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Some Thoughts on Homesteading, Part IV - Do We Want to Live or are We Satisfied Just to Make a Living?

Hal Porter

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Disruption of Coles', cont'd

district? Could they not settle into such an area, and by working together get elected to the local school board, hire the kinds of teachers and bring in the kinds of influences which would offset the depersonalizing and dehumanizing bureaucratic regimentation? Much of the effort might take the form of volunteering to assist in the local school program, i.e., gifts of books, serving as librarian, recreational or noon-hour assistance, help with nature study projects, etc.

"Such experiments would not succeed overnight. It would take a few years, but my experience is that anyone who has clear goals, persistence and an ability to communicate enthusiasm and values to others is difficult to stop."

Influence Community

Rev. Kreves lets his imagination play. "Needless to say," he writes, "each regional School of Living group could buy out or create some small newspaper or duplicating business simply to infuse values into the larger society. We must not underestimate one factor: we live in a society which lacks rational planning,

a sense of ethical purpose and a dedication to a vital individualism. Within it is much disorganization and regimentation. When a small group is organized and its members know what they want, are persistent and able to avoid creating antagonism: when such a group pushes into a chaotic situation in which there is a vacuum, the small organized group will prevail."

Three Essentials

Mr. Kreves concludes with an evaluation of and gift to the School of Living, and lists prerequisites:

"Anyone who is at all aware of modern-day trends cannot help but realize the importance of the School of Living. It has a potential which is awesome, but the realization of that potential requires (1) intelligent, enthusiastic, cooperative members; (2) money; and (3) effective planning and organization which will create a strong international, national, regional and perhaps state or provincial units. Progress will come when those three situations exist. Please accept the enclosed \$30, and count my wife and me as members, greatly wanting to be of help."

Letters To The Editor

Congratulations!

To the Editor:

Hoorah! I've found a nature girl. I thought it an impossibility. We envelop and consume organic gardening, nature study, poetry and philosophy with gusto!

Where, oh where, are sunlit sprawling wooded dells, and few shingled windowed cells? We have an eye beamed toward the Arkansas highlands, but nothing definite. An encouraging word is welcomed from fellow naturalists. The Green Revolution will most certainly flourish. — David Arnold, R. R. 2, Iron River, Mich.

A Salute to Adequacy

To the Editor:

Bless the June and Farrar Burns of the world! The account of their homestead in the April *Green Revolution* nudged me to reread their "unconventional autobiography," *Living High*.

I would like each member of our local SCOPE (poverty program) committee to read this book and this story of their "Place" with June Burn's 8-point program for rich living while being, what she calls, poor. There is no poverty of spirit, nor of the pocketbook either. Simple, thrifty living, yes; but with land, shelter, equipment, knowledge and health, the Burns are surely adequate to the general needs of life. And what homesteader isn't in this "good" condition? Why don't we use the School of Living term "adequacy" to express our material level of living, as quite different from either poverty or affluence?

What is needed is more of the Burns' philosophy — they have something not bought with dollars — time to live and to enjoy their living. Sometimes I have a sneaking suspicion that the "poor" in our rural Ohio county whom we do-gooders are so bent on helping have this straight and are living "the good life" in their own terms.

Would that our national "poverty program" had more of the philosophy and practice of the Burns, the Hal Porters and other homesteaders. Isn't a good goal one in which the "poor" become creatively and joyfully "adequate"? — Rose Smart, Sycamore Hollow Homestead, West Alexandria, Ohio.

You Are 18

Dear Trudy Miller:

Your letter in February *Green Revolution* provokes a response and I would like to talk to you.

Probably I am about as old as your father — since I've been aware of Mildred Loomis' activities for more than 20 years. Just

about everything that you find so good, so zestful, so honest, so kind I have never known. I have never lived on a farm, nor milked either cow or goat, I've known no bees, had no cats, rarely saw a piece of wood, seldom driven a nail, never swam nude in a creek, found no turtles, saw no geese, picked no berries, found no eggs, built neither shed nor shack. Furthermore, I've but once ever touched a donkey, never had any pigeons, never saw a calving and wouldn't recognize rhubarb.

Your father is a very intelligent man; I am merely educated. His are the true ways, his daughter the sane and fruitful proof. Mine are the barren ways, the tired pursuit of dull money, the dying courage to do half of that which your father accomplished. He, as I see it, has enriched the earth and the race, and men like me have merely occupied space, making noises and gestures and many promises all of which are as hollow as our hearts.

You are 18! Imagine; I was once 18. Mildred was once 18. The years tarnish, so you must love, Trudy, with a raging exuberance, your father to whom you owe so much more than the trite things one finds on Christmas cards. Things that go way back, when America was herself young and clean and glad and free. You are a fragment, paradoxically, of the glorious past of each of us. And you are the radiance we all search amidst the gathering gloom.

May all your years be forever 18.

Chester Dawson

Box 2048

Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Student For Homesteading

To the Editor:

I am a student at Goddard College, who for a long time has been interested in natural living, organic farming, homesteading, etc. Would you happen to know of any jobs on a homestead for this summer? I enjoy all types of work, especially ones in which I come in contact with the earth. — Virginia Gilmer, Northwoods campus, Goddard College, Plainfield, Vt.

Anti-Stress Cocktail

To the Editor:

We have experienced real help from nutrition in overcoming emotional depression. In her latest book, Adelle Davis tells about an anti-stress cocktail. Before I read it I had worked out one for us consisting of rose hip powder, brewer's yeast, bone-meal, soy flour and sesame seed meal. Whenever I get blue or discouraged I immediately start

doubling up on this stress cocktail, especially on the rose hip powder and yeast, or desiccated liver tablets. I find that this helps me snap out of it within 24 hours.

As for news of our Farmette:

We have nine new bunnies. In one cage of four we're experimenting on feeding weeds, garden produce and much comfrey (completely home-fed organically). Our 16 hens (cross between Rhode Island Reds and Plymouth Rocks) are averaging 13 eggs a day, fed mostly on weeds. I won't rouse your envy by reporting our present (April 24) harvest in the garden, but blackberries and strawberries surely taste good—with a pint going in the freezer for every one we eat. Sweet corn is tasselling out. — Hal Porter, Rt. 1, Box 1742, Port Orange, Fla.

Plans Home School

To the Editor:

To our family of two children, we have added a nine-year-old boy. Their education poses a problem, and we are thinking of starting a homestead school. Three years of teaching in public school (upper, middle and slum class neighborhoods) plus hearing what goes on in our local schools, combined with my own theories and reading convince me that I could do a better job in less time and with less cash outlay than a not-so-nearby private school. State law forbids teaching children at home here unless it is a school which others attend. Hope authorities won't require many facilities we don't have or want. We would be interested in hearing from others who have tackled home education or small schools. — Helen Ryan, Fiddlers Choice, Rt. 1, Box 91, Franklin, N. H. 03235

Free Space For Help

To the Editor:

We offer spaces for 3 to 6 trailers at our 4½ acre property in Ripely, Calif. There is rich sandy loam garden soil there, a fine sunny winter climate and excellent fishing within two miles. In order to get some improvement under way we will not charge for trailer people of the right quality to stay there. They could help, in return, in building a bath house and possibly a swimming pool. Weather is ideal October to May. — Paul Marks, Box N, Los Banos, Calif.

Publications For The Homesteader

National Stock Dog magazine, quarterly, \$2 a year, \$5 for 3 years. E. G. Emanuel, Rt. 1, Butler, Ind. 46721

Peace of Mind Thru Nature, \$1. Backwoods Journal, Paradox 5, N. Y. \$2 a year, sample 35c.

Hygienic Review, \$4 a year. Herbert Shelton, Editor. Box 1277, San Antonio, Texas.

California Homeowners, quarterly, \$2 a year. 1561 N. Gower, Los Angeles 90028

Dairy Goat Journal, monthly, \$2 a year. Box 836, Columbia 35, Mo.

American Rationalist, \$4:50 a year, liberal religious viewpoint. Box 742, St. Louis, Mo.

Mankind Go Home, by Russel Jaque, simple life, handcrafted, \$2 from School of Living.

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Some Thoughts on Homesteading, Part IV—

Do We Want To Live Or Are We Satisfied Just To Make A Living?

By Hal Porter

Necessary supplemental homestead income could very easily come through raising high-priced ornamentals or even scarce luxury food. It might even come from raising organically-grown vegetables for the increasing number of followers of the natural food program. I know one man, over 80 years old, who makes an average of \$900 a year just raising big tomatoes and selling them right from his home on a suburban street. Flowers, nursery stock also present opportunities. (However, the last one has its dangers; in Florida they have a licensing and inspection system which is supposed to prevent the spread of nematodes and other plant diseases, though of course it doesn't do this because the only protection from nematodes and other plant diseases is healthy soil filled with organic matter which itself destroys such pests and troubles.)

Things get irritating to a person who wishes to avoid laws and law enforcers. One of the tragic factors of modern life is the way in which the body politic passes laws to cure all troubles, especially in the fields of morals, health, economic welfare and traffic. Of course this is very convenient. We can pass a law which says we must not do so and so and should do such and such, and then can forget about the whole matter. The fact that the law is unenforceable and even if it were enforced would help matters little is largely ignored. After all, we can virtuously say, "We made it against the law for people to be sick; if they would respect the law they would all be well."

A Working, Unfinished Entity

To get back to the dream homestead. With a house built, containing a harvest-kitchen, a well for water, septic tank for human wastes, animals for eating and to produce manures for the soil (and even these manures would have to be supplemented by others hauled in for many years to build up the soil), vegetable and fruit growing, the homestead would be a working entity. But it would not be finished. I would never want it finished, everything all done up neatly, shrubbery trimmed, lawn manicured. If the day ever came when there was no more expansion, change and beautification (oh yes, I would raise lots of flowers and flowering vines, trees, and shrubs; I would like to have as many as possible also to provide food but would want some just for looks, to perfume the air, and to furnish food and shelter for birds, bees, butterflies, and other animal life of the ecology), if it was ever finished, then I, too, would be finished. With nothing left to do except maintain the status quo I would be ready to lie down and die. It is a law of nature that there must be growth or death ensues.*

Farming vs. Homesteading

I am not really worried about this happening. Building a homestead is a never-ending process. If one thinks of it that way, there is an enormous amount of work to be done. But I do not think of gardening, growing things, tending and feeding animals and other chores around the homestead as work.

Such an attitude defeated our ancestors. To them life was a matter of dreary toil and a continuous fight for existence. Part of this was due to the fact that to them the farm was a business. They raised crops to sell to get the money to buy the necessities of life and a few luxuries. Their main effort was what is called "making a living." If the homestead is the living, the work becomes not toil but a pleasant way

of spending time.

Part of their attitude was due to the before-mentioned notion that farm chores were degrading and that there was some mystical advantage gained if one provided for that which is needed to maintain life (like food, shelter, and clothing) by using the brain and letting others do the work. The fact that such a way of life was in actuality a retreat from life still escapes millions of people.

One of the most ridiculous ideas of modern life is expressed by the dweller of the suburbs who works hard in an office to make enough money to pay someone to mow his lawn so that he will have time to play golf for exercise.

Work With Nature

Such an attitude toward work is only one of the many that is not compatible with successful homesteading. In a recent issue of *A Way Out* I find a reference to Man's struggle with nature. I fail to see why there should be any struggle. In any fight with nature I am sure that man would lose; but I am also convinced that if a man works with nature he can't help but win.

This is well illustrated by the attitude of members of Alcoholics Anonymous toward alcohol. They believe that a man who fights alcohol is bound to lose but one who surrenders will win. The first thing he must do is to admit that he is powerless over alcohol. Taking it from there, he can maintain sobriety.

To be successful with my homestead I will have to take the attitude that if I fight nature, or the ecology in which I live, I am doomed, but if I live as a part of that ecology I will survive.

(to be continued)

"Fiddlers' Choice" Homestead Notes

By Helen Ryan
Franklin, N. H.

I've just read Hal Porter's lively account of what he'd do if he were beginning homesteading now, and it makes me ask some questions. (And give my answers.)

Why bother to try to hide a house? Why not pick a community that has no building permits or codes? There must be others, besides the one we live in, that have none of these restrictions. I cannot imagine any rural community where comings and goings into a previously unsettled area would go unnoticed. Word would get around before your second truckload (or backpack) of materials was brought in that someone was building in there. However, one can avoid a lot of taxes by being inaccessible. We still pay only the taxes for our land, \$8.80 per year, as the town has not accepted our abandoned road yet. They plan to, and we need to be accessible to others, so eventually we'll be taxed for our buildings, too.

Composting Outhouse

Why are plumbing, flush toilets, etc., so important? Some I agree would be convenient and worthwhile — running water would speed up the time to do the laundry, and electric lights would increase the number of things one could do in the winter. Also, my electric sewing machine enables me to do more mending faster. We plan on electricity eventually.

However, our composting outhouse operation is far more efficient and less wasteful than a flush toilet—and takes less care. We have three concrete bins, each about 6 sq. ft. with a concrete pad bottom to prevent seepage. (We wanted to experiment with something that could be used in less isolated situations where seepage might cause complaints as well as loss of fertilizer.) A small outhouse sits over the bin in use, and is moved (continued on page 3)

*[I have heard there is an old Chinese saying which, translated, is: "When the house is finished, the master dies"—Ed.]