

# Quality in Our Culture and Everyday Lives

by Robert Jawitz

This generation is witnessing the disappearance of quality in almost every facet of our daily lives. The large corporate supermarkets have supplanted the myriad of small shops that used to be part of our culture; the bakeries, the fruit stand, the neighborhood grocer, the cheese shop, the fish store and now even the florist and the pharmacy. In the supermarket, in the thousands of square feet of items, are all items of mediocrity. The breads are all soft and tasteless. The cheeses are all bland. The tomatoes are too hard and the bananas too starchy. The growers have bred them for transportation and shelf-life. The corn is too old and flavorless. Fresh cider and fresh squeezed orange juice is gone because of inflated fears of bacteria. There are aisles and aisles of prepared foods with just an image of what good food should taste like. The individual attention of the neighborhood stores is missing. Nobody knows how to cook anymore. The old recipes handed down from generations past are gone. Young people never even experienced good fresh cooking. Young people never felt hand-made clothes or a hand-made afghan. The rugs are now machine made, the kitchen-ware is machine-made, the furniture is mass produced, even the art work is mass produced. Outside, our built environment is even worse. Our houses, ranch style, so-called colonials and split levels, are devoid of individuality and decoration. They are monotonously placed on tree-less streets with featureless yards of toilsome grass. They are made of the cheapest materials; aluminum or vinyl siding, plywood designed to mimic real wood, pressed wood windows covered by a thin layer of plastic, thin asphalt shingles, and light fixtures that fall apart if you pull on them too hard. There is Formica trying to look like stone, vinyl flooring trying to look like tile, and pressed sawdust cabinets with a vinyl surface made to look like wood. Our cities are not much better. We have office buildings with miles of the same strip windows and “Dryvit” exteriors made to look like stucco. Inside, we have “office landscapes” with row upon row of “work stations” crowding each worker into 35 sf of plastic or metal furniture. Working for these large corporations is just as monotonous, everyone needing to fit the corporate culture, everyone needing to look alike. Going to and from work is

just as monotonous; stuck in traffic on monotonous highways. Our leisure time is just as monotonous: Taking the kids to soccer practice, cutting the grass, watching endless episodes of sit-coms or “reality” shows, or playing golf on over-manicured over fertilized grass.

All of this is a result of our corporate industrialized money-oriented culture; a culture that has constant downward pressure for wages and a corresponding requirement for the cheapening of products. What we need in our culture and everyday lives is food that is prepared with care and has taste, artifacts that are hand-made and have a story, houses that are built to last, have decoration and depth of beautiful real natural materials, places to work that are populated with friends and structured to our personal needs, gardens to work in rather than grass to cut, and activities that are meaningful to our legacy of life: creation, education and contribution. We need childcare and eldercare provided by a loved one rather than strangers. We need healthcare that is based on prevention of disease rather than just on curing of disease. This can be achieved in a homestead society, in smallness of government, small business and education and in the appreciation of the arts. RMI supports and promotes quality in our culture and everyday lives.