

Meanwhile Back at the Farm...February 22, 2001

Howdy Folks,

Rain, Rain, Rain. So much for fears of a drought. We are catching up nicely in rain/snowfall totals. We aren't doing much out in the field right now since its pretty wet. Moving around the farm when its wet can spread plant diseases so we don't do much in the way of soil work when its wet.

In a way it's the worst thing for me right now. I end up spending a lot of time indoors and dealing with mounds of paperwork I have put off for a rainy day. Well here's the rainy day.

Well this week the axe just fell. I have been off and on negotiating with the Landlady since last November and she finally just told us that she just plain wants us out. I guess you can't blame her since she can get twice the rent we pay from someone else. So we will have to leave the main farm by June 30th. It's a farmer's nightmare to be evicted from land that you've worked for years. We've moved over 10,000 wheelbarrow loads of compost down our slopes to our terraced beds these last 8 years. The transformation of hard pale clay into dark loamy soil is one sort of artwork. So in a sense I have always looked at the main farm as a piece of transitory art. I've always known that someday I'd have to leave. I just wanted to find our own land first and move out in a calm orderly fashion. Well it's not to be. We have until June 30th only.

The good thing is that we will leave in style harvesting huge loads of food on our way out and leave behind lots of flowers and fruit trees growing. The Matadero farm will take over producing our food after we move out of here and by the time next winter comes around we hope to be producing at whatever new place we find. If we can find a place within a month or two we can even get two or three quick cover crops in on the new land before we start growing food. In any event I don't anticipate any break in production since we have the Matadero farm to cover us until fall and beyond.

If we have trouble finding a place I have a couple of farmer friends to check with about using some of their land next fall to handle our winter production. So all in all I think we have enough redundancy in our plans to make sure we stay abundant in our production.

I am trying to look forward to this transition with excitement rather than dread. We are going to try and find a place that will be permanent but we may have to transition through another temporary place on our way due to this untimely eviction.

To keep my spirits up I am trying to picture what our new place will be like. I am visualizing a permanent place that has some slope and some flat land. I want to plant the two or three acre orchard first with fruit, berries, and nuts. We'll definitely plant a Mediterranean south slope with olives (to eat and for oil) pomegranates, apricots, and chestnuts. The sooner we plant it the faster we harvest. I want to get perennials in like rhubarb, artichokes, herbs, berries, berries and more berries, asparagus, strawberry guavas, cardoon, and all the things I couldn't see planting here since we were only renters.

It would be great if it had a stream or two for both production and hydroelectric power. I'd like to set up a Mayan aquaculture system where we harvest vine crops from little boats underneath trellises spanning fingers of land with fish living in the water to gobble up what drops in the water.

I'm looking forward to setting up an acre of greenhouses to have wonderful abundant production over the winter in the subtropical warmth under 30 foot wide bowed ceilings. Some bananas, mangoes, and cherimoya would be nice as well as a few guanabanas, short avocados, and a few coffee shrubs. Ducks will have ponds in the green house and their exhalations will give the plants the CO2 that they need and the pond water will have great nutrients to water crops with. The ducks will take care of any bugs during the day that our armies of toads miss during the night.

We'd have to keep the ducks out of the fresh water shrimp ponds under the seedling benches though. Ditto for the tilapia fish ponds too!

We'll make our own methane so when Pigs, Greed and Extortion raise natural gas rates we'll just laugh real hard. Our farm vehicles will depend on our beet crops. We'll ferment the beets and make alcohol auto fuel so we can ignore the oil monopolies when they raise the prices on their old fashioned dirty fuel.

The by-products from the process, the mash, hot water and carbon dioxide will go to good use. We'll sell the organic carbon dioxide from the fermenting tanks to natural soda makers, the mash will feed our chickens, ducks and captive earthworms who will stagger around from the little bit of residual alcohol. Excess heat from the process will warm our herb dryers, homes, sauna and hot tubs which of course will attract a lot of volunteers escaping their cubicles for a few hours to smell our soil and help plant our seedlings. You see it's all tied together. The underground root cellars would allow us to store potatoes, onions, winter squash and a lot of other things that harvest in large quantities. We'd have dry and moist cellars for different crops. We could have mushroom cellars adjacent to grow our

porto bello mushrooms and oyster mushrooms.

We could build a commercial canning kitchen that members or neighbors could use as well. We could make a lot of value added products for our members. Salsas, pestos, marinated olives, spaghetti sauces, marinated mushrooms, canned roasted peppers, and more.

Maybe if we get really ambitious we could start a small dairy and do milk, cheeses, yogurt, and butter.

Ryan wants us to plant wreath making flowers and shrubs so we could make holiday wreaths. They'd go well with the dried braided garlic hanging in the strawbale packing shed/walk in refrigerator.

We'll find a nice little hollow that we would convert into an outdoor amphitheater with a little bulldozer work where our members or we could have speakers, classes, and celebrations. Nearby we could have a nice fire pit surrounded by spiral earthbanks to make a windfree fire circle. We could use native clay, paint it with a glaze and fire it smooth like a pot from the inside.

A sweat lodge would be next to it so we could bring the hot rocks from the fire into the lodge.

Maybe we'd build a nice labyrinth out of lavender or other fragrant herbs for people to walk and slow down even more before driving back out into the harried world.

We'd surely build a big strawbale community barn separate from our maintenance barn. The floor would be 5 layers of random length salvaged oak where we could hold big contra and english country dances.

Of course there would be ponds and flowers everywhere.

Ahhhhhh now I feel more excited about looking for land. I might even be glad that we are getting evicted. I guess it's all in how you visualize it. By the way, I could use all sorts of help & support managing to get through all of this.

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The Food

Lettuce: Red Looseleaf

Turnips: Heirloom purple top turnips- The greens are great too.

Onions: Yellows

Arugula: I can't believe the symphylans don't like to eat this stuff too. We have lots of this nutty stuff.

Carrots: From another organic farm.

Endive: This slightly bitter green is really nutritious. See Jean Pierre's recipe.

Potatoes: Yukon gold variety. An old heirloom that has made it back into the mainstream.