

« (/read-267812/?page=2#booktxt)	1 (/read-267812/?page=1#booktxt)	2 (/read-267812/?page=2#booktxt)
3 (/read-267812/?page=3#booktxt)	4 (/read-267812/?page=4#booktxt)	5 (/read-267812/?page=5#booktxt)
6 (/read-267812/?page=6#booktxt)	7 (/read-267812/?page=7#booktxt)	8 (/read-267812/?page=8#booktxt)
... (/read-267812/?page=31#booktxt)	32 (/read-267812/?page=32#booktxt)	» (/read-267812/?page=4#booktxt)
4		Перейти!

NemaloKnig.net (/) / Документальная литература (/genre/dokumentalnaia-literatura/) / Публицистика (/genre/nonf\_publicism/) /  
Toth J. (/author-87759/) / книга «The Mole People»

Without brothers or sisters, he learned early to be alone. He didn't miss company; in fact, he almost sought to escape people "because people disappoint you. I had some friends here and there, but most times my best friend was myself," Seville says. "You don't need too many people around you, cuz when you got too many people, you don't know who's for you and who's against you. When you're alone, you don't have to worry about that cuz people will flip on you like at the International House of Pancakes. They'll be your friend and the next minute they'll try to kill you for money. If they're thirsty enough, and if they think they can get away with it, they'll try to kill you. That's a fact."

He lived well in his early teens by stealing cars, which is how he met Iris, whose father had a white Cadillac.

A friend was auditioning with a ventriloquist act, and Seville, while waiting for him outside the club, was sitting on the hood of the Cadillac when Iris and her father came out. Her father spoke gruffly to Seville in a foreign language—Dutch, it turned out.

"He had these thunderclouds in his face," Seville says, "Very unhappy. Didn't like me. He thought I was a hoodlum or something. I guess I am, but I know how to put it aside. I said to Iris: 'Yo, what's up with this? Is he cursing at me?' She laughed and said, 'He just wants you to get off his car.'"

To anger her father, Iris invited Seville to go into the club with her. She was a stunning redhead with green eyes, according to Seville. "She was real tall and thin; her dad was short, fat, bald, and ugly."

"We hit it off pretty well, and she asked me to show her New York while they were visiting. We stuck around each other for two weeks. Then I got locked up for selling reefer in Queens. I didn't call her—didn't want her to know—and when I got out, she was gone. I didn't know she was pregnant with Naga.

"When she got back to the Netherlands, she had to do something fast, so she married this guy Earl [an American serviceman] to bring her back over here. He kept beating on her—real nasty attitude—and she got him arrested. I had told her where I sold reefer and she moved there, to 163rd Street between 89th and Jamaica Avenue in Queens. She was looking for me, and I was there but I didn't see her or recognize her and I guess she didn't see me.

"Would you believe, I was giving my own daughter a dollar every day for three months, and I didn't know she was my daughter! She was so cute. I used to deal across the street from where they lived, and I used to call Naga over when she was going to school cuz she was so cute. I love kids and I wanted to mess with her.

"Naga'd say: 'What them people give you money for? What you giving them?' I'd say, 'None of your business. Here, take a dollar and go to school.'

"Every day I used to give her a dollar. I didn't find out she was my daughter until one day I thought, man, she's so cute her mama's got to be nice. So I followed her upstairs one day so I could get a look at her. When she came out of the apartment, I just stood there. Tris?' I said."

He nods his head now in a pleasant memory. I wonder how fanciful it is but keep silent.

"Boy, we had a good time after that. I was fourteen years old when Naga was born. Iris was twenty-four. Count it up, Naga is seventeen now, and I'm thirty-one."

Seville sent Iris and Naga back to Holland in 1981 when the police shut down his reefer operation. The tickets cost him \$842, he remembers, and he gave them \$5,000 more. "I asked her father to take care of them until I got things back together again," he says. "Sure I want them back. But I just haven't gotten it together again yet."

Seville is inconsistent with some pieces of his biography and omits key facts while traveling down one avenue of his life, disclosing them later when they serve to embellish another tale.

He fathered three more children by two other women: two other girls and a boy named after him. The boy, whom he called “Little Seville,” was born to Candy in March 1981, the same year Iris went home to Holland.

He was not present for the birth of his son, now seven years old. “I was in jail,” he says, looking down as if ashamed. “I had to tell on myself to get Candy off the hook because I didn’t want my son born in jail. I sent him to live with her relatives in Saint Croix. He’s my only son and I want him to grow up. You know what I’m saying? I don’t want him dying on one of these streets. Most kids do.”

The boy’s mother, Candy, was eight months pregnant when Seville and a friend burglarized a jewelry store ostensibly to help support Candy and their coming child. “We got \$25,000 in cash and \$40,000 in jewelry, and I got caught because of a jealous girl who saw all of Candy’s rings and stuff and she called the police,” he explains. It was then, apparently, that Seville admitted to the crime to keep Candy from going to jail. Iris and Naga are not mentioned again.

“People have to do what they have to do,” he shrugs. “You can’t blame them for that; you can’t look down at them. They do what they have to do to take care of themselves and their own, no matter what.

“When the judge locked me up, he asked, ‘Mr. Williams, do you regret doing this?’ I said, ‘No, cuz to take care of mine, I’m going to do it again. Now if you don’t want me to do it, get me a job, and not that minimum wage stuff—you can’t support no family on that.’”

“I had to tell him straight up what was real. He said he respected that.” Then Seville smiles. “But he still put me away for three years. It would have been less but I had been in [jail] for so many other things so many times, he had to do it. I respect him for that. Since 1975, I’ve been arrested so many times I can’t count. I used to get into trouble cuz there was nothing better to do. I used to be good at stealing cars, even when we didn’t hardly know how to drive. Once me and my friend Bill—he was crazy, Bill—we drove up an exit ramp the wrong way, and a police car looked over and just didn’t believe it. We went fast against traffic on the highway for two exits, with the whole precinct after us. We were having fun, whooping it up. You don’t take it seriously when you’re a kid. You get thirty days, ninety days, they throw the case out, it don’t matter.”

SEVILLE HAS LIVED FOR TWELVE YEARS IN THE TUNNELS, VIRTUALLY all of his adult life except when he was in jail. He was sleeping on subway platforms at nineteen, and a year later moved to the hollow areas under the passenger platforms of commuter rail lines under Grand Central Station terminal. The homeless had knelt along the tracks and pick-axed holes in the walls, usually high under the overhang so they could not be seen by anyone standing on opposite platforms; he lived in these burrows first alone and then with many “communities,” as Seville calls them.

Each move took him deeper into the tunnel and underground life. From beneath the platforms, he went along the train tracks as they leave the station into the tunnels that spread like veins on the back of a hand. From there, he moved into the tunnel network of the subway system, and into the tunnels under Penn Station, and then the more distant and peaceful reaches of the Amtrak tunnels along the Hudson River in upper Manhattan. Seville moved deeper, too, downward into the darkest reaches of the underground.

“Once you’ve lived in one tunnel, you’ve lived in them all,” Seville says half-joking. “They’re all connected. The people are mostly the same, too. Homeless is homeless. The tracks are just another place to live, that’s all. Same people. Attitudes change. Some people will do anything for you, some of them are bad. Most of them don’t care, not about you or about themselves. They are totally unhappy with themselves. They won’t say that, but you can see. They can’t see it, but you can see.

“The tunnels are old. They look like catacombs. It’s a whole ‘nother world down there, separate from this one. Believe that. The worries you have up here, you don’t have down there. You don’t have rent worries, for one. You don’t have any bills to pay. You have a whole different attitude. Everyone’s on a different wavelength down there, and then every time you join a new group of people and move in, you find the direction they’re going—it’s like a circle. It’s family in a way, but limited, very limited. Like your family to a certain extent. You take on a role, and then you become like them even when you don’t know it’s happening.”

In some ways, tunnel life closest to the surface is the worst. “Under the train platforms,” Seville says, “you have to worry about rats. You can light small fires to keep them from jumping on you.” Police once found a body by the smell; he had died of an overdose and been picked at by rats. Seville shivers with the memory. The compartment, stretching the length of the platform and about ten feet deep, was home to about twenty men at the time, all heavily into drugs. They urinated and defecated where they lived. The odor was gagging.

After a year, Seville moved deeper underground to “the Condos,” a kind of natural cavern where over two hundred people lived. He had become friendly with a few men who lived there, and they convinced him to stop taking drugs. When he did, he said that they invited him to join their community, which is accessible from the tracks in Grand Central.

Few “did drugs” in the Condos. “Some were homosexuals, some straight, but mostly it was called the ‘Condos’ because the living environment was so good. It was easy to get water from a sprinkler pipe. You could set up shacks on the ground and find electric wires to screw in light bulbs. You could run clotheslines to dry your clothes. It was quiet and peaceful.”

The cliff was set back from the tracks so that beyond it, train noises could barely be heard, and police seldom had ventured that deep into the tunnels.

“I’d been looking for mole people for years, been patrolling those tracks, and never saw them,” Sergeant Henry once confided to me. “I only found them when I overheard people talk about the Condos in the terminal.”

Sergeant Henry and the Transit Police cleared out the Condos. Seville moved even deeper underground.

“The further down you go, the weirder people get, and I mean real weird,” Seville says. “There are people down there, man, I swear they have webbed feet.... Can’t hardly see them at times, they’re so sneaky. They make strange noises and sounds, like trains, but they aren’t trains; they’re communicating with each other. They said I could stay but that I could only be allowed to go back up with their permission. I ran from that place man, and I ain’t never going back. They’re the *mole people*.”

SEVILLE NOW FAVORS AN AMTRAK TUNNEL RUNNING UNDER HELL’S Kitchen along the West Side. The area is considered extremely dangerous by graffiti artists who paint flashy mosaics on the walls in tunnels as well as on the surface. For Seville, the most dangerous aspect is getting into the tunnel from the street. He usually slips through a gate in a chain link fence atop a natural rock crevasse. One day the gate was chained shut by police.

Trespassers had made a new entryway by bending up the lower section of the fence at one spot. “We used to crawl in feet first and then slide under, and the rocks on the side of the wall were like steps to get down part way. But you got to hold on. If you fall,” he says of the thirty-foot drop to the tracks, “you might not get killed but you’d be hurt something terrible. You climb down the side part way and then jump the last part. I fell once and broke my wrist. It was hanging like this, only backward,” he laughs, swinging a listless hand as if unjoined. Mechanics who work in the auto repair shop outside the fence saw him fall and climbed the fence to help. “One said, ‘Man, after that fall, I thought you’d be dead.’”

Even when he gets into the tunnels, as experienced as he is, Seville is not safe.

“The biggest danger is crossing tracks. They got tracks that interlock, and if your foot gets stuck, trapped, that train won’t be able to stop. It’s happened, and the people down there won’t risk their necks to help you out. I hate to say it, but I doubt they’d help you out.

“The people down there, I wouldn’t say they’re bad, but most of them are strung out. There is some kind of unity, but it fluctuates. It’s a mood thing. Whatever mood they have, they’ll act on and their mood changes twenty times a day, mostly because of drugs—coke, speed, and now heroin, if they got enough for it.”

After a while he continues, “Those people down there, they’re not used to people helping them—or them helping people. Like this guy who just got hit by a train up here last week.” The man was so drugged that he apparently did not hear the warning whistle of a train behind him. The train was moving too fast to even slow down. “There were people around who could have helped him, gone get him off the tracks but they don’t really care. They’re not going to risk their necks for you. That’s a fact. His girlfriend was there. She’s like most of the girls up here. They’re whores. She only with him cuz she think he can protect her.” He shakes his head and stays quiet for a minute.

“I knew this girl down there,” he resumes with a small smile. “Pretty little one. She’d be so strung out she would almost starve herself to death. I used to make her clean herself up. I used to drag her up top and she’d be crying, ‘Fuck you!’ But I’d get one of the gas station people to let her into their toilet and I wouldn’t let her come out til she was clean. Man, she was so pretty, she didn’t need to be turning tricks. She was in her early twenties maybe,” he remembers. “Maria.”

“She found a man,” he says, vaguely again, “that didn’t want nothing from her but to help her, and she came and surprised me. Came down to my couch in the tunnels and woke me up. ‘Wake up, Daddy, I got something for you,’ she said. Brought me lunch and everything. Looked clean and straight, real nice. Said she wasn’t coming back no more, and I haven’t seen her again,” he says wistfully. “I hope she made it.”

SEVILLE HESITATES BEFORE AGREEING TO TAKE ME DOWN INTO HIS tunnel. Because of his recently crippled foot, he can’t use the regular entrance over the eighteen-foot fence and down the steep, rocky tunnel face to the tracks, and he won’t let me go on my own.

“I don’t want that on my conscience,” he says, shaking his head. “If we see Franko or Shorty, I’ll let you go with them, but not on your own. There are people who are bugged out and people who are real crackheads and they’ll try to rob you, at least. That’s a fact, and you being in the tunnels alone, I don’t think there’s too far they wouldn’t go. No way I want that on my conscience. But I’ll show you where it is.”

« (/read-267812/?page=2#booktxt)	1 (/read-267812/?page=1#booktxt)	2 (/read-267812/?page=2#booktxt)
3 (/read-267812/?page=3#booktxt)	4 (/read-267812/?page=4#booktxt)	5 (/read-267812/?page=5#booktxt)
6 (/read-267812/?page=6#booktxt)	7 (/read-267812/?page=7#booktxt)	8 (/read-267812/?page=8#booktxt)
... (/read-267812/?page=31#booktxt)	32 (/read-267812/?page=32#booktxt)	» (/read-267812/?page=4#booktxt)
4		Перейти!