Betsy’s Fall Report from the Farm

The past summer was an odd one! With only one period of hot and dry weather, the frequent rains sprouted many weeds, and lessened the time to deal with them. In some parts of the garden we clearly lost that battle!

Our dear goat Frida was a first time mother in April, and in due time we started to milk her. Her kids were moved to sleep in another shed, so we can get our share of milk once a day. The kids then return to their mothers during the day. The kids were less trouble getting into this routine than Frida. For weeks she tried all kinds of stunts and gymnastics, like a bucking bronco, disrupting the smooth extraction of milk from her udders, and testing my patience sorely! Eventually the antics subsided, before the milking stand was completely demolished, which I feared some mornings. These days she hops up there and stands and eats her grain, as a model milk goat should, and that rough patch at the beginning shall be forgotten. By August Hilary, our rookie milker, graduated from just milking Bonnie to doing both goats on her own.

One pleasant surprise this summer was the beautiful crop of peaches on our young peach tree. We had not attempted growing peaches before, being at the northern edge of their range, but with good reports of some of the new, hardy varieties we ventured and one year after planting got a couple dozen of our own delicious peaches—and learned how fast you need to use them! Not a big problem! Peach pie, peach cobbler and peach jam—all delicious.

July also held the County Fair, Brian’s trip to Cleveland, and deliveries to the Uhlenkamp family who got a weekly share from our garden on for 22 weeks. At the beginning of August I had a trip to Buffalo to see Elijah, my sister Kathy and some other friends. While in the Buffalo area I was able to speak about the Catholic Worker movement at 5 Masses at my home parish in Orchard Park, NY, Nativity of Our Lord, by the invitation of the pastor after he heard from a friend and former neighbor of mine that a person from the parish had become a Catholic Worker.

Saturday the 27th of August we took off after chores and drove to the southwest corner of Wisconsin to visit and celebrate and new Catholic Worker Farm named for St Isidore. Two families who had lived at the New Hope Farm near Dubuque in Iowa have moved to a new location and are making a new start farming there, learning, designing their site for their needs and building community. They have a wonderful dwelling there, and were about to get some solar panels installed to increase their energy sustainability. A barn was being used for usual farm purposes on the lower level and above served well for a barn dance with live music for the celebration. They envision it as a great space of educational events, as well as celebrations.

September brought the peak of our tomato canning for the season—not so much as the best years, but more than last year. We enjoyed plenty of fresh tomatoes, especially the little yellow pear tomatoes and the Green Zebras.

Continued on page 6
A Visit to Russia

For “Life Extension” of the Planet

Brian Terrell

On October 9, I was in the Nevada desert with Catholic Workers from around the world for an action of prayer and nonviolent resistance at what is now called the Nevada National Security Site, the test site where between 1951 and 1992, nine hundred and twenty-eight documented atmospheric and underground nuclear tests occurred. Since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the apparent end of the Cold War, The National Nuclear Security Administration, NNSA, has maintained the site, circumventing the intent of the treaty with a stated “mission to maintain the stockpile without explosive underground nuclear testing.”

Three days earlier, as if to remind us that the test site is not a relic with exclusively historic significance, the NNSA announced that earlier in the month, two B-2 Stealth Bombers from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri dropped two dummy B61 nuclear bombs at the site. “The primary objective of flight testing is to obtain reliability, accuracy, and performance data under operationally representative conditions,” said the NNSA press release. “Such testing is part of the qualification process of currentalterations and life extension programs for weapon systems.”

“The B61 is a critical element of the U.S. nuclear triad and the extended deterrent,” said Brig. Gen. Michael Lutton, NNSA’s principal assistant deputy administrator for military application. “The recent surveillance flight tests demonstrate NNSA’s commitment to ensure all weapon systems are safe, secure, and effective.”

General Lutton and the NNSA do not explain what threat the testing of B61 nuclear bombs is meant to deter. The military industrial complex, including the “life extension programs for weapon systems” the U.S. intends to spend a trillion dollars on over the next decades, is not a response to any real threat but exists only to perpetuate itself. For public consumption, however, expenditures of this magnitude require justification. The not so subtle message that this was a “dry run” of a nuclear attack on Russia was not missed by the media that picked up the story.

Shortly after leaving Nevada, I was in Moscow, Russia, as part of a small delegation representing Voices for Creative Nonviolence from the United States and United Kingdom. Over the next 10 days in Moscow and St. Petersburg, we saw nothing of the massive preparations for war there that are being reported in the Western media. We saw no sign of and no one we spoke to knew anything about the widely reported evacuation of 40 million Russians in a civil defense drill. “Is Putin preparing for WW3?” asked one U.K. tabloid on October 14: “Following a breakdown in communication between the USA and Russia, the Kremlin organized the huge emergency practice drill - either as a show of force or something more sinister.” This drill turned out to be an annual review that firefighters, hospital workers and police routinely conduct to evaluate their capacities to manage potential natural and manmade disasters.

Over the past years I have visited many of the world’s major cities and Moscow and St. Petersburg are the least militarized of any I’ve seen. Visiting the White House in Washington, DC, for example, one cannot miss seeing uniformed Secret Service agents with automatic weapons patrolling the fence line and the silhouettes of snipers on the roof. In contrast, even at Red Square and the Kremlin, the seat of the Russian government, only a few lightly armed police officers are visible. They seemed mainly occupied with giving directions to tourists.

Traveling on the cheap, lodging in hostels, eating in cafeterias and taking public transportation is a great way to visit any region and it gave us opportunities to meet people we would not otherwise have met. We followed up on contacts made by friends who had visited Russia earlier and we found ourselves in a number of Russian homes. We did take in some of the sights, museums, cathedrals, a boat ride on the Neva, etc., but we also visited a homeless
shelter and offices of human rights groups and attended a Quaker meeting. On one occasion we were invited to address students in a language school in a formal setting, but most of our encounters were small and personal and we did more listening than talking.

I am not sure that the term “Citizen Diplomacy” can be accurately applied to what we did and experienced in Russia. Certainly the four of us, me from Iowa, Erica Brock from New York, David Smith-Ferri from California and Susan Clarkson from England, hoped that by meeting Russian citizens we could help foster better relations between our nations. On the other hand, as much as the term suggests that we were acting even informally to defend or explain our governments’ actions, interests and policies, we were not diplomats. We did not go to Russia with the intention of putting a human face on or in any way justifying our countries’ policies toward Russia. There is a sense, though, that the only genuine diplomatic efforts being made between the U.S. and NATO countries at this time are citizen initiatives like our own little delegation. What the U.S. State Department calls “diplomacy” is actually aggression by another name and it is questionable whether the U.S. is capable of true diplomacy while it surrounds Russia with military bases and “missile defense” systems and carries out massive military maneuvers near its borders.

I am conscious of the need to be humble and not to overstate or claim any expertise. Our visit was less than two weeks long and we saw little of a vast country. Our hosts reminded us continually that the lifestyles and views of Russians outside their country’s largest cities might be different from theirs. Still, there is so little knowledge of what is going on in Russia today that we need to speak the little we have to offer.

While we heard a wide variety of views on many crucial issues, there seems to be a consensus among those we met about the impossibility of a war between Russia and U.S./NATO. The war that many of our politicians and pundits see clearly on the horizon as inevitable is not only unlikely, it is unthinkable, to the Russian people we talked with. None of them thinks that our countries’ leaders would be so crazy as to allow the tensions between them to bring us to a nuclear war.

In the United States, Presidents Bush and Obama are often credited for “fighting the war over there so we don’t have to fight it here.” In St. Petersburg we visited the Piskaya Memorial Park, where hundreds of thousands of the one million victims of the German’s siege of Leningrad are buried in mass graves. In World War II, more than 22 million Russians were killed, most of these civilians. Russians, more than Americans, know that the next world war will not be fought on a faraway battlefield.

Russian students laughed at the joke, “If the Russians are not trying to provoke a war, why did they put their country in the middle of all these U.S. military bases?” But I ruefully told them that due to our nation’s professed exceptionalism, many Americans would not see the humor in it. Rather, a double standard is considered normal. When Russia responds to military maneuvers by the U.S. and its NATO allies on its borders by increasing its defense readiness inside its borders, this is perceived as a dangerous sign of aggression. This summer in Poland, for example, thousands of U.S. troops participated in NATO military maneuvers, “Operation Anakonda” (even spelled with a “k,” an anaconda is a snake that kills its victim by surrounding and squeezing it to death) and when Russia responded by augmenting its own troops inside Russia, this response was regarded a threat. The hyped up proposition that Russia might be conducting civil defense drills raises suspicion that Russia is preparing to launch World War III. Yet, a practice run, dropping mock nuclear bombs in Nevada, is not viewed in the West “as a show of force or something more sinister,” but only as an indication of a “commitment to ensure all weapon systems are safe, secure, and effective.”

The life extension of our planet needs to be a universal goal. To speak of, let alone pour a nation’s wealth into a program of “life extension programs for weapon systems” is nothing short of madness. Our Russian friends’ confidence in our collective sanity and the steadiness of our leadership, especially in the wake of the recent election, is a great challenge. I am grateful to new friends for the warmth and generosity of their welcome and I hope to visit Russia again before long. As important and satisfying as these “citizen diplomatic” encounters are, however, we must honor these friendships through active resistance to the arrogance and exceptionalism that might lead the U.S. to a war that could destroy us all.
Hilary Burbank

Earlier this year on a snow covered morning, I sat down to write Betsy an e-mail. While I work closely with farmers and gardeners in my job and have continued to try my hand in my small garden at home, I haven’t had much hands-on experience getting to work alongside an experienced farmer. I had a specific interest in not only working in the soil but also getting to know the goats and the responsibilities they entail. I sat down with my calendar marking off a long weekend each month from April through September that I would plan to visit Betsy and Brian at the Strangers and Guests Farm in Maloy, Iowa. I knew I needed to mark the dates early and have the accountability of assigning specific dates to this plan as time moves quickly and calendars fill up. This fast paced tendency was also a “reality” I was looking to push back against.

The lack of “charging forward” has always drawn me back to the farm in Maloy. There is always work, but there is consistently an ecological rhythm to the day. Space is carved out to cook, eat communally, sit, read, and reflect. The work itself is a part of the reflection process as I learn through each task at hand. Making mozzarella or feta is not a complex process yet there is no skipping ahead or brushing over details. Waiting for exact temperatures and stirring the curd gently for twenty minutes force you to slow your pace and be in your work.

In the morning, I would walk outside, my boots cleaned by the morning dewy grass. Whitenose, the most lovely farm cat I have ever met, would greet me, emerging from the bushes. We would walk together down to the goat barn where Frida and Bonnie would pop their heads out of the windows wondering what we had been doing all morning while they’d been up watching the sun rise. Whitenose joins the litter of orange cats waiting for their breakfast. First it’s dry cat food per usual, but their purring starts up automatically as they see the milk bucket, dreaming about the warm milk on their tongue. Frida, by force or possibly mutual agreement, goes first onto the milking stand, enjoying her breakfast. As I sit next to Frida or Bonnie with my cheek on her belly, milking, I am honored by the process I am a part of. While sometimes there is chaos on the milk stand, between new mamas who jump and kick or cats drunk on the potential of milk rubbing along the bucket trying to stick their tail or heads inside, there is also a sweet intimacy that is created by being down at the animal’s level. The milk spraying out at each squeeze is such incredible matter. The baby goats, cats, humans and even the chickens all benefit from this process. As the milk moves into the kitchen it transformed in many forms through a whole host of chemical processes, each creating such different outcomes.

While recently in a yoga class, working through the various poses, leading up to a handstand, the teacher said, “The handstand itself isn’t even as hard as the poses leading up to it. There are lots of poses you can get into without doing the work to get into them the right way, but they just don’t sing the same way. When you truly master each stage of the pose, it truly sings.”

Not only do the acts of milking, processing and making cheese, cause the cheese to “sing” as you eat it on your homemade pizza but it goes deeper than that. I am inspired by the deeply rooted work and lifestyle that Brian and Betsy have forged in their almost 30 years in Maloy. Intimately knowing a piece of land for that long augments...
those seasonal intimacies that are found with each new baby goat, a new crop of sweet potatoes or this season’s okra.

As we worked on hot afternoons hoeing and tilling and re-tilling new beds my body ached in new ways and my soft hands tightened. I look at Betsy, 30+ years my senior, and was amazed by how her body, her strength, has adapted to her place in the world. This type of connection to your land base is a key characteristic of the vision of deep ecology which focuses on our “profound interconnectedness with one another, with future generations, and to the web of life” (Jacob Taylor). Our current environmental crisis is not simply an over-use of our resources but has been born out of an increasing disconnection from the ecology that surrounds us. Ecology encompasses not only the physical environment and its resources, but rather the rhythms, interconnectedness and interactions of all forms of life.

While recently visiting the Carnival de Resistance, a traveling arts carnival focused on themes of environmental justice, resistance, and radical theology, I found a zine entitled “Confronting our Alienation” by Jacob Taylor which explored deep ecology and social ecology. These theories deeply resonated with me and the spirit being carried out in Maloy and the many other Catholic Worker farms around the world. At the Carnival a curiously dressed carnivalista presented me with a deck of cards in a feigned magic trick style. Instead of a dumbfounding magic trick the card told me to walk across the midway as slowly as possibly while pondering and honoring the pace of nature. I feel as though my time at the farm and the inspiration I have gathered from the ecologically focused spirit of Catholic Worker farms has changed the way I move forward in our current ecological and environmental state. Jacob writes,

“Grief that recognizes that we’re not losing some distant ‘nature’, but part of ourselves, our own home - might be the key to unlocking the courage and solidarity we need to face these issues. However, this is not something our culture leaves much room for. Humans can kill and destroy nature because they think only with their alienated reason, blind to the emotion and intuition that link them to all life. Something within us cries out at the death of a tree, but we force ourselves to ‘think rationally,’ to ‘stop being sentimental’ - it is after all, for the good of humanity, and humans are a higher species.”

Deep ecology principles state that humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity except to satisfy vital human needs. This points to being connected to and responsible for the various ecosystems from which we benefit. We are responsible for the “continuation and flourishing of that species survival.” This shift in perspective at its essence insists that we care for the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth. That all life forms have intrinsic value. These values are independent from the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

Don, a neighbor up the hill, and I took a walk to identify wild flowers, a subject that continues to expand for me and become increasingly awe-inspiring at each level I discover. There are thousands of wildflowers that live and breathe around me that I do not know. Their distinctions are subtle from the shape of their leaves to the roundness or squareness of their stem. They function in a massive web of benefits and interactions with many types of species. Their existence can easily feel unrelated to me beyond an aesthetic experience, but when I move slowly, when I get to know them, when I care for them, then slowly, the more I learn about the web of connectedness, I realize that my life depends on them.

To get in a copy of Jacob’s zine, contact him at jaacobtaaylor@gmail.com Find out more about The Carnival de Resistance at www.carnivalderesistance.com
Betsy’s Fall Farm Report

Continued from page 1

During Hilary's September visit we had pizza with homemade sauce and mozzarella. It was a pretty good year for okra, and plenty of Brian's famous pickles are stored up for winter. Also in September Jim and Jane Uhlenkamp came with their granddaughter Sophie for dinner which featured our homegrown vegetables and some of Jim's home-brewed beer. Sophie has become a huge fan of fresh vegetables-although she learned this summer to be wary of those little red peppers! Brian went to Sugar Creek, Iowa for the annual Midwest CW gathering, and then to Washington, DC for an anti-war conference. Our Missouri friend, Herb Petty, continues to help out when Brian needs transportation to and from the Kansas City airport for his travels.

The beautiful willow trellis constructed by German Sculptor Elisabeth Wagner in 2015 was still thriving this year. It supported a multitude of vines from a hill of initially sorry looking cucumber plants. After a slow start, they produced an abundance of juicy cucumbers longer into the fall than I have ever experienced. We ate cucumbers, made dozens of jars of pickles, shared cucumbers with friends, delivered baskets of cucumbers to the Neighborhood Center that houses the local food pantry, and finally chopped cucumbers for the chickens. A fall storm, with the trellis still laden with cucumbers, broke some of the supports and spoiled its symmetry, but since some of them had rooted and were growing this year, it remains to see how it may be utilized in the future.

In October Brian went to Las Vegas for a larger CW gathering, which concluded with a witness protesting Drone Warfare at Creech AFB. October 12th we zoomed to Kansas City with Mark Kinney to support Fr. Carl Kabat at his trial for anointing the entry of the KC Nuclear Weapons factory operated by Honeywell (more politely known as the "National Security Campus"). My very first visit to Kansas City in 1985 had been for a trial involving Carl as well, with the Missile Silo Plowshares.

Our 30th anniversary since moving to Maloy and starting "Strangers and Guests Catholic Worker" was approaching. We planned to get together our Fall issue of "The Sower" as I worked to get ready for fall craft sales, especially the Clarinda Craft Carnival, and Brian prepared for a trip to Russia for Voices for Creative Nonviolence, leaving the day after the Clarinda event. I went to town to pick up rugs that were on display in a local store and stopped by our mechanic's garage to see if he could figure out what was wrong with the car. "Not safe to drive" was Mike's verdict. Panic.
I don’t need a car every day, but this was a time when I urgently needed a car to get through the next two days! There have been many times when we have been aware of how we wouldn't survive in this venture without friends. This was one of those times. Our neighbor Don met me in town, assisted with the rug pick-up and took me to make the vegetable delivery. Then he drove me to, the Hynks (at the far corner of the county) who had a car that they could loan to us for the weekend.

We met Bill and Angie Hynk because their 3 children were in school with our kids. I don’t know what they first heard about us, but I remember when Elijah told us about Amy. She brought her partially melted Barbie doll to their kindergarten class as the "show" part for her "Show and Tell" story about their house fire! Later on we shared watching the school's marching band, and concerts, as Band Boosters or chaperones on bus rides with the band. I enjoyed participating in community theater with them, for "The Music Man" and later for a production of the musical Joe Hynk and his mom Angie wrote, composed and directed, about the farm crisis, "Farmer Song". After the 2007 ice storm they heard how we had been struggling with clean-up, and came on Christmas eve, after singing carols at the nursing home, donned their winter gear, started up their chain saw and worked till dark and a little past, cutting and hauling downed and dangling limbs from on trees, stacking them ready for burning. I have often been amazed by their energy, creativity and community spirit- and they always add some fun to a party! In addition they have, in recent years started a community radio station, based in Murray, Iowa, started a Tree Farm.

So in 2016 again they came to the rescue with loan of their car, and after the news that it could be 2 weeks to get our car on the road again, have continued the loan. May God reward them! My birthday rolled around while Brian was away in Russia, and a friend from the Mount Ayr church rounded up some folks and came to Maloy of a morning of work, helping get caught up with some autumn outdoor work plus brought a great lunch including birthday cake and ice cream to top it off. Luckily we had lovely weather and it was a fun break from my stint alone here- Thanks to Mary Ellen, Lynette, Deb and Cyndi!

So harvest lingers on! Brian has returned from Russia with new stories to tell. We have had a hard freeze or two, but still are finding fresh food in the garden- Fall spinach is looking terrific, and finally have a few beets that the rabbits didn't get.

Craft Retreat-
January 12-16, 2017

We are planning a Craft retreat for January as a part of our development of Peter Maurin's vision of Catholic Worker Farms as "Agronomic Universities" where workers can learn hand crafts and skills. People who are interested in learning, teaching, sharing and celebrating handwork. contact Betsy about details of our schedule and arrangements.
“With only one period of hot and dry weather, the frequent rains sprouted many weeds, and lessened the time to deal with them. In some parts of the garden we clearly lost that battle!”

**Hope in a Time Like Ours**

If [we] are not nearly in despair there is something the matter. The only thing that is to be regretted without qualification is for one to adapt perfectly to totalitarian society. Then he is indeed beyond hope. Hence we should all be sick in some way. We should all feel near to despair in some sense because this semi-despair is the normal form taken by hope in a time like ours. Hope without any sensible or tangible evidence on which to rest. Hope in spite of the sickness that fills us. Hope married to a firm refusal to accept any palliatives or anything that cheats hope by pretending to relieve apparent despair. Hope must mean acceptance of limitations and imperfections and the deceitfulness of a nature that has been wounded and cheated. We cannot enjoy the luxury of a hope based on our own integrity, our own honesty, our own purity of heart.

Thomas Merton to the Polish poet Czesław Milosz, September 12, 1959