

THE WOMAN BEHIND

THE VANCOUVERITE'S

A BETTER WAY TO

VIFE

ELECTION GUIDE

RETIRE

VANCOUVER



THE VAN CITY DIET

We asked a few of our favourite locals about their food obsessions du jour. Dig in on pg. 60

the FOOD ISSUE

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"I'M GUESSING IT'S BAKED CAULIFLOWER
COVERED IN SOME KIND OF
METHAMPHETAMINE"
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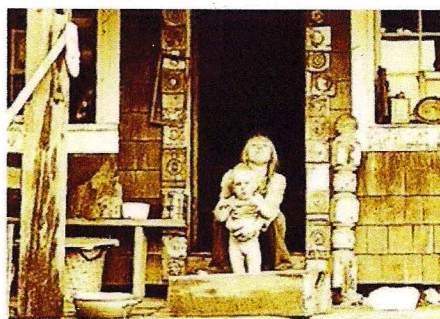


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See hundreds of winners from past Restaurant Awards, with chef videos and more

Bouhaus: Luis Valdivia; Waikiki Diamond Head: Hawaii Tourism Authority/Tar Johnson; Chris Wantless: Paya Nabei

THE BACK-TO-THE-LAND ETHOS OF THE HIPPIE ERA WAS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE MUD FLATS HOUSES OF THE EARLY '70S, AS SEEN IN THESE PHOTOS FROM THE CLEMENS FAMILY'S COLLECTION



HISTORY

Carving Out a Legacy

The idealistic spirit of a ragtag collective of hippie carpenters is reborn for another generation of Vancouverites

LOW-HANGING CLOUDS ENVELOP the Maplewood mud flats, a tidal plain that skirts Burrard Inlet east of the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge. Sam Clemens steps gingerly around the washed-up logs, trying to get a better view of the western sandpipers that normally reside here. The mud flats are a conservation area now, home to dozens of birds, but Clemens has been here before—decades ago, when he was a toddler and the flats were a hippie haven to about 25

artisans, their partners, and their children, living in self-built shacks and shelters. His rubber boots squelch in the mud as he edges closer to the water's edge. "I was conceived here," he says as he spies several pilings in the distance, the only remnants of Vancouver's infamous squatter community. "This is where my life began. It's part of my story."

By 1971, Clemens's parents, Dan and Wendy, were well entrenched in mud flats society. Wendy carved out a living making leather goods. Dan, along with his buddies—a group of self-taught carpenters called DeLuxe Renovators—scoured West Side demolition sites for gingerbread trim, balustrades, and stained glass (heritage pieces nobody wanted at the time) and turned their booty into kiosks, restaurant facades, and movie sets. (Robert Altman's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* made use of the collective's wares; see sidebar.) At night, Dan retired to his wife and child in their

mud flats home. But not for long. The District of North Vancouver deemed the squats unsanitary and an eyesore, and ordered them to be removed. "There was a big protest," says Clemens. "As a baby, I was in front of the bulldozers. But, of course, it got torn down." In December of that year, the authorities set the Clemens house ablaze and the family relocated.

Clemens grew up with a hammer in his hands, helping his dad build houses on the Sunshine Coast. He eventually became a contractor—a steady 9-to-5 that paid good money—but he felt unsettled and unfulfilled. Too young to remember those Maplewood days in detail, he grew up restless and inquisitive, steeped in the mud flats mythology thanks to family stories and photographs. "It's in my DNA," he says of the hippie ethic that drives him. In 2014, Clemens left the construction business and, together with his younger brother, Lenny, established his

own enterprise, Hobo Woodworks, sourcing used lumber from demolition sites like his father did 45 years ago. "My dad is still my inspiration," he says. "I've always looked up to him as someone who could spin something out of nothing and make things happen."

His father returns the compliment. "That little business he does, it's really familiar to me," says Dan Clemens, from his current home in Mexico. "It just ties together what we were thinking and how we were feeling in those days." In essence, a DeLuxe redux.

Today, Sam and Lenny work out of an East Vancouver shop they opened last year, where the duo turn reclaimed wood into kitchen islands or coffee tables. Commissions also figure prominently. "It's probably more lucrative to open up a cabinet shop and just bang out boxes, but that's not what we're trying to do here," says Sam. "What we're trying to do is get back to a natural, organic way of living."

Clemens says it's wrong to assume he's simply following in his father's footsteps. It's broader than that. He says he represents a West Coast attitude, a reverence for nature and the environment. "People don't want mass-produced crap. People want to be connected to where their stuff comes from," he says, citing his practice of making handmade goods out of recycled indigenous species. "This landscape, this part of the world, completely informs what we do."

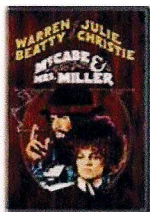
It's this consciousness, Sam believes, that will keep both the DeLuxe legacy and the Maplewood mud flats story alive. "I'm very aware of the history of this part of the world and where I come from," he says. "Hobo is a continuum of a story that's still being written."

—John Thomson

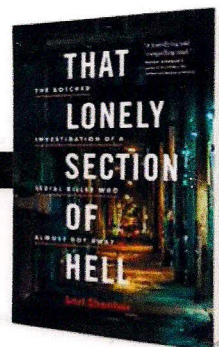


THE MUD FLATS MEET TINSEL TOWN

Legendary director Robert Altman's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* stars Warren Beatty and Julie Christie (the latter garnered an Oscar nomination) as business partners who run a brothel at the turn of the 20th century. Set in the fictional town of Presbyterian Church, Washington, the 1971 movie was shot in West Vancouver and Squamish. Construction of the sets provided work for the Vancouver-based DeLuxe Renovators crew for roughly a year.



CRIME



A REAL COP-OUT

In her new book, former VPD detective Lori Shenher lays bare the various battles she waged (not least with her conscience) during and after the investigation of the Pickton murders

→ Throughout my policing career, I felt like an imposter—as a queer person, as a female, as left of centre, as a writer, as someone who questioned the police culture and the system. I was different, and never before had I felt that as intensely as when the Pickton case broke. Far stronger than my sense of being a cop and a detective was my need to be a truth teller—a need that simmered just below the surface throughout Project Amelia [the VPD's alternate name for its Vancouver Missing Women Review Team], but that could not be expressed for so many reasons, most relating to job security and the culture I toiled within.

Now that need was replaced by a loud, screaming voice inside my head that told me I had to tell this story, my story, *their story*. It was not a desire; it was a compulsion, and I briefly tried to fight it, knowing there was nothing I wanted more than to just forget this whole damn thing. But as a writer, I saw no choice. As a human being, I bore a responsibility. As a police officer, I felt a duty. Sitting here in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry hearing room, I think of the media accounts I've read of my pending testimony, of those reporters wondering how I could possibly cite burnout and breakdown and, at the same time, have the energy and ability to write a book. Some of the lawyers in the inquiry pursue this line of questioning, asking me how I could possibly write a book if I was so shattered by my work on this file. I struggle to articulate that writing the manuscript both tortured and soothed me. Writing was never an effort for me, but reliving the

investigation was another matter.

Am I obligated to share the details of the horrific nightmares that woke me every morning at 4:00 in those first months after the Pickton farm search, plus several sleepless years before and after? That I'd sit in front of my computer obsessively pounding out the details of the investigation until I went to work at 6:00 every morning? That overwhelming anxiety is a powerful motor driving you forward, unlike depression, which presses down on your head and pulls at your heels like a ball and chain? Anxiety made me productive, but its effects don't last forever, as I would discover. I wrote like a person possessed because I felt my life depended on it.

They wonder how I could quit the investigation and then write and consult for *Da Vinci's Inquest*. How has this commission of inquiry become about me? Why are the brightest lights of scrutiny glaring into my eyes when so many others are much more deserving of audit? Because I had dared to put myself out there. Why should I have to publicly point out that my trauma has never been about the actual events on that farm, tragic and deplorable as they were, but is rooted in the lack of support for our investigation from the VPD and the RCMP? Why do I feel the need to explain myself and be known?

Excerpt from That Lonely Section of Hell: The Botched Investigation of a Serial Killer Who Almost Got Away by Lori Shenher, published by Greystone Books. Available now.