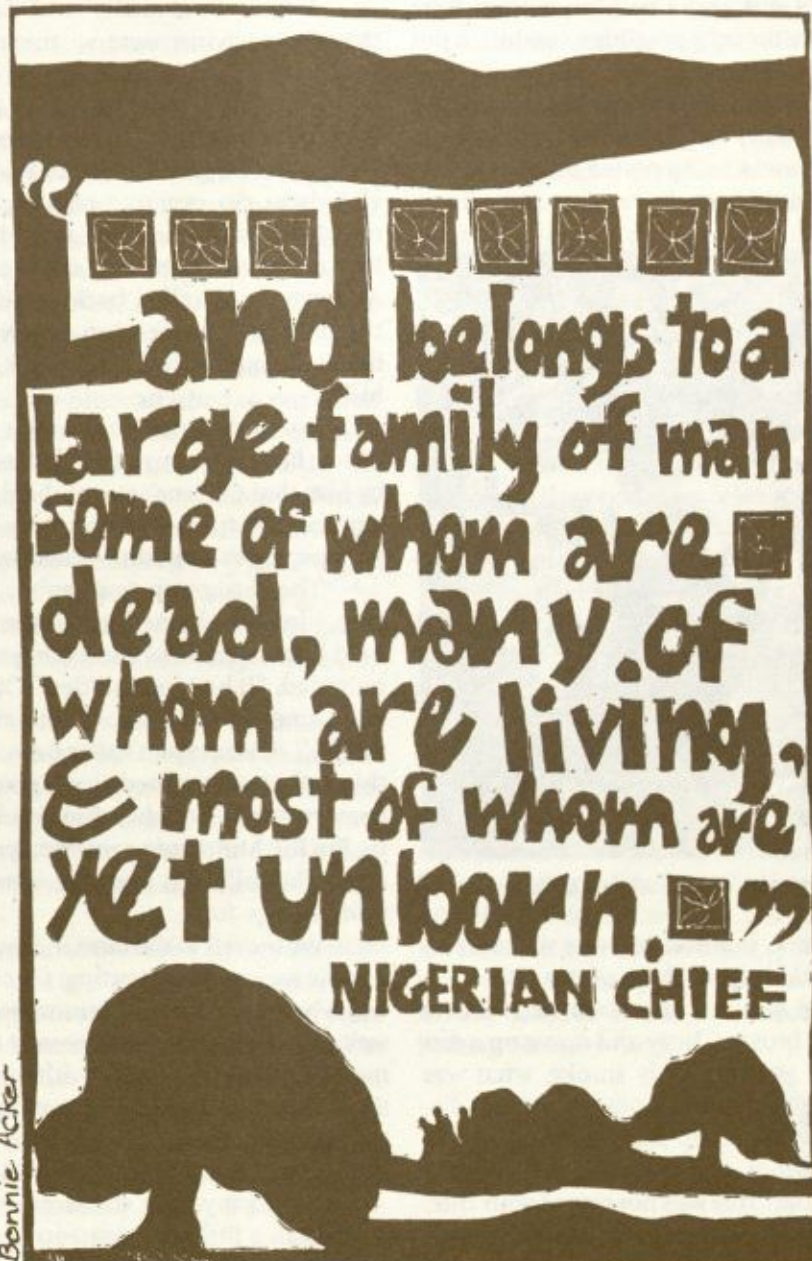


# EARLY MEMORIES OF NOONDAY FARM

From the time Louise and I first learned about Dorothy Day and the movement in the late 1970's, we'd been struck by the idea of Catholic Worker farms and the vision of Peter Maurin. Every objective assessment we encountered singled out these farms as the weak link, and yet there was something of a mystical aura surrounding them—a place in the country—being grounded in the earth. It didn't matter that they were inefficient, financially unmanageable and nonviable. Every Catholic Worker house wanted one.



And we at Haley House were no different. When in the early 80's we received two substantial financial grants, a few of us who were interested began talking—and looking. That original group included Michael Harank, Louise and myself then living at Haley House, Eileen Lawter living at John Leary House, and Bill Beardslee and Lisa Mahar, who were part of the Centerpeace community in Medford. We also originally hoped to enlist Tom Farley, an experienced Maine farmer who was also with us at Haley House, and his famous dog Dawson (renamed Lubiloo by Noah), but other pastures beckoned.

Kathe McKenna, a key person in the "brain trust" supporting this effort, brought to us a long list of religious communities with the thought that some might have land they wished to unload for a noble cause. There were no takers. And so our own search began. We started by taking out a map of New England and drawing a half circle with a radius of one and a half hours from Boston—the maximum we thought possible to maintain the link with Haley House.

When my former wife Sati heard about this she told us about a friend, Barry Hughes, who owned a farm in Winchendon which was being rented to tenants. We spoke with Barry who told us the tenants were inter-

threatening to gore any of us foolish enough to get too close. No other sign of life. What kind of hospitality was this?

We huddled for a few minutes and decided that, having been given the owner's permission, having been announced, and having driven all the way from Boston, we had a right to look around. So Michael, ever quick

**IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT THEY WERE INEFFICIENT, FINANCIALLY UN-MANAGEABLE AND NONVIALE. EVERY CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSE WANTED ONE.**

on his feet, snuck up on the goat from behind, employed a hammer lock on the unsuspecting animal, and tied him to a pole, while the rest of us...well, how difficult is it to break into an old farm house?

It took about ninety seconds to discover why it was that these tenants were so anxious not to see us, and also why they were so keen on buying the farm. The entire top floor was a processing plant for pot—and we later found plenty of it growing outside.

We had a good laugh, and decided we'd better look elsewhere. So over the coming months, using every realtor we could find, we visited another twenty New England farms. Every one of them had some fatal flaw. And every one called back to mind the advantages of that farm in Winchendon—away from the main road, fields surrounded by stone walls, a view of the distant hills.

So, in the course of these visits, we continued to phone Barry, and then, during the winter, were informed by him that the tenants—probably discovering authorities on their trail—had suddenly disappeared, without even paying the rent due—"and are you still interested?"

The core group was euphoric. Others were not so sure. Illona took one look at the beat-up living room, tried hard to think of something nice to say, and finally muttered, "It has possibilities." Others drove up and offered a negative verdict without even getting out of the car. Still others expressed grave reservations about how this rather entrenched, low-income but conservative community of Winchendon would take to the likes of us. But Bill Mulrennin came out, poured some antifreeze down the toilets to keep the pipes from freezing, and told us to go for it.

We moved to the farm in May—our goal—and just in time for our first planting. Our kick off event, in fact, was what we billed as "planting weekend," and all were welcome. The dozens of us present filled up the two fields marked off by Tom Farley with seeds and seedlings, but the most important planting took place afterwards, resulting in the conception that very weekend of the non-biological twins, Aiden Carey and Dora Levinson.

That first year at the farm was filled with visions, more than a little self righteousness, lots of hard work,



*Noah's Bar Mitzvah*

and some dandy mishaps. The most famous of the mishaps took place our first autumn when, after the harvest, we got ready to fertilize the fields. A local farmer trucked over about a ton of manure and dropped it in the middle of one of the fields. What normally happens then, at non-mechanized farms, is that farm hands (that was us) put on high boots and gloves and begin shoveling the manure over the fields.

But Bill Beardslee, who in fact knew much more than the rest of us—but perhaps not quite enough—decided that we could be more creative than that, and why not spread it with the snow plow attached to our small pickup truck? Bill headed for the pile of manure with a burst of speed, hit the pile, and sank in, while all the kids, watching from a safe distance, hooted and hollered. Bill tried all the gears, but nothing worked; another neighbor had to come with a tractor and pull the truck out. "Never heard a man of cloth talk that way," the neighbor said of Bill, still frantically working the gears. The kids, laughing hysterically, wouldn't step inside that truck again 'til spring.

Our first item of indoor business was naming the farm. It took us six months. We loved consensus and decision making! Among the more colorful candidates: "Shambala Catholic Worker Kibbutz" and "The Franz Jaggerstaedter Memorial." The name Noonday, in fact, came from one of our favorite biblical passages, Isaiah 58.

Other items of business included economic sharing (which we actually kept in place for eight years), what we'd eat (Louise, throughout the course of our ten years at the farm, referred to herself as a "carnivore trapped in a vegetarian habitat"), what we'd grow ("let's try corn and potatoes") how we'd resist (a weekly vigil in nearby Fitchburg), how we'd earn money (growing Christmas trees in the front field? Eileen's paintings? a farm stand? retreats?) The closest we actually came to a farm-wide

"business" was serving collectively as custodian at the local art museum, a one-person exhibit of minimalist art made from yarn.

We also were intent on worship—worship for grownups and worship for kids. The kiddie worship became legendary. Indeed, two episodes featuring kiddie worship superstar Lucas Beardslee were featured in "Sojourner" magazine.

Less well known, but nearly as colorful, was the adult worship which, in our initial zealotry, we decided to hold every evening. We took turns organizing and leading it. Predictably, after a month or two, energy began to wane. One evening, Lisa, up to her ears with responsibilities and not feeling well, asked if I would take her turn. I said, "Sure," and proceeded to look through our various religious calendars in search of a theme.

What I found was that very day marked the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. This I knew from nothing. But I read up quickly and then found the readings and hymns usually associated with that service. Eight o'clock came...and the only other person who showed up for worship was Bill Beardslee. Little did we realize, as we sat down to begin, that, for the only time in human history, a Protestant minister and Jew were about to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.

There were, in the years to come, lots more stories, lots of highs, plenty of lows. Some of us stayed, some left, others came, guests came and went (Ed Hennessey and Willie Brown were two of the regulars). We established sister communities in Nicaragua and South Africa. We started a singing group which actually sang for Nelson Mandela in Boston. We began growing flowers along with the vegetables. We experimented with different types of chickens, creative forms of compost, and Chinese agricultural techniques.

I look back on those early years, and our faithful little group in Winchendon, with more than a little nostalgia. It now seems far away and long ago. And yet those years claimed us with a passion and an engagement none of us is likely to experience in quite the same way again.

*by Jim Levinson*

*Jim lived with his wife, Louise Cochran, and son Noah for three years as part of the live-in community at 23 Dartmouth Street, serving in the soup kitchen and participating in Ailanthus's Witness for Peace. The Ailanthus Singers, which Jim initiated, were the precursors of the Noonday Farm Singers. Jim hosted the Friday night "Welcoming the Sabbath" services, followed by the famous pot luck suppers, prior to birthing Noonday Farm.*



*Community Day at Noonday (Jim, Noah, David)*

ested in buying the farm, but that we were welcome to look, and that he would inform them of our visit.

So on a colorful autumn afternoon in 1983 we piled into the beat-up brown Chevy and drove up a dirt road in Winchendon to find...holy smoke, what was this? An idyllic setting, but a farm house in serious disrepair, with a ladder propped up against the front surrounded by dabs of primer, and protected at the garage door opening...by a goat! This was not one of your cute, petting zoo kids. This was a serious grownup with horns,

# CONNECTING & SUSTAINING



The system in which we live, and in fact have created for ourselves and the world, might be called a "money dictatorship." Certainly the process of making money rules most of our lives. Acquiring money and the things that money can buy occupies most of our time, mind and energy. Such life elements as nutrition, work, health care, education and relationships, which once existed as harmoniously interrelated parts of a wholeness, have been separated, isolated, controlled and given a price. To this end, we, the human species, have separated ourselves from the other inhabitants of the world and are demanding that they conform to our desires.

In a parallel way, those people with the most money have separated themselves from those with less. The world is thus being controlled and exploited by a relatively small number of people at the expense and destruction of the rest of the living world—the forests, the oceans, the rivers and lakes, the soil, the air, the animal and plant life, and of course those human beings without money or control of resources.

The same rich, powerful people also control the world's communications and educational systems.

Thus they can and do keep us distant from the truth by feeding us irrelevancies, distortions and lies. A dire picture, indeed.

What can we do? Undoubtedly the answer is not singular or simple. However, I would offer a direction, or at least one point of view, for a viable alternative to the present course.

To do anything more than treat the symptoms, we must think and act in ways that will bring back the wholeness and interrelatedness of life. The present path is simply not sustainable. We must return to a daily lifestyle that connects us with, and makes us directly dependent upon, the earth's resources. In no other way can they really be cared for and sustained. No amount of money

can do it. No absentee landlord can do it. No organizations like the Sierra Club, Greenpeace or the Green Party can do it. Care can and does happen only when profit is not the motive but rather when there is connectedness and interdependence.

When we renew our connection to and dependence on the earth's resources, we also build organic bonds with our fellow humans in such a way that those integral elements of life—nutrition, work, learning, health—are interconnected and linked to our particular locale. What we do, what we eat, what and how we learn and how we take care of ourselves cannot be separated. We evolved out of a particular part of the earth and lived organically connected to that particular part for thousands of years. Does it make sense that we have evolved to no connection in a few hundred years?

Further, in denying our basic interconnectedness with the living earth, we are also denying our basic spirituality. This plays into the hands of the monetary dicta-

torship, in part because it perpetuates "separation of church and state" and insures an absence of moral or ethical foundation of behavior.

Religion then is allowed to exist on a competitive level for esoteric purposes, used specifically to help keep us separated.

How do we regain our connectedness? There is certainly no easy path, but here are two possible steps in that direction.

1. Reject the present system by either refusing to pay federal taxes or earning below the level of taxable income. (Most tax dollars go to present and past war-making enterprises, the system's best money-makers.) Refusing taxes is increasingly difficult, as laws are now in place which essentially make every employer a tax collector. Refusal also requires the possession of no significant material assets, as they would be confiscated.

**YOU CANNOT SAVE THE LAND  
APART FROM THE PEOPLE OR THE  
PEOPLE APART FROM THE LAND.**

**WENDELL BERRY**

While I am a federal tax refuser, I usually recommend the alternative of earning below the level of taxable income, because it often requires us to simplify our lives, thus giving us a big push toward the second step.

2. Connect or reconnect with the earth in every way possible. Question how you can move toward direct responsibility for your food, shelter, heat, light, education, and health care. It can seem impossible and overwhelming because it requires changing lifestyles and habits, but it also has the nature of a snowball rolling down a hill. It is as self-generating and empowering as change begging to happen.

The ways such change happens are different for everyone, but often food is a starting point. One scenario might be to connect with a local farm which has organic produce, letting your eating habits change according to what can be produced. Locally, try to establish an ongoing relationship with such a farm based

upon work and/or barter. This relationship can certainly become empowering as you begin to find yourself directly responsible for a major part of life, and more so as you begin to feel the direct connection between food and health, health and work, work and food, work and learning, learning and relationship, relationship and work.

This path takes us into the realm of truth. This is radical. This is anti-corporate. This is anti-capitalist. This is for life. If we are to survive, we must return to a direct, individual, specific connection with the living earth. We are nothing if we are not a part of its wholeness. It is my hope that Noonday Farm can function to help us move in this direction.

by Bob Jennings

*Bob is a husband, father, Buddhist practitioner, farmer, engineer and sometime actor. His passion for living rightly on the land has taken root at Noonday.*

## FARMING AT NOONDAY

The farming operation functions to grow and distribute eighty- to ninety percent of its produce to people of need at no cost. This amounts to about 5000 pounds of vegetables and 500 dozen eggs per year. The resident, above-ground population that contributes to this effort presently includes three adults, one child, twenty-two chickens, one dog, four cats and a hive of bees. This is supplemented by considerable volunteer help from many sources, including Winchendon Public Schools, Worcester Catholic Worker, St. Francis and Theresa House, Boston College, and St. Benedict's School in Newark, New Jersey. In addition, this past summer we had two young men (one from Japan) living and working here who were interested in learning about the world of organic farming.

Partially in the interest of maximizing the freshness of food and minimizing transportation, the major portion of produce is presently divided between the Worcester Catholic Worker and the Winchendon Community Action Center with a smaller amount to the Haley House Soup Kitchen in Boston. In all of these organizations, the folks involved are in daily or weekly contact with people of need. A few folks from the Worcester Catholic Worker House actually come to learn and work here one day a week from April through November.

Our basic growing area amounts to about one-third of an acre or about 1400 square feet. There are actually two plots which are alternated year-to-year, resulting in the following cycle: planted six months; fallow eighteen months. Both plots utilize raised bed technology and always retain a deep mulch cover except when newly planted. This is what might be called a "no-till" method, which has the benefits of helping retain moisture, minimizing weeding and erosion, and helping the in-ground

animal life in their processes of feeding and aerating the soil.

Our nutriment for the soil comes from ten compost bins, each measuring six feet square by five feet high. The material for the bins includes hay, leaves, grass, weeds, sod and organic household wastes. When composting action is complete, the resulting humus is added to the soil at planting time.

We try to keep our growing techniques as organic and sustainable as possible. Thus, there is no use of chemicals, and the use of machinery is kept to a minimum. The farm has a small tractor which we use for moving compost and bulk materials when hand power is in short supply.

Basic crops include tomatoes, potatoes, onions, squashes, garlic, carrots, turnips, beets, peppers, lettuce, cabbage, kale and broccoli. Herbs and flowers as companion crops appear in small quantities here and there, and a separate herb garden is now in process. Further along in development is a perennial and annual flower garden which supplies cut flowers to brighten spirits and the vegetables upon delivery.

Growing fruit organically in this area has proved a serious challenge, requiring time that we are as yet hard put to find. More than two dozen fruit trees of various types are now in place, but they are still a few years away from significant production.

We have recently completed an extensive greenhouse connected to the south side of the house. It offers 130 square feet of in-ground planting bed and plenty of room for seedling flats prior to setting them in the garden. The heat it has supplied to the house this winter has greatly reduced our wood requirement.

**PEACE AND HEALTH IN 1998.**

**F**ROM 1985 to 1990, while practicing as a nun in the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist order, I traveled, often for several months at a time, on peace walks through India, Nicaragua, England, Japan and this country. As we walked through countrysides, cities, poverty and wealth, I was struck by the ways people lived and worked and who did the work. Eric Gill, quoted by Peter Maurin in *Easy Essays*, says, "Culture is related to work, not to leisure. Man is saved through faith and through works, and what one does has a lot to do with what one is."

At the age of twenty-one, I visited South Korea as a Peace Corps volunteer. In villages and cities alike, women gathered to chop huge quantities of vegetables to prepare kimchee, a staple of their diet. It seemed to me they were always doing this! And as they did, they talked, shared their lives, their children; they were together in spirit and in struggle, in life's work. They were not alone. At that time South Korea was the economic miracle of Asia, and as a result of this prosperity, the 'time saving

hands and that seems to connect us most closely to the earth and to each other. We need work to have culture; we need culture if we are to survive. All elements of culture, including art, music, dance and theater, flow out of our common work. And underneath it all we need faith to believe that our work does matter, to believe the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "Whatever you do will most certainly be a very small thing, yet it is essential that you do it."

At Noonday Farm we are trying to create a way of living that is sustainable, responsible and loving. We separate our garbage because it does matter. We cook and heat with wood because the mining of all fossil fuels is deadly. We try to eat wholesome, locally grown foods because health and nutrition are inseparable, and it is insane that each calorie consumed by Americans travels an average of 1600 miles. It is our hope to be helpful.

If we are to do in this world that which helps—that which offers true change—then our work must awaken the human spirit, so each and every person can

## THOUGHT IN ACTION

wonders' of modern technology were becoming affordable. One such 'advancement' was the food processor, to save one the drudgery of kimchee preparation. Gone is the work; and with it goes culture—the common, shared nature of life. What wonder of technology replaces this?

I love work, particularly as it engages the hands and heart. I knit, chop wood and vegetables, heal, plant and weed, and play with JR. This is how I feel and learn, stimulate and express my creativity.

The development of a child's brain—the motor pathways, neurons, left and right hemispheric pathways, etc.—are integral to the use of the hands. Does this cease in adults?

Buddhism holds that we are now in the Age of Mappo, or the age of the decline of the Dharma. Loosely translated, this means a time of darkness and distance from Truth. We, in our lifetimes, will not necessarily live 'the kingdom of God' on Earth, but our mission is to sow seeds within people's hearts and minds—seeds of love and compassion, seeds of peace with social justice, seeds of hope.

I believe we can do this through work, work that requires the use of



become an active, spirited, creative being, free of the system which promotes fear and violence in order to control. The system makes us more and more individually powerless and more and more dependent upon it to meet even the most basic needs of living. Once we begin to remove ourselves from the system's clutches, our spirit—the breath of life—can breathe.

Mumia Abu-Jamal writes from death row, "Remember, the system is not a true reality, but an idea which

can be fought and dismantled. People forget that we don't need the system, or the accessories we mistakenly assume are essential for living. We need only the things God gave us: love, family, nature. We must transform the system. That's the challenge. It's doable, but only if we do it ourselves."

I offer these thoughts because I believe the Catholic Worker stands for "thought in action." I hope that Noonday Farm can offer a way of living that is empowering, offering an opportunity to reconnect with the soil, with the cycles of the growing season—decomposition,

birth, growth and death. We learn not to fear when we know we are not alone; and we know we are never alone when we are part of—not separate from—Mother Earth and Nature. And when we know this, we know Truth, God, Buddha, and we are free.

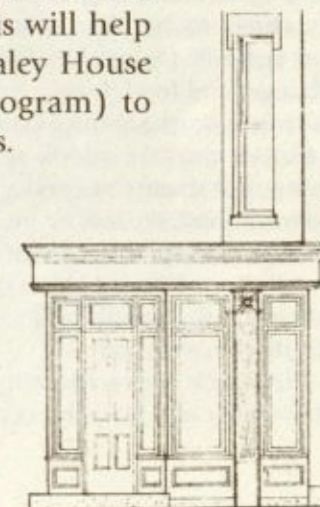
by Beth Ingham

*Beth is a wife, mother, Buddhist practitioner, farmer and caregiver who came to Haley House as part of the live-in community serving guests in the soup kitchen. She then spent five years as a Buddhist nun before coming to Noonday.*



## HALEY HOUSE WISHES TO GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE A GENEROUS GRANT FROM THE CARLISLE FOUNDATION

This grant has been made to create a renovated retail space on the corner of Dartmouth and Montgomery Streets. It is our hope that this will help The Bakery at Haley House (our training program) to reach new heights.



# CHILDREN'S THEATER:

## ETHICS IN ACTION

When Bob moved to the farm, I went to visit and got talking about the kids I work with and what a wonderful thing it would be if they could come to visit the farm. Most of them live in urban areas and have limited experience of anything outside of that. But St. Benedict's does have a period of time during which the school shuts down and people do community service projects. I had been looking for a way to change the children's theater program, and Bob and Beth invited me to bring a few of the kids up. Our kids range in ages from twelve to eighteen, and we're a group of about eight.

We've continued to call the course Ethics in Action, which was our theme the first year. Before we came to the Farm, we met with people who had made some choices about working for others rather than making money for themselves. For instance, there's a monk at the school who has a masters from Columbia. He could be making a bundle of money somewhere. Gaeron himself has a Ph.D. in geochemistry and has taught at Georgia Tech and Cal Tech. We met Katoshonin and Clare at the Peace Pagoda and learned about how they chose to become Buddhist monk and nun. One year we focused on hunger and food. Every year the kids keep a journal about what they eat so they can take a look at how they nourish themselves and spend money on food. We talk about how much more cheaply one can eat well. We read about different places in the world where there's famine and how often it's caused by man.

This year we're focusing on sustainability and how choices one

makes as an individual can make a difference. On TV we hear a lot about corporate abuse of resources; what can one kid do about that? So we talk about buying processed food; how much packaging is there and what's the cost? We talk about water and people taking showers, letting it run and run; how much does it cost to heat the water? Nobody ever thinks about that. Of course, here's the advantage of being in a partnership. Gaeron is a scientist, so he can be very clear about such things as the energy required to heat a certain amount of water or the different proteins in food; and then I bring in ways of interpreting—taking these facts and letting them spark some kind of creative process.

We spend two weeks at the beginning doing reading and discussion on the theme for the course, and in the afternoons we do improvisational acting exercises. The third week we come to the farm. When we return home we take two full days to create a performance piece which we take on tours, usually to grade schools and

nursing homes. During the question and answer period after performances we get questions like "What's a chicken really like?" or "You touched a goat?"

The plays are little scenes about different experiences that have resonated with the kids—about working in the field, encountering the bugs, or discovering where food comes from. I don't choose them. We make a list of things that have struck the kids—perhaps a particular incident or a job Bob had them working on. Some students have no idea what a broccoli plant looks like. They love discovering the tiny onion plants, being around the chickens, cleaning out the chicken coop, or taking down a tree. When we make the scene, they use the improv techniques we worked on the first two weeks. I'll ask them what technique they think will work best, and sometimes we use excerpts from their journals. I take slides from the work on the farm to use as scenery, projected on a screen in back of the players.

Apart from the outdoor experience,

### THEN ST. FRANCIS



#### Students' Reflections...

*Today at the farm I busted my ass moving logs and chopping up and putting in barrels. This was the most successful day I've had; for the first time I think I feel better about myself.*

*I've never seen so many chickens in my life and especially in such a grand and beautiful chicken coop. Those chickens got it good.*

*Always heat a pot of water with a cover on it.*

*Compost: a layer of grass, dirt, and hay  
Buckwheat, rice and bulgur*

*I learned not to drop potatoes in the hot water. You have to lay them gently in the water. And I learned not to be scared of the hot water.*

### PREACHES



### TO THE BIRDS



*As I sit here the sun  
Warms my face looking around;  
What a wonderful peace.  
A blue house beyond my way;  
Chirping birds, what do they say?  
Green meadows  
and blossoming things,  
Trickling water like cooling springs.  
A whistling breeze blows gently  
through the trees  
And sounds echoing around  
As the sun makes me hot.*

*I had a nice day at the Noonday Farm.  
It was kinda hot, but we picked weeds  
and baled hay anyway. I also learned  
chickens and roosters like weeds. I look  
forward to coming back again.*

*The day on the farm was hot,  
But it's a very beautiful spot.  
The flowers are in bloom.  
The gardens need to be groomed.  
But we keep on working.  
Why not?*

### UNTIL THE SUN SETS



I think the sense of purpose at Noonday is the most important experience of the week because some of the children I bring do come from impoverished circumstances. To be in a household where everyone sits down at a meal together, where not everybody is intent on earning money, is something new. Often they have speakers at the school who encourage them to get out of the ghetto and into the boardroom. At Noonday there are people who are very well educated who could have chosen to do any number of things for their careers and who have chosen to grow food for hungry people. They've taken the time to think about living sustainably, not wasting resources.

Another lesson to be learned at Noonday is a positive image of work—getting up early, eating a nourishing meal, and going out to do some really good work. Beth and Bob are wonderful workers. At the farm the work is considered part of the joy of living. It's not a punishment, not something to be endured in order to do something else, and

not something to be avoided. For the kids to see that is very important.

The evening is also important because we allow the kids free time. We do spend some time sharing a story or singing. One year I taught them Irish dancing. What do you do when there's no television? The kids play board games or make up games. It's great for them to see they don't have to depend on TV—it doesn't have to be the only choice at the end of the day.

Bob and Beth are great with the kids. They're articulate, warm, and accessible. The kids talk to them, ask them questions about their lives, their backgrounds, and why they've made the choices they've made. They're great teachers. When teenage kids try things for the first time, they're often embarrassed—they don't want to look foolish. Bob and Beth make them feel capable by saying, "You can do this. We'll show you how, and you can try it."

The kids always ask questions about the food. Usually we do a scene

about the diet at the farm. Most of them have never had tofu or miso, things they would have considered weird. Most have never been on a farm or grown anything, and their reactions are mixed. Brother Gaeron is a vegetarian, so he can talk about his experience, but most of them think they can't live for a week without meat! Beth might serve fried parsnips, similar to French fries. Sometimes the students like them; sometimes they're happy to get home to hamburgers.

Even the dark and the quiet get to the kids—hearing crickets, chickens and unidentifiable sounds instead of police sirens, traffic and airplanes. When the lights are out at the farm, it's really dark. It's never really dark in Newark.

The experience at the farm touches all of their senses. Everything is new—new tastes, new smells, new sights and sounds—and at the same time there's a serenity that can't be found in the city. I've had kids come home and try to stay vegetarian for a month or two afterward, or think about finding a way to work on a farm—to consider a different kind of work for the summer. It opens up possibilities they would never have thought about before.



*In a recent phone conversation, Pat Flynn talked about the plays she has created for three years at Noonday Farm with students from St. Benedict's Prep in Newark. Years and years ago, she says, Bob Jennings was her acting teacher in college; the two have stayed friends. Brother Gaeron Reuter O.S.B., the school's chemistry teacher, is Pat's partner in the project. Pat also directs two after-school plays at St. Benedict's during the year and does stage managing in New York City.*

I've been helping distribute vegetables from Noonday Farm for the past four years. Once a week, the Catholic Worker in Worcester gets boxes of fresh, organic produce harvested from the farm. Some of it we keep for use at our house of hospitality, while the rest is shared amongst a dozen or more families in our neighborhood.

Noonday Farm has taught me the importance of thoughtful farming in caring for our environment and the community around us. It's important to be connected to the land. Noonday Farm has helped me with my efforts with children in our neighborhood as we explore together how to grow all sorts of healthy foods, learn about new vegetables, and share those vegetables with our neighbors. The farm food distribution provides healthy foods for poor families who otherwise couldn't afford them, as well as showing families in our neighborhood a concrete alternative to the consumerism of junk food and processed food which exploit the environment and harm people in poverty.

by David Maciewski



Noonday Farm is a special place and will always remain so for David, Hannah, Tino and me. When Dave, Hannah and I moved there in 1987, our vocational identity was in flux. Folks received us with grace and excitement; we had a sense of challenge and readiness to accomplish anew the work of the farm—hospitality, farming and music. We had vision; and, looking back, we were at our collective best when we really worked that vision.

I will always be grateful for the gifts that Noonday—that group of people in that time and space—gave me: an unending love of music, a passion for growing things, the desire to communicate well (always an uphill stride), and an invitation to let into my life those people whom the world scorns. I can't imagine my life without having traveled through this place; and it's all in the journey, right?

Samir, Domingo, Manuel, Ed, Willie, Ann, Noah, Mira, Dora, Amber, Luke, Si, Hannah, Tino, Lisa, Bill, Jim, Louise, Suzanne, Mark, Larry, Matthew, David, and me...Presente!!

by Clare Pearson

If, three months ago, I had been asked, "Want to volunteer to rake cow dung?" I wouldn't exactly have jumped at the opportunity. That, however, is just what I found myself doing yesterday. I originally got involved with Haley House by volunteering Saturdays at the Bakery. Like many others, I was eager to volunteer for a fun, immediately rewarding job like baking, but would have

been less likely to raise my hand for, say, cleaning the toilets.

I've learned over the last three months, however, how many different jobs go into food production, and how seemingly removed much of the work involved is from the food itself. While often I am picking vegetables that go either directly onto our dinner table or to the groups who distribute the food to the needy, at other times I am performing tasks whose fruits will not be born for another year or two. Weeding and liming next year's garden, cleaning up the harvested beds from this year's, and, yes, spreading feces, all require a vision of the "big picture" of organic farming.

One aspect of the big picture is the basic commitment to producing food without chemical assistance. The novelty of living in harmony with nature disappears as soon as you squeeze the life out of your first potato beetle; organic farming does not mean we respect equally the lives of all creatures, it means we kill our enemies with hand-to-hand combat rather than chemical warfare. Agriculture itself, it may be argued, is an intrusion on the natural order. The point is not to nostalgically recreate the Garden of Eden, but to provide real, present day resistance to the corporate system that is taking over the world's food production. Without that basic political commitment, the amount of labor involved in producing one's food on a small scale without pesticides seems absurd.



The planting of Ed Hennessey under the crab-apple tree, Spring 1998

In addition to the political motivation, an interest in food itself and an enjoyment of often very mundane manual labor seems essential. Certain specialized skills, none of which I possess, are very useful. Everyone at the farm must often enter into the rhythm of very simple, repetitive tasks. Some may use this time to daydream about their past or future, others as a meditative space.

For all of us coming from non-agricultural settings, it is a big adjustment to settle into the groove of weeding, mulching or raking day after day. I have been pleasantly surprised that I have gotten to like such work; I was afraid I might get quickly bored and run away.

With all that said, my three months on Noonday Farm have actually been a lot of fun. I've had time to play accordion, go jogging, and even watch a couple of movies. I've gotten to enjoy the company of Bob, Beth, John Robert, and other visitors to the farm. Certainly, I've eaten a lot of wonderful food. Without, however, a belief in the social and economic relevance of what I'm doing, and the pleasure I've taken in seemingly monotonous tasks, I wouldn't have been able to endure it. External stimuli are few, and, yes, time is rather slow. But I have not become disillusioned; both my belief and my patience have grown.

Before I came to the farm, I would often, before eating, try to think about all the forces, both human and natural, that brought the

food I was about to eat to my table. During this ritual, two things always troubled me. On the one hand, I felt that I didn't really understand enough about food production to have a clear sense of where the food came from. My own cooking or the waiter who brought it to me were the only visible aspects of the process. On the other hand, I knew that much of my food came from politically questionable sources. Here at Noonday Farm, I continue the ritual, but it is easy because of my intimate involvement with the source. Hopefully, when I return to the city, I can continue this ritual in a more honest and understanding way.

by Daniel Staub



Hi, my name is Christian. I work with Dave and Scott. They're really friendly to others. They come up with ideas. I like to help a lot. Some of Dave's friends are funny. God bless that family. I like the vegetables that Dave and Scott give the neighborhood. I like the cucumbers. Once I went with Dave to pass out vegetables. It was fun. My favorite thing about plants is how they grow.

At present, Beth Ingham, Bob Jennings, J. R. Jennings and Patti Stanko are the full-time, live-in folks at Noonday.

Last March, the Saint Francis and Saint Theresa Catholic Worker folks (Dave, Clare, Justin, Bruce, Joe, Grace, Patrick, Aiden and friends) began their weekly

visits to Noonday and didn't quit until the ground began to freeze in December! James and Boston College students visited for a weekend in April. In early May, Ryuya Oguma, a Japanese student from Salem State College, moved in; and in June Daniel Staub joined us. Dave, Bob, Justin, Ryuya, Daniel and J, Bob's fourteen-year-old son who comes for the summer, played a lot of mean basketball! Ryuya returned to Japan at the end of July; Daniel moved back to Cambridge in early October. On June 14, Dora Levinson and her 200-plus family and friends celebrated her, her sister's, her grandma's, her aunt's and her cousin's Bat Mitzvahs here.

For eight weeks in July and August, Joe, Fred, Tommy and Frank from the Winchendon Summer School Program worked the fields. The Food Project and James and Steve visited for a day of work and discussion in early August, and in mid-August the Isogawa and

## FOLKS AROUND NOONDAY FARM



Nagano families flew from Japan to spend five days at Noonday. Patti Stanko began moving in during October and was here in earnest by Thanksgiving. David Simpson and a friend visited over the holiday. Also we've welcomed Terri, Kathe, Kato Shonin and Sister Clare and other friends.

This year the Saint Francis and Saint Theresa folks are set to come. We hosted Bruce and the Boston College students for weekends in March and April. Mary Jane Rosati and her children were here for a week in April. Pat Flynn, Brother Gaeron, and students from Saint Benedict's in Newark, New Jersey, are scheduled for a week in May; and the Winchendon School work skills program wants to send students again. We also received an anonymous donation to be used to stipend a young local person who has certain financial needs and who would like to work and learn on a farm.

# PLEASE HELP

WE NEED ITEMS TO SELL FOR OUR 5TH ANNUAL BLOCK PARTY AND RUMMAGE SALE WHICH WILL BE AN ALL-DAY EVENT ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1998 (RAIN DATE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4).

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:  
GRANDMOTHER'S ANTIQUES, ART, FURNITURE, HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES, BOOKS, DISHWARE AND BRIC-A-BRAC.

CALL DONALD AT HALEY HOUSE (617) 236-8132.



AS ALWAYS, WE NEED CUPS, SPOONS AND FORKS.

AND NOW WE HAVE DONE ENOUGH PRELIMINARY WORK  
TO ASK FOR OFFICE HELP—  
SOMEONE WHO CAN ORGANIZE OUR FILES  
AND HOPEFULLY HELP ON AN ONGOING BASIS.

Haley House is a spiritually based community nurtured by the personalist tradition of the Catholic Worker Movement. As a community and as individuals we struggle to carry out our double mandate: to minister to the needs of society's forgotten people, and to challenge and offer alternatives to the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and perpetuate suffering and violence.

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