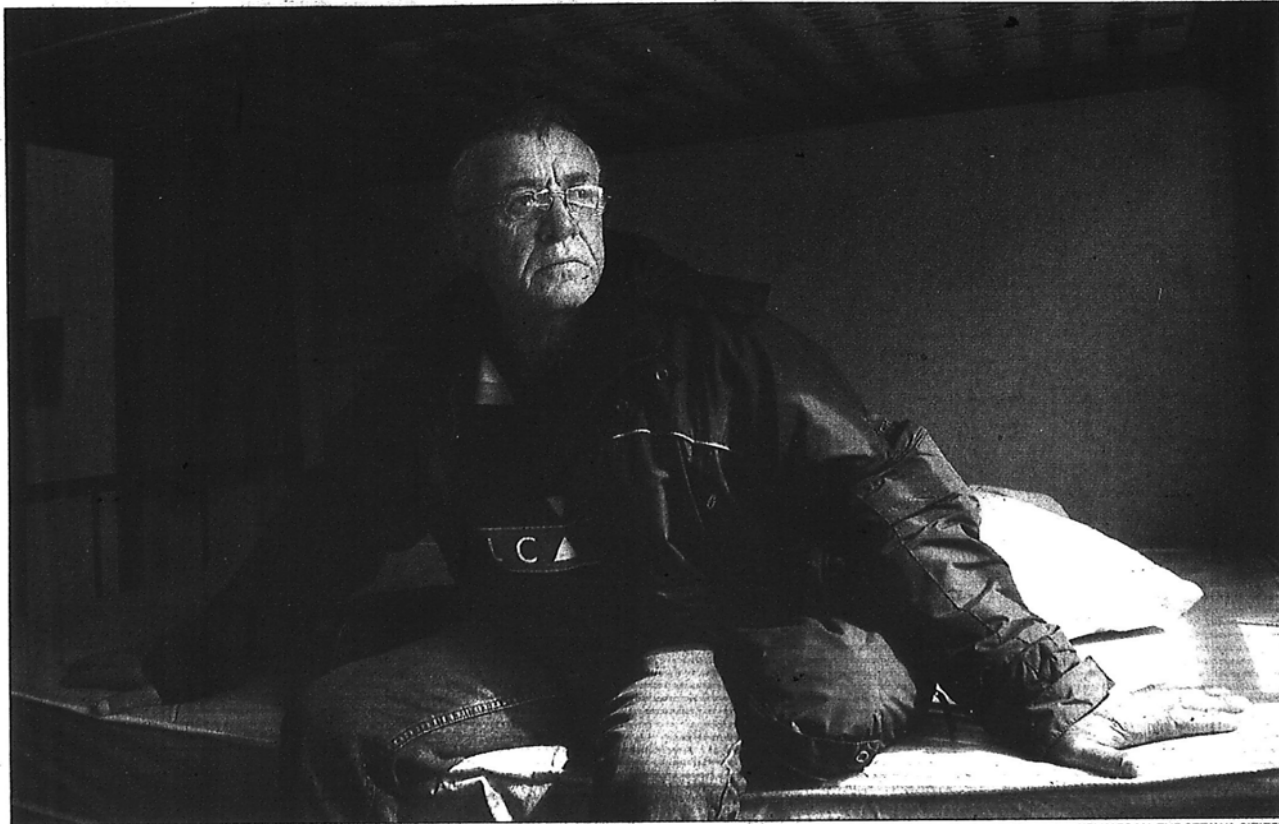


Ottawa Citizen, April 10th, 2009

AN EASTER STORY



KELLY EGAN, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Aldège Saumure sits on his bunk at the Shepherds of Good Hope shelter on Murray Street. Saumure, 59, once had a thriving construction business with six employees and some real estate holdings, but eventually his wealth evaporated. Despite his woes, he keeps his chin up.

Meet Aldège Saumure: A shepherd of good hope, a man of simple needs

All that head of homeless residents group wants is freedom, sunshine, fresh air

It is Good Friday, the grey end of a grey, dawnless week. It is only a day. It was only a life, then and now.

Aldège Saumure, 59, is the new president of the association that represents the residents in the Shepherds of Good Hope shelter at Murray Street and King Edward Avenue.

Bed 042, the lower bunk, is his, together with a banged-up locker beside it. Home, sweet, homeless.

It was quite an election. He was prodded by staff to let his



KELLY EGAN
COMMENTARY

name stand. He took the bait, but had a strategy. He says he pulled his carton of smokes from his locker and bribed the

voters with free cigs.

Next thing you know, it's Mr. President.

There is, about Aldège Saumure, this ruthless honesty about himself. Life has worn away any veneer of pretension.

He was one of 15 children who grew up in Lowertown, the son of a city sewer worker, in a flat-roofed house on Cumberland Street. Times were tough.

"I used to steal bread from Morrison Lamothe," he said Thursday, perched on the edge of

a bunk, stripped of its bedding.

He was eight or nine. One day he was caught by the baker and hauled into the boss's office. He explained why he was stealing old loaves. The man asked him to name all his brothers and sisters and, skeptically, wrote them all down.

Then he asked young Aldège to repeat them. He drove the boy home and saw for himself the brood of young children.

See EGAN on PAGE A2

Egan: Almost everything Saumure owns fits in locker

Continued from PAGE A1

It was the late 1950s. Welfare was not yet a system. Saumure says the sympathetic bakery manager arranged for him to have a wagon with a box. Once or twice a week, he was allowed to fill it up with day-old bread and unsold cakes.

"When you have no food on the table, you do what you have to do," he said. "You ever eat pigeon? It's good. Used to kill them with rocks."

He left school early, well before high school. He was working as a busboy at the Château Laurier at age 17, vowing never to be poor again.

Saumure has many stories, to the point that you wonder: Could it all be so?

He says he lost his mother and two sisters in a fire 40 years ago, an act that drove him to attempt suicide.

And sure enough, an hour later, there it is on the microfiched front page of the *Ottawa Citizen*, dated Feb. 21, 1969. Fire began in the kitchen at 228 Cumberland, the exact address he named, early in the morning.

His mother, Marie-Jeanne, in her late 40s, and two daughters, Gabrielle, 5, and Claudette, 14 or 15,

were found dead in the upper floors. There were photos of a sister weeping and another child running after the ambulance carrying their dead mother.

In the weeks that followed, said Saumure, he wondered why God had taken them, the youngest in particular. He wanted to trade places.

Despondent, he said he "dove, not jumped" into the Rideau Falls, off Sussex Drive. It just wasn't his day. He survived with a broken arm.

He is quite the street philosopher, with wonderful malapropisms — "watch this," he says, when signalling a turn in a story — and it is easy to see why the others take to him.

Boozing, he admits, has often gotten the better of him. He does not lie. "If the Lord had made an 8th day, I would have drunk on the 8th."

He married and had two sons, neither of whom he's seen in more than 20 years.

He once had a thriving construction business with six employees and some real estate holdings. But the marriage ended and, one imagines, a lot of bad stuff happened. Wealth evaporated.

"I must be wearing Joe Bad Luck on my back."

Now everything he owns, save a bicycle and odds and ends, fits in a locker.

In a coat pocket, he carries a slim radio. He likes nothing better on a nice summer day than to sit on a comfy park bench, sip on a couple of pints, and listen to music.

"I just want what the Lord Jesus Christ gave us. Freedom. The sun, the fresh air."

What he came to realize, with the family tragedy and the marital

meltdown, is that you don't really own or "possess" anything: not personal relationships, not love, not even your own life.

"So let it all go."

He no longer wants a car and a job and a house. He'd like his own little place, like the bachelor unit he is trying to arrange with Options Bytown.

He'd also like a small electric scooter, for which he would need neither gas nor a licence. With it, he'd pull a little trailer into which he'd collect beer and wine bottles from recycle bins and anything else

he can salvage.

Street people, he says, are the toughest people who walk the Earth.

"Who the @*# are we to judge?" he asks. "I hate that. There is someone more qualified than all of us to do that. Let Him do his job."

Here then is one shepherd of good hope, walking about with a cane, not a staff, owning almost nothing in this world, but his own truth.

Contact Kelly Egan at 613-726-5896 or by e-mail, kegan@thecitizen.canwest.com

SUNDAY | MAY 3 | 2009

Nortel, 3500 Carling Ave.

OTTAWA CITIZEN CORPORATE CHALLENGE RIDE FOR COMPANY PRIDE And Help Stop Childhood Cancer in its Tracks



Branham
CORPORATE GROUP INC.



"In addition to being a father and event participant, I am also the proud sponsor of the Branham