

Panorama
TOP STORIES

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Matchy-Matchy Grüne Punkt

The Caretaker

Ken Trevail presides over one of the city's sketchiest alleys. The shopkeepers love him; the drug dealers want him gone **By Marcie Good**

Society

KEN

Trevail rings the buzzer at the grated back entrance to the Deluxe Junk Company.

"Have you heard the news?" he asks Rod Hubic. "Those dealers came back. That's why I haven't been here."

"I could tell you weren't here," says Hubic, "because the alley's trashed."

Trevail agrees, surveying the ripped-open garbage bags littering the ground. For two years, he has tended this alley near Victory Square. At 43, he is slight but strong, and describes himself as "NFA," preferring that term to "homeless." Buffered by the tips, bottles, joints, and food he receives from people who work on this block, Trevail recently took himself off welfare. Things were going well until some drug dealers stopped by.

The first time, a man told him to stay out of this alley. Hubic stepped out just then: "He wore a white-and-red tracksuit. They all wear tracksuits, all matchy-matchy."

Trevail picks up the story. A



Dark Knight The Victory Square alley, which Ken Trevail keeps clean and orderly, attracts all manner of interlopers, from models to binnors

week later, the same guy returned with four others, and asked Trevail if he'd forgotten what he'd been told. "I said, 'I didn't forget a thing. This is my job. It's not your alley. It belongs to the people who live and work here.' And he came right at me with a collapsible baton, and, tap-tap-tap. On the back, head, wherever I wasn't covering, he was hitting." Since then, he's stayed away.

Yesterday he spent his last five bucks.

Why would a drug dealer beat him up? Hubic has a simple answer. "Turf," he says. "All Ken's doing is keeping it clean, but in their minds he's pissing on their area."

If the battle is about territory, this block is important. Along the north side is an eclectic collection of clothing boutiques reshaping Gastown

into a design destination. The merchants here have no appetite for the brazen selling and using that scourges the Downtown Eastside on the other side of Cambie Street.

Marc Emery, who enjoys Trevail's harmonica from the office of his Cannabis Culture headquarters, refers to the broken-window theory of crime prevention: a clean alley shows that people care and discourages bad behaviour. "When you're not there," he tells Trevail, "there are people back there kind of pretending to do your job but who in fact are tacitly involved in the same old problems. We can't afford to have crack addicts move into our neighbourhood."

Trevail takes a moment to express his thoughts. "For the first time in my life I have a community of people that understand what I'm trying to do," he says, blinking. "That means a lot to me."

Over bacon and eggs at a nearby diner, he muses about this critical point in his life. In 2003, he carried a decade-long crack habit and jail time for armed robbery. He came to Vancouver intending to overdose. Instead, he made friends, quit the drugs, and discovered his musical talent.

He's glad to be done with welfare. "Between them and I, it wasn't working out," he

What he'd really like to do is to take gasoline, diesel fuel, wires, boxes, nails, glass, and a car battery and **make a bomb**

says. He didn't like having to attend a life-skills program and do mock interviews. He told someone that he wanted to work in the entertainment industry. "He said, 'You live in the Downtown Eastside. Nobody down there is capable of anything other than labour jobs.' I was bewildered. I said, 'You're a counsellor who makes résumés, you're not a stats researcher!'"

His past jobs have included safety watch on a Halifax Harbour oil rig, logistics clerk in an Ottawa tech firm, and data-entry subcontractor for the Department of National Defence. He wouldn't go back to any of them. Over and over he wonders why those dealers want him out and how he can fight back. What he'd really like to do is to take gasoline, diesel fuel, wires, boxes, nails, glass, and a car battery and make a bomb powerful enough to blow a four-foot stump out of the ground. "But morally," he says, "that's wrong."

A few days later, I spot Trevail playing his harmonica on Main Street. He's wearing his usual outfit—paisley suit vest over white tank, dark blue Levi's, and trademark felt hat—but now he's holstered with pepper spray. "Let me buy you coffee!" he says. "I decided, instead of whining and moaning, I got to do what I do. 'Cause I'm not alive unless I do. I'm just existing, waiting, hoping this monster will go away. And in a lot of cases, we discover our monsters are dust bunnies." At a nearby coffee shop he pulls out a crisp twenty. "I'm back," he says with a quick roll of his eyes.

He doesn't want to sit down with his Earl Grey; he's keen to show me his work. Today, the

pavement is swept. In neighbouring alleys, the bin locks are broken and trash emptied out. Not here, where Trevail holds the keys. "All the people that would normally come and utilize the bins," he explains, "now know that this is Ken's little angle, this is what Ken does. 'If I go looking I'm not going to find anything because Ken's pretty thorough.'"

We stop at the corner store to see Dada, the proprietor, who likes Trevail to separate the shreds of his documents into separate bins. They discuss the next level in alley maintenance. Wouldn't it be great if there were more public washrooms? "He's particular," says Trevail as we leave, "and why not? He's the businessman, and I'm the service person in the back."

In the alley, a long-haired young woman is having a cigarette behind the store where she works. "This is Anna," Trevail says. "She's one of my favourites."

"Really, Kenneth?" she asks, pleased.

"Nobody used to talk to me. You were the first one to break that motif."

Thanks to him, she feels safe coming out here to read or smoke. She also shares his interest in garbage; once she found a large wooden frame by the bin that she used in a piece of art with a collage mounted behind it. "It's hard to explain..."

"Discarded treasures," he offers.

"That I make into art."

"Did you have your show yet?" he asks.

"No, and you're more than welcome to come." She gives him the details. He nods. "I'll take off work that day."

Business



Stowed Away

Freighters inject goods (mostly legal) worth \$50 billion into our city

By Michael Harris

CAPTAIN DOGWAN Lee of the tanker *Bum Shin* is blowing his horn in frustration at the stevedores working at Neptune Bulk Terminals below. They're taking their sweet time pulling the gangway back onto the North Vancouver facility, where the ship has taken on a load of tallow. Lee is eager to cross Burrard Inlet to Vanterm on the south shore, where his 148-metre-long, 12,000-tonne vessel will take on canola oil before heading back across the Pacific. His impatience is understandable: this day, like the other 64 days of his round-trip journey between South Korea and Vancouver, is costing his employer \$65,000. (A larger tanker can cost as much as \$110,000 daily to operate.) There's no time to waste at Canada's largest, busiest port, which trades more than \$53 billion in goods each year and generates \$6.3 billion in GDP.

Captain Lee is not actually piloting his ship. Every freighter that docks at a Vancouver terminal is directed by a British Columbia coast pilot. Today, the *Bum Shin* (which cost between \$50 and \$80 million to build in 2003) is

being guided by Captain Nick Maylsh, a dapper man with a ready smile, the handshake of a guy who's not in the habit of crashing tankers, and four years of piloting under his belt. Maylsh, who's a long way from the tugs he used to be master and mate on, enjoys comparing his profession to surgery—pilots are an elite set.

Maylsh is one of only 100 such pilots in British Columbia; among them, they make about 12,000 sailings per year. Ninety percent of the world's cargo is handled by pilots at some point.

The steering wheel on the *Bum Shin* is a mere 10 inches across. On the short hop across Burrard Inlet, Maylsh never actually touches the wheel. Instead, he shouts from the port deck; his commands are parroted first by Captain Lee, and then by an officer at the helm. Maylsh coordinates the work of the two tugboats that nuzzle the freighter, bow and stern, as well as six line-men and the bridge crew.

Captain Neil Crysler, the vice-president of the pilots' association, happens to be along for today's harbour shift. He's a dapper man whose single earring suggests a rebel past that his tailored suit holds neatly in check. He accepts a can of pear juice from a silent cadet—the 21 crew members on the *Bum Shin*, mostly Koreans and Filipinos, speak limited English, and their ability to work flawlessly with Captain Maylsh depends on their grasp of a few well-understood commands.

The vast majority of our port's trade is with Japan (16,998,000 tonnes), China (16,662,000 tonnes), and South Korea (7,345,000 tonnes). From us, these