



Building a Better Nest: Living Lightly at Home and in the World

Evelyn Searle Hess

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For fifteen years, Evelyn Hess and her husband David lived in a tent and trailer, without electricity or running water, on twenty acres of wild land in the foothills of the Oregon Coast Range. When they decided to build a house – a real house at last – they knew it would have to respect the lessons of simple living that they learned in their camping life. They knew they could not do it alone. *Building a Better Nest* chronicles their adventures as they begin to construct a house of their own, seeking a model for sustainable living not just in their home, but beyond its walls.

What does it mean to build a better nest? Better for whom? Is it better for the individual or family? The planet? Green building and sustainable design are popular buzzwords, but to Hess, sustainable building is not a simple matter of buying and installing the latest recycled flooring products. It is also about cooperative work: working together in employment, in research, in activism, and in life. Hess is concerned with her local watershed, but also with the widening income gap, disappearing species, and peak resources. She actively works to reduce overconsumption and waste. For Hess, these problems are both philosophical and practical.

As Hess and her husband age, the questions of how to live responsibly arise with greater frequency and urgency. With unfailing wit and humor, she looks for answers in such places as neuroscience, Buddhism, and her ancestral legacy. *Building a Better Nest* will appeal to anyone with an interest in sustainable building, off-grid living, or alternative communities. The questions it asks about the way we live are earnest and important, from an author whose voice is steeped in wisdom and gratitude.

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