besides, it was unnecessary to do so since in Celebration this belief was as natural as breathing.

COMMON INTERESTS

Levittown, as Herbert Gans pointed out, was neither a town—which would offer employment—nor a community—which suggests a desire for sharing values. The Levittowners moved there to own a home, most of them for the first time in their lives. Celebration did not yet feel like a town, but it was conceived and populated with the aim of becoming a community as quickly as possible. Between the era of the Levittowns and this new place in Osceola County, the idea of building self-contained communities evolved into a staple of the housing industry in Sunbelt states like Florida. Today, most developers will say they are building communities, not subdivisions.

Historically, most communities were not designed by professionals at all, let alone planned in any systematic way. Community design was the outcome of piecemeal building by artisans, craftsmen, townsfolk, and peasants. Celebration's neighboring lakeside towns of Kissimmee and St. Cloud are typical, modern examples. Most of the great European cities so admired for their urbanity are haphazard hybrids of aristocratic pleasure grounds, sober bourgeois quarters, merchants' commercial enclaves, and proletarian holding tanks. It was not until the onset of rational urban planning at the turn of the century that professionally designed communities would see the light of day as an industrial enterprise.

Originating in Britain, in Ebenezer Howard's blueprint for the Garden City (which rested on cooperative ownership of the land), this planning concept was translated into the American private housing landscape in the form of common-interest developments.[1] Today, we know these as planned unit developments, condominiums, or co-ops,

where private developers offer buyers commonly shared land. Oftentimes, they are governed by covenants and deed restrictions that "run with the land" and forbid alternative uses of the land in the future. These covenants, which date back to twelfth-century England, protect property value, and, to ensure further protection, homeowners associations offer a form of community governance, at the behest of fellow residents' votes and assessments, which assumes many of the public responsibilities of local government. In the United States, the evolution of these interlocking institutions has given rise to what Roderick McKenzie calls "privatopia," which he describes as a condition of private government currently enjoyed by over 40 million Americans, or about 17 percent of the population.[2] By the year 2000, it is estimated that a quarter of a million homeowner associations will exist, exacting restrictions to guarantee members' property value, and where the only form of participation for homeowning shareholders is to satisfy their contractual obligations by maintaining their mortgage payments.

The privatopian community has become the preferred development for builders of nonurban housing in the last two decades. Lenders are increasingly unlikely to issue mortgages for planned developments unless they have a homeowner association.[3] The flourishing of walled and gated communities—a natural extension of privatopia—arouses widespread concern about a rampant "fortress mentality" in late suburban America, signifying what Robert Reich termed the "secession of the successful" from all public contact with, let alone obligation toward, their less fortunate fellow citizens.[4] One of the most common outsider misperceptions of Celebration is that it is gated, or that its managed ambience is "gated" even in the absence of a physical gatehouse and uniformed guards. On the contrary, the creation of this town is a highly visible counterpunch to the prestige ethos of the gated community. Virtually every resident I met, including many who had lived behind electronic gates before, took pride in the town's open public access and resented the mischaracterization. Should some calamity occur as a result of this openness, the decision about whether to keep the town open will be a real test of residents' commitment to retaining its cherished public character.

In principle, the concept of the homeowner association promises self-government to residents, and in its most shrewdly promoted ver-

Celebration's first polling day, September 1998. Precinct #73, Town Hall. (Photo: the author)

sions, conjures up the sanctity of ultra-democratic Town Hall meetings, New England–style. In Celebration, Town Hall's information sheets about governance describe membership in the association as "a representative form of government similar to our federal system." Yet voting in the association, unlike in the federal system, is restricted to homeowners (not renters), and to one vote per property unit. (In addition, a supermajority of 75 percent is needed to carry any motion.) In most developments like this, the developer will retain control of governance until two-thirds of the lots are sold, and often exercises voting rights thereafter based on continued ownership of parcels of land or other residual rights. When homeowners eventually do take on elected positions, regulating in accordance with the developer's original rules, their zeal often marks them out as "condo nazis," and residents pine for the professional management of the fledgling years.

The governance of Celebration is not exceptional in this regard. The company controls the homeowners association until 25 percent of the units are sold, at which point one out of three board directors are elected by the residents of the town's several villages. After 50 percent, the residents elect two of five directors, and after 75 percent, three of five. One year after this initial "control period" lapses, six of seven directors are elected, and a year later, the developer withdraws all official representation on the board. The 75 percent deadline is nullified if the buildout has not reached this level after forty years. The developer can also withdraw before the deadline at its own discretion. But the "Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions" also record that nothing can be changed without the decree of the "owners of at least 75% of the total number of Units within the Properties and by the Celebration Company." The latter clause is particularly notable. So long as TCC owns any property or developable land in Celebration, it has veto power over all changes in governance. While they had all read and signed the covenants, the vast majority of residents were unaware of this veto power until an article in the *New York Times* magazine pointed it out. When I asked Herrington to clarify the matter, he professed that although he thought he knew the document very well, he too had not been fully cognizant of this veto power. "In practice," he ventured, "using those kinds of residual powers is a little bit like setting off an atomic bomb in your own underwear," especially for a developer who, at that point, would be "contributing zero to the budget, and has nothing at risk."

For the most part, Celebrationites were content with what they often called their "benevolent dictator" (a phrase that originates in Walt's comment that he wouldn't want to be U.S. president but would "rather be the benevolent dictator of Disney enterprises"[5]). Though if things got too "Orwellian," as one of my tennis partners observed, that would be another matter. It was expected that the company would maintain good order, and so long as the decision making remained benign, TCC would serve residents' private interests better than would any office-bearers elected from their own ranks. Among the townsfolk, I ran into several former presidents of homeowner associations who swore that Town Hall's administering of the rules was much kinder and gentler than in the associations of housing developments they had known, some of which had the power to enter private homes and to restrict the stay of guests. The deed restrictions were no more, and in some cases less, severe than those they had helped to administer elsewhere. Terry Neff, who had served as an association president in nearby Hunter's Creek, even alleged that helicopters had been used there to survey residents' backyards for infractions of the rules, though no one I questioned at Hunter's Creek could confirm this.

If anything, Herrington's light enforcement of the rules drew complaints about the laxity of regulation—"things are not being kept up." Aware of media scrutiny, it's likely that Town Hall sometimes chose to waive some of the micro-rules rather than risk public ridicule in yet another boilerplate press report about the company's suppression of civic liberties. To compensate, residents exercised their own scrutiny, building a groundswell of hearsay that Town Hall could not easily ignore. Many townsfolk were vexed, for example, when homes were not lived in. An ornate, ochre Mediterranean estate home had been lying vacant on Golfpark Drive for as long as I could remember. This violated the residency rule (a home should be occupied for at least nine months of the year), and reinforced conjecture that there was one rule for the wealthy and one for the others. The rumor around town (other than that it belonged to Julia Roberts) was that a rich businessman had bought the home for his wayward son, who decided never to occupy it. On the other hand, there were some decrees that disgruntled residents were happy to see annulled. The rule, established as an antispeculation deterrent, that no one could profit from sale of a home within one year of closing, was routinely waived if the seller could prove "hardship."

For myself, I was guilty on two counts. I decided that Hamish and Molly, my capricious cats, would live illegally in Celebration rather than observe the renters' rule requiring them to be declawed. As a result, I lived in abject fear that my furry charges would be found out, especially when they made a periodic run for freedom, padding and loping along the Market Street balconies in full view of passersby below. Aware of their clandestine existence, my neighbors never turned them in. In addition, I had reluctantly invested in an array of large potted plants for my balcony. On Market Street, balconies festooned with plants were a prime element of the downtown decor, and I did not want to be the odd one out. Never having had any luck in keeping flora alive, sadly my efforts fell short again. A notice distributed to apartment residents drew

attention to "unsightly plants on balconies," and I assumed, as the guilty do, that it was for my eyes. In a slender act of rebellion, I allowed mine to decay visibly for the next four months before I bid them farewell.

One evening in April, the Osceola County Planning Department called a meeting in Town Hall to solicit residents' feedback for its reappraisal of a comprehensive plan adopted in 1990. Poorly advertised and ill-timed at the dinner hour, the meeting attracted only three residents (it would take a while for residents to feel that their input in county affairs might be a priority). In attendance were myself, Jim Bayley, president of the Celebrators and an inveterate presence at all community events, and Ray Chiaramonte, the Tampa urban planner. It was mostly a red-tape affair for county bureaucrats, but at a late hour, we were asked whether we thought residents would eventually vote to incorporate the town. From the outset, this prospect had been widely discussed among residents, although very few seemed to be aware that the state requires all Community Development Districts to hold a referendum on incorporation when they reach a population threshold—about 9,800, in the case of Celebration.

In response to the question, Bayley summarized the majority view of the "benevolent dictator." If nothing goes too badly amiss, Celebrationites would probably be happier living with the rules laid down by Disney, as interpreted by residents on the board. I summarized another view I had found on residents' lips. Since it had attracted more than its share of independently minded citizens, hungry for true self-government, Celebrationites, I predicted, would incorporate sooner or later. For his part, Ray declared that residents were "more interested in pragmatism than politics," and suggested they would actively resist incorporation for that reason. Of course, there was much more to be said on this topic, and we had not begun to cover the views of all the townsfolk. But these three positions were fairly representative. Jim's opinion displayed a concerned tolerance of the status quo and a general desire to hold the developer to its obligations. Mine was based on evidence of residents' pushing already for more input in decision making, and on their general frustration with outsiders' perception of the community as a Disney-controlled "puppet state." Ray's comment reflected the conviction of many residents who had moved here, in part, to escape from local government politics. It may have also reflected his own professional

relish for utilitarian order. Civic politics have a tendency to get in the way of planners' designs.

In truth, none of us had hit on the most likely factor to influence votes on incorporation—the cost of government. Most planned communities figure out whether they will have to pay more or less to assume control over their own destinies. Gary Moyer, the manager of the Celebration Community District, was not able to estimate the financial feasibility for Celebration, but he cited the example of Weston, an Arvida development to the south, where his company is also contracted. Residents there had recently incorporated, and had established what Moyer called "an almost 100 percent contract city," with only three full-time employees. The services of everyone else were contracted. Weston had no mayoral governance structure; it was pure management all the way down.

Many Celebration residents felt they had been promised a "town," with all the municipal trappings that term evoked, but, when the time came, the Weston model might just offer the preferred privatopian alternative—a township with no real public representatives. In the meantime, one sure thing I had learned is that Celebrationites were very defensive about any suggestion—a favorite in the media—that they lived in a less than democratic environment. They knew that they enjoyed the same rights as any other citizen of the republic, and, far from considering the deed restrictions to be an erosion of these rights, they saw the maintenance of community standards as an extra layer of privileges that local government could not otherwise afford. On the other hand, I interviewed several who made a point of speaking passionately about their dislike for "democracy." What could this possibly mean?

John Pfeiffer, the doctor who had moved from Ohio to fulfill a childhood dream of driving a Disney monorail, offered an explanation:

> I'd rather live in a civil than a political society. Here we have a contract with TCC that defines our property rights, and we are not frustrated by bureaucrats with their own agenda. I don't have a contract with politicians. . . . What we have here is a deconstructing of government, a rollback of politicization. In a civil society you feel a desire to fit into a community and satisfy your neighbors. In a political society, under the heavy hand of government, you expect your neighbors to satisfy you.

Pfeiffer, who looked preternaturally young for his age (he and his wife had fully adult offspring), and who wore a baseball cap backwards to Town Hall meetings, was satisfied that his "contract" gave him more rights than one that was not based on property rights: "We have more self-determination here under a nonpolitical regime than in a political society." His views offered the purest statement of a vision of governance entirely based on property rights. Nor did everyone's property rights appear to be equal. For Pfeiffer, who owned an estate home, there seemed to be a sliding scale, on which owners of smaller lots might have a lesser contract. "If you have less expensive houses, you lose the sense of sacrifice," he explained, adding a new spin to the Celebration ethos of self-sacrifice.

However chilling to behold, these were hardly crankish views in the world of Florida's planned communities. Yet for all the security represented by Pfeiffer's "contract" with the developer, there was little residents could do to stop the company from obtaining a zoning variance to alter its plans for the site, or from blocking a majority resident initiative. As Ray Chiaramonte pointed out, "the developer could decide to put in a Saturn manufacturing plant." At a meeting in June, when TCC unveiled plans for the commercial corridor, several residents loudly expressed dismay at the prospect of twelve-story hotels rising up to obscure their westward views: "We feel it's no longer a small town," one grieved, "it looks like a city, with big buildings." They must have forgotten that they had signed a raft of disclaimers at closing, among which was a waiver of their rights to a view. Pfeiffer's contract could easily turn into a raw deal, and homeowners' rights could often seem like thin, self-addressed envelopes.

Given the legal maze of the "Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions," it's small wonder there was a general fuzziness in residents' understanding of their internal rights. Most Celebrationites confessed they did not really understand the town's system of governance, and habitually flunked when examined on details regarding the fiduciary responsibilities of entities like the Community Development District. Unlike most master-planned communities, Celebration had as many as four entities of governance: the Residential Owner's Association; a Non-Residential Owner's Association, which represented retailers and owners of apartment parcels; the Community Development District, a quasi-government entity which provided services and was responsible for maintenance of infrastructure (water, sewage, roads, drainage, landscaping) and utilities; and an Enterprise Community Development District, responsible for services to the commercial campus. An overarching Joint Committee governed all four, and Town Hall functioned as a one-stop home for the whole kit and caboodle. Celebration actually enjoys more of a working distinction between public and private sectors of governance than in most communities with homeowner associations. Here, the municipal functions of government relating to infrastructure are handled by the Community Development District, a unit of special-purpose government created by the Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commission, and whose board of supervisors, currently all Disney executives, will eventually be elected by landowners in the district. By contrast, the homeowner association's realm is limited to more private matters such as those relating to architectural review and community standards and restrictions.

Naturally, residents tend to take more of an interest in matters of governance when their property values are on the line. Jim Whelan, the canny psychologist and dedicated cyclist, confessed to me one day: "I didn't think for one minute about the governance structure of the town until I decided to sell the house." After less than a year in town, he and his family had decided to move back to Mahwah, New Jersey. He had only recently discovered that homeowners are not permitted to erect a "For Sale" notice in their yards. In Whelan's view, this helped give the developer a virtual monopoly over the housing market in town. He had begun to suspect that the residency rules helped reinforce the monopoly while masquerading as a deterrent against speculators. Whelan's suspicions in this matter were unconfirmed, but it was significant that his property interest was the factor that galvanized his concern about governance.

In the course of my year in Celebration, at least one hiccup in governmental process did occur, and went entirely unnoticed by residents. The chronic problems caused by the narrowness of the back alleyway increasingly demanded a resolution. At a Community Development District meeting in December, the board members decided they would consider a "one-way" designation for alleys if a majority of the residents on the block petitioned and voted for the measure. There was some

discussion about the percentage of votes required: would it be 51 percent, 65 percent, or 75 percent? At several such meetings I attended, no residents were present, and this one was no exception. The meetings were tedious and mostly technical in content, although a period was always set aside on the agenda for public comment. The board decided to implement a 65 percent rule. Several weeks later, residents on Campus Street and Greenbriar were informed in a letter from Town Hall that their alleyways were now one-way streets. No formal votes had been taken, and no one I talked to on those streets had noticed the oversight. It was a small measure, and by all accounts a popular one. Nor was it likely to affect the value of anyone's property. But this had been the first time in Celebration when a residential vote was endorsed, in principle, and yet it had not been solicited.

UTOPIA ACHIEVED

Advocates of homeowner associations often argue that their method of community rule keeps at bay the messy intrusion of "politics." Yet there were some Celebrationites, like Larry Haber, a founder of the town's Jewish Council and the Jewish Congregation and whose family had been the town's first official residents, who saw the management structure as a perfect embodiment of their own partisan politics. A busy pioneer, Haber was active in United Way and saw himself as a George Will kind of Republican—social libertarian, fiscal conservative, religious liberal, and fierce opponent of big government. In addition, he was a Disney employee who had no great affection for "big corporate paternalism," a trait shared by many Celebrationites I knew who were also company employees. Haber believed Celebration to be the ideal Republican state in miniature, without government's layers of elected officials to stifle the process of self-determination. In fact, Celebration was pretty close to what Haber saw as a "condition of direct democracy." He said he had liberal friends in town who saw their own politics reflected in Celebration's community values, and he liked to tease them by declaring they were simply "closet Republicans." I never met any liberals who could match Haber's view with a counterclaim, based on their own principles, but it was not inconceivable that they existed in Celebration. In addition, there were residents like Pat Breck, a pro-choice Catholic

who attended Presbyterian services, who believed that Celebration was a conservative community in a cultural sense. Conservatives, in her view, are "people people," a "tribe that looks out for another," and she associated liberals with "working mothers and latchkey children."

Haber's view of the town as personifying his own ideal of a pure political utopia was probably exceptional. When people loosely referred to Celebration as a "utopia," they generally meant that it was a good place to start over again, where other places had failed, or that it was a place of general happiness where no one had reason, other than his or her own personal misfortune, to be disenchanted. The use of the phrase had little connection to the venerable American tradition of utopian communities.

In the fanciful European mind, the New World had always been imagined as a utopian place, with apocalyptic dimensions—the end of the world as we know it and the beginning of a new order. The early Puritan settlements, with their own form of community *covenant*, including a New Urbanist–type rule that required residents to live within a mile and half of the meetinghouse, established a model for hundreds of utopian religious communities to follow. These were founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the principle of the communal ownership of property by sects like the Shakers, the Rappites, the Moravian Brethren, the Zoar Separatists, and the True Inspirationists of Amana. Some survived for hundreds of years, and a few are still extant. The nineteenth-century versions were mostly secular, like Brook Farm, New Harmony, Fruitlands, Skanateales, Nashoba, Oneida, and the Phalanxes, and were heavily influenced by the anarchist and socialist ideas of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier. More than a hundred sprang up before the Civil War, each with its own polished vision of a new age to come where inhabitants would be truly free to pursue a rational form of the good life.[6] The equivalent in this century were the thousands of hippie communes founded in the late 1960s and early 1970s as living laboratories of a communal freedom that the materialism of consumer society promised but could never deliver. However short-lived, these were all intentional communities, planned as pocket-size correctives to the corruption and inequalities of dominant society. All of them, from the religious to the countercultural versions, experienced the tension between freedom and order that is intrinsic to the planned utopia.

While Celebration was living through the same tensions, none of its creators or residents saw the town as a descendant of these earlier utopias. More important were the utopian ideals of the Dream Home and the Main Street town. Also relevant, perhaps, was Florida's own utopian backdrop, having built long and hard on its early reputation as the site of the Fountain of Youth. Under Spanish rule, it had offered religious sanctuary to runaway slaves from the southern states. In its self-promotion as a frontier haven for settlers, it lured Civil War veterans, black and white, to a "soldier's paradise" by offering free land.[7] More recently, Florida had flourished as a resort and vacation utopia, and, thanks to Social Security, a retirement utopia where 25 percent of each generation of Americans now come to live out the rest of their lives, free from northern taxes and chills.

In the historical utopias, community was an intentional goal shared by individuals with allegiances to commonly held beliefs. In today's planned development, community is mostly a marketing term, aimed at a consumer niche to be attracted and recruited through effective advertising. True to the gospel of the "clustering of America," TCC had done its share of niche-market research. But the company had also staked its brand name on the premise that residents would forge common bonds that exceeded the mere "sense of community" featured in advertising for the town. This was something of a gamble, since the outcome of overly zealous community building can easily threaten the property interests of residents and the developer. But the genius of the marketing concept would override any potential conflict. In Celebration, residents would be protecting their private interests precisely by building strong community bonds. The more community-minded the town became, the more its property values would improve, since its homes were built to attract buyers who wanted to come and be community builders. Of course, since no one wanted any single group or initiative to overreach itself, Town Hall and the Celebration Foundation were there, in part, to manage and channel the zeal.

Between the two, community management had become a fine art. The Foundation, staffed entirely by women, kindled the flames of volunteerism. Herrington's checking role at Town Hall was decidedly more paternal, though he lamented to me on more than one occasion that his job was mostly restricted to "housekeeping duties." Professionally ambitious, Herrington was a leading light in the national association of community managers (the Community Association Institute), and while his Celebration job was highly prestigious, he was clearly hungry for responsibilities that would give him a more active role in designing communities.[8]

This personal drive was reflected in the Town Hall newsletter that always carried the stamp of his own opinion. While the force of this opinion was powerful, it did not always sway residents. One good example appeared in the January 1998 issue, where Brent implored residents to kick the habit of referring to different parts of town as West Village or North Village, and even worse, Phase I and Phase II. These, he argued, are developer's short-term labels, and

> tend to reinforce parochial thinking, stratification and division . . . words that do not currently come to mind when I think of Celebration. In adopting the "town" model, Celebration is committed to an entirely different ethos than is found in a typical residential subdivision. At Celebration, we are all stakeholders—whether apartment residents, estate home owners, cottage home owners, garage apartment residents, retail merchants or office building workers. We all have a stake in the future of the town. As fellow stakeholders, our shared goal should be to build a sense of community, shared responsibility and civic pride that runs through the width and breadth of our town. Somehow, dividing ourselves into "villages" seems to run counter to what Celebration stands for.[9]

The proper frame of reference, he observed, should be traditional towns like Savannah, or Cambridge, or Kissimmee, where residents say "I live on the north side just off of Exeter Drive," or "I live near Waterford Park." In his next newsletter, Brent recorded that a majority of the respondents to his cause expressed agreement, but this one really was a losing battle. Around town, I found that most folks had taken the advice with a grain of salt, and were lacing their conversation with heavily ironic phrases like "In what used to be called North Village . . ."

In September, Herrington abruptly announced his resignation. Those who knew him personally did not seem surprised, but the community as a whole was stunned. There was much speculation, though

no real evidence, that he had been fired by Disney. Some residents viewed his resignation as an act of disloyalty, as if his duties had been bound by an oath of public office. Others surmised that he had been in a tight political corner, both as a Town and Country homeowner facing possible litigation with the builder and as the father of the only two children in town who could never be pulled from the school. He left for a plum job at DC Ranch, in Scottsdale, Arizona, where the developer DMB was building a similar, but larger, master-planned community. Recruited to Celebration after the rules and governance structure were established, his job description had indeed been confining. With DMB he would have a more integral role in community planning, a business he considered more like a "cause." In the course of our last conversation, he acknowledged that Disney's connection to the town did not always help the advancement of this cause: "As wonderful and fun as it is to be a part of Celebration, it is a one-project deal, and, quite honestly, as powerful an asset as the Disney organization is in getting this project done, its sponsorship of the project to some extent colors the world's perception of whether any of this is replicable, or meaningful in real terms."

Herrington joined the steady exodus of planners, managers, and teachers from the Celebration project, reinforcing the impression that a job in this town or at the school was simply a career stepping-stone. The name was like gold leaf on a job résumé, and he acknowledged that there was a "constant drumbeat of opportunities for everyone" associated with it. Herrington had done more than anyone to build morale, yet his abrupt departure did little to diminish residents' perception of management as a corporate revolving door.

TWO FROM LEFT FIELD

Celebration had not witnessed anything on the scale of a community "barn raising," but there were myriad small, interpersonal efforts that marked it as a caring community where people pulled together. Word spread very quickly about illnesses and personal difficulties, and the casualties were often deluged with gifts in the form of food and goodwill packages. More than one Celebrationite observed that they initially thought they had moved to a community with a high proportion of

misfortunes, accustomed as they were to the anonymity of suburbia. It was clearly a place where residents could feel that they would be supported in the event of some personal mishap, and in ways that went far beyond neighborly expectations of mutual help.

Even so, several community initiatives had taken on an organized life of their own. There were two—quite different in nature—that I chose to follow closely in the course of my year. The first was a plan to start a Montessori school, undertaken by a small group of residents against all odds. The other evolved out of the time-honored institution of block parties.

The Montessori initiative grew out of residents' dissatisfaction with the day-care services provided by Children's World, a local company awarded an exclusive franchise by the developer. These services were widely perceived as overpriced and underattentive to young children's needs. So, too, there was the dissatisfaction with Celebration School, originally planned to include a preschooling component, until the funding ran into complications. Several parents met to discuss an alternative—"a much better school at a fraction of the cost"—with the potential, eventually, to provide K–5 education. This group included residents with a wide range of incomes and was spearheaded by the resilient Lance Boyer, the Domino's Pizza employee with a wry wit and a healthy instinct for independent equality of opinion. It began to meet regularly in the fall of 1997 to investigate all possibilities, and by the early summer had succeeded in launching plans for the school. It became the first truly successful independent initiative in Celebration.

As the group built confidence in its efforts, the reception of my own attendance at meetings shifted. I progressed from being ribbed as a "spy in our midst" to being listed in Lance's minutes as "scribe" and finally "historian." This wasn't simply a twist of Lance's mischievous spirit. The first several meetings were marked by a decidedly conspiratorial air, as if the attendees were contemplating a coup against Disney. In the course of one of them, a mother in the group thought out loud, "If we could only get our foot in the door," adding, on reflection, "Isn't that silly? We live here." Whenever someone made a disparaging comment about the company, my presence was acknowledged: "Did you get that down, Andrew?" No one was sure how the developer would react to an alternative educational initiative that intended to go all the way, and

group members assumed, from the outset, that TCC would not be terribly helpful at all. The group was already disheartened by a flat response to their initial overtures. At Town Hall, Lance had been told that "surveys show that everyone wants a Montessori school, but it usually doesn't work out. It's the same with a hardware store." The reference here was to the store that everyone in town wanted to see happen, but that the population was not large enough to support.

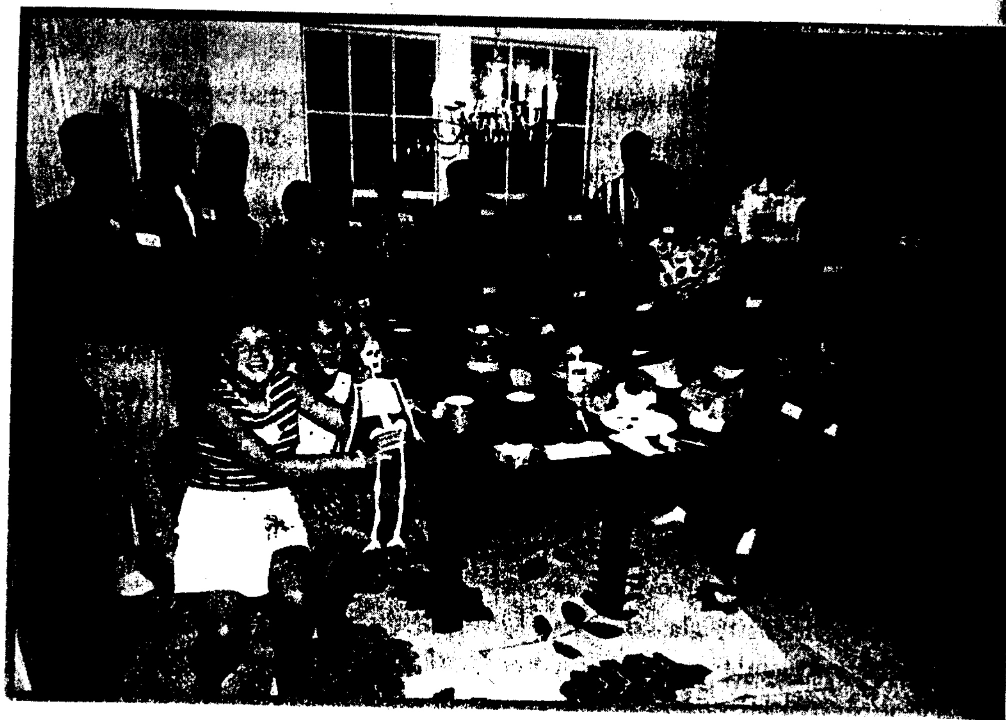
Convinced that there was a big difference between a school and a hardware store, the group pushed ahead. They were now faced with the Herculean tasks of fund-raising and finding a suitable site on Celebration's costly land. At that time, the going price was $330,000 an acre, almost three times the price of land outside the White Vinyl Fence. Over the course of several months, the group doggedly explored every possible site within a feasible radius of the town, and made loose contractual commitments to a Montessori principal in the region. The initiative might have fallen through at several points, but it was driven by a visible passion for the children's well-being, and also, in some part, by the view that residents should have more than "a foot in the door" when it came to creating institutions independent of TCC. In due time, Lance and others learned the tactics of approaching Disney from other residential contractors in town, and eventually won over key TCC employee residents who decided that their own children might benefit best from a Montessori education. By late spring, the group had secured a site and a floor plan, teachers, and the registered interest of about forty families, and they laid down a deposit on a three-thousand-square-foot French estate home in the area to the east of downtown, where residents are permitted to run a business from their homes.

The only serious setback occurred over internal disagreements about financing. Some members felt that the seed investors in the school would, in effect, be subsidizing the education of others, especially much wealthier parents who could easily afford private tuition for their kids. Would it not be fair, then, for these investors to expect a fair market return, by raising the tuition rate and charging market value for use of the space? This gave rise to a heated debate about the principles behind the initiative. What should be the goal of the group? To open the school at the lowest cost to everyone in the community? Or to make a reasonable

return on a for-profit institution? Questions like this stirred up a small hornet's nest, as the group factionalized for several weeks, one side pleading "from the heart" their simple cause of furthering education, the other adopting a more hard-nosed business approach. Amy Gould-Pilz, director of the Children's Playgroup in town and an active Montessori participant from the outset, regretted the intrusion of class resentment in the discussions, but was hardly surprised. "There's a reason why suburbs are divided into different income levels," she joked. The specter of class friction faded when a pragmatic business plan (seven large investors with limited return on their investments) eventually prevailed over the more egalitarian proposal (many small stakeholder investors in a not-for-profit corporation). On September 3, the building broke ground, only a year after the group had first met, and the school opened its doors to fifty students in June 1999.

Low-intensity class friction will flourish in any mixed-income community, and though muted, it was hardly absent from the social life of distinct neighborhoods in Celebration. Each block consisted of the same lot sizes, and so block parties, inevitably, took on a local, socioeconomic flavor. Residents in the middle-income homes took pride in the fact that all the townsfolk, including apartment tenants, were welcome at their potluck parties. Those in the newer and less central neighborhoods, like Lake Evalyn, which hosted the least expensive, detached homes, made a special effort to attract the rest of the townsfolk. It did not escape notice that residents on blocks of estate homes often had their parties catered and that the guest lists were more carefully zoned. In April, Town Hall launched its "block party trailer" (outfitted with barbecue grills, stereo system, ice chests, hula hoops, and water sprinkler games) for general use. Since every act of Town Hall was closely analyzed, the chuck wagon was perceived by some as an intervention in the "block party wars" and as a subtle invitation to keep these events nonexclusive and noncompetitive.

Competition aside, one street had already achieved an unsurpassable record for its potluck performance. On Honeysuckle—an early pioneer row with middle-range Cottage lots—the zest for neighborliness was running far ahead of expectation. Regular monthly parties were slated at residents' houses for almost two years in advance, and



An early Honeysuckle potluck gathering. (Photo: Jonathan Hayt)

each was announced with ornate invitations. The driving force on Honeysuckle was the home team of Darlene and Fred Rapanotti, who supervised the soirees with cosy precision. Originally from Garden City on Long Island, with a "five-and-dime on every street corner," the Rapanottis were one of the town's many (ex-)military couples, long accustomed to the regulated environments of military housing. In addition, theirs was one of the houses decorated as a teeming shrine to Disney memorabilia. Shelves, tables, and wall space were lined with figurines, pictures, and sculptures of Walt's entire entourage, including an awesome rendering of Cinderella's Castle. The Rapanotti home was also a fount of hospitality, and I was always received there with uncommon largesse. Of Chinese-American descent, and with a culinary range to match, Darlene's no-nonsense efforts at pioneering the potluck circuit were justly famous and had been lovingly archived. An attendance book registered residents' comments at each event, a photograph album recorded past gatherings, and a range of custom invitations from each party were preserved. Darlene, who worked at Disney's Caribbean

Cruise Lines, had also been active in exporting the potluck protocols to other neighborhoods and had aspirations to link the several circuits together in an annual, communitywide bash. The Honeysuckle potlucks had hosted votes on block adornments—coordinated Christmas decor on the mailboxes—and Darlene wanted to organize discussions on how best to represent the town to visiting journalists in hopes of dispelling the media cliché that "we are all mechanical puppets and Disney mannequins."

Each of the several parties I attended had its own flavor, where hosts would invite their own friends from other parts of town. One event in late summer took the form of an elaborate hayride to the North Village. Attendance varied. There were regulars and not-so-regulars. To be sure, there were some on the block who found the monthly regimen to be a little more sociability than they cared for, and the Honeysuckle model, while much admired from a distance, had set a pace that no other block in town tried to match. In some ways, it represented the tolerable upper limit of community bonding in Celebration.

There were many blocks in town where neighbors, lacking willingly active organizers, preferred to socialize informally or loosely attach themselves to the party circuit of an adjoining block. If anything, the pace of community building that had been set here had resulted in partial burnout. Several pioneers acknowledged there was too little time for their own families. Religious leaders, partially in competition with the community professionals at Town Hall and the Foundation, expressed concern that overcommitment to community activity was in danger of producing dysfunctional families. In Celebration, there was such a thing as a little too much community.

Besides, block solidarity was an uneasy feature of social life in a town where Town Hall encouraged residents to identify with the whole of Celebration. In his newsletter item discouraging the use of village labels, Herrington warned against "the tendency of new developments to fracture into separate districts rather than functioning as dynamic, cohesive communities." Officially, at least, community was intended to be synonymous with the entire town, and professional help was on hand to ensure that community building kept its course. A subtle reward system was in place very early, where especially active volunteers enjoyed the gratitude of the professionals. Each year, the Foundation handed out Community

Service Awards and ran a "Tattle Tales" section in its newsletter in which residents were encouraged to inform on their "do-gooder" neighbors. Town Hall had established its own impromptu practice of awarding certificates for community-minded acts, and Herrington rarely missed a public opportunity to comment on "the incredible organic juice that flows up from the residents."

There was lots of evidence of this juice, but it was still too early to say that the residential fabric had developed the truly organic texture that is the Holy Grail of nostalgic mythmakers and community management professionals alike. Community pride among Celebrationites was a heady cocktail, mixed with equal parts of performance anxiety, property angst, and pioneer exuberance. Professional community management, on the other hand, had already proved itself as a well-seasoned vintage. Beyond the machinery of management, however, the battles being fought in town had fashioned community bonds that were arguably stronger than those brought on by the physical advantages of New Urban neighborliness or the Foundation's culture of volunteerism. This was a sense of community forged out of conditions of adversity, and however much outsiders snorted at the mere idea of Celebrationites suffering, these internal struggles had worked their way into the guts of community building in ways that offered some lessons for the outside world.

11

GOD'S HOUSES, A PICTURE OF HEALTH, AND THE COLOR OF OUR MINDS

"Eat fresh fruit, nuts, and vegetables. Get plenty of rest. Exercise. Get plenty of fresh air and sunshine. Avoid meat, high-fat and high-sugar foods. Get a good night's sleep. Don't smoke or use alcohol. Reduce stress. Learn to relax. Enjoy life."

—"The Corn Flake Connection," Celebration Health

Patrick Carrin, the pastor of Celebration Community Church, had delivered his Mother's Day sermon on the gospel of love with vigor and dash. It had been international in scope, ranging from the Vietnam War to the crisis of faith in the old Soviet Union, and had touched, in some depth, on the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Assembled in the school cafeteria, where the church met regularly, members of the congregation were asked to stand, individually, to pay tribute to their mothers. Several rose and testified in turn. Joan Jones, retired schoolteacher and former tenant of my apartment, spoke passionately of her mother's kindnesses and good deeds, and went on to praise "all good Christian mothers." As she sat down, she leaned over, patted my knee, and added, sotto voce, "and Jewish mothers, too." It was a characteristically thoughtful act, though Joan, who had quizzed me on my background at our first meeting, hadn't quite got it right. It was my father who had been Jewish (though he had chosen not to be a Jewish father, as Holocaust refugees in out-of-the-way places sometimes did). My siblings and