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A Shower for Heathcote Center

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What Does Homesteading Mean For Us?—

Homestead Drainage: When We Tried Machines, They Couldn't Do The Job

By Carl Ogren
Rt. 3, Paw Paw, Mich.

Part VI

There weren't any buildings when we moved onto our original 46 acres, so we lived in a tent from March to October, at which time we moved into our newly-built garage-house. In the meantime I worked 70 hours a week while the family built the garage-house. That was the first year. The second year I plowed up about 7 acres. The third spring, after discing down the 7 acres and getting the roots out, we started planting.

We soon found out something we hadn't expected. Scattered irregularly all over the field were saucer-shaped depressions. They were all sizes, ranging from less than 10 feet across up to around 40. After a good, downpouring rain, water would stand in them from an inch or two deep up to 8 and 10 inches. In the spring this water would stand for several weeks, and after the heavy rains later in the season it might last for several days or a week. The vegetation in these places was poor, running heavily to weeds like curly dock, etc. This was our introduction to "hardpan."

We soon found out that there were also such things as "claypan" and "plowpan." (We figured we had all three.) When we talked to farmers about our standing water, they told us about hardpan. When I tried to set a few fence posts in the dry month of August, nobody had to explain about it to me anymore; I had met Mr. Hardpan face to face. We set fence posts at all different times of the year, and that gave me a good chance to study this pan condition. Naturally we had to do something about it.

The Sub-Soiler

About this time a friend at the shop had introduced me to organic farming, in particular the books of Friend Sykes (of England). Sykes tells about the wonderful work of the sub-soiler. We bought a new John Deere wheel-less sub-soiler and went to work with it. We sub-soiled 6 acres one year, and more two years later. It helped, but it wasn't the answer. Where the pan was hardest our tractor didn't have power enough to pull thru, and we'd have to skip that part. Even worse, the job threatened to break down the tractor completely, and we had to give up that approach.

Time marched on, and we endured a grudging coexistence with our "wet spots." Meanwhile, we had become thoroughly serious about our organic farming, to the point, in fact, where we found ourselves studying the technical aspects of hardpans and drainage as they are presented in the textbooks. What we gleaned we tried to apply to our own farm situation.

Part of our education had been to absorb the ideas in Faulkner's *Plowman's Folly*, and when these were grafted onto what we had learned about drainage and our convictions on organic farming with humor, it came out like this: what we needed to do was to arrange for natural waterways to make surface drainage effective and let our organic farming practices take care of the sub-surface conditions (in other words, the hardpan). We proposed, in plain English, to leave our saucers alone except to fix them up with drainage channels which would carry the water away. Presto—no more standing water!

The Grader

This required either a helluva lot of shovel work, or machinery. We chose machinery. We scoured the countryside for a trailer-type grader. We briefly rented a slip scraper. We borrowed a rollover scraper (which eventually was given to us). We looked at catalogs (you guessed it, like Sears Roebuck). We even drove up one

cold January Saturday to the lots for used heavy machinery in Grand Rapids. While there, I actually drove (after they managed to get it started) one of those BIG diesel, four-wheeler road graders. We were tempted (I could just see 40 acres getting leveled, parade ground flat, in one weekend with THAT monster), but we couldn't stretch our pocketbook to cover the payments right away. We had to wait.

The Bulldozer

Good thing! In the meantime we picked up some more ideas along the way, and some years later decided that a bulldozer was what we needed. Eventually that's what we got. But that didn't work either.

One of the ideas we'd picked up along the way was: permanent, grassland farming. But slicing partway thru a heavy sod was too much for our bulldozer. It was either leave the sod alone or roll the whole thing up, which I did not want to do. You can't imagine how tough a heavy sod is till you try to work it. Stumps I could get out, but slicing sod was too much.

This set the stage for some solid, practical progress—at long last.

Exit machinery; enter simple organic homesteading. We'll tell about that next time.

April, cont'd

ing clubs. He has helped develop an urban group to buy eggs cooperatively and to pool their savings toward the purchase of a farm. Some members would then live on the farm to produce eggs and other food for their urban members. This aroused the interest of all present as a practical next step. Several called for more discussion. Roger Wilkes offered to organize a conference, with Don Newey as resource leader, to go into this further and discover whether it could be extended to Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. The weekend of July 4-7 was set for this continued searching and planning at Heathcote.

Heathcote Operation

Heathcote residents, School of Living board members present, and others interested met in a concluding session. Satisfaction was expressed with current operations at Heathcote. Four residents do the work cooperatively: Evan Lefever is printer and maintenance man; Marilyn Dorsey handles School of Living bookkeeping and mailing, as well as other activities; Betty Rauh assists in all of these; and Dave Wayfield is chief homesteader, having installed goats, chickens, etc. These four plan and work together and share an evening meal.

Bill Anacher helps in the overall planning. He helped get the big garden tilled and ready, and conference members planted 500 feet of peas, carrots and onions. He will engineer the creation of a lake, a small pond, and a larger swimming hole on the premises this summer.

Roger Wilkes offered to join this group, to add his skills wherever useful but with particular reference to promotion and outreach of the School of Living. This was welcomed by all, and Roger becomes part of the cooperative staff in early May.

Marilyn Dorsey is paid a small salary, but all the others work as volunteers. Our hope is that remuneration will be forthcoming from the increased income from their activities.

Spring has come! Heathcote looks forward to a busy and happy summer, in which hopefully many School of Living members and friends will share.

IF YOUR EMPLOYER WON'T STOP PAYING TAX WHEN YOU ASK HIM TO, FIND ONE WHO WILL.

The Hopis, cont'd

Deer-hoof and turtle-shell rattles are worn on the right leg, a strap of bells on the left. What holds attention is the distinctive head-dress. Surmounting a ruff of spruce around the throat, the face mask is painted yellow on the left side, blue on the right, and above this rises a blue cloud-terrace tiara tufted with heads of wild wheat and downy eagle feathers, and topped by two eagletail and two parrot feathers. Just above the face a red rainbow arches over a field of white on which is painted a frog or butterfly."

How must it feel to be inside all that, to be an "ordinary Indian" taking the part of a kachina?

In each of the ceremonies, man's actions are carefully related to what is happening in nature and in the whole cosmos. The ceremonials have both a historical and a present meaning. They are not merely something repeated from the past, they also stress the importance of man's continuing participation in the rhythm of life, that he must be fully in on the on-going now.

(continued next month)

Banded Families Could Do Things

By Nancy Davidson
Rt. 1, Easton, Pa.

All over the Western industrialized world, individuals and families resent our loss of identity as governments push us into big business, war and welfare statism. We are frightened at the manipulation of our own and our children's lives. But I believe many people, realizing the trap we are in, can decide not to waste energies in futility. We can put our treasure into command of our own lives. We can band together in small groups of seeking families.

Difference and Loneliness

We all know the fear of being different. We know the pressures put on persons who stand out from the crowd, especially if we live in a village or town where criticism is close and constant. Many of us are afraid of loneliness. Yes we are a gregarious lot: we love companionship. Yet we have sold our birthright of shared work and conversation to the Machine. What is left of these joys is on a very low level. Accepting this low level, we do not really respect ourselves. And this unconscious disrespect takes away our courage, confidence and imagination.

The friendships we form on this lowered scale of contact are generally weak. Most of them cannot be counted on in a pinch, do not yield the joys friendships should yield. We are scared by the divisiveness of our culture. If we had friends to love and be loved by, friends motivated by fundamental values, friends outside our own four walls and family relationships, it would be possible to combat the loneliness of being different. It would give us the support we need to live the life we all know in our hearts we are searching and longing for.

Band Together

But all that is necessary is to band together—three or four or five families. If each household acknowledges to the others that it is seeking better values, fuller life in shared companionship and work, is aware of the necessity of presenting solid values in a living context for the children, the families involved could take cheer. Such banded families may be told by others that they are escaping or are unable to face reality. But a truer statement is that the current, sophisticated, aggressive values in our culture have little reality in them. It is necessary for those of us who are unhappy with the current way of life—who yet are not rebels or changers of the world—it is necessary for us to evolve a stable world for ourselves, to shape an I-Thou world that can operate no matter what happens. We in a small group of three to five families can make and live this new life. It will not proselytize;

it will not upset the status quo; is not violent, aims at love and combats the evil of separative-ness.

Importance of Avowal

An avowal is all that is necessary to band together several families. Cannot an avowal, based on goodness, bind consenting families together? Give a sense of purpose, joy, working together as a unit small enough for all to feel the force of acting without apathy? Suppose in a square mile half a dozen such families banded together (in town, city, but the best possible functioning would be in the country). This avowal of love and working together among small groups would break down barriers set up by government, technology and business. In making this avowal to one another no laws would be broken, no trespass committed on the rights of others.

Such groups, for permanence and resilience, must be spiritually independent of government. They must never be dependent for their subsistence on government. Such families understand that government will receive an exorbitant share of taxes from them: they will enter into no illegal activity, but they will also be aware that they expect nothing from present government. They know that government may send them all off into Kingdom Come. These groups derive security from shared love and work toward a good life on their own small scale. These groups make their own world. They do not own land in common. They ought to live not more than three miles from one another. A sense of privacy and peace is vital to their basic values. These banded families should form among neighbors: they should expect not to belong to any organized groups outside the activities of the families, except perhaps church and school. These groups can meet together in one another's homes, children may be taught at home. They could make use—together or in separate families—of Silence and Silent Meeting, thinking of how to improve their lives, how to be kinder, more aware, acknowledging the Presence, standing in thankfulness and humility before creation.

Subsistent Activities

Individual families should have enough land to grow produce and raise animals, to be free from earning much money. Swapping surplus between families would be common. A supply of meat, milk and eggs, with some steady income, is necessary. Homes can be built on cheap land (with water) or an old one bought cheaply to be repaired. All productive activities reduce dependence on cash, and give purpose and usefulness to lives of both adults and children. Women can have reading circles and sew and mend as they discuss. Great books may be read aloud and discussed. Times of canning and preserving can be shared. Building projects, singing groups, dancing and farm work can be shared.

Such groups would not separate from others nearby, or become ingrown. Pleasant association and activity can be maintained with non-members. Nor should children be sequestered or withdrawn from public school. Both adults and children can live a good private life aware of, and in spite of, the surrounding culture.

Fulfill Basic Human Rights

Such banded families in many respects fulfill ten basic human rights as I see them:

1. The right to ownership of land;
2. The right to live fundamentally without harming others;
3. The right to think rationally and believe in order, purpose and beauty;
4. The need to express beauty and have full scope through love and confidence generated in the group;
5. To live independently of government, yet undertake no activity outside the law;
6. The right to get at the reality of life;
7. The right to live in small face-to-face groups;

A Shower For Heathcote Center

Heathcote School of Living Center could function much better with the following items. Please send or bring these when you come to Heathcote:

Mimeograph and photocopier for the office, paring knives, large cutting knives, bread knife, large stirring or mixing spoons, small cereal bowls, mugs or cups, pitcher for hot drinks, tea towels, hand towels, bath towels, hot dish mats, brooms, dustpan and brush, garden tools, work gloves, sponges, wire mesh baskets, cutting boards, blender, cheese cutter, bread pans, large stainless steel mixing bowls and cooking kettles.

Thanks for help in outfitting your School of Living headquarters.

Order Books From School of Living

Definition of Definition, Borsodi, \$2. (The problem of communication.)

Education and Living, Borsodi, 2 vols., \$3.50. (Abnormal and normal society.)

Education of the Whole Man, Borsodi, \$6. (the educational problem.)

Get Well Naturally, L. Clark, \$5.95.

Go Ahead and Live!, M. J. Loomis, \$4.15.

How to Get Out of the Rat Race, Herber, \$4.15.

Island, A. Huxley, \$1 (Community.)

Let's Eat Right, Adelle Davis, \$4.

Money and Interest, Benjamin Tucker, \$3.

Normal Neurosis, G. & S. Putney, \$4.

Poems for a Green Revolution, Dawton, \$1.

Progress and Poverty, Henry George, \$2.

Seventeen Problems, Borsodi, \$8.95.

Send for book lists and let us order other books for you.

Order from:

School of Living Books
Heathcote Center
Freeland, Md. 21053

Minerals, cont'd

grown the way this 18-month-old calf's food was grown, it would do more good than all the doctors, lawyers, preachers and politicians in the world.

Standardizing Minerals

Here is the process, known as Stamina, to create such soil. (It follows the plan of Albert Carter Savage, Nicholasville, Ky., who has done much in producing high quality food from use of crushed inorganic minerals, with proper addition of organic matter and mulching.)

Analyze the soil, when possible and practical, for the three major chemical elements, nitrogen, potash and phosphate, and for some of the more important minor elements, such as calcium, magnesium and iron.

Use Devonian shale, dolomite, colloidal phosphate and a limestone which will support a growth of moss on rock exposed to air, to get what is needed in these elements, and you will get the trace minerals and other minor elements needed. Seaweed can be used in place of Devonian shale; wood ashes boost potash.

Do not turn the soil over with a plow, but rather use a rotary tiller or cutting disk to work the organic matter into the top or three inches, then mulch the soil with as much organic matter as is available, leaving none of the soil exposed to rain, sun and wind any longer than is necessary. If organic matter is being composted so that soil can get a quicker availability of nutrients, then use these minerals in the compost.

8. The right to privacy;
9. The right to companionship and community;
10. The right to a coherent world and continuity through support of sound values.