

## Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	xiii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1

### **PART I: A HISTORY WRITTEN IN MUD**

<b>Chapter 1: Our Ways of Building</b> .....	9
--	---

*Guiding Principle: We mostly work with unprocessed natural and recycled materials to create and decorate beautiful and healthy structures that are earth friendly.*

*Guiding Principle: We believe this work is so important that we cannot wait until we are all experts. No matter the level of experience, we value each individual for their contribution and abilities and believe strongly in skill-building on the worksite.*

**We Went for It:** Creating the World We Wanted to Live In ..... 9

**The Measuring Tape:** Skill-Building as a Priority.

A Non-intimidating Approach to Building ..... 14

**Fast, Cheap and Out of Control:** Permits = Limits ..... 19

**Messages from Mud:** It's Not About How Much You Know,

But How Much You Believe in What You're Doing ..... 26

**Case Studies:** Ray and Soozie's Place; Measure Twice, Think Three

Times, Cut Once, Because Chainsaws Are Forever ..... 29

**Chapter 2: Women’s Work** .....33

*Guiding Principle: We are a women’s collective and seek to empower ourselves with employment and the skills to build homes.*

**No Boys Allowed: Why We Chose (and Still Choose)**  
An All-woman Crew. ....33

**We Play With Dollies: Work Smarter Not Harder.** .....42

**Our Heroines: Other Women that Are Rockin’ the Natural Building World and Shattering the Status Quo:**  
Athena Steen, Liz Johndrow, and Becky Bee. ....45

**We Love Dudes: And Dudes Love Us** .....49

**Case Studies: Chris’s Contribution; Set the Men Free;**  
No, Really, She’s Doing It; Contribution from  
Todd Turik (One Man Among Many Women). ....52

**Chapter 3: Rethinking Work** .....59

*Guiding Principle: We are a collective that is human friendly: we recreate our concepts of work to prioritize respect and care for our hearts, our bodies, and our children while we work together. We create a work environment that nurtures us.*

**Large and in Charge: The Empowerment Inherent in Working for Oneself** .....59

**It’s Our Worksite, and We’ll Cry If We Want To: Allowing Space for Emotions, Needs, and Limitations on the Worksite** ....62

**Bigger Isn’t Always Better: Dealing with the Expectations of of Conventional “Efficiency” Versus the Efficiencies Long-term Learning, Safety, Skill-sharing, and Community-building.** .....65

**Baby, I Like It Raw: Maintaining the Connection with Raw Materials and Raw Power** .....66

**Case Studies: Ode to the Old: Hand Tools and Handy Elders** ...69

**Soul Food: Nurturing Our Bodies** .....72

**Recipies:** Smoked Tofu Potato Salad; Bethany’s Rice Pudding;  
Coconut Curried Lentils; Energy Balls . . . . . 73

**Chapter 4: Caring for the Children** . . . . . 77

*Guiding Principle: All our events are child and parent-friendly with quality childcare always provided.*

**Our Kids Are Your Kids:** A Better Model for the Greater Good . . . 77

**Take Your Child to Work Day, Every Day:** Why Mandatory, Built-in Childcare Makes Sense, and Why It’s Not Always Perfect . . . . . 79

**The Children of the Revolution:** Children as Active Members of the Community . . . . . 81

**Case Studies:** How the Inner Child Schooled the Adult Attitude: Youth Facilitation as a Non-parent; That One Time I Almost Lost My Kids and My Mind, and the Silly Play That Saved Us All; Life After Motherhood; Participant/Mother Contribution . . . . . 84

**Chapter 5: Rethinking “Business”** . . . . . 89

*Guiding Principle: We seek to do our business in a non-capitalist spirit. We keep the cost of natural building affordable by keeping our wages low, offering our workshops for barter, building for low-income people as much as we can.*

**Ménage à Trois:** The Breakdown of Our Workshop Structure . . . 89

**How Much Is Too Much?:** The Quest to Practice Sustainable Idealism. . . . . 92

**Who Needs Money When There’s Mud Everywhere?:** A Low Income Plus Resourcefulness Equals Creative Power . . . . . 95

**Client-friends and Friend-clients:** Keeping a Healthy Building Relationship Without Contracts . . . . . 98

**Case Studies:** Molly’s House; Trade Ya a Small House for a Website? . . . . . 101

**Chapter 6: Who's the Boss?** .....107

*Guiding Principle: We are structured non-hierarchically. Each member is equally valued and has equal say in decision-making.*

*Guiding Principle: We use the teachings of Compassionate Communication to create a peaceful, mutually respectful, and revolutionarily harmonious group process.*

**The Internal Workings of The Mudgirls:**

How We Make Decisions .....107

**Don't Tell Me What to Do** .....110

**Mycorrhiza: A Symbiosis Inspired by Nature Keeps the Collective Rollin'** .....113

**Case Studies: The Voice of Dissent, and How We Hate to Love It; A Model of Our (Ideal) Steps to Resolve Conflict** ...116

**Chapter 7: Building a Revolution** .....119

*Guiding Principle: We work together to create this collective as we go, nurturing the creative and inventive and courageously open to the process of transformation.*

**Build It and They Will Come: The Search for Other Ways of Living**.....119

**Don't Muddy the Waters: Trying to Live by Example** .....123

**Case Studies: Our Collective's Babies: Mudmob in Australia and The Good Earth Builders.** .....125

**PART II: THANKS TIPS!**

**(PRACTICAL BUILDING MATTERS)**

**Chapter 8: Materials and Tools** .....131

**Clay Sourcing Tips** .....131

**How to Test Your Clay**.....132

**Sand, Sand, and Sand** .....135

**Fiber**.....136

Lumber .....	137
Mud Tools .....	139
Woodworking Tools .....	139
What Trowel to Use and Why. ....	140
<b>Chapter 9: Recipes</b> .....	143
Clay Paint Recipes That Work .....	143
Paint #1 .....	143
Paint #2 .....	144
Pigment .....	144
Adhesion Coats. ....	144
Lime Water, Lime Wash .....	145
Starch Paste (Wheat Paste) .....	145
Plasters .....	145
Manure Plaster .....	146
Clay Plaster .....	147
Lime Plaster .....	147
<b>Chapter 10: Tips to Success</b> <b>(We Screwed Up and Learned Stuff)</b> .....	149
Dry Stack Rock Foundation Tips .....	149
Dry Stack Rock Foundations for Straw Bale Walls. ....	151
How to Fix Cracks .....	152
Why Cob Walls Fall .....	154
Wall Systems Pros and Cons .....	156
Build Your House in Ten Steps! .....	161
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	169
<b>Index</b> .....	173

**xii** *Mudgirls Manifesto*

**About the Author** .....177

**A Note about the Publisher** .....178