Summer Farm Report

Our last issue highlighted winter activities here on the farm and Brian’s winter travels. In March there was good weather for garden cleanup and preparation of the ground for a new year’s growth. Many of the plants for our garden are started here indoors. This year I had success with getting healthy parsley, celery, tomato, peppers, eggplant, basil, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage seedlings grown indoors. Like animal infants, they require a lot of tending in the beginning, but to have the variety of plants for continuous harvest for the home garden and not just those tailored for the industrial agriculture system takes some investment of effort.

Early in March, I completed the harvest of basket willow that we began during the craft retreat. For best results the basket willow is cut back near to the ground each year, to produce the maximum amount of supple material for baskets. Most of mine is used in the garden, making various supports for plants and helping define and utilize space better. The exception is my “living fence” which forms a willow hedge, with added interest with its woven shape. Though it is pruned yearly, I do not cut it down to the ground. This year in early April, before the leaves were out Sandy Maxa came to help me explore connecting it with a more random weaving. The willow provides shelter from drying south winds and a screen between that garden and the road. It seems to have deflected deer traffic that used to cross from fields to the north and south of Hillcrest drive. Unfortunately for tender plants, the rabbits find a snug spot to huddle at its base, until the coast is clear for snacking.

Around the Equinox, the time of spring celebrations in many lands, Brian went to Des Moines for a “Fly Kites, not Drones” gathering at the Des Moines Air Guard base, which has been flying drone missions. Peace people in Kabul and the United Kingdom were also flying their kites with prayers and hopes for peaceful skies and carefree children under them.

As we cleaned up the garden in early spring, Brian dug up lot of our powerful and prolific horseradish. When he got the time, it was cleaned and trimmed, ground and bottled for one of our favorite all natural flavor blasts. For a new twist he experimented with making horseradish infused vodka. Known as khrenovukha in Russian, it’s not for the faint of heart. He had been introduced to it during his trip to Russia in 2016. It is sure to find some medicinal uses.

In April, a play called This Evil Thing, was brought to Graceland University. We enjoyed the production which told the story of British men who resisted the draft during World War I. When the war began Britain had an all-volunteer army, but a military draft of compulsory service began in 1916. The play includes verbatim testimonies
from conscientious objectors and some of their contemporaries and was very compelling. We appreciated the chance to share with others this well told story of conscience and non-violent resistance with discussion that followed the performance.

A Catholic Worker friend, Kelsey Chalmers, came up to work and visit one April weekend. We had some nice weather and worked on the new strawberry bed being established. Ersyla Nella-joy visited us in mid-April on her way to a retreat center in Illinois from the West coast. She will be living, teaching and help with hosting retreats there for a while. Ersyla visited us some years ago with Lucky Marlovitz of St. Francis House in Chicago when they were traveling cross-country together. She helped me with some fence repairs the day she was here-one of those chores that only gets finished in a provisional way- till the critter who really want to be either in or out finds a new weak spot. For now, the chickens are staying in and the dogs out. I taught her to make an 8-strand kumihimo braid, with one of the cardboard disks I was preparing to take to the local school. (see page 6, “May Day”)

We went for a Sunday afternoon visit in Missouri to the home of Bridget and Reed Gibson and came home with a rooster.

April was unusually cool and much of the planting was late, but May brought warmer weather- unusually warm! While the work outdoors was calling for busy hands, thanks to a grant, I had a great chance to work with children at the elementary school Mount Ayr as an artist in residence, teaching about weaving. I completed a lot of my preparation in April, but for two weeks of May, I divided my time-half days at school and half at home with work here-with the energy I had left. It is challenging for me to work with the larger groups of children, when I am used to teaching one, two or a handful of people at a time here at Strangers and Guests. But I enjoyed the challenge of getting young people to think about how things get put together, and to wonder about how other people figured out initially how things could be made with fiber. When we got to the hands-on part they did get engaged with the fascination of making something with their own hands and simple tools.

Brian made a few trips to participate in demonstrations with the Poor People’s Campaign in Des Moines. It is good to see new coalitions strengthening, and the connections made between systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation. Any time is a good time for moral revival- and what better time than now!

I began weekly deliveries to town in May also, of a share of the produce we harvest here with a family in Mount Ayr who invests in our garden in the spring, then shares the bounties and vagaries of each season with us. This spring, with the rhubarb, asparagus, winter onions and eggs, we had some wintered over kale and parsnips. The tender herbs that wintered over in the house; rosemary, tarragon, lemon verbena, lemon grass, the scented geraniums and the bay tree are all back in the garden and enjoying lots of sun to strengthen their potency.

We had taken two of our goats to an Amish dairy farm for breeding during the winter, and expected Bonnie would have some kids in April. She grew big and fat with her extra rations, but April, then May came and went with no offspring! Ruby had a white female kid as we are finishing up our layout. She is just a year old, but her udder has filled out and looks ready for the business of making milk. We are looking forward to being back in the dairy swing of things after our unexpectedly long break (since February) and to the vegetable rich days of summer harvest.

Betsy

A Post Script from Brian

This spring, I have been home on the farm more than I have been for many years, sharing with Betsy of the tilling, planting and tending the new crops, but I did get away to agitate for peace on a few occasions.

Over Holy Week in late March, I was with the Sacred Peace Walk, sponsored by the Nevada Desert Experience and led by the Western Shoshone people. Some 40 people of diverse backgrounds and far flung places walked 60 miles from Las Vegas to the National Nuclear Security (sic) Administration’s test site.

Two months later, on Memorial Day, I made the shorter trip to another National Nuclear Security Administration facility in Kansas City, a “campus” where most of the non-nuclear parts of all of U.S. nuclear weapons are produced. As in Nevada, my part in the protest of the unspeakable assault of the NNSA threatens to wreck upon the earth and its creatures led to my arrest there.

Post Script, continued on page 7
Two Interrogations,
Gina Haspel and
Adolf Eichmann

“the evasions and obfuscations of these two willing technicians of state terror are chillingly similar”

By Brian Terrell

On May 9, Gina Haspel, Donald Trump’s choice for head of the Central Intelligence Agency, testified at her Senate confirmation hearing in Washington, DC. Some senators questioned her about her tenure, in 2002, as CIA station chief in Thailand. There, the agency ran one of the “black sites” where suspected al-Qaida extremists were interrogated using procedures that included waterboarding. She was also asked about her role in the destruction of videotapes in 2005 that documented the torture of illegally detained suspects. Her evasive answers to these questions, disconcerting and unsatisfying, are also hauntingly familiar.

In 1960, Adolf Eichmann was kidnapped by Israeli spies in Argentina and brought to trial in Jerusalem for his part in the extermination of millions of European Jews during Germany’s Third Reich. In his interrogation with Israeli police, published as *Eichmann Interrogated*, DeCopo Books, NY, 1999, Eichmann stated that in the intervening years since the acts in question his own view of them had evolved and before the Senate on May 9, Haspel expressed herself similarly.

Haspel testified that while she can’t say what exactly might constitute an immoral order in the past, her “moral compass” would not allow her to obey one today, given the “stricter moral standard” she says “we have chosen to hold ourselves to.” She does not judge the actions that she and her colleagues took in the years after 9-11, “in that tumultuous time” of decidedly looser moral standards: “I’m not going to sit here, with the benefit of hindsight, and judge the very good people who made hard decisions.” She testified that she supports laws that prohibit torture, but insists that such laws were not in place at the time and that such “harsh interrogations” were allowable under the legal guidance the CIA had at the time and “that the highest legal authority in the United States had approved it, and that the president of the United States had approved it.”

Likewise Eichmann was probed about his obedience when “ordered to do something blatantly illegal.” In a response that augured Haspel’s Senate testimony a half century later, Eichmann told his interrogators: “You say illegal. Today I have a very different view of things...But then? I wouldn’t have considered any of those actions illegal... If anyone had asked me about it up until May 8, 1945, the end of the war, I’d have said: This government was elected by a majority of the German people...every civilized country on earth had its diplomatic mission. Who is a little man like me to trouble his head about it? I get orders from my superior and I look neither right nor left. That’s not my job. My job is to obey and comply.”

Not to compare the evil of the holocaust with the CIA rendition and torture (as if evil could be measured by quantity) but the evasions and obfuscations of these two willing technicians of state terror are chillingly similar. Eichmann’s cowardly protestations that he could not have known that facilitating torture and murder was illegal ring hollow. It was only after Eichmann’s atrocities, though, that such crimes as torture were formally codified into law. By 2002, however, along the precedents of the war crimes tribunal at Nuremberg, the United States was legally bound along with most nations in the world to the Geneva Conventions, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention against Torture. Even the U.S. Army Field Manual, cited by Haspel in her hearing, labels waterboarding as torture and a war crime.

“We all believed in our work. We were all committed,” Haspel proudly boasted to the Senate, describing the morale and esprit de corps of her CIA comrades overseeing illegal detention, torture and murder in the years after 9-11. Eichmann similarly praised the work ethic of his team. Inspired by Eichmann’s trial, Thomas Merton, in his poem, “Chant to be Used in Processions Around a Site with

Adolf Eichmann’s and Gina Haspel’s official portraits

Haspel and Eichmann
continued on page 7
Wonderful Adventures

“...for us at the Catholic Worker, the work goes on, just as it always has, in the midst of fear and class war and race war, and for all the difficulty of the times, it is still a wonderful work.”

by Dorothy Day

It seems to me that the spirit of fear, always so dangerous, is worse than ever. Everything we read in the papers and hear on the radio these days conspires against us, raising up in our hearts a contagion of fear of others.

People are afraid just to walk down the street, we hear and read so much about mugging and murder. But some of the young peace people we know have an interesting way of dealing with muggers. Whenever someone holds them up, they empty their pockets and say, “Well, this is all I have. I need some money to get to work and a little bit for the rest of the week, but you are welcome to take what you need.” This has proven to be a successful technique. But more important, these experiences help to overcome the sense of fear, the dread of violence.

We all have opportunities to overcome the sense of fear that afflicts us.

Much of this fear is of our own making. I always feel that chickens come home to roost. All that we have been doing all over the world is coming back to our own country, almost destroying us with fear and hatred and violence.

Yet for us at the Catholic Worker, the work goes on, just as it always has, in the midst of fear and class war and race war, and for all the difficulty of the times, it is still a wonderful work.

But the times are awful.

I was asked recently to write an article for a Long Island paper, Newsday, about the depression in the ’30’s and the depression now. I would say that the depression now was far worse than it was in the ’30’s. It isn’t just that we were a younger people then. But today people pay a hundred dollars or two hundred dollars a month rent. In those days we could rent a room or an apartment for $15 or $20 a month with no difficulty. Now it isn’t only the rent, but one has to pay one or two month’s rent in advance as “security.” In the 30’s we could have the gas and electricity turned on with no difficulty. But today the companies demand a large sum in advance again as “security.” It’s almost impossible. In those days in the ’30’s, there were riots in front of the Home Relief offices and other places. But now you see all these long lines of people waiting on line for unemployment insurance— you would think they were begging for something instead of getting back money that was taken out of their wages as unemployment insurance. The experience today is more degrading.

In those days, something very interesting was happening. People built shanty villages. Down at the end of 10th St. there was a big vacant lot where they built one. Our first bookkeeper lived there in an old piano packing box and some other crates. There was another below Riverside Drive, right along the river. The people could fish there and get something to eat, and there were neighbors who brought vegetables and milk from the country for them. These things actually took place, right here in New York. Fantastic, as we look back. Certainly we have nothing like that now. If you have to sleep, you’re fortunate to get a park bench. If you need warmth, you try to find some scraps and place where they’ll allow a fire. During these winter months, every day we see men and women clustered around fires on empty lots here in the city, because there is no place where they can go to find warmth and be welcomed.

I remember Upton Sinclair writing about one of these shanty-towns on the West Coast and how they formed various cooperatives for jobs and food. His book was called Co-op and I recently found an old copy of it.

I came upon these shanty-towns in New Orleans and Seattle, Portland and St. Louis and practically everywhere I travelled in those days. There were always these “villages” that people had founded for themselves. Nor were they simply places where people lived because there was no place else for them. They were centers for the discussing the problems of the social order—what ought to be changed and how it should be changed. It was always astounding.

There is nothing like that today. Can you imagine how quickly settlements like this would be dispersed if anyone dare to start them.

Yet there are some parallel things happening today—wonderful, wonderful adventures, with young people going out into the land, acquiring acreage down in West Virginia and other places where the land is good and cheap. I think especially of West Virginia because a number of our young Catholic Worker families have settled in remote places there. They haven’t founded “houses of hospitality.
on the land,” as some of our farms have been called. Nor are they farming “communes” or “agronomic universities” as other Catholic Worker people have sometimes called such ventures. All those high-sounding titles we used to give to our little bits of land! These are more like villages with families living close together, sharing and cooperating in all those many ways that used to be common of any small village. This is happening in the Catholic Worker movement and in many other groups as well. It seems that wherever there are people who are working for peace and keeping to the nonviolent way of Gandhi, there is a new understanding of the land. From Maine to California, the idea of land trusts is taking root: people coming together, cooperating, building the shelters, raising food.

One of my grand-daughters is married and living in one of those settlements in the hollows of West Virginia. It’s a rigorous life, raising what they eat, taking care of all the basic needs. And she tells me of similar things that are happening all through (West Virginia). I don’t know how many of these things there are scattered all across the country. But I know they have tended to spring out of the peace movement and that they are part of the peace movement.

Up until last Spring I was traveling pretty steadily around the country. Wherever I went, I found these things. I remember being in Kansas last year and finding a Catholic Worker couple who were living on a few acres and making spinning wheels and spindles and rocking chairs, for children-making jobs for themselves in an increasingly jobless world. They are finding occupations for themselves. They’re very active and alive. And this is an important part of the peace movement today.

This isn’t, as so many people say, an escape. In West Virginia, for example, the farms are threatened by the strip mines. Despite all the time and work that goes into building shelters and raising food and bringing in fuel (renewable fuel), our people have responded to the needs of all those people whose homes were swept away when the Buffalo Creek disaster happened—when the dam made up of debris from strip mining gave way after a week of torrential rains and swept away several settlements. Some of the local Catholic Worker people went to Washington to testify about the destruction of life and land and the violence to culture. They joined in protest demonstrations. They worked with the unions. They did all of these things, and in addition carried on what we call the “works of mercy”—feeding the hungry, taking care of those in need.

Nor are they responding only to local disasters. There is the continuing pestilence of war and the taxes that are paid for war. We have resisted war and resisted war taxes.

A few years ago someone left the Catholic Worker some money in a will. It precipitated a reaction from the IRS, which came down on us and demanded taxes, a demand they finally withdrew. We have never paid any income taxes—none of us has ever gotten any salary. Having no salaries, we have escaped that particular pest. But, even if we did get salaries, we should have to resist taxes. I marvel at the example of Martha Tranquilli, a nurse, 64 years old, her whole life devoted to the works of mercy, who is now in prison on Terminal Island because she refuses to give money for killing.

All these young people we know who have started these little farms and villages are similarly refusing to pay taxes for war. It’s one of the other ways in which they set an example for all of us.

These are things that young people are engaged in now— I thought you would like to hear them. And they say the peace movement is dead!

The peace movement knows that there is something fundamentally evil about this society. Kent State and the killing of students. All the years of killing in Vietnam. All the murderous weapons being sold throughout the world. All the endured violence of Civil Rights struggles and freedom rides and sit-ins. Through all this one comes to know the seriousness of the situation and to realize it’s not going to be changed just by demonstrations. It’s a question of risking one’s life. It’s a question of living one’s life in drastically different ways.

They’re doing all that in these West Virginia communities I’ve mentioned. Very soon they may have to put their bodies in front of the strip mining equipment.

There’s strong, strong work going on within the peace movement, with all the joy of youth and the strength of youth, living the normal life of the family, making clothes, raising food, having babies. So it’s a healthy movement and a good movement, living in the midst of these appalling, murderous times.

(Originally published in Fellowship, March 1975)
MAY DAY

by Betsy Keenan

Do you celebrate May Day? We do.

May Day is remembered and celebrated as the anniversary of the Catholic Worker movement. The first issue of The Catholic Worker newspaper hit the streets May 1st, 1933, the year unemployment peaked at 25%. So this year we celebrated the 85 years of this experiment’s amazing, unpredictable existence. The Catholic Church also celebrates St. Joseph the Worker on May Day, honoring the working man who sheltered and raised Jesus. And in most of the world the day is a holiday to honor working people for their contribution to building the common good, and give them a day to celebrate.

May Day falls between the vernal equinox and the summer solstice and many European cultures had customs to celebrate spring’s arrival around this time. After spring planting, lambing, calving and when it is more pleasant outdoors than in, people met outdoors and celebrated, some with fires, various dances, with bringing flowers into their homes or visits to local springs. Some washed their faces with dew.

This spring-before it was nicer outside than in, when I was weaving a lot, I found an audiobook at the library of Barbara Ehrenreich’s Dancing in the Streets—a history of Collective Joy, for listening as I worked. It traces outbreaks of “collective joy” through history in many places and various forms. The author describes how practices rose and fell in their popularity with common folk and “the authorities”. They might be embraced or condemned as religious fervor, or excess. But the author concludes they have a positive social and psychological function reviving solidarity and freeing us from personal preoccupation. These rituals are not for mere entertainment, but are inclusive and allow for self-expression.

In post-Reformation England, fearing their pagan associations, May Day festivities were outlawed by the Puritan parliaments, then reinstated with the return of the monarchy. Cultural conflict over what holidays we will celebrate and how they will be celebrated is still going on. In the United States the official Labor Day holiday is carefully separated from May Day with its communist and union solidarity connections and held in September. This is usually a busy time for those involved in farming pursuits so it effectively divides industrial workers from their rural brothers and sisters.

One survival of earlier customs is the Maypole dance—where girls and young women dance around a central tree crowned with flowers and some kind of colored ribbons weaving a pattern. I thought this might be a fun activity for the younger children at Mount Ayr Community School, when I was there to share weaving experiences with them. Not so simple for children who haven’t even the experience of dancing in a circle together. We did have some glimpse of the experience on my last day, when we took our improvised pole outside, on the green grass, under the blue sky, in the generous shade of a tree, and with the help of some 5th graders we moved with the ribbons, in two directions, around the pole and wove the lovely colors.

These things take practice.
Post Script

(continued from page 3)

We are grateful to our friend Rosalie Riegle for finding and sharing the article on page 4, *Amazing Adventures*, by Dorothy Day, first published by *Fellowship* magazine in March, 1975, a few months before I came to New York and met Dorothy. She wrote: “one comes to know the seriousness of the situation and to realize it’s not going to be changed just by demonstrations. It’s a question of risking one’s life. It’s a question of living one’s life in drastically different ways.” I am struck by her wisdom, recognizing both the necessity to risk one’s life and the importance of living that life well.

Dorothy’s words encourage us as we try to make sense of our life here in Maloy and in the big world. I am grateful, too, for the many friends who joined us for our solstice celebration. Dorothy also often recommended the advice of the poet Ruskin, that there is a positive “duty of delight.” Our annual party with its rich music, dance, good food and joyful company remind me of the value of our life on the land, a counter to my own personal hankering for cities and travels to far places.

By the next issue I will, inshallah, have been to Chicago, Kabul and New York, home again in August while Betsy will be away. In September I plan on joining a walk in Georgia to “Disarm Trident” nuclear submarines and later to go to Wisconsin to speak at a gathering to remember the “Milwaukee 14” draft board raid, 50 years ago.

We are hoping for visitors this fall to help harvest and store the crops we have planted this spring. You might want to learn to milk a goat!

Haspel und Eichmann

(continued from page 3)

Furnaces,” put these words in the mouth of a condemned concentration camp commander: “In my day we worked hard we saw what we did our self-sacrifice was conscientious and complete our work was faultless and detailed.”

An Israeli court did not buy Adolf Eichmann’s defense that he was following orders and obeying the law as he understood it and he was hanged on June 1, 1962. We will soon know if the U.S. Senate will accept Gina Haspel’s appropriation of Eichmann’s alibi and confirm her as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

*This article was written before Gina Haspel was confirmed by the Senate and officially sworn as Director of the CIA on May 21.*
I am done with great things and big things, great institutions and big success, and I am, for those tiny invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride.

~William James~