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Rural

Issue

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138

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30

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SUMMER
2021

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Intro

I remember driving through Wisconsin during the height of the pandemic and stopping through small towns to get gas or get some food. I would look around at all the unmasked folks pulling up in their vehicles or walking around in these small towns and rest stops and I thought to myself, “Who the fuck are these people? Don’t they believe in science?” I would try to get back on the highway as soon as possible to get myself to that imagined safe destination that was away from THEM. And I thought to myself “Why am I afraid and why aren’t they afraid?”

It was later that I made myself believe that the politicization of mask wearing by the extreme right and President Trump was just another strategy to help promote further division between us city and country folks. They just monetized and amplified it via the social networks that control our lives.

The Dark Ages of Trump and the Age of the Plague demonstrated how easily extreme ideas can be promoted by misinformation, fraudulent claims and outright lies. Authoritarian leaders of all stripes can convince vast swathes of the country to believe ridiculous conspiracy theories about stolen elections, microchips in vaccines, and even more outrageous claptrap.

We live in parallel worlds disconnected from each other and are manipulated by traditional and social media corporations who promote fear and anger to anyone with differing opinions on any subject. And there seems to be no vaccine or remedy for this condition. No media literacy plan, no fact checking by the mainstream media can compete with the outright management of reality by very bad corporate and political actors leveraging psychological warfare tactics tailored to every individual with a phone.

The past five years have been a challenge for most people living in the American Divide between so-called red and blue states delineated by urban and rural landscapes. The manufacturing of alternative realities, the politics of fear mongering and the ongoing efforts to weaken democratic institutions has made it hard for us to communicate rationally to each other. We can’t even describe what is happening politically, socially, economically with any certainty anymore. It’s dangerous to even talk about your politics.

If you live in a city and are liberally inclined, you look at the MAGA heads, Trump supporters, religious folks, the suburban supremacists and the hicks in the hinterlands as deluded, mind controlled zombies that are just stupid and ill informed racist fucks.

Rural folks look at Democrats and city folks and consider them Satanic communist scum, who steal their tax dollars to force abortions on women and want to take their weapons away while they impose their socialist dystopia on their way of life.

These stereotypes and these ideas have been tempered a bit with the election of Biden. But the war against commonality continues unabated underneath this veneer of bringing ourselves back to a sense of “normalcy.” And what is this “normalcy” we want to get back to anyway? I don’t want live under the same old monopolist capitalism engineered by neoliberal politicians and their corporate backers. I don’t want the same shitty two party system. I don’t want the growing divide between the rich and poor to continue. And I am not sure the folks in the hinterlands want business as usual either. But what ideas, what dreams do we share?

This edition of Lumpen magazine marks our first research foray into better understanding these places where people don’t wear masks, the places that supposedly vote for Trump. Forgotten places, “the rural”. It’s an attempt at understanding. It’s the beginning of a conversation we need to have if we want to stave the growing tide of authoritarian impulses here in the US.

But we didn’t talk to any MAGA heads. We thought the best way to learn about the rural was to talk to some of the people we know who live and work there. We spoke to old friends who moved away decades ago or recently, to people who grew up in the countryside, and to people who have some serious opinions about our prejudiced views on what life is like in a small town. If they can’t explain what is going on in the countryside to us then no one can. We hope you will glean some nuanced opinions of your own based on these conversations.

We release this issue as the country opens up for business again and there seems to be an end to this plague. As you try to enjoy the summer and find yourself in countryside we hope you find yourself questioning your own conceptions about the people and the places that you fly over or drive by.

Lastly, this issue wouldn’t have materialized without the guest editorial contributions by Nancy Klehm, Catherine Schwalbe and Joseph Judd. I want to thank them for helping us begin a new multi-year journey to explore the connections we can make between rural and urban communities. We’ve got to make some new relationships and form new alliances in this never ending struggle. And we have to do this outside the city. We’ve got to come up with new ways of engaging the rural and we need your help making these plans. Tell us what we should do. There are no wrong suggestions.

ED MARSZEWSKI

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What I am Doing in Rockcastle County.

BY NICOLE GARNEAU



Nicole Garneau is an interdisciplinary artist. Her book *Performing Revolutionary: Art, Action, Activism* was published in 2018. Originally from Chicago, she now lives in Rockcastle County, Kentucky. She is an Appalachian Teaching Artist Fellow for 2021-2022 and was recently awarded a grant from the Kentucky Foundation for Women. She teaches at Eastern Kentucky University, makes theater in non-traditional settings, facilitates meetings, throws parties, and does healing work. www.nicolegarneau.com

In August 2020, I moved to a rural place from which the Eastern Band of the Cherokee and Shawnee were violently removed 200 years ago. It's north of Climax, between two branches of Clear Creek, 1,020 feet above sea level, and just up the road from the old Disputanta Post Office.

Lately I've been digging a lot of trenches. I've been moving washed-out gravel from the bottom of the driveway to the top. I've been clearing debris from drainage channels clogged from a storm with an extremely literal name: a "gully-washer." The water finds a path to flow down the mountain, and I am in service of the water. I've also been building a recording studio, rehearsing an audiobook, making collages, and dreaming up plans to put into grant applications for a future that may one day come. I've been nurturing some ongoing international collaborations, particularly in Russia.

In 1995, I moved to the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago because I wanted to be near my comrade-creators at Insight Arts. For 25 years, it was very fruitful to be within walking distance of them and our space. Ten years ago, I drove from Rogers Park to a small music festival in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains with a plan to make a performance called UPRISING #33 (as well as a plan to party and lie on a blanket listening to bluegrass). I entered this rural community as a visiting artist. For years after that first festival experience I kept showing up, always as an artist, with UPRISING #45 and #57, and as a singer, actor, emcee, altar-builder, theater director, and maker of meals for large groups of volunteers. I like that people here always knew me as an artist. I bought the deed to some land and a house a quarter mile from two dear creative partners and our performance spaces in the woods.

Living in this rural place supports me as an artist because I am committed to building a life with my neighbors and all of the artists who live in this place and who travel to visit here. My art is supported by US taxpayers in the form of a mortgage through the United States Department of Agriculture designed to incentivize rural home ownership.* I can leave the house and get right into the trees. I love the air and I can't believe how many stars are visible at night. Folks around me grow a lot of amazing vegetables and one neighbor has a pop-up bakery and wood-fired pizza oven. Water from nearby filtered springs is delicious. Water from the tap gets filtered and boiled. There is no cell service,

but we have land line phones and adequate, but not stellar, internet. A recent ice storm took out power and water for 9 days and made roads impassable. It's beautiful here, but it's not always easy.

Similar to Rogers Park, I count friends within walking distance as part of my riches. Knowing that I can reach off-grid lesbian homesteaders on foot is part of my survival plan for rural living. I'm also energized by a community of folks drawn to this place who have revitalized old practices of labor sharing. We have regular "work parties" where we harvest and shuck corn with our local permaculture mentor, repair roofs, raise timber-frame structures, dig ponds, winterize cabins, and prepare garden beds. At my first work party this spring, we will build a small bridge over a drainage ditch and maybe paint the shed to look like a hobbit house. "Nature" is wonderful as a vacation destination, but land labor with people really helps me feel capable, useful, and connected to a world outside my head. Showing up to work is also

how we slowly get to know neighbors whose families have been around for generations. From the window at my desk, I can see a small family cemetery where their ancestors rest. It has been my experience that country people respect hard workers. Busting ass is a rural language of love.

I have a 75-year-old neighbor who calls himself an "old mountain man." His most recent career was competitive truck pulling. We've known each other since festival days, so he's seen me perform a few times. A couple of weeks ago his house burned down and he barely escaped with his life (and 17 guns). The day of the burn there was a steady stream of folks dropping by his still-smoking house, offering condolences and rebuilding support. I walked down there just to witness and be a friend. There is not much I can do in his current project of demolition and rebuilding, but I can serve him lemon-cornmeal cake on the porch when he stops by for a visit, and drop off slices of chorizo and egg casserole for the crew. This

traumatic event has cracked his outer crust and I'm appreciating a window into his tenderness. With his power out, I like to go past his house on midnight walks after a Zoom dance party. It's so dark down there now, and I love listening to the water flow on either side of the road in all of the darkest places. My back and spade have been clearing the path for that water, and for the artist I am right now, in this place. ♦

*USDA "assists approved lenders in providing moderate-income households the opportunity to own adequate, modest, decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings as their primary residence in eligible rural areas." More info: eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov



Interview with Dr. Jifunza Wright and Akin Carter Growers and Food System Justice Workers of Black Oaks Center Pembroke, Illinois

BY NANCE KLEHM

In 2005, the Wright-Carter family made a pact to reduce their carbon footprint after learning about global warming and resource decline.

In 2006, they established Black Oaks Center as a non-profit with the goal of equipping youth and families with the skills of sustainability to be lifeboats in times to come. Young and old engaged in collective design charrettes of the 40-acre eco campus in Pembroke Township. Envisioning it to be a place where the community can build skills.

We are named in honor of the endangered dwarfed black oaks that thrive on what remains of what was once thousands of miles of black oaks savanna. This transition zone between forest and prairie was created by retreating glaciers of the last ice age.

Proverbial west winds formed sand dunes and ridges that are now a habitat to rare and endangered plants and animals. The dwarfed black oaks are just 1 of 22 rare plant species that grow on the savanna including

the endangered orange fringed orchids and yellow false indigo. The western glass lizard, the race runner and the plains pocket gopher can be found here as well.

Pembroke is one of the oldest black rural townships. It was founded by a runaway slave named Pap Tetter before the Emancipation Proclamation. Folk history tells us that he and his family of 18 children escaped from North Carolina around 1861. He originally acquired 42 acres of what is now called Old Hopkins Park, creating a safe place for other runaway slaves and the Potawatomi who did not go to reservations.

Hopkins Park was a terminal for the underground railroad and became a secure space for ethnic diversity among the indigenous people and those who migrated there. In the northern migration, Pembroke came to be the largest black farming community north of the Mason Dixon Line. During World War II, these farmers answered the nation's call for hemp. Pembroke was the 3rd largest hemp producer in the nation. www.blackoakscenter.org



Nance: So, I'm interested in a little bit of your history and then how you've found yourself operating The Healthy Food Hub on this really regional scale.

Jifunza: Okay, I think the key thing is that I have practically been in alternate food systems all my life. When I was little the elders would be directly from farms. I remember the food being in the kitchen, grasshoppers jumping out, the greens being dirty and all the women gathering to do this work. I got a little older and our family were members of a cooperative. So, we would go and bag beans and do whatever tasks were assigned. We worked our hours on a monthly basis in order to maintain active membership status in the cooperative. It was a little co-op and then it grew. So, I go to medical school and I go and buy all my produce from the co-op. I moved from Cleveland Ohio for my medical residency. I looked for alternative food systems. I was a resident at Cook County Hospital in the 1980s and I participated in the food co-op on the south side of Chicago. When I left and went to New York I did the same thing and if something wasn't started I would start it. I would talk to people and we would all get together and

collect the food because a lot of the food back then, you couldn't even find it in a grocery store anywhere. So, if you were eating consciously all you could really get was like some iceberg lettuce, some tomatoes and you couldn't really get good quality food. So, there was this whole alternate undercurrent. When I lived in Detroit I was a member of a food co-op. Small farms would make shipments. My goal always when I step into the grocery store is to buy as little as possible and to buy as much from my neighbors- food that's grown or made by people who are passionate and committed about healthy food and helping people be healthy.

So, that's what's been driving this work. Especially getting healthy food into places where it's really needed. We started a food co-op, a food buying club in my practice with my patients. All ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. That gave birth to The Healthy Food Hub. Every month we would buy from UNFI or whoever we could buy it from. I would bring food from Pembroke Farm. I would have it at my practice so that people could get healthy food when they were actually there for their medical business.

Nance: And from what I understand, since last year, you've really expanded some of your services?

Jifunza: Yes, we have expanded where initially, before the pandemic, we were located in one place where maybe we would do several clients in one place in Cook county. But when the pandemic hit we were able to secure a trolley to go to multiple locations in high risk areas to serve as much as we could. Before that we administered about 50,000 farm family boxes from West Humboldt Park to the suburbs. So, it was an urban-suburban-rural span of a little over 100 mi. And to 13 community centers clustered on the south side and into the southeast suburbs and one municipality in Pembroke township, a west side of Chicago community-based organization. Together, all got added to the list because during the riots there was no place to get food.

Nance: So, if a local food shed is defined as being within 400 miles of a location, from let's say in this case, Pembroke or Chicago, that's a pretty large area. Do you have the same definition of a food shed being that large?

Jifunza: Yes. And what it is that we're working on now is developing relationships with farmers in Central and Southern Illinois as well as Michigan all inside of that radius that you talked about and ways that we can connect small farms to Chicago residents.

Nance: How is food insecurity different in a rural area compared to an urban area? And, what do you see as the strengths of living in a rural community? Both of you can answer that too. If you have different perspectives.

Jifunza: In contrast the advantages and disadvantages around food and security in urban versus rural areas is that in a rural area, people in terms of their own resilience, they grow their food. When I was needing something, I was pulling things from the freezer. We really didn't have to go to the grocery store. So, you have people who have managed to grow their own food and process their food here in Pembroke. People make their own sausage, grow their vegetables and fruit and we were able to use the last of what we had from last year really even though poverty is probably worse here. Need is probably worse in the Chicago area. The most challenging is possibly the suburbs. You have this combination of a decreased amount of food sources as well as a decreased access to healthy food.

Nance: So, outside of the food issue and being connected to land, where you can grow, what are some challenges, or other strengths of rural communities? Particularly the one that you live in.

Jifunza: Well, rural areas that have an agricultural base have the ability to grow food for a radius of locations. But the land for an urban farmer where you can grow, is you wonder if somebody is going to take the land away or even if you have it, where are you going to get the water from to consistently water? Things like that affect production. And even if everything goes well there's only so much you can produce on a small parcel. But if you have an acre of land in a rural area you don't have to worry about somebody taking it away, you can put in your irrigation system. So, for urban farmers to go to a rural area the transition is overwhelming, but we're hoping that more and more urban farmers will consider taking on rural farming.

Nance: Well, you've lived in a lot of cities and there's a lot of translation between the urban and rural that needs to be open and be facilitated, as I think most people see the

two as really separate and that the rural is somehow "out there" instead of something that could be more integrated into everybody's lives. I was wondering if you had some kind of feelings about this or statement in that direction?

Jifunza: I do. Because in our experience we've been going to farms and getting information around the uniqueness of black farming. But we started to encounter 80 and 90-year-olds who began to share with us these histories of black farmers. What you saw unfold in the stories they told was that these farmers were integrally related to urban communities. So, they grew food here and even my husband Fred who's 70 years old recalls during the Great Migration when he was six years old, this black man on a horse drawn wagon with food yelling what you could buy and he'd run out of the house and buy food. This is on the west side of Chicago. We didn't know how many farms there were, we've been told that they never wanted for anything. They had fruit - grapes, pears, apples, berries, peaches... They had U-Pick operations. People would come from the city to have a day in the country and even the stories about how a number of families ended up here.

A lot of folks in the Great Migration from rural areas in the south came into Chicago and made a relationship with the land outside of the city. A lot of homesteads were created in the Southland. There's a lot of black history in and around Pembroke. The International headquarters of the UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association) moved to Southern

Illinois...Bessie Coleman, the first black and native american woman to get a pilots' license was the head of the airport in the area and she was actually flying around the suburban and rural areas. When people find out who lived down here, all these wonderful people, they would come out here for U-picks... activities... They delivered food they gathered as far as they could.

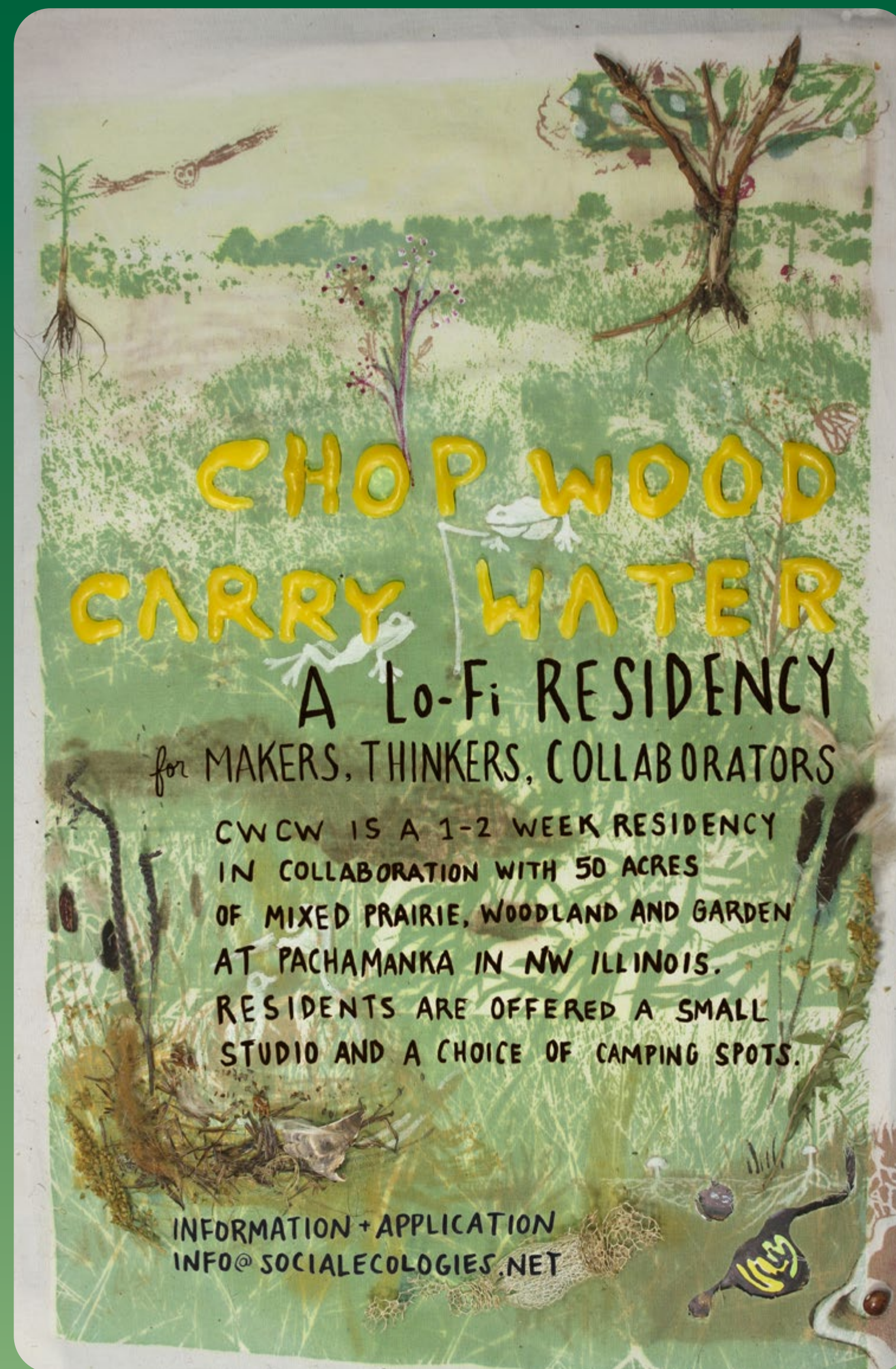
Nance: Well, wonderful. In the past year with the need caused by the pandemic and how things have grown so fast....

Akin: We're getting more calls and requests from people including government agencies and not for profits who want food boxes. It's been really intense. It's just more preparation for the work. My biggest piece is having the professional knowledge and responsibility. More young people are getting involved - all shades and backgrounds, regardless of demographic. A lot of farmers are extremely elderly and it's just a hard time doing that so I think that's a real serious issue. That's where my mind's at.

Jifunza: I think as we really face and take seriously local food systems development we can't live without that. The urban areas don't have the ability to feed themselves by themselves. How to have an interdependent relationship with food systems. The way they are structured is really important.

Nance: Thank you for speaking so clearly and passionately about what you do. Enjoy your spring day.

Jifunza: Okay, thanks again. ♦



Interview with Ned Bushnell

No-till commodity farmer Stillman Valley, Illinois

BY NANCE KLEHM



Ned Bushnell believes it is easier to get out of farming than get into it. Ned graduated from Montana State with a degree in photography, working in analogue photographic process in landscape photography. As the younger son, he got into farming when his father decided to retire from the farm and his farming brother decided to go back to medical school. He now grows corn and soy on his family's farm where they have practiced no-till methods of farming since the 1970s.

Nance: Wow. Well, there are a lot of questions in there. Let's start with your cows, are they dairy or meat?

Ned: They are beef cattle. They are Angus, and we sell them locally as hormone-free, antibiotic-free beef in quarters and halves.

Nance: Do you also grow a family vegetable garden?

Ned: No, we do not. I just don't have time for it anymore.

Nance: Oh yeah. With a thousand acres, who has time for vegetables?

Ned: Yeah, we used to, but it is too busy and it is the wrong time of year.

Nance: So, you are growing corn and soybeans, which are pretty standard crops for the Midwest. Who are you growing for right now?

Ned: Well, I have an elevator in Wisconsin that I deal with and they buy my grain, and it can end up a lot of different places. It can end up on a rail someplace going on a train to who knows where and there's a local ethanol plant that it goes to occasionally. But, I'd say most of it is exported someplace. And, I wouldn't know where.

Nance: Outside of the United States?

Ned: Yeah, or down south or maybe west to, you know, cattle or hog facilities, maybe chickens or pigs. A lot of it goes to feed.

Nance: So, it is feed and ethanol, mostly?

Ned: Yeah. And, then the ethanol is kind of interesting because they just use up the starch in it and then there's all this protein left behind as distiller's grain, and then that becomes cattle feed or hog feed, too.

Nance: So, you are the primary grower and then it passes through many hands?

Ned: Some of the soybeans have been going in containers and then going overseas to China or someplace in a container, because they have all these spare containers around. They come over here full and then they go back mostly empty because of the trade deficit. It's a lot for a small community or town in China to buy a container that is a whole shipment - a whole grain vessel.

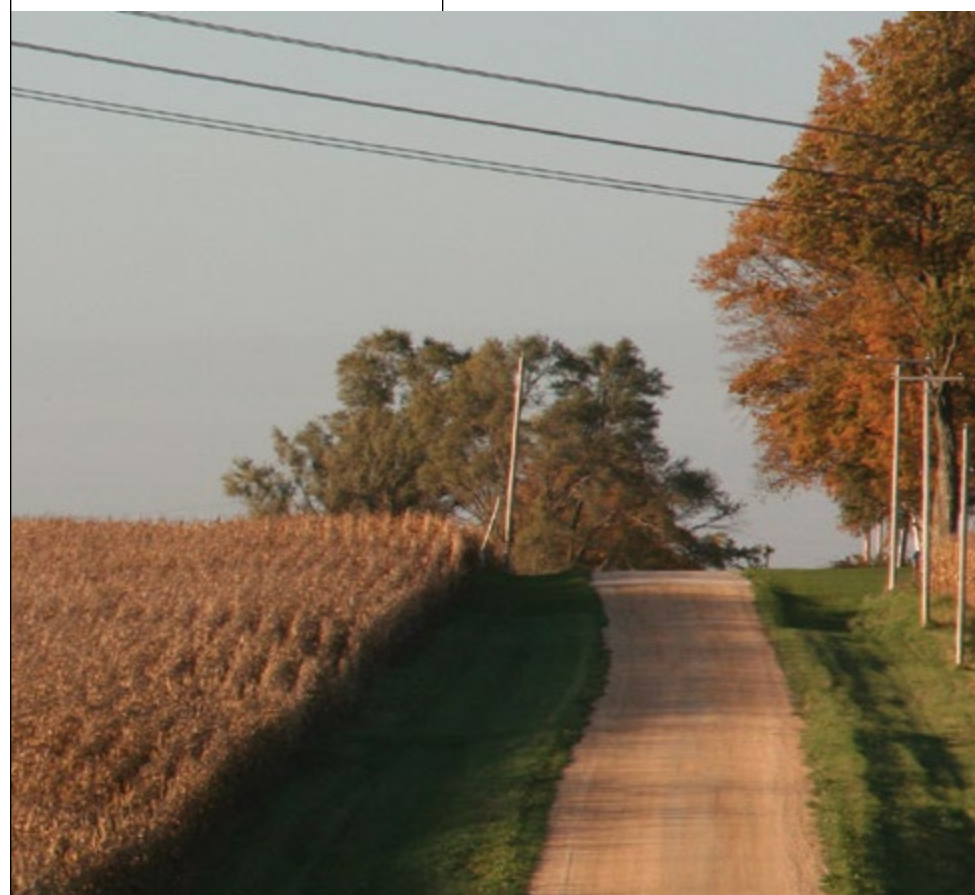
Nance: Getting back to your growing, how many acres are in soybeans and how many are in corn?

Ned: Well, I'm a 50-50 farmer, so I try to rotate my crop one to the other. Corn to soybeans and soybeans to corn.

Nance: You're not doing any cover cropping then?

Ned: No, we're in a tough area for cover crops because by the time we harvest our soybeans to put in an annual rye, it's almost too late in the year. What a lot of people are doing is flying the seed on - flying the seed out of a helicopter or airplane before they harvest the soybeans. You have to do it right after the soybeans, it's a good idea because it sequesters all the leftover nitrogen and fertilizers that are left behind by the crop. The plants pull it up into their tissue and hang onto it until you till it the next spring.

Nance: After a corn crop, you have a fair amount of carbon on your fields to take that up. You're talking about residual nitrogen at what time?



Ned: Well, the soybeans are legumes and they leave nitrogen behind as it starts to leach out of their roots and out of their system as they die. The idea is that you plant the rye and it starts to grow and it pulls it up into its tissue and hangs onto it. By building organic matter, its own tissue, it is hanging onto those fertilizers, and then you can kill it later in the spring next year and eventually it gets back into the system.

Nance: But you said you are not doing that. You are not using any cover crops, you rely just straight on, after you harvest, just

laying it on the field?

Ned: Yeah. The organic matter just lays down, and then the next spring, I just plant through it. So, it's actually a soil-building thing, the no-till. We are actually creating soil where another farmer, if they're in a tiller's program, they are using it up because it is washing away or it's blowing away or it ends up at the bottom of the hill in the waterway where you can't use it anymore.

Nance: Have you been doing no-till for a while or is this a fairly new practice?

Ned: My dad started no-tilling in the 70s when I was a kid.

Nance: Oh gosh, wow. That's amazing. What influenced him to take that leap?

Ned: There were some forward-thinking people and, I think, some university people that were experimenting with it. And, somehow with the soil and water service, they got introduced to it. And my dad had been to college and started farming, so he was into more progressive things. We got told by a lot of people that it would never work.

Nance: They probably think differently now.

Ned: Right. There are still people who think that way, but farming is not sustainable up here on a tillage system because they are just using it up. You know, it ends up in the Gulf of Mexico building the Delta eventually. A lot of it ends up in the fencerows. And, you can see it in the topography of the land up here where the soil has washed into the fencerow and then on the downhill side it washes away. There are five or six feet in difference in elevation just because of the fencerow. It catches on the uphill side and disappears on the low side.

Nance: What are some of your other methods of conservation?

Ned: We do GPS soil sampling, which means that you border the field with the GPS unit and you get an outline of the field in the computer. You can overlay a grid on that and then there's a bullseye in the middle of each square, and you go out and sample it. With the results of the samples you can map the levels in the field and later the yield levels. And then you can tie that in with the soil sampling and you can actually return nutrients to areas where it is highest yielding and not to areas where it is lowest yielding.

Nance: So, you are building structure in the soil by not tilling it. You're preserving that. Do you have any other inputs besides chemical fertilizers? You only have twelve animals, but are you using that manure?

Ned: Yeah, I use that manure, but it is really not enough for the farm. There's just no way. And that's the way it is with all organic fertilizers. There are not enough animals to produce it.

Nance: Is there a reason you don't increase your animals?

Ned: I don't have enough pasture, and the other thing is you get into some government regulations when you get more and more animals.

Nance: So, you're at that nice limit where you can support yourself and your community with some meat.

Ned: Right. And I am growing the calves and I am the retailer, too. So, I've got control of the whole chain, except for the processing, which is done by a local place here that is USDA inspected.

Nance: What is the community like that you live in? I would assume it is rural or semirural?

Ned: It's a town of 95, Stillman Valley; I went to high school here. So I know a lot of people in the area, and I know a lot of the local farmers. If I get more than five miles away from my farm, I don't know many of the farmers. It's a small community, but we don't really get off our farm much.

Nance: Right. You're too busy.

Ned: Right. I go on vacation and I get out of town.

Nance: What are some of the hopes that you have for the land that you are taking care of now as a farmer?

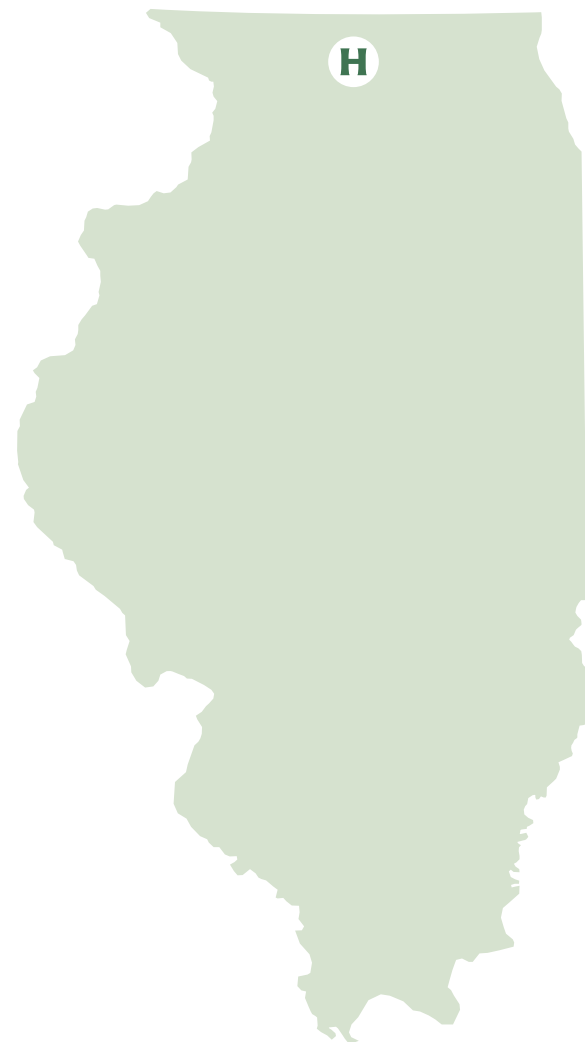
Ned: Just that somebody else will farm it someday. I am a steward to it now. I know that my life is short, but the land's life is not. And, if I squander it or if I waste it now, I'm going to make it tough on somebody else. I think that's an attitude that a lot of people don't have in this world - they're just in for what they have right now. You know, if they can make ten dollars more per acre, then that's what they want. And that's not necessarily what I want. ♦

Interview with Andrea (Andy) Hazard of Hazzard Free Farm and her father Ken Hazzard of Hazzard Farm 5th and 6th Generations of Grain Growers Pecatonica, Illinois

BY NANCE KLEHM

Andy Hazzard started Hazzard Free Farm in 2007 to counter her frustration towards the role she was playing as a sixth generation grain farmer in the demise of the environment. One of the tenets of her farm is education at the local, regional and state level. Seed saving also plays a major role in her operation. Hazard Free flours, cornmeal, polenta, wheat, emmer, barley, berries, groats and rolled oats are alive and — like many naturally-grown ingredients — they are perishable. They contain the germ, bran and natural oils that nature intended. Hazzard Free Farm whole grains are always stone milled to preserve taste and quality, avoiding high-heat conditions found in many industrial mills that alter flavors and nutrients. Their flours contain the germ and bran, and are unbromated, unbleached and unaltered by the addition of additives. They are nutty, rich, and alive. Their rolled oats are never steamed, a process that removes nutritious flavorful natural oils in favor of longer shelf lives.

WWW.HAZZARDFREEFARM.COM



Ken Hazzard is a 5th generation grain farmer, his father started the farm he now works on using plows pulled by teams of horses. Ken has transitioned from horses to John Deere.

Nance: So, thanks for doing this. I was wondering, how many generations has your family been farming?

Ken: Since 1948 that we know of.

Andy: He said 1948 but he meant 1848.

Nance: What do you speculate was being grown by your relatives then?

Ken: Oh, I don't know. It had to have been many acres of corn because everything was done by a team of oxen. And the grain was sowed by hand the first few years. Harvested by hand and beat out with a flail. Waiting for a windy day to clean it and took it to Chicago, I assume on route 72. I would assume a number of farmers went together on this trip. There were no bridges.

Nance: How do you suppose they thresh the grain? Did they mill it off with stone? Or do you think they just used a team of oxen to walk over it? How do you think they processed it at that time?

Ken: In most of the pictures I've seen they're beating it out with a flail. And if you're going to sell it, it probably should be clean. And it might not be if the oxen had walked over it.

Nance: So, do you know the story of how your family acquired the land back in 1848? Or how they came upon farming?

Ken: The grandfather, his name was James, he lost his job in New York as a stagecoach driver when the railroad went through. They moved here and farmed and ran a stagecoach between Chicago and Galena. But the railroad came through and that was the end of that job. People wanted to ride in a rail car instead of a stagecoach.

Nance: Less bumpy. Probably better on the butt.

Ken: There's the scene in Gunsmoke where the girls get out of a stagecoach and it looks like they just came out of a beauty salon.

Andy: You should know that he is making the ultimate sacrifice right now because Gunsmoke is on and he's not watching it.

Nance: I'm sure you can pull some up on the internet.

Ken: I've seen them all before.

Nance: How many acres was originally being worked back then, and how many are you working right now?

Ken: The original Farm was about 180 acres.

Nance: And what are you farming right now? How much land is your farm?

Ken: Well, I farm a couple hundred acres and my son has taken over most of the farming operation along with Andrea.

Nance: Andrea, how many acres are you working?

Andy: Right around 20. And how many is Adam is farming probably around 1000 total, do you think?

Ken: I don't know for sure. He owns some and I own some.

Andy: We're hitting a private note.

Nance: Okay. You both farm really differently and I thought you could each talk about your farming methods and what you're growing, and what you will be growing in 2021. Either of you can start and tell me.

Andy: I think Dad should start and I think it would be interesting if he told us the rotation they used in the 50s and 60s 70s and then what they do now and then what I do now.

Nance: Yeah. That would be great. I'd love to hear it.

Ken: All right, when I was much younger even when I started farming in '68 we would maybe have 40 acres of hay, 40 acres of oats, this is out of about 180 acres, maybe 20 acres of pasture, then the rest would be corn.

Andy: Did you guys ever grow wheat?

Ken: Rarely.

Nance: Is that because it doesn't grow well?

Ken: After we started chopping corn in the fall in silos and bunker silos we would try to plant some wheat on that, partly as a cover crop but it also gave you, you took the wheat off in the middle of the summer and you had a place to pour manure in the summer. The wheat wasn't a big money maker but you had the straw for bedding which everyone needed. At that time it was dairy cows and cattle. Then hogs maybe around 1970, 71. I'm thinking...

Nance: It's not radio, so you can take your time.

Ken: I bought 80 acres that was next to it ...

Nance: So, what has changed for you since 1968 And now, in terms of how you're growing, or what you're seeing on the land?

Andy: Prices. Prices have been interesting.

Ken: Corn has moved a quarter of a cent since I started or maybe half a cent. It was maybe a dollar or a \$1.10 a bushel. I mean, when you compare the prices now to then, it's eight times the amount of money for the same thing.

Andy: You were just talking about it the other day, there was corn prices in the '70s that are equal to what they are today, right?

Ken: No. The oil embargo back in the '70s that was kind of the beginning of the inflation. The corn was a dollar or more and up to \$3 and then back down again. I mean, it has always jumped all over, even in the early 1900s.

Nance: I'm going to assume that the varieties you're growing are very different now than they were back in 68 when you started?

Ken: 150 bushels an acre was a heck of a big crop at that time and so 100, 120 is more likely and now, sometimes we get close to 300 in an ideal year on some of it, not all of it.

I don't know why, but I don't have any neighbors anymore. People come from all over to farm the land from different counties. In Rockford on Kelly Road they're only two people that live on the farms and farm it. No there might be another one in a couple years. He doesn't live there but he might move to the farm.

Andy: Okay Dad, so what's your rotation now?

Ken: About six acres for hay, the rest of it is corn. Quite a bit of it goes to Corn Products International.

Nance: Andy do you want to talk about what you have going on? On your 20 acres?

Andy: My rotation is corn, and then usually small grains to clover is what it's become. I don't use any inputs, so that's kind of solving that problem. It's really pretty simple but ultimately I would like a seven year rotation where it's going into pasture and then rotational grains for a couple years and then maybe do a little hay on it. And then it could go into corn and then add beans and things to the mix and so on and so forth.



Nance: What kind of animals are you working with now?

Andy: I grow different types of corn like flour corn, flint corn and popcorn, and then I grow straw wheat and bushel wheat. I grow into rye, oat, and barley.

Nance: And you pasture what kind of animals?

Andy: I'm working on cattle, sheep, and hogs.

Ken: Andrea wants to farm the way we did 50 years ago-- all the way back then.

Andy: No, I don't want to be dependent on any outside inputs. I'd like to completely close the loop on the farm and currently I do grow all my own food. Or almost all of it.

Nance: Right, and you're buying yours in?

Andy: Yes, they buy theirs in.

Nance: And from where?

Andy: It's all GMO seed so you cannot replant it.

Nance: Right. I was wondering if you could each tell me what you think can happen in a rural landscape, in a rural community that can't happen anywhere else?

Andy: What do you mean when you say that? Like, in terms of food?

Nance: Anything, you can interpret it anyway you want to.

Andy: Well, I mean I think one of the things that can happen in rural areas is that there's been so much intellectual and resources drain from rural areas. I ultimately would like to see smaller farms supported by the government and by local communities saying hey, we want more people on small parcels. That will solve a lot of the financial issues that rural areas have. I think one of the things that will happen with everyone working from home now is that we may see more people moving to rural areas for the lifestyle, being that they can work from home. Dad, do you have any thoughts on this?

Ken: A lot more fresh air. I'm not sure I want the government to get involved.

Andy: But they already are. The corporations are making things easier for them not for us. That's my opinion.

Ken: Politicians make the rules. Do we have a question about politics?

Nance: Sure, how do you politically identify? If you want to answer that question. But I'm happy with the last question we just answered.

Ken: I'm happy with anyone but we're not going to get it figured out in this country until we have term limits. Because when they get in there, they lie and cheat and steal to stay in.... Oh, I have a question for you.

Nance: Okay.

Ken: How do you politically identify?

Nance: Earthling. How about that? ♦



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Interview with Olly Greer Artist Champaign, Illinois

BY NANCE KLEHM

Olly Greer is a trans fat rural dyke who grew up in Georgia amongst evangelicals. They embrace materials through excavation of memory, fluidity of time, identity, and personal history. Olly's installations and sculptures use ceramics, performance and charged objects to ask the audience to bear witness and to think differently. Through a slow cooking process, they alchemize and fabricate objects which create hybrid sculptural interventions. Olly's work begs the audience to come closer, dig deeper, and think outside the normative box. They collect, play, and mash together a variety of materials, which allows mediums to flow into one another. This reveals the decadence in accumulation, repetition, and excess. Olly is rooted rhizomally in queer and fat resistance as they recognize bodies as sites. Often their installations and performances are one time happenings; moments speckled in the larger quilt of their haptic and personal practice. Through their research in the studio, Olly pushed to disturb the sediment of archaic legacies while using care as a medium; as a reverberation of resistance.

WWW.OLLYGREER.COM

Nance: Hi Olly.

Olly: Hi Nance.

Nance: So, how would you describe the work that you're making at this point?

Olly: Yeah. Wet and gooey and sloppy and also like cozy and comfy and I think in some ways trying to invite people in to maybe see something different. I think I'm trying to subtly queer everything. But that's complicated, you know? But I'm making art in Illinois at the land grant institution of Illinois, a very old colonial institution. My sparkle is a little too much for the cornhole.

Nance: Well I was going to ask you about that. You call where you live 'the cornhole', and I was hoping you could tell me more about this rural place, maybe even about the landscape and how you've found community there, or perhaps not.

Olly: Yeah, there's been an ebb and flow to find community. It's been four years that I've lived here and of the two years that I lived here I had different partners and they were out of town. I was thinking about the other day how I've never fucked anyone in this town and it's been four years, and if I wanted to, I don't know how I would because there's no place for me to go to find people. So, not even COVID, pre-COVID. There isn't a space for queer people here. And yes, they exist here I know that they do. In Chicago I knew where the dance floor was and I had a good community and I was there for 13 years. So, I don't know, this is a different space and place. The Corn Hole... let me say I didn't move here for school, I moved here for eggs. I was buying eggs off of craigslist and driving hours out of the city to get eggs.

Nance: How many eggs were you buying?

Olly: It depends on what craigslist led me to and how many they had. I consume like two eggs a day, so I was getting, you know, four dozen at a time. Now if I got a big connect, if a person was like 'hey, I've got this many dozen' I sometimes would hand off the dozens to my friends just for what I got them for. So four years ago when my partner and I were looking for a place in Chicago and doors were kind of closing on us. They said why don't we go somewhere else. 'You like the country. I think'. 'You leave the city to go buy eggs'. And so I said hey well there's this rural town where I did acid once a year on a permaculture farm. Do you want to go down to this farm where my friends have an

octagon and spend a couple days and look for a house? So we did and we found a three bedroom house for like \$900 and we were like let's do it. I got a job at the food co-op as a produce stocker and a baker. And then I applied to the graduate program here and I got in. And so you're catching me in my last semester of a three year media MFA program and yeah I'm trying to figure out what's next.

So I call where I live 'the cornhole' because, as you know, there's GMO corn everywhere. I take my 1998 Chevrolet pickup truck for what I call 'dike drives' where I go looking for dikes- sedimentary dikes, not d-y-k-e-s... d-i-k-e-s. I look at the land. It's just small little towns like the town I was in today. I was in Tolono to look at an old butcher shop to possibly be a studio. Tolono is a town of 3,000. There are towns of 400, or 500. And then you have a university - a big university an R-1 major institution kind of like right smack dab in the middle of all it. So that's where I'm at.

Nance: So, where did you grow up?

Olly: I grew up in Georgia, outside Atlanta in a town called Roswell and lived there 'till I was 12 and then my evangelical father thought that Y2K was going to be the start of the end times like Jesus was going to rapture us all, so he moved us to Whitehouse, Ohio a town of 875 in the middle of corn where my mom's eight siblings and her mother lived and that's where I spent age 12 to age 18. Then I left home at 18 and never went back except for a 4-month span when I had to go back to take care of some business but other than that I have not gone home. I've made my own home.

Nance: With yourself?

Olly: Yeah. With myself and with community. You know, Chicago was a really, really, really beautiful place for me. Chicago allowed me to figure out who I was and it was actually through my undergrad degree at Northeastern, when I was 23 and double majored in gender studies and fine arts with a concentration in painting and ceramics. I just like had

my brain torn out and realized I was queer and figured out when I was 33 that I was a dyke. So, it's been a journey I am a queer, non-binary person who came from Evangelical fundamentalism. I was born in a cult. We left the cult when I was seven years old but I've been thinking a lot about that in my work, the presence of cults in my life because we left a cult but that didn't mean that we left the cult.

Nance: A Christian cult?

Olly: Yeah. It's called The Way International. It used to be one of the largest cults in America. That's where my parents fell in love. I think we don't talk enough about how -- we talk about how religion saves people and it gives them something to hide in but we don't talk about the harm it causes. So, Chicago, for me, was like-- man that place really just changed my life and I would say the dance floor changed my life, seeing other fat bodies being celebrated.





Nance: So, would you consider yourself a rural person?

Olly: Yeah. I feel like I'm a country boy in my heart. Right now I would come back to Chicago in a heartbeat. Everything's there. I could come back and I love the people and I miss them so fucking much. Nance, I miss my people but I'd rather live on your land. I mean, what I was doing today was driving to a smaller town looking for 'for rent' signs to try to find a cheap thing in a butcher shop-- this weird studio. I'm trying to find a place where like actually nobody really knows me and I'm all by myself for the first time. So, I don't know what that is.

Nance: This is great, Olly. What do you think can happen in the rural that can't happen in cities?

Olly: I mean, for one for me it's clean food. That was like why I came here. I can only talk about my experience but, what's important to me is knowing where my eggs and my lettuce and my radishes come from. And I know I can grow that in the city and I know that there's badass gardens in the city. My friends are making them and doing them. Maybe for me in the rural there is silence and quiet and there are open roads-- no one's car on it but my own, and my anxiety level, I have anxiety anyways, but when I'm in the city it's just like a beehive. My innards are like "zzzuh zzzuh zzz." When I'm not there, when I can hear crickets at night, my senses, my psyche, my practice-- my practice is a practice of embodiment and that starts within my own body.

I believe Chicago continues in my life. I fucking love it. It will forever be my home. But I don't want to come back to that grind. It's a grind and I know that I'm probably always going to be poor. I don't ever think about myself like... If I could make \$40,000, if I could just taste what that is I could feel rich. I would be fine. I don't need more than that. I really don't. I just want to know what that tastes like though. In Chicago I had to work so much just to pay the rent and then your car gets a ticket and it was just always something. In the rural I think you can, I don't know, find self and maybe that seems narcissistic and fucked up right now because we need to come together, but I also am at a point in my life, maybe it's also that I'm working through deep fucking trauma, I just need some self-stuff. The rural gives me the opportunity to be with myself. I mean, you're by yourself on a walk right now, right?

Nance: I'm by myself five days out of the week.

Olly: Yeah... what is that? I have no clue what that is. You know how many people don't know what that is, too.

Nance: Yeah. And I forget. And so when I'm in conversations with people I spend a lot of time listening to them and just kind of marveling how they don't give a lot of space for other people to talk, or it's kind of a competition. There's a quickness to it that I'm working on slow mode. Slow, sensuous mode and not so heavy. Even if I'm thinking a lot in a rural place I think differently. I can settle into my thinking instead of being

jockeyed out of position by another thought-- another Nance thinking another thing.

Olly: Yeah, so like the beauty of slow time. That's what the rural has given me. What you just said, it's like the time to alchemize, the time to think, the time to, I mean, what I literally do for fun is take walks or go for a drive to find somewhere to walk, you know what I mean? There's plenty of places here to do that. I think I need that for my practice. I think I need it for... yeah. And I do find, like today, when I went to look for the studio in Tolono--the person who's in the studio is a trans letter press artist, and then there's another printmaker, and then there's this old man I guess who makes really sick concrete sculptures, they're beautiful-- and I'm like okay Tolono. I find people. I find magic. I believe that the rural gives me maybe the room to go on more adventures to find things like I do today. I don't know.

Nance: That's beautiful.

Olly: And I got my eggs from these dykes that I get my eggs from. Polly's Eggs. I get them off Craigslist. This morning I got my eggs in Savoy, a town about 10 mi away and then I went to therapy, and I have a free therapist here, there's free therapy which is phenomenal and then I get to be in my studio and I get to take a drive. I drove out to Arcola today. I rarely eat meat, but when I do I like to know what meat I'm eating and for tonight a friend is going to cook me some chicken and we're going to have dinner together and I drove 45 minutes to get that meat. That truck is my think tank and that truck is my little bubble and I go find the things that nourish me.

Nance: Amazing.

Olly: I mean, the way that I experience the rural is different. If I were a person of color here it would be very different. There are 52 sundown towns around this university. No, they're not sundown towns like they used to be but the fact is that they were and not that long ago.

And how do we start to... so this university does a land statement but, what else? It's cool that work acknowledging but maybe this is just like evolution takes a really long fucking time and there's so much shit to change... ♦

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A Rural Reckoning

BY ALEX PRIEST



“I think the most common perception of the rural environment is that it’s featureless, flat, and monolithic. And in many respects, it is that way to the undiscerning eye.”

— JULIA BADENHOPE, FASLA

“[A] largely unrecognized and unrepresented association between blackness and rural space has played a direct and undeniable role in those spaces being neglected or, even worse, being rendered entirely invisible.”

— DAVID TODD LAWRENCE PH.D

“See, if you can’t spatially expand my horizons, then that leaves you in a class with scrubs, never rising”

— LISA ‘LEFT EYE’ LOPES

Standard Operating Procedure

Detasseling, for those unfamiliar, involves walking up and down miles of seed corn fields removing the tassel from the female corn so the male corn can fertilize the female corn. The tassel is the feathery part at the top of the cornstalk (not the corn cob silk). Seed corn is corn used to produce more corn, not to be confused with feed corn or sweet corn or popcorn. Generally there are six female cornrows to every male cornrow. Usually a machine will first go through and remove the majority of the female tassels, and sometimes it is all manual, or as its vernacularly called, a “full pull.” It is important that all the female tassels are pulled to allow for maximum fertilization and crop output or optimization.

For a few weeks every summer — usually the hottest weeks of July — hordes of rural teenagers gather at vast acres of seed corn to assist in procreation. In the deep-rural town I grew up in, detasseling was a coveted summer vocation where one could net several thousand dollars. I begged Mr. Riley, the middle school math teacher, to

join his team before school let out for the summer. I was 13, of course technically underage, but that did not halt my pursuit. I would be paid under the table, nothing out of the ordinary in farm work.

For five summers, me and a group of young people, mostly young men, would meet at Soper Park at 6:00 am to cram on a decommissioned school bus and drive 30–60 minutes to the field we would be working that day. Mr. Riley and his wife Lori were the leaders of our group. We would pull up to the cornfield and get out with our gallon water jugs; our packed lunches of bologna sandwiches and store-brand chips would remain on the bus. At this point in the growing season, the corn is at least five-feet tall. Our pubescent bodies would be assigned to two rows of corn to walk up and then two rows to walk back — the irony that we were controlling the sexual reproduction of a domesticated grass while our own bodies were changing into sexually reproductive organisms was not — is not — lost. Plenty of NSFW conversations and activities occurred in the fields, but that is another story. Our water jugs would demarcate who was doing which rows. With one step into the dewy cornfield, we would be drenched from head

Photo Credit: modernfarmer.com, Children of the Corn

to toe. No amount of precautious water-proofing (read, garbage bag dresses) would keep us dry. Experienced detassellers came prepared in long sleeved shirts, jeans, heavy work boots, gloves, hats, protective glasses, and bandanas. Inexperienced detassellers would arrive in shorts, tank tops, and tennis shoes. This dichotomy would last no more than one day, allowing the inexperienced to learn for themselves about their fashion faux pas.

Stepping into the field, our boots would cake with mud and our sopping wet clothing would chafe. Any urge to remove a layer or expose our smoldering bodies would be met with the razor-sharp edge of the corn leaves. Walking down the rows of corn was generally unbearably boring. We all knew each other from school (my graduating class was 63 people) so the usual gab and chat of teenagers would echo throughout the field. Experienced detassellers would rough-house the new recruits. It was not uncommon for an upperclassman to hide in a nearby row and wait to plow you over when you least expected it; covering the newbie in mud. All you would hear would be a rush of rustling leaves, then splat. I once made the unfortunate mistake of keeping dozens of feathery tassels and holding them like a bouquet, exclaiming “I would like to thank the academy” after I had completed my rows. I was ridiculed both in the fields and for years to come.

After a hard day’s work, we would rank-and-file back into the bus, bodies aching, hands and feet pruned, and covered in mud (and chemicals) and ride back into town. We would often jump into the lake at Soper Park after work wearing all of our muddy and sweaty clothing. It wouldn’t matter if our shoes were still wet in the morning because they would soon be drenched by the corn again. Then we went home to chow down on a starchy casserole, go to bed, and repeat for 14 days straight. After detasseling my first summer in 2000, I got my cash, started a checking account at my local bank, and have been financially independent since.

This rural experience is not unique, and I didn’t think twice about it until I moved outside the countryside. Detasseling for a few weeks each summer during middle and high school was really hard work. It was also standard operating procedure. Most of my rural life had been filled with anecdotes about farming, unending stories about animal husbandry, walking beans and pulling weeds

by hand, and, as the story goes, walking miles to school uphill both ways in the snow. Detasseling is just another such story.

Detasseling, while probably strange and unknown to outsiders, is how I began to fully understand the production value of land and commodity crops and my relationship to it. This seemed like a normal evolution. Rural people know by experience that agricultural work is hard and relentless. Our grandparents’ withered bodies show the evidence. It is a rite of passage; a birthright to work hard. I craved to be a part of Mr. Riley’s detasseling team. At 13, though, I had yet to be gaslit into believing that working hard would make me a better and stronger person and “get me somewhere in life.” Prescribing hard agricultural work as a gateway for success is a device keeping rural people subordinate with “bootstrap” theory — a myth with rolling consequences. In the fifteen years since leaving the countryside, however, my rural experiences, including detasseling, have been devalued by a metronormative point of view that loathes the “flyover country”. This skewed worldview based on a geographic preference for the urbane, excludes my rural experiences with demoralizing effects. Is it possible for the 57.23 million people’ living in rural America to find value in working hard without the deception? How can we reorient outlooks on the rural with respect, accuracy, and empathy?

Reorienting the Rural

In fact-checking the agricultural elements of this essay, I called my stepfather Bernie. Bernie is a farmer, beekeeper, and seller of seed corn. In our call, we spoke in matter-of-fact terms about corn and farming, but after the nuts and bolts were covered, our conversation slipped into an hours-long diatribe about misunderstandings and misrepresentations. I learned a lot from a 58-year old’s rural perspective. Bernie, like many folks of his generation and locale, finds value in his work and life, but like others in his community, finds that popular narratives fail to truly understand his perspective and reality

The mythologies of the rural are mostly untrue and biased. Many questions posed about the rural areas are simply the wrong questions. They perpetuate harmful falsehoods. Why? Probably because it is easier

[1 https://www.statista.com/statistics/985183/size-urban-rural-population-us/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20there%20were%20approximately,people%20living%20in%20urban%20areas.](https://www.statista.com/statistics/985183/size-urban-rural-population-us/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20there%20were%20approximately,people%20living%20in%20urban%20areas.)

than thinking critically and ethically about the 20.9% of Americans living outside urban areas. The COVID-19 global pandemic has only exacerbated the widening gap between the rural and non-rural; the privileged and working-poor. It feels like we are practicing six-feet of cognitive dissonance when examining or chronicling rural life, regardless of context. Attempts by hegemonic journalists to even cover rural areas are often met with untethered fury by online commenters/trolls. There is little empathy shown, even in the wake of natural disasters. Digital commenters target, annihilate, and dox the rural with falsified and irrelevant “facts”. Take for instance:

New York Times, March 20, 2019

“An Iowa Town Fought and Failed to Save a Levee. Then Came the Flood”

READER’S COMMENT:

“Isn’t it ironic to see areas of the country hard hit by something they claim doesn’t exist? No sympathy for them.”

Washington Post, May 24, 2019

“The real (surprisingly comforting) reason rural America is doomed to decline”

READER’S COMMENT:

“Rural America is declining because they vote Republican and elect Trump. That is clear evidence of educational and intellectual deficiency and moral decline.”

The Atlantic, May 28, 2019

“The Rural-Urban Divide Is More Complicated Than You Think”

READER’S COMMENT:

“Huh. It’s almost like the people who are actually having trouble adapting to the American way of life are those from rural areas.”

The New Yorker, September 23, 2019

“How Trump’s presidency looks from rural Wisconsin”

READER’S COMMENT:

“It’s not the burbs, it’s the rural areas that went MAGA. I should mention that most Midwestern rural folks are scared, white, elderly people.”

Wall Street Journal, May 26, 2017

“Rural America is the new ‘Inner City’”

READER’S COMMENT:

“These are dumb rednecks we’re talking about. They can’t do anything creative. They’re left behind because they’re scared of minorities in the cities. They voted for Trump

thinking that the factories and mines were coming back.”

National Public Radio, October 22, 2021
“COVID-19 Surges In Rural Communities, Overwhelming Some Local Hospitals”

READER’S COMMENT:
“It’s hard to feel sorry for these rural communities. Many of them have wholeheartedly supported Trump, denied facts & science, poo-pooed mask wearing, questioned the seriousness of COVID & now the chickens have come home to roost.”

Imagine reading these comments as a rural person; being told once again that you are what is wrong with this country based on the perception of your geography. It is beyond disrespectful, but painfully American to paint the rural as an easy target by a frustrated populace. These narratives portray rural America as a racially and culturally monolithic, often anti-intellectual and anti-science entity who should be responsible for their own bitterness. This monolithic vision of the rural is reproduced and circulated over and over again. As a counterpoint to these commenters’ points-of-view, there has been a surge in first-person research and literature calling attention to and recalibrating the drastic inequalities, harsh criticism, and the creation of the heartland myth, especially following the 2016 and 2020 elections:

In *Dividing Paradise: Rural Inequality and the Diminishing American Dream* (2021 UC Press) rural scholar Jennifer Sherman “exposes the mechanisms by which inequality flourishes and by which [rural] Americans have come to believe that disparity is acceptable and deserved.”

The Whitechapel compendium *THE RURAL* (2019 MIT Press) edited by Myvillages has 42 points of views un-explaining the rural as “an investigation through texts, interviews, and documentation of the complex relationship between the urban, the rural, and contemporary cultural production.”

The Heartland: An American History (2020 Penguin Books) by Kristin L. Hoganson exposes how the “rural Midwest as a steadfast heartland became a stronger and more stubbornly immovable myth.”

Robert Huthnow in *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America* (2018 Princeton University Press) asks, “is there a more nuanced explanation for the growing rural-urban divide?”

White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America (2017 Penguin Books) by Nancy Isenberg “takes on our comforting myths about equality, uncovering the crucial legacy of the ever-present poor white trash.”

Sarah Smarsh’s personal memoir *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth* (2018 Scribner) tells “the story of her life [in rural Kansas] and the lives of the people she loves with clarity and precision but without judgement; challeng[ing] us to look more closely at the class divide in our country.”

David Todd Lawrence’s essay *The Rural Black Nowhere: Invisibility, Urbannormativity, and the Geography of Indifference*, (2015 The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association) investigates the racial organization of the United States and the persisting American imagination of blackness and the urban — despite the many African American communities in rural places.

None of this is perfect and deserves careful and critical examination. The rural’s charm (allure?) can lead to gross misrepresentations by creative leaders, suggesting the rural is something new to think about and create in. On November 15, 2019, Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation hosted “Ruralism Dialogues.” This was “[a] conversation about the ‘rural’ as an emergent terrain for research, architecture and urban design” — Willa Cather started describing this “emergent terrain” back in 1890; John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* was published in 1939. Or take, for instance, Ron Howard’s depiction of rural ways of life in *Hillbilly Elegy* (2020 Netflix) which is an ignorant caricature of what is wrong with rural-splaining for a popular audience — the film and book by J.D. Vance (2016 Harper) Disneyfy bootstrap theory. These are just two examples. We might get a more realistic representation of ruralness from the Blue Collar Comedy Tour and Reba McEntire than Hollywood or the Ivy Leagues dabbling in the rural and countryside.

There are alternatives to streaming slapstick ruralism. *We’re Here* (2020 HBO) is a six-part unscripted series featuring Bob the Drag Queen, Eureka O’Hara, and Shangela Laquifa Wadley bringing drag to small-town America and the rural, unlocking seeming cultural divides. *Schitt’s Creek* (2015-2020 Pop) is a reversal of the *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971 CBS) where a cosmopolitan family

is forced to move into a remote town, learning through experience about their preconceived fallacies about their new rural community. Also the podcast S-Town (2017 Serial/This American Life) digs deep into rural Alabama where the character’s complicated lives affect their perceptions of a murder, the South, and protagonist John B. McLemore.

There are two parallel narratives describing the rural, one with nuance and one without, and they need to be bridged. Barnstorming evidence allowing for rural perspectives seems to evade the ability to shift popular metronormative culture; the rural is still somewhere in the distance escaping a major public reckoning. We are living truth as if it is fiction. There are still countless aloof descriptions of rural America that refuse to acknowledge the rural as anything but “red” and “conservative” and, of course, the much used “Trump Country.” These inflexible assumptions aren’t realistic. The ridicule is unnecessary. What about the countless Biden-Harris signs (or faded Hilary bumper stickers) posted across the Heartland? What about the non-white and LGBTQIA+ families living rurally? How many more pages of first person research, interviews, projects, architectures, and scholarship do we need to believe that the rural is far from monolithic? Is there any hope in attempting to adjust perceptions of the rural? What if we affirm rural identities instead of trashing them?

Taking Pride

“Flyover country”, “the middle of nowhere”, and other predictable slogans prescribe meaning onto the rural, conjuring regional stereotypes in subtle and overt ways. These are places and communities with complex cultural contexts that challenge metronormativity, including the scholastic “terrains” that prestigious universities use to set the tone for theory, research methodologies, and socio-cultural scholarship broadly. The discovery of the rural is paternalistic, colonial, and problematic with respect to the actual communities of individuals who create the rural. While the rural may be hard to pinpoint, it is not something new to discover or disparage. To complicate the popular tropes of the rural, people from rural areas should be proud to speak, celebrating their rural pride by whatever means possible. These lived experiences not only challenge



the banal popular imagination of the rural but also help us understand the story of class conflict, especially during this pandemic.

My rural is personal, complicated, and community/family-oriented. I grew up in an eight-person working class family in Emmetsburg, Iowa (pop. 3,728). An isolating geography that was at least thirty minutes to the nearest avocado, ninety minutes driving to the nearest Target, and four hours to the nearest H&M. But also the type of cultural geography rich with its own forms of diversity and thought. Emmetsburg both fulfils and complicates many assumptions about rural Iowa: monocultures suffocate bio-diverse ecosystems; educated liberals worship at homophobic and conservative churches; women drive farm equipment while their husbands cook “supper”; gay adults are welcomed home while queer youth commit suicide; agricultural surplus is harvested by impoverished families; lack-luster academics are disregarded for winning athletics. Emmetsburg is relevant as a community and a place because it represents the ongoing and uneven repression of working-class rural American voices, intersectional identities, and perspectives. Emmetsburg is suffering as the punchline to

spatially ignorant fallacies and policies — the national news coverage of the 2019 Iowa Primary suggesting its “irrelevance” is only one humiliating narrative plaguing the state.

During a recent trip home to see my family, I flew to a regional Iowa airport to meet my family who drove over an hour and a half to pick me up. On our way to my childhood home, Bernie remarked, “I never realized that we are actually in the middle of nowhere.” He is not wrong. But in this expansive landscape, my family is not conservative, backwards, or yearning to live in a city. They are, however, incredibly ingenious, intuitive, and focused on other matters of the rural such as extreme disinvestment, climate change, food deserts, economics, international trade, and community support beyond identity, class, race, or gender expression — but also frustrated with



the appropriation of rural as an aesthetic by brands like Carhartt. My family is not something to be “preoccupied” with; they are not a studio project, exhibition, depressing film, or demeaning headline.

When I first moved to Chicago in 2018, most of the comments I received went something like, “wow, the big city, you must love it here,” or “how are you liking the big city?” and a nagging “where is Iowa?” As the city’s opening line to me, I immediately felt inadequate and stigmatized because I am not like other Chicago residents who have lived here their whole life and can’t imagine leaving. I did not attend one of Chicago’s major universities (SAIC, University of Chicago, University of Illinois, DePaul, Loyola, Northwestern) and I did not yet know how much this would affect my life as a Chicago resident. The reversal of this repressive conversation is scarce. To be clear, I never wanted to move to Chicago — it was not a checkbox on my life’s to-do-list. I have lived in metropolitan areas such as Ames, Iowa (pop. 66,023), Amsterdam, Netherlands (pop. 821,752), Omaha, Nebraska (pop. 475,862), and Kansas City, Missouri (pop. 486,404). This is not my first urban experience, and who cares if it was.

A few years ago, I took a past lover who had lived in Chicago for 10 years to my rural homeland and witnessed as they unlearned the rural over the course of a nine-hour car ride and a weekend at my parents. I saw them gaze out the window into the vast agricultural fields of Iowa and Illinois. I experienced them ride in a tractor for the first time. I heard them working out in real time their own misperceptions about the rural. They were there as I told my entire extended family that I am gay and watched as my grandma embraced me with loving arms. This is where I find my Iowa. Lived experiences, told or shown, can really open a different world. If we don't show our stories, the diverse and lively rural life will often be reduced to a vacant answer to the question of "how do you like Chicago?"

Since the beginning of the pandemic, after losing my job in early February and after 100+ job applications, I found myself as a minimum-wage Supervisor at a corporate-owned neighborhood grocery store in Chicago. I work alongside a diverse group of colleagues — a range of identities, national origins, abilities, genders, languages, sexualities, races, and ages — fulfilling "essential" needs for those lucky enough to "quarantine" and work from home. I have learned how to ethically and empathically support my coworkers during these hard times through active listening and individual engagement — I can assure anyone proclaiming that "we are all in this together" that we are empirically not. America has collectively turned a blind eye to "essential" workers on the frontlines.

Working at a grocery store during the COVID-19 pandemic teaches me to unite through diversity and participate with compassion. It has also shown me the darkest sides of humanity. I witness micro and macro forms of bigotry from nearly every single customer. Everyone is a "Karen." We are constantly reminded that we do not matter. We are not heroes, we are the collateral to this pandemic. People want us to die emotionally and literally — one customer told me on the day of a George Floyd protest, "I hope you stop breathing" and another barked in coded slavery language, "speak when spoken to." I cannot unsee or unhear the polarization and white-hot-rage of rabid customers. The COVID-19 viral pandemic is also a class and race pandemic in much the same ways that America's geographic-aversion pandemic is fueled by class and racial



Photo Credit: Alex Priest

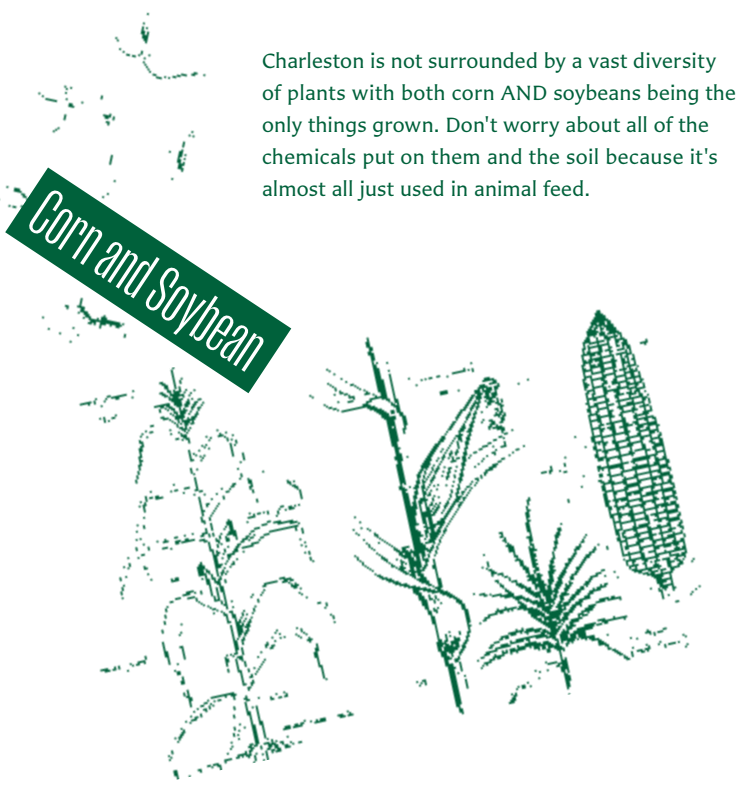
discrimination. There are few explanations that I have read or heard that accurately describe what is happening to grocery store workers other than we are the recipient of what I call "America's petty performances of privilege." This is a learned behavior like America's forced distaste for the rural. I see a correlation between how the urban working-poor are mistreated and how rural folks are ignored. Instead of enforcing our differences, I build bridges with my coworkers through this ignorance. This clarity, however, was hard to come to because the constructs of societal disinvestment are complex. I now know that I was part of the problem in believing that I was immune to my working-class and rural upbringing.

It has taken 33 years of life and 14 months of employment at a grocery store, but I am now proud of who I am and where I came from and currently am. I am a complex intersectional human. I do not need to be duped into resenting my ruralness or status as a working-class American or need to compare my earned work ethic. I wear these with pride. I reckon with my roots in ways I never thought or knew were possible. I ask better questions when speaking to my family and coworkers. I read different literature and can see my life experiences reflected with new light. I am gaining the tools to critically understand my homeland. I appreciate my immediate family and how I am a part of the rural diaspora spread out across the United States and the globe. From my perspective, the rural is more of a collage than a patchwork quilt — mixed source materials are brought together in a palimpsest where the frayed edges remain exposed — we share a lot, but we also don't. Rural and non-rural folks are all part of the story of America and we need to do a better job at reading the full story.

What if we actually open dialogues around the ways rural folks, communities, and spaces are often misrepresented, flattened, or not present in contemporary discourse? What if we took the time to build community instead of leaning into stereotypes? Within this contested terrain, the value of rural voices needs to be elevated by the very folks in rural places and by the nonrural alike. I believe we can do this together. Through championing voices in rural places and not fetishizing the rural, we can bring nuance and site sensitivity to rural-specific conversations and rural resistance and resilience to get a better picture of who and what ruralness can be (and more urgently, what the rural actually is). ♦

Alex Priest (he/they) is a queer spatial advocate, curator, and writer. He grew up in a large working-class family in the deep rural Heartland and is formally trained in landscape architecture with an emphasis on architectural theory and art history. Since 2011, Alex has worked with hundreds of international artists to produce exhibitions, performances, and associated public programs at Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha Public Library, El Dorado Inc, and the 2019 Chicago Architecture Biennial. He is currently an "essential" worker on the frontlines of the COVID-19 global pandemic and an Associate at Seelman Landscape Architecture. His current research confronts the traumatizing class and environmental biases objectifying the rural and working class folk. These remote and isolating geographies inform his perspectives on spatial theory, generational disinvestment, and community representation. www.priestscape.com





Subjective atlas of

Charleston, Illinois

BY JOSEPH JUDD

Cannabis and Fast Food

And one day a miracle happened. In a place where the State Representative spoke at the attempted coup and the United States congresswoman quoted Hitler and voted against the Violence Against Women Act, while praising god and Trump, a cannabis dispensary arrived at the corner of 9th and Lincoln.

These are the distances of fast food restaurants and the local coffee house from the dispensary:

- 49 ft. Revival Donuts (christian donuts)
- 236 ft. Joey's Hot Dogs
- .2 miles Dominos
- .2 miles Thai Garden
- .3 miles Arby's
- .4 miles Casa Tu Casa
- .4 miles Taco Bell
- .4 miles Subway
- .4 miles Jimmy John's (The very first one)
- .5 miles McHughs Burgers
- .5 miles Siam Thai
- .6 miles McDonalds
- .7 miles Little Ceaser's
- .9 miles Jackson Ave. Coffee
- .9 miles South Side Cafe (nice diner)



Less of a college town and more like a town with a college in it, Charleston might not have anything open 24 hours except a gas station, but it has a castle where Eastern Illinois University is located. Many people assume that it is were the King and Queen of Charleston live but even after repeatedly asking, they continue to insist that it is 4 year university.



Old Main, formally named the Livingston C. Lord Administration Building, was completed in 1899. Old Main was built with Indiana limestone with a Gothic revival style with turrets, towers, and battlements. This distinctive outline is the official symbol of the school. Eastern Illinois University and Illinois State University are the only schools with "castles" not named after Altgeld. Old Main was constructed as Eastern Illinois University's first building in 1899.

CHARLESTON CEASETERIES INC.
ROSELAWN / ADAMS
1992

Two self guided cemetery tours based on two distinct parts of Mound/Roselawn cemetery. If a longer tour is desired, they may be combined. Start at Southwest corner and move North and then East.

Created by Amy Wywialowski eu.edu/localite/wwgravehome.php

Some have the opinion that Lincoln's head is too small or if his body is too large. The largest wooden Lincoln seems to be giving the finger from a distance. A mural of the Charleston Riot of 1864 across from city hall. Union soldiers and anti-Lincoln locals, who brought their guns for a rally, fought on the square leaving nine dead and 12 wounded. A war memorial that was recently "restored", but no one replaced the guy's arm. They made sure to give the other guy his sword back. There is a racetrack and a drag strip eight miles away from each other. To drive back from one to the other at the speed they race would take about 4 minutes.

Odd public art that appears in Charleston

The Coles County Courthouse

Thursday is drug court so there isn't much parking. City Hall and the Police Department and the Sheriff's Department are also close by. Including the University Police there are over 87 full time officers, 2 dogs, and an armored car.

Vacant store fronts surround the courthouse square. In 1997 the city raised the drinking age from 19 to 21 which closed many bars and music venues. The Walmart did its usual job of driving small businesses out.

People usually go to Champaign where a college life culture continues.

Zoning Map

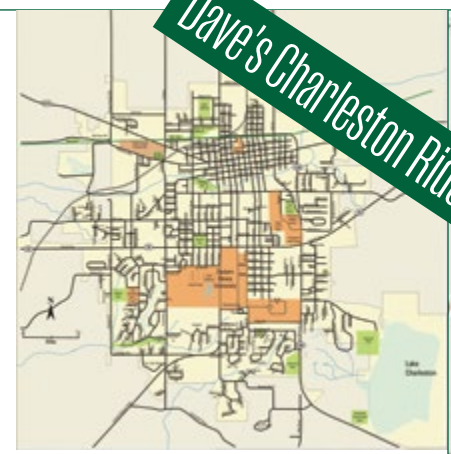
Subjective atlas of

Charleston, Illinois

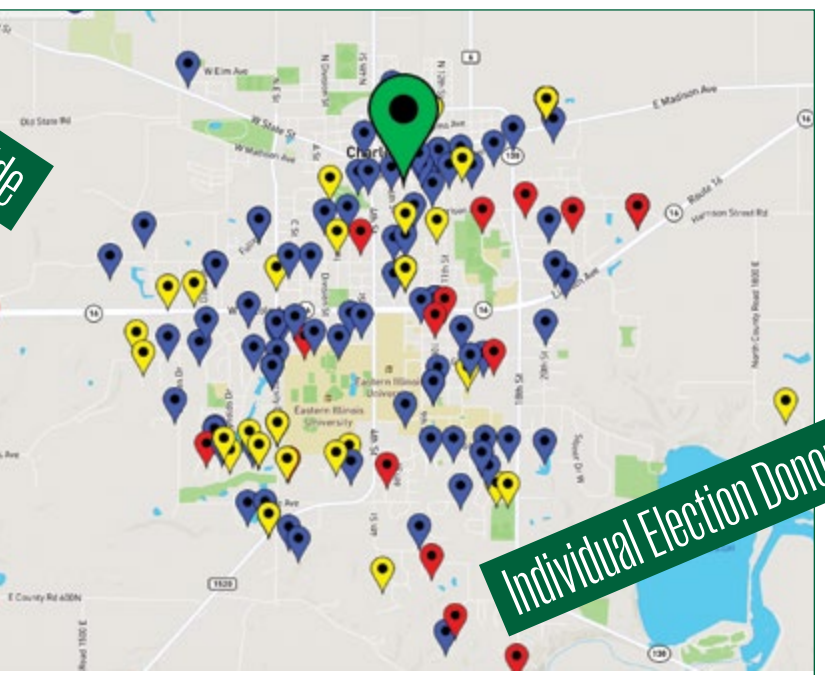
BY JOSEPH JUDD

Start:
Washington and First
East on Washington to 6th st.
6th south to Jefferson Ave.
East on Jefferson to 10th st.
10th south to Harrison Ave.
West on Harrison to Division
Division south to Grant Ave.
East on Grant to 4th st.
4th st. south to Coolidge Ave.
Coolidge east to 5th st.
North on 5th to Wilson ave.
East to 6th.
North on 6th to Taft.
Taft east to 9th.
9th north to Edgar.
Edgar east 18th st.
North on 18th to Garfield.
West on Garfield to 12th st.
12th north to Lincoln ave.
East on Lincoln to 18th.
North on 18th to Van Buren
East on Van Buren to 20th st.

End.



Charleston streets include presidents Washington to Coolidge in order from north to south, And streets first to 20th going east and west. But they are not in grid with all streets crossing. This map shows a bike ride that goes past every President and streets 1 to 20. David claims to have traversed this route until "they told me to stop" Who, why, and when is not clear.



There were more Democratic Party donors than Republican Party donors during the last election cycle. Most of the Red money game from upstate and outside of the county.

Source: <https://donor.watch>



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
Charleston is a city in and the county seat of Coles County, Illinois, United States.[4] The population was 21,838, as of the 2010 census. The city is home to Eastern Illinois University and has close ties with its neighbor, Mattoon. Both are principal cities of the Charleston-Mattoon Micropolitan Statistical Area.

History
Native Americans lived in the Charleston area for thousands of years before the first European settlers arrived. With the great tallgrass prairie to the west, beech-maple forests to the east, and the Embarras River and Wabash Rivers between, the Charleston area provided semi-nomadic Indians access to a variety of resources. Indians may have deliberately set the "wildfires" which maintained the local mosaic of prairie and oak-hickory forest. Streams with names like 'Indian Creek' and 'Kickapoo Creek' mark the sites of former Indian settlements. One village is said to have been located south of Fox Ridge State Park near a deposit of flint.

The early history of settlement in the area was marked by uneasy co-existence between Indians and European settlers. Some settlers lived peacefully with the natives, but conflict arose in the 1810s and 1820s. After Indians allegedly harassed surveying crews, an escalating series of poorly documented skirmishes occurred between Indians, settlers, and the Illinois Rangers. Two pitched battles (complete with cannon on one side) occurred just south of Charleston along "the hills of the Embarrass," near the entrance to Lake Charleston park. These conflicts did not slow American settlement, and Indian history in Coles County effectively ended when all natives were expelled by law from Illinois after the 1832 Black Hawk War. With the grudging exception of Indian wives, the last natives were driven out by the 1840s.[5]

First settled by Benjamin Parker in 1826, Charleston was named for Charles Morton, its first postmaster.[6] The city was established in 1831, but not incorporated until 1865. When Abraham Lincoln's father moved to a farm on Gooseneck Prairie south of Charleston in 1831, Lincoln helped him move, then left to start his own homestead at New Salem in Sangamon County. Lincoln was a frequent visitor to the Charleston area, though he likely spent more time at the Coles County courthouse than at the home of his father and stepmother. One of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates was held in Charleston on September 18, 1858, and is now the site of the Coles County fairgrounds and a small museum.[7][8] Lincoln's last visit was in 1859, when the future President visited his stepmother and his father's grave.

Although Illinois was a solidly pro-Union, anti-slavery state, Coles County was settled by many Southerners with pro-slavery sentiments. In 1847, the county was divided when prominent local citizens offered refuge to a family of escaped slaves brought from Kentucky by Gen. Robert Matson. Abe Lincoln, by then a young railroad lawyer, appeared in the Coles County Courthouse to argue for the return of the escaped slaves under the Fugitive Slave Act in a case known as Matson v. Ashmore. As in the rest of the nation, this long-simmering debate finally broke out into violence during the American Civil War. On March 28, 1864, a riot—or perhaps a small battle—erupted in downtown Charleston when armed Confederate sympathizers known as Copperheads arrived in town to attack half-drunk Union soldiers preparing to return to their regiment.[9]

In 1895, the Eastern Illinois State Normal School was established in Charleston, which later became Eastern Illinois University. This led to lasting resentment in nearby Mattoon, which had originally led the campaign to locate the proposed teaching school in Coles County. A Mattoon newspaper

printed a special edition announcing the decision with the derisive headline "Catfish Town Gets It."

Thomas Lincoln's log cabin has been restored and is open to the public as the Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site, 8 mi. south of Charleston. The Lincoln farm is maintained as a living history museum where historical re-enactors depict life in 1840s Illinois. Thomas and Sarah Bush Lincoln are buried in the nearby Shiloh Cemetery.[citation needed]

Demographics
As of the census[14] of 2010, there were 21,472 people, 7,972 households, and 3,329 families residing in the city. The population density was 2,632.2 people per square mile (1,016.7/km2). There were 8,794 housing units at an average density of 1,019.4 per square mile (393.7/km2). The racial makeup of the city was 90.4% White, 5.7% African American, 0.1% Native American, 2.4% Asian, 0.0% Pacific Islander, 0.9% from other races, and 0.6% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 2.2% of the population.

There were 7,972 households, out of which 20.2% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 33.9% were married couples living together, 7.3% had a female householder with no husband present, and 56.6% were non-families. 34.6% of all households were made up of individuals, and 9.5% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 1.75 and the average family size was 2.44.

The median income for a household in the city was \$21,849, and the median income for a family was \$49,625. Males had a median income of \$30,906 versus \$21,822 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$15,544. About 17.4% of families and 41.1% of the population were below the poverty line, including 8.7% of those under age 18 and 11.8% of those age 65 or over.

Wikipedia Description

Five Midwest Folks

Five locations.
Five Questions.
How are you doing it?

BY CATHERINE SCHWALBE

(some couples)

Inquiry “How are people doing it?” ...outside of the city. How are they making it? The Great Pandemic of 2020/21 has planted the seeds of many to question their lifestyle, location, occupation, vocation, and so much more. A street side conversation with Ed Marzewski inspired this query for those that have always been there or have intentionally made the decision to live outside the city center for reasons all their own. As more rural or small towns became trampled with urbanites escaping higher perceived risk over the last year, and as those residents brace for the possible permanent influx of urbanites, we thought it prescient to explore the thoughts of those having made that decision, long before the pandemic may have decided it for others. I have always skirted the urban and rural existence. Coming from a small town north of Milwaukee, WI, and finding farm structures to be some of the most inspiring sculptural shapes, I have feet solidly in both worlds. I have intentional-ly fostered relationships in rural communities, through

artist residencies, genuine and deep conversations and experiences with those who have chosen more rural settings, or those that deliberately layed down roots and continue to plant, from where they were born. It was my hope, in my marriage, to have a rural and urban existence right about now. I thought we as a couple were moving towards such a life. Alas, ten years ago the marriage dissolved along with that dream-like urban and rural life. I live, vicariously now, through others who live more rurally. These are some of those people. I asked five people (some couples) five questions in five locations. When I sent the questions, I suggested if they weren't so fond of them that they create their own statements. One of the artist/farmers did just that. I asked questions for which I am genuinely interested, and my sense is you might be, too, if you have ever thought of such a move for you.

Joanne Aono and Brian Leber of Bray Grove Farm and Cultivator Arts Morris, IL

► **How are you making it? Financially? Psychically? Socially? Urban dwellers want to know!**

Joanne Aono: We're doing relatively well, as we realized our move from a lifetime in Chicago to a rural life would be drastically different. Bray Grove Farm is not the kind of farm you read about in Dwell or Modern Farmer (Lumpen - yes!); neither of us came from high paying careers or inherited large sums of money. We made a decision to commit to living from the meager wages of a small farm, so we saved up money by filtering out things. No vacations, no eating out or ordering in, no entertainment tickets, no excesses - instead Brian spends his non-farm time reading and writing while I spend time in my studio or attending in-person or virtual art events. In order for me to make art, Brian does much more of the farm work.

Brian Leber: We came into this way of living realizing small scale farming is not, and never has been, especially lucrative in the monetary sense. But economics should be about more than dollars and cents. For the most part, and this holds true for countless issues facing our species and planet, “use less” seems to be an answer to a lot of the problems. In short, we are content with what we have and are grateful for it. We are able to work together as a couple, make a go of it farming with our wonderful Belgian mules Loretta and Emmylou, plus we get to be home for lunch each day, even if the work day is sometimes fifteen hours long. But it doesn't seem like “work” in the traditional sense when we're doing what we love. And farming in our way permits us to get by with much less.

I met Joanne several years ago when I showed my ever evolving, crops from the sky view, at the Ukranian Institute of Modern Art in a show called Skimption, curated by Robin Diluzen. Joanna keeps a keen eye on regional artists and invited me to exhibit at her farm shortly thereafter. Joanna, a practicing and exhibiting artist and “art cultivator” has strong roots in the art world of the region. Brian, more the farmer, writes exquisitely of his farming observations as a juxtaposition to most lives lived in contemporary society. They both offer up a beautiful CSA for (sub)urban dwellers. This from their website: Holistic farming. Healing the earth while providing sustenance to all creatures. Locall grown fresh vegetables via pick-up and home delivery CSA. Named one of the country's best farms by Food and Wine Magazine.

IG @BRAYGROVEFARM @JOANNEAONO

JA: Money can get very tight at times, but we are both used to being extremely frugal. When we first got the farm we both had other jobs to help support the startup costs, which was draining, but we knew it was temporary. That was particularly stressful for time demands - we would wake up early, do farm work, drive to our off-farm job, drive home so Brian could continue with farming while I worked in my art studio, dinner at 11pm, then to bed after midnight. Our days are still long, but more concentrated on what we like to do.

Social life? What's that?!

How have you built community, as defined by you?

BL: First, to define what I feel makes a community, I would describe it as an environment in which all members are bound to a certain place, reliant on each other to some extent, and who all share within their membership the limits and rewards of their collective place to mutual benefit or detriment, all of which is rarely something that can be deliberately built or constructed, at least not successfully. It needs to coalesce naturally. This holds true for the human, as well as for the non-human communities of the native flora and fauna that surround all of us, wherever we may live. It's more about being a small part of a greater whole than a gravitational center.

JA: Brian would define his community as the mules, ducks, cats, birds, opossum, rabbits, I would say we have established friendships from all realms of the community, very different from the mostly like-minded liberal

thinking arts related friendships we had in Chicago. Our rural location and Bray Grove Farm's CSA draws in people from all walks of life where we have enjoyed conversations with people we might not have had the opportunity to interact with prior to our move to the country.

BL: Despite the misperceptions of what many urbanites think of as the homogeny of rural America, it really isn't true and there is an undercurrent of some very interesting and thoughtful individuals, even if we don't agree on all the finer points all the time.

It's worth saying, to live in a place comprised solely of like-minded people would be akin to a Sartre play for me. For community to thrive, the perceived differences between groups of people, be they political, social, or religious, need to matter less and the subtler things, those elements that are what in fact bind us together, need greater recognition if not encouragement. “It's what neighbors are for” is a common refrain I have heard in our small rural community more times than I can count when someone has given help to another, and it's a genuinely held belief I've seen in action. It makes me cautiously optimistic that there is a future beyond where we seem to be collectively as a nation.

In some ways, we wanted our farm to play a part in this general notion, a place where art could help be a means to cultivate, not just under-represented artists, but a sense of connection between different elements of the greater community.

JA: When we were searching for a farm, two main criteria for me were a studio for myself

and a setting to exhibit other artists' art. Cultivator (www.cultivatorarts.com) was an idea I had brewing for years to help give exposure to artists. I'm active in attending art exhibitions and events throughout the Chicago area so I try to familiarize myself with artists. The uniqueness of a space like Bray Grove Farm provides artists with a challenging and hopefully fun experience. We get a nice crowd consisting of our CSA members, artists, and friends, from our local area, Chicago, and the suburbs.

How has Covid affected your way of life and the life of those around you?

JA: Like everyone else, the loss of lives and the illnesses brought on by COVID have created many changes for us. We are extremely cautious, only leaving the farm once or twice a week. I used to see art exhibitions several times a week, but since COVID, I've only gone out once or twice a month, while trying to supplement my art cravings with online events. My ability to make art was derailed by the stresses of the pandemic and world news.

We had to postpone all of our 2020 Cultivator events and Bray Grove Farm harvest days and are unsure of when we can resume them this year. Instagram and Facebook have become even more important outlets to maintain Cultivator's mission of helping other artists.

BL: Because we farm, the main human interaction with what we do is during the growing season, so I think the most tangible reminder of how different life has become is when we aren't able to linger and connect with our CSA members like we used to. But the pandemic won't last forever, and hopefully we'll all be better for it once it's under control.

JA: We were planning to participate in farmers markets, but switched to CSA deliveries because of the necessary safety protocols with COVID. Bray Grove Farm's mission to donate produce to the local food pantry has become more vital given the food insecurity caused by the loss of jobs with the pandemic.

Talk about the way that beauty fits into your daily life, both inherent to your location and that which you have created.

JA: Beauty surrounds us. Nature provides it. Sometimes it provides inspiration for art making and sometimes it generates challenges.

I created an outdoor installation on the farm in response to COVID and the endless cold and snow the Chicago area witnessed this winter. ENDURE consisted of snow carved letters with seed to feed the hungry birds and animals. Nature once again provided unexpected beauty as the rabbit footprints left patterns in the snow and the wind and sun reshaped the letters. After eleven days, all that remained were remnants of seed with the possibility for regrowth and the memory of what was.

BL: It's easy enough to wax poetic about a perfect sunset across the broad flat horizon with the endless Midwestern sky alit with a lilac afterglow. But it's those cold autumn



nights, when the rain is pouring buckets from the heavens, your boots have started to leak, your fingers are numb, and there is ankle-deep mud everywhere, that you linger a while longer in the barn, your mules quietly chewing their oats, and you think to yourself how lucky you are to be in the midst of so much beauty, even if everyone you know is probably snug inside their homes, warm and dry.

Talk about if, when, and what you would recommend for others who may be interested taking the leap to a similar way of living.

BL: I recognize that our way of living, farming as we do, is certainly not for everyone. You must love the work and if that is the case, you'll be rewarded beyond all measure. If not, you won't last long at it. Such a life is a measure of devotion - to the farm, to the animals, and especially to each other - to stay sane, safe and happy, at least most of the time, three hundred sixty-five days a year, rain or shine, every morning and every night, and every point in between. But if it becomes your calling, if it imbues itself into every pore of your being, then you have found your home.

JA: Understand that it is a lifetime commitment, not a phase of life. The animals and land are your responsibility, so you must have the passion. Be ready for hard work, the whims of Mother Nature, the unbelievable beauty, and the love of living with the land and animals. Oh, and have a sense of humor.

BL: In truth, there really is less of a barrier between the urban and the rural than both sides are often willing to admit, and living where we do doesn't mean you need to live how we do, farming with mules and growing food to feed scores of people. Not everyone has the makings of a farmer, especially one reliant on draft animals for their farm to work, nor should they. But we have running water, electricity, indoor plumbing, most of the perceived necessities of modern life, and it isn't another planet. Two centuries ago ninety percent of Americans lived, worked and farmed in an agrarian setting. Now the number living in rural areas has dropped to around nineteen percent with a mere one percent actually farming. But there's no reason the tide can't turn again. ♦

Deborah Niemann Cornell, IL

► How are you making it? Financially? Psychically? Socially? Urban dwellers want to know!

We have been doing great in every way. With 32 acres, we have been able to spend as much time as we want outside, especially last summer and fall. I think being in nature is always good for us psychologically and physically. I have never felt as lucky or blessed as I have the past year. I can't imagine spending the past year in a small apartment or even a small house. I've no doubt that's been extremely hard for people. My parents lived through the Great Depression and World War II, and I remember them always saying "Can't complain!" when someone would ask them how they were doing, and now I understand that sentiment. I really don't feel like we have anything to complain about.

How have you built community, as defined by you?

Mike has continued working at the college and had to move all of his lecture courses online last spring. Starting in fall, they had in-person labs, so he still sees people face-to-face now, and he has also been in charge of delivering our eggs to the grocery store in Bloomington. While he's there, he picks up whatever we need. I have been staying home. In fact, I only left nine times in the first year. But I work online, so it's a rare day that I do not have a Zoom meeting, and that was true even before Covid. I used to travel a lot for speaking engagements or to attend conferences. I have definitely missed the real live interaction with people.

Deborah is a known and generous author. I met her virtually through the Chicago Chicken Enthusiasts group when I had four urban hens - Annie, Winkie, Penny, and Vanilla. When I saw a call for help to butcher some of their young and quarrelling roosters, I offered up my help. I needed to understand part of the food loop for which I participate. It was an unforgettable day as one might imagine. Our shared meal that evening was comprised of everything within one mile and punctuated by their own ice cream drizzled with personally tapped maple syrup. This article afforded a reconnection for which I am grateful. Deborah is the author of *β*three books, *Homegrown and Handmade* (2011 and 2017), *Raising Goats Naturally* (2013 and 2018), *Goats Giving Birth* (2020). You can give a google to Thrifty Homesteader for lots more information.

[IG @THRIFTYHOMESTEADER](#)

How has Covid affected your way of life and the life of those around you?

A really positive thing for us is that we used to have more eggs than we could sell, but during March last year, we were selling out every single week. Even though business was



great last year when grocery store shelves were empty, a lot of local farmers were wondering if people would remember all of us after their favorite brands were back in stock. And I'm happy to say that our egg business is still going strong. We are still selling out! I've always said that if we can just get people to try our eggs, they won't be able to go back to mass-produced eggs, and it looks like that's true!

Talk about the way that beauty fits into your daily life, both inherent to your location and that which you have created.

Our 32 acres is mostly wooded with a creek and pond, so we couldn't ask for a more beautiful location. We have also taken this time to do some decluttering and remodeling on our house, and we have created some outdoor living areas that have created a whole new definition of "eating out" for us. Now it means eating on the deck or in the pavilion or on a picnic table or a blanket in the woods. This summer I want to go camping in our woods and just completely unplug from the Internet for a few days.

Talk about if, when, and what you would recommend for others who may be interested taking the leap to a similar way of living.

Do it sooner rather than later. We moved out here when I was 39 and Mike was 43. We literally built our house with our own hands and tools. I can see that things are more challenging now than they were 19 years ago, so I always feel a little sad when someone says they are planning to move out to the country when they retire. We are both still very capable, but it is much easier to hurt myself now, and even Mike complains of a few aches and pains every now and then. But we have been so happy to live here for the past year! ♦

Kimberly Clark Dane County, WI

Chef Clark Pickles & Preserves is a known chef in the Baraboo and Dane counties of Wisconsin. Kimberly catered a divine, corn centric meal on my handmade plates, two years ago for the Corn Again / Maiz de Nuevo show I curated for Wormfarm Institute at Woolen Mill Gallery - Reedsburg, WI. Handmade food, on handmade plates, is always a good thing. From Kimberly's website, "...a small batch producer of unique pickles and preserves in Dane County, Wisconsin. We source locally from farmer friends at our area Farm Markets and grow some of what we produce when possible. Chef K personally selects seed and encourages local farmer partners to grow unique varieties to create distinctive combinations while highlighting the natural flavors.

IG [@CHEFCLARK](#)

► **How are you making it? Financially? Psychically? Socially? Urban dwellers want to know!**

The first and third questions run into one for me. Financially, Covid has restricted how we can run our business now. Usually we would be at several events per month sampling and selling our products. I have severely limited how I see people at work. I have become a good little hermit. I am normally a very social person. Learning Zoom is hard.

How have you built community, as defined by you?

I am a connector and I love collaborating with other food people. I like to know people. No negative nellys in my community.

I am involved in The Rural Urban Flow which has been a learning experience for me.

How has Covid affected your way of life and the life of those around you?

Talk about the way that beauty fits into your daily life, both inherent to your location and that which you have created.

I have a perfect spot to watch the sun rise daily. I love to stroll around the property listening to the birds and animals looking at moss and rocks and nature things. And I have become a proficient painter and spend time daily in the studio.

Talk about if, when, and what you would recommend for others who may be interested taking the leap to a similar way of living.

Buy Good Boots. 4x4 vehicle. Learn how to use a chain saw and budget for that and other machinery like mowers, blowers branch lopers and a good wheelbarrow. Good work gloves. Learn that dirt is part of it all. Throw rugs. And the woods always grow back. Fireplace preferred. Well -stocked liquor cabinet, pantry and library. ♦

Natalie Hinahara & Matt Kronschnabe Viroqua, WI

It was a pleasure reading the answers to the 5 questions from these two, inspiring people. I have had the pleasure of knowing Natalie nearly since her birth! Watching her mature into a fellow artist and printmaker, connector, and appreciator of the human scale of this life. Her partner Matt, now of Baird Bakery, is a bright light in these pandemic stories of loss and trauma. Matt's gift of passion for all things sourdough has, ahem, risen, offering delivery and wonderful eye candy on Instagram.

IG [@NATALIEHINAHARA](#) [@BARD_BREAD](#)

► **How are you making it? Financially? Psychically? Socially? Urban dwellers want to know!**

Both: We're making it largely due to the support of our friends, family, neighbors, and community, as well as a lot of luck. We have an amazingly affordable rental arrangement for our small rural home, which is one of the primary reasons we felt the financial freedom to leap into self employment as a baker (Matt) and artist (Natalie). We have the rare privilege of not having any student loan debt, medical bills, or other large bills to pay, so we're able to make it okay on a small and variable income.

We live on land shared with a multi-generational family, and there are a number of other households within walking distance who we can go to for conversation, mentorship, or to give or receive a freshly baked treat. Our little town of Viroqua, has a surprisingly vibrant arts & music scene. In pre-COVID days, there were often live music events multiple times a week as well as dance parties and art shows on a monthly basis. The past year has been quieter, of course, but there were creatively COVID-safe events throughout the warm season and there are many more planned for this summer.

How have you built community, as defined by you?

Both: We feel very lucky that we found a place to live out in the country (10 miles outside of town) where we also have a sense of community. Although we are in a temporary rental arrangement right now, we have been here for almost two years and we share meals, rides to town, projects, and dreams for the future with our neighbors.



Photo Credit: Jae Arnold

N: When we first moved here from Madison, I was surprised by the outwardly welcoming energy I received from the artist community in Viroqua. When I was invited to participate in events and welcomed into circles of artists and craftspeople, I realized that a part of me had been expecting to feel some sort of competition with other working artists in a small town. Now that I have been here for a few years and I am establishing myself as an artist, I see the wisdom that they were enacting: We all do better when we all do better. Because of the work of artists who have been here much longer than me, we have a number of amazing art organizations around town that I am now lucky to be a part of: VIVA Gallery Cooperative, the Winding Roads Art Tour, and The Commons Community & Arts Center.

M: Something I notice here that feels different to city life is the way that people put a call out for help when they need it, and community members show up. It is not uncommon to be asked to lend a hand for a big harvest day, to chop a bunch of wood, or to help manage a controlled burn. These sorts of weekend-long projects would be completely daunting alone, but are totally manageable (and even fun) with the help of a group of friends. It feels like people really want to be helpful and answer those calls quickly.



Photo Credit: Jae Arnold

Stephanie Samuels & Dan Brinkmeier Mt. Carroll

Both Stephanie and Dan have skirted the urban and rural life. Dan, having solid roots and Walnut Creek Family Farm along with a long career with the Field Museum. Stephanie, as a pastry chef, former sole proprietor, of the venerable and sorely missed, Angel Food Bakery, always had her eye on and respect for the producers of her ingredients for the café. Both are artists, too. Dan is a painter and illustrator of regionally inspired works and Stephanie knows her way around the possibilities of a bag of clay, sometimes using the same tools that may be found in the world's kitchens. I am privileged to know them and if you get to know them, you might be able to sleep on the most heavenly feather pillows, in their guest room, too.

IG @STEPHANIESAMUELS @THISSTRANGEARTH

► How are you making it? Financially? Psychically? Socially? Urban dwellers want to know!

This past year has been challenging for everyone. I have to say that I've been fortunate enough to be in a situation where my day-to-day needs have not been compromised. Keeping my mental health at 100% though, has been rough. I already felt a sense of isolation by being out in this rural landscape, and COVID just exacerbated that. I must add that is positively affected greatly by the turn of the seasons. When it is warmer out, things are blooming, walks are more accessible, and my role as farmers market manager begins, and I feel more purpose, my mood can shift.

How have you built community, as defined by you?

Coming out of the strong community I built around my bakery in Chicago, and missing that terribly, it was important for me to find a way to do that in Mount Carroll. I began by joining the local Farmers Market as a vendor, in order to meet more of the community, later taking over as manager. That experience has helped me tremendously in building community not just for myself, but also for Mount Carroll in general. Over the 6 years that I've been there, The market has become larger, more attended, and has really become a place to support local foods, businesses and foster friendships.

How has Covid affected your way of life and the life of those around you?

WELL... like for all of us, it's been challenging. I was already feeling a sense of

isolation having relocated to a small rural community after a life in the city. Covid definitely exacerbated that feeling of separation, loneliness and isolation. Time that small group we socialized with was cut back significantly, if not completely. A false sense of security fell over the town, because of it being so small and rural, and yet we still had our covid loses. Some believe in the safety precautions and some do not. As Market manager, it fell to me to enforce the covid appropriate guidelines so that we could run the market safely, which meant implementing

mask wearing, hand sanitizer at every booth, marking off 6 foot distances, and kindly yet firmly reminding those not adhering to those rules. I have to say that after a few weeks; about 90% of the visitors were compliant.

I can now see, after a year of this way of life, the pandemic, the awful political climate, being out of my element, not knowing what is to come, and having already been in a place of mental fragility, that I have been tremendously impacted by all this. Working on crawling up out of the quicksand.



How has Covid affected your way of life and the life of those around you?

M: It seems that some of the challenges brought on by COVID are much easier to deal with in a rural setting, while others have been amplified. Because there are simply less people and there is more space to be in, the spread of COVID was slower and less impactful overall. During the stay-at-home orders, we were able to easily take long walks and be outside without fear of catching or passing along a deadly disease. I think COVID may have hit harder in communities like ours because so many businesses and individuals were already on the edge financially.

N: There were some blessings in disguise that came as a result of COVID. We each were laid off from our part-time jobs in town, which freed up a lot of time and energy to reflect on what we were spending our time doing and what we wanted to be creating for ourselves and our community. Over the summer, we were presented with the opportunity to start renting a spot in town for our bakery, and we decided to take that leap, even though we knew it was an absurd time to start a business. It has been hard, and at times we question why we made that

decision, but we are going to give it everything we have to try to build a business that can sustain us, nourish our community, and help in some small way to support the farmers that we source from.

Talk about the way that beauty fits into your daily life, both inherent to your location and that which you have created.

N: What a great question! I think that beauty, and our attention to it, has a way of helping us pause and be present in our bodies and in the world in that moment. For me, the small, daily doses of beauty keep me grounded and hopeful. Now that I live somewhere where I can physically see the sun rise and set each day, and the stars and moon shining brightly on every clear night, I don't think I would choose to live somewhere without it.

M: I agree. Even if it is just during the commute to and from town, watching the seasons change, taking in the big sky from the ridgetops... We're so lucky to see it.

Talk about if, when, and what you would recommend for others who may be interested in taking the leap to a similar way of living.

N: I think that if you daydream about living in a small town or rural setting, you should at least try it for a while. Finding community, friendships, and mentors still takes work, but I think it is just as possible to do in a small town or at the end of a gravel road as it is in the heart of a big city or suburb.

M: Part of me says "don't!" because I worry about the gentrification of rural spaces. But we are a part of that, and telling people to not move to rural communities is not the solution. I think if you move to a small town, try to be open to the perspectives of those who have lived there longer than you. You are a part of the community, but you'll be a transplant, like us. Learn from those around you, get to know your neighbors, and pitch in to a community project or local organizing effort. ♦

Talk about the way that beauty fits into your daily life, both inherent to your location and that which you have created.

As self preservation, I have been able to create my own daily practice in nature. Nature always cures what ails me, and a simple walk or a long hike can shift my state of mind. I've been paying close attention to what signs I stumble upon while on these walks, and applying and incorporating those to whatever present moment I seem to be in. it helps.

Talk about if, when, and what you would recommend for others who may be interested taking the leap to a similar way of living.

There are so many factors at play here. I left the city after closing my business, and not having a definite direction for myself at that time. It was a way for me to distance myself from some of the immediate grief of that. However, it also took me out of my main support system, familiar routines, and comforts. I may not have been completely ready for that shift emotionally, and it has created some discomfort. If I had felt like I was retiring to somewhere, instead of looking to recreate myself somewhere, that may have been an easier jump. I think that is someone were to desire to relocate to a smaller way of life, having more of a definite plan in mind of what that would look like would be helpful. Are you in it alone? Are you in it with a partner, or a group or friends? What is the new community like culturally, politically, is it diverse enough? How do you see yourself contributing to that? Is it important for you to be part of that new community? ♦



The effects of the pandemic on a small rural town in Northwestern Illinois

BY DAN BRINKMEIER

► **Rebuilding/reimagining community during the pandemic and the importance of “neighboring”**

Our small, rural town doesn't have a large number of places for people to interact **with each other anyway. Farm people live this life anyway, and may go days** without interacting with outsiders other than members of their own family. People out here wave at each other as they go by, and perhaps this has increased due to the more limited contact with other during the “lock-down.” (you wave back at people you don't even know; you obviously don't want to be accused of not waving back at someone who waved first). This small gesture is important out here... and sometimes is confusing to city dwellers who move out here.

But what is more important to note here is the negative effect of the lockdown on a **“closed” society like a small, rural town, and I'm talking specifically about the social role** of taverns here. Keep in mind that many people who go into the local tavern may not even drink alcohol, but they go there to interact with others and to maintain our social system (they don't know they are doing this). This is very informal, there aren't any rules for this, but this human contact is especially important for people who live alone, and there are many solitary people in our rural town— partner passed away, no kids at home anymore, retired so there's no work interactions anymore, also some are “oddballs” who don't fit into the other civic interactions we have. We lost that “informal space for neighboring” for a few months during the pandemic, and yes, it came back, but I'm not sure if it's the same as before.

Unfortunately, there are some people who can't help themselves but they have to lecture others on politics, masks, social distancing, following the Illinois Governor's rules, etc., etc., etc.; which created unnecessary divisions that were probably there, but really came out during the pandemic. People here are generally kind to one another, but with the introduction of a new type of politics into our social lives, some may now feel justified in not being kind to others, simply because they disagree with them

about one thing or another.

Remember: there is one hard and fast rule about being in tavern: you never talk about politics or religion. Period. Yet, the pandemic, the state government-mandated lockdowns, closures, and rules, were unfortunately highly politicized by many. People here now know what “virtue signaling” is.

How has this affected me financially? Me, not much, in fact, because I'm retired and have investments, I'm doing fine; like everyone else I received the two payments from the Federal Government, and I also have just enough outside income to count as “beer money;” that said, the local economy has obviously suffered, big time. Have we lost small businesses? Some have held on. This hit the local taverns and restaurants hard, especially those that depend on live music. I also know that many community/civic organizations have suffered, and this has hit the churches hard (and churches are a big part of the social fabric in rural towns). Although government PPP assistance was available for some businesses, many here became frustrated with it and stopped looking for Federal help, many also didn't need another loan, as they were already owing so much anyway. Farmers did get several coronavirus payments due to the cattle and grain markets plummeting at the beginning of the year; the payments we received on our farms was the first federal assistance we've received in many years, as we are small operators and don't usually qualify for any aid. Mind you, you this was Federal assistance, we don't expect anything from the State of Illinois.

Why I live where I do

The strong pull of my family history here, and the small-town rural culture, always pulled at me to return and live in Mount Carroll, regardless of where I lived for 30 some years of academic life and professional employment. I've turned down job promotions in the past, because I was always going to come back here. I always considered myself to be from Mount Carroll, even when living someplace else. It was only natural that I moved back here twelve years ago, and made it my home once again. It's funny now, in that most of the people I know, here in a little town of 1,500 inhabitants, probably don't know that I had ever been anyplace else, but, what counts is that you are here now, and being part of the community. I like that fact that I'm accepted here and don't have to explain myself, or prove anything to anyone.

Advice to people considering making the move from an urban life to a rural life

When people from the city move out here to live, I've noticed that sometimes they spend too much time explaining to me that they are outsiders, or telling too much about what they used to do. I sort of don't care that they moved out of the city and to a rural place, what counts is they are here now, and I would stress that what is really important is that they become part of the social system itself, and not try to change it with ideas that you brought with you. That's a culture war you'll never win, as people here have deeply felt emotions about their rural life and history, and they'll just resent it if you try to show kind of moral superiority just because you came from an urban area. Nobody gets to be morally superior here, unless you're a minister in a church— maybe then. Those neighbors of yours? You might need them....

The effects of the pandemic on a small rural town in Northwestern Illinois

Will things here ever get back to normal here? Yes, sure they will , **and here's why:** people in this rural community find strength in themselves, and know what they themselves believe— and they don't need the internet to tell them what that is. They certainly don't need the state government telling them how to live; and the federal government is also far away. But perhaps even more than that, there is a sense of being a unique community here, in that it is special to us, and perhaps that gives us a sense of belonging, something that can't be broken, even after a year of pandemic crisis, fear, and behavioral changes like quarantining and staying away from your friends, family and neighbors. The government? They aren't going to do anything for us. The local governments (city and county) have far more importance in our daily lives.

Oddly enough, people here are also very fatalistic, and many (myself included) just sort of accepted the fact that, when the pandemic hit more than a year ago, well, “we'll get through this.” I don't remember there being a lot of panic; it was the sort of thing that happens to us... “like getting the cancer...”

I do have to note, that my responses to this would be drastically different is this was March of 2020, not March of 2021. Then, we all thought we were going to die. Now, probably not. I just got my first vaccination shot a few weeks ago, and I'm schedule for my second shot in mid-March.

I remember mid-March of 2020, when this thing just got started, and talking one morning with my younger brother out at the farm. We both sort of said the same thing— we were going to be careful around our 91-year-old mother (by that time we knew of two local people who had died, supposedly of the virus), but likely that we were going to die from something else, like “the cancer,” or dementia, or Parkinson's Disease, or ruining your liver because you drink too much. So, by mid to late March everybody was pretty terrified of the coronavirus, but, I think a lot of that had to do with the media, and the messages out there that we most definitely all going to get the virus and die.

We also knew that, yes, we could still get it too, and I remember being scared, at first, but that is because I thought, “who's going to take care of my elderly mother who lives alone out at the farm?”

Using art to help maintain and build our community

At the end of March, and more than a year ago and soon after everything closed, I started a personal art project that I felt would benefit my community. For lack of a better title, I called it “The Charlies Portrait Project,” and it is sort of like a public mural project, but in the form of small, 18” x 24” canvases hung together on the wall of one of our oldest taverns in town, with each canvas a painted portrait of an individual who once drank at the bar, but is no longer living. There are fifteen portraits there now, and another dozen to come. We'll see. People keep passing away and theoretically, there's no end to this. There's nothing in this art project about the virus or the pandemic (only one of the individuals represented “may have” died of the virus (the family disputes it), but it was definitely driven by the idea that we are a community that is held together by our memories of other people, and in this case, the memory of someone who we once drank with at that very tavern. Simple. I wrote a short explanatory note to put up by the portraits down at the tavern and **this is it:**



The Charlies II “Rememberance Wall” Project— 2020-2021

The idea for this collection of small portraits had its origin in the beginning of the great Covid-19 Pandemic lock-down of 2020, and how we could no longer gather freely in this tavern to share stories, to chat with friends, and to remember those who were also once here, just like us, at the same bar.

This is an attempt to commemorate some of our friends, comrades and acquaintances who once graced this bar with us, and who were an important part of our community— from the time this tavern was known as Poffy's, or Bob Dauphin's, or Charlies II, then “Linda's place” (which was Charlies); and now, once again Charlies II. In this tavern we often talk about those who went before us, as we remember those old friends— and how we shared a beer with them.

This town has always had quite the collection of unique “characters,” and yes, there are many more people from the past who could be represented here, but aren't for one reason or another— maybe we'll get to them. The only rule for this project is that you had to have had relationship with the bar; and unfortunately, to have passed away.

And if you don't think these portraits truly represent the visage of a particular person, rest assured that, with time, and as memories fade, these paintings will eventually look more and more like the friends at the bar that we once knew.

“Of All the Money, that E're I spent,

I Spent it in Good Company”

—From the Scottish folk song

“The Parting Glass”

D. Brinkmeier March 15, 2021

Dan Brinkmeier is an artist and full-timefarmer living in Mount Carroll, a small town of about 1,500 in Northwestern Illinois.



Photo Credits: Mike Evans





Photo Credits: Mike Evans



On Henry's Farm

An Interview with Ines Sommer

BY ED MARSZEWSKI



While working on this issue of Lumpen I asked Encarnación Teruel, Deputy Director of The Illinois Arts Council, for some tips. Among links to various nonprofit organizations like the Wormfarm Institute, and a suggestion to read National Governor's Report on the Rural, he said I needed to check out Ines Sommer's new film. I contacted Ines and was lucky enough to watch a digital screener of Seasons of Change on Henry's Farm. The film is currently making the festival circuit and will hopefully be screened in theaters everywhere soon. Ines is a veteran filmmaker specializing in civic engagement, biography and the environment. She kicks serious ass. We're lucky to have her as the Associate Director of the MFA in Documentary Media program in Northwestern University.

Ed: Ines, I love your film because it showed me what sustainable farmers do. And you picked a wonderful farmer and family to follow. I'm wondering if this all started because you were inspired by Terra Brockman's book "The Seasons on Henry's Farm?"

Ines: Initially I signed on to direct a short documentary project about Henry's Farm which then led me to Terra, whose book gives such a wonderful, intimate view of life on Henry's Farm. Terra and I clicked and decided to collaborate on this feature-length documentary.

Ed: Did you first encounter Henry at the Evanston Farmers Market?

Ines: I was introduced to Henry through an acquaintance. The initial plan for the documentary was to film it over the course of several long harvest days in the fall. All hands are on deck for those very long, labor-intensive days and even Henry's college-age kids came back to the farm for that, which you can see in the film. So, the documentary was initially very limited in scope and then just grew into something much larger.

Ed: I didn't know about the Evanston farmers market because I live on the South Side. A market like that is pretty common on the North Side of Chicago, isn't it?

Ines: We have lots of farmers markets across the North Side of Chicago, but I believe the Evanston one is among the oldest in the state. So that's also one of the reasons for Henry to make this long trip up here. Henry's Farm is located in Congerville, between Bloomington and Peoria, and when Henry started farming, there were really no farmers markets in his area. Chicago was kind of the main option. So that's what he's been doing, driving back and forth for 25 odd years.

Ed: Henry and his family run what I consider a romanticized idea of what a farm is. But in fact this farming is unlike what most farmers are doing in Illinois, is that correct?

Ines: That's for sure. I think I definitely had that romantic view of farming, too. When I was finishing high school in southern Germany, several of my friends were planning to become organic farmers because we were all very environmentally conscious. This early on informed my view of sustainable farming as something worthy and important, but it also had this glow around it. But I don't

Photo Credit: Ines Sommer

think I was quite prepared for the intense physical labor that I observed when I started filming at Henry's Farm.

Just driving down to Congerville, it's about a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Chicago, and you only see big cornfields and soy. And it's all this huge, mechanized kind of agriculture. So, to encounter Henry's Farm amidst all this is wonderful.

Ed: What do you think the benefits and the drawbacks of this type of farming are? It seems brutal to me. Like you said it's very labor intensive.

Ines: I would say that Henry is maybe even more intense than other organic farmers in that he uses so little machinery. I could imagine that other farmers don't do quite as much by hand as he does. Even his idea about not listening to music while you're working indicates that there's something almost spiritual about his practice. He's become one with the physical labor that he does, and I think that's what other people who work with him get out of it too. So that aspect is separate from just looking at the benefits of organic farming in general, which has to do with growing a much healthier product for us as consumers and doing it in a way that's also much healthier for the earth.

Ed: You mentioned the farm hands who were not allowed to listen to music who became involved with Henry's spiritual philosophy of farming. It seems like a wide range of people would up working on his farm. Were they mostly agriculture students or were they from all walks of life?

Ines: There were a few interns who had some farming experience, but what was quite surprising to me were the many interns who had liberal arts college degrees. Maybe it's an indication that people miss doing things with their hands and pursuing something meaningful that's inherently positive.

Ed: Yeah, it was very surprising to me as well. There's this great moment where everything's awesome at the farm, the harvests are beautiful, and then Henry and his wife finally take a sabbatical in Japan. Of course, after he leaves, he's faced with the massive crisis on the farm. Do you want to describe that major shift in their lives?

Ines: When Henry left, he invited his former interns Kris and Adriane to run the farm. Some of what they encountered has to do with the shifting climate, the more extreme



Photo Credit: Alex Sing

and unpredictable weather events. It's not just "oh, it's getting hotter," but it's the unpredictability which makes it so hard, especially for agriculture, because when you're planting something, you need to be able to anticipate what will happen weather-wise. I think if Henry had been there, maybe some of the impact of these weather events could have been mitigated just slightly more because he's just so super experienced.

This was kind of a turning point that we highlighted in the film to show that there is this change coming and people will need to adapt their practices to survive. In terms of filmmaking, this is not just about capturing the right kind of footage, but also about shaping the story in editing so that what's happening at the farm is connected to what Henry is going through in Japan. So, in the film, instead of a year of leisure and contemplation, it becomes a year of reckoning.

Ed: To me the most surprising aspect of the film was that you capture the moment when farms were flooding all over the Midwest. No one really thinks about excess rain being a problem or weather event. Most people think about drought as a symptom of climate change or climate breakdown. When in fact, the instability of the entire weather patterns themselves are the problem. And it could be too much rain, which is what happened.

Ines: Yeah, you can see how these plants are drowning. Unfortunately, this wasn't just happening during that one year that I captured on camera, but it's every year now that there are more floods than before. So that becomes the new pattern. Henry tends to lose a lot of crops now and that's why he's constantly trying to adapt.

I don't think we touched on this in the film but for example the runoff water from the shed is where he has now planted rice paddies. He's planning to plant more fruit bearing bushes and trees. He's constantly thinking about how to adapt to this unpredictability. At some point, he might have to move his whole farm operation up onto the hill where he also has fields.

Ed: Not that I know anything about farming, but I would consider Henry an anomaly as a farmer. Wouldn't most farmers give up when faced with this kind of massive interruption in how they farm their land? Or do you believe most farmers are resilient and just roll with the changes no matter what happens?

Ines: I would make a distinction between sustainable farming and industrial agriculture. A lot of organic farmers are absolutely adapting and trying to think of other ways of doing things. Maybe not as extreme as Henry who plants 650 varieties of vegetables, which is his form of crop insurance. Even for organic farmers that

amount of diversity is unusual. But organic farmers are definitely much more aware of what's going on with their particular piece of land. In industrial agriculture, if you only monocrop, there's not much you can do in terms of adapting with that method. You will have to switch to a different kind of farming.

Ed: How is this affecting the future production of those agribusiness farms versus sustainable farmers.

Ines: Yeah, you know I don't have an answer to that. It seems to me that often they're just using more chemicals to work their way out of this. I think it would require farmers to really assess if this is sustainable in the long run.

Ed: What's interesting to me is that you plan on doing a short film about a harvest. And then you became embedded in this farmer's life in the middle of Central Illinois, in the Midwest. How were you able to even comprehend what was happening? Was it just through constantly interviewing, being present and learning about sustainable farming in general? Did you have a background in and interest in this field at all?

Ines: I've been interested in environmental issues my entire life. But in terms of visual storytelling, I think the joy of making documentaries is really about being open to discovery. There are different types of documentaries, for instance, if you make a historical documentary there's probably a limited amount of archival material and it's possibly scripted. Or maybe you're making more of an advocacy piece where you have a clear goal as to what you want to bring across when you start filming. Those are completely fine ways of making documentaries, but in this case, I was more interested in being open to seeing where the story leads and to keep adapting and re-envisioning what the film wants to say. After the first week of filming at the farm I was really intrigued by talking to Hiroko, whose experience as an immigrant to the U.S. echoed some of my own experiences as an immigrant. I wanted to keep filming so that she could tell me a bit more about her experience living in a rural, very white community. There's just a tiny bit of that in the film but that was important to me. And then, like two or three weeks into filming, Henry said, "Oh and by the way I'm taking a sabbatical."

So, then you have a choice to make as a filmmaker, do you stop and just make something with the material you have up to then or do you allow yourself to go a bit further to see where that will lead. Yeah, so to be open to forks in the road and just letting things play out a bit and constantly re-thinking, questioning, and adapting what you want to say with the film is part of what's so enjoyable about this improvisational kind of documentary filmmaking.

Ed: It's truly a lovely film and the fact the family was a biracial family living in what many call the red parts of the state was interesting. I didn't see much conflict or I didn't see how being persons of color affected the family in that town. I'm not sure if there were any moments where you felt like there were some legacy issues within that community in dealing with people of color or not.

Ines: I think it's just briefly mentioned when Aozora, the daughter, talks about her high school experiences. She comments on how kids in her class would question her patriotism and said she should go back to Japan. So, there is that short section where that's addressed through her memory and reflections. Henry and Hiroko have to live in that community too. So, it's not as if they are going around saying to people "You are pursuing the kind of agriculture that we don't like." It's not like in the city where you could just move to another neighborhood. As farmers, they are more rooted, and you have to get along with your neighbors and maybe that's a long tradition too.

Ed: That's a good point too about getting along with your neighbors. The pandemic has made so many people imagine themselves having a life outside of an urban area. We have seen how many people, when they could, work remotely. Many even left urban environments and moved to more rural places. There seems to be a movement by some people to start thinking about opening a farm and engaging with this community that's been vilified in the popular imagination due to Trumpism. The rural has become polarized, where we look at people who live there as MAGA heads. What kind of advice do you have to people thinking about moving to more rural areas?

Ines: My first reaction to this is for me to actually think about the many people in the city who have started to raise their own

vegetables in their backyards and on their porches and the growing interest in urban agriculture. I mean that's what I've always been interested in. Working on the film really gave me the push I needed to start growing my own vegetables and I know that's something that a lot of people are turning to. There is something beautiful about being able to raise your own food. And then this impulse that you're describing about moving out of the city, I completely understand that too, because it can feel much more balanced if you are not surrounded by the noise and the hectic aspects of city life. I think the difficulty in starting a farm right now is addressed in the film when Kris, who runs the farm in Henry's absence, comments on how expensive it is to buy land.

Ed: Why is it expensive to purchase land now?

Ines: Kris said in the film that it's partially caused by suburban sprawl. Suburbia moves further and further into what used to be rural areas. And then all of a sudden you can no longer use that land for agriculture and it's no longer in your price range. So that's been an ongoing phenomenon.

Ed: Yeah, you could argue that suburban sprawl has led to less availability of land for small farmers, and then the remaining land is owned by bigger agribusiness corporations.

Ines: Yeah, and it makes it really hard for young farmers who are just starting out to get their hands on some land. I don't know what the alternatives are, but I know that Kris and Adriane, after they were done with the year running Henry's Farm, moved to the Carbondale area.

Ed: I found that incredible that they moved to go work with Scratch Brewing, which is an amazing brewery located near the Shawnee National Forest. It's mind blowing.

Ines: Yeah, I didn't know that you would know that brewery, that's so great. It's all interconnected.

Ed: Yeah, that's where they're from. One of them is Aron, who was a photography major at Columbia College, and he moved down to open this brewery with his friend Marika and someone else. I remember when they started out, they were just boiling wort



Photo Credits:
Alex Sing

in giant pots over a wood fire outdoors. Yeah, they're crazy and then to see Kris and his partner move down there to be part of that is just beautiful and it really kind of shows the possibilities. You can actually work with nature, be a farmer, and do things that are connected to what people are doing in the city, like consuming beer.

Ines: Yes, you just have to start visioning in a different way. I recently talked with Kris and Adriane and they're still working with the brewery, foraging, growing all kinds of cool stuff. Adriane also works as a baker, they purchased some land and have a young son now. You know they're really settling in and creating a different way of farming for themselves, too.

Ed: It's truly inspiring. And that's where this film, despite the tragedy of what we're facing in the world with the climate breakdown, shows some signs of hope. Are there any other lessons like that, that you might want to share that you experienced or maybe give you some hope?

Ines: For me there are a number of things. Working with nature is possible and we don't need to continue in the Western tradition of seeing nature predominantly as a resource to exploit. It's possible to be a mini-Henry in some ways by constantly rethinking what we're doing, adapting, and researching and not just doing things the way they were previously done. Henry is definitely an innovator - he constantly records things in his notebooks and I see him as someone who merges science, art, and agriculture. And I found that incredibly inspiring.



I hope that some of this prompts viewers who live in the city to also think about their own habits. Can you buy from a local farmer and thereby reducing the carbon footprint of shipping produce and also supporting the local economy? Would it make sense to become a CSA member? Maybe get a garden plot or work on one of the many urban ag projects around the city. I think we can all adjust our behaviors to a certain degree and have some agency in what we're doing about climate change and about producing and consuming good food. ♦

Seasons of Change on Henry's Farm will be playing on a streaming platform soon. Visit seasonsofchangeonhenrysfarm.com for more information.

The Accidental Butcher

An Interview with Ricky Hanft

BY ED MARSZEWSKI



Ricky Hanft is a fourth generation Union Ironworker that left his trade and became involved with various aspects of the food and beverage industry. I worked with Ricky at various family run businesses and it was with much excitement that I watched him open his own butcher shop, The Wurst, in northwest Indiana last year. He is leading proponent of promoting responsibly raised animals in Indiana and has some great ideas on how to broaden the movement.

Ed: Let's start out with a simple question. Why did you become a butcher? What led you there?

Ricky: I blame you. I had just taken a voluntary layoff from Ironworking in Indiana and started helping you guys out at Marz delivering beer as well as barbacking at Maria's. You could say my becoming a butcher started at Sassy's in Portland, Oregon in 2015. We were there for the Craft Brewers convention. That's where I met a blond-haired, blue-eyed young lady from Connecticut, who offered to let me stay at her house while I looked for work as an Ironworker in New York City. I had recently taken a trip to NYC, fell in love with it and became fixated on moving there.

I was down with staying at her place and ended up finding a job on a bridge deck in New Haven, Connecticut. I also quickly found out that she and her family were 100% anti-union and were against pretty much everything I stood for. It became real awkward real quick. A friend from my days at PQM was interviewing with Applestone Meat Company and it was only about an hour away from me. Josh & Jess had just sold Fleischers, the whole animal butcher shop they opened in 2004. New Haven wasn't far, so I fled my uncomfortable living situation and went to a barbeque they invited me to. I was talking gardening and food with Josh and I said "You have all this land you should start a food forest." He was intrigued that I had a background in metal fabrication and food. He said that combination would make for a good butcher. I ended up crashing in his Airstream for the weekend before I came home to Indiana. I worked at Maria's and Marz until he called me a few months later and offered me a job.

Ed: I remember that. You split town and went to New York to work and suddenly due to some weird circumstances became a manger of the company. So how did you evolve into learning how to manage a butcher shop and meat retailer? Was Josh a great teacher?

Ricky: Josh was a great teacher but not in the traditional sense. It was easier for me to jump into the managerial role than it was the butcher role. What Josh was doing at the time was so revolutionary that he was always looking months and years down the road, dealing with crazy shit I had no idea he had to address. Now that I have my own place, I realize that the job is not just about the day to day stuff but also constantly planning for

the future. He was often thinking about how to take things to the next level and kind of left me alone to handle the day-to-day operations at his brand new, state of the art processing facility. It was trial by fire. The facility, at the time, was designed in a way that a single butcher could handle all the production behind closed door, then stock the vending machines with the finished products.

I would cut and make mistakes but also figured out how not to fuck up next time. I would go home every night after work and read books, watch videos and study any and everything related to butchering and food production. I would have a mental list of three things that I fucked up yesterday that I didn't want to fuck up today. You know Josh. He's a cool dude. I would ask him in the morning when we had time together and say hey man, I screwed up and he would show me, "boom, boom, boom, this is what you did wrong and this is how you fix it." And then he would go off and do his thing. He was very understanding that there was no one else there and that I was studying my ass off and doing everything I could. He didn't come down on me. He was there to show me how to learn from those mistakes and cut with confidence.

Ed: That's the spirit of a lot of entrepreneurs. You figure it out yourself. Many of the people I work with are able to jump into whatever it is, do their research and learn by figuring it out as you go.

Ricky: Logan Bay influenced me as well. I told Logan that I was torn about leaving Maria's and my desire to become a great bartender. I told him that I had the opportunity to go learn how to be a butcher, but it was in the middle of nowhere. I liked the nightlife in Chicago. Logan told me "Hey man, you are going there to learn how to be a butcher, not for the night life." I always kept that in mind.

Ed: Not a lot of people have the opportunity to apprentice under a master butcher. Josh is such a baller. What's also interesting is that while you were there Josh was pioneering the development of these meat vending machines. And that was something you were involved with, right?

Ricky: That's why the managerial portion of the job was easier for me. I was used to managing work as an ironworker in steel mills. Everything is an order of operations. I would unload very expensive, very heavy

equipment from trucks and bring it into our facility. I put together our OSHA site safety plan as well as all the regular administrative tasks that a manager does. That was the easy part for me.

At the time, the vending machines we were using were similar to what you might find in a cafeteria. The refrigerated, carousel-style. What he has now is a completely new machine that he designed. It's state of the art.

Ed: This endeavor wasn't the idea of automating the sale of commodity meats you find in most grocery stores. What is interesting is that it was about intentionally supporting small farmers with a philosophy that making sure the animals are treated well. Can you tell me why the responsible treatment of the animals to be sold via these vending machines matters?

Ricky: Obviously you are no stranger to all the environmental threats we are facing as a civilization. Farming can actually sequester carbon. The beef industry, as a whole, has a very negative stigma. However, when you work with farmers doing things the old school way, for example: cows eat grass, their stomachs are designed to eat grass. If you grow grass and cut it with a lawnmower the roots only go so deep. But if you raise beef on grass and they are constantly digging at it and eating it, the roots grow exponentially longer which allows the grass to sequester more carbon. It's like eating sunshine and sequestering carbon simultaneously.

By allowing an animal to do its job, you are not only contributing to the improvement of the environment, but you will have an animal that, most likely, will have no need for antibiotics and definitely no need for growth hormones. When you look at the health of the consumer you are not only what you eat, but what you eat, eats. So, if that animal is never given antibiotics or hormones, you the consumer will also not be consuming them.

This style of raising livestock means the animals are not being force fed in a stall their entire life. That's why animals get sick and require antibiotics. If a person was put into solitary confinement and force-fed every day, they too would be unhealthy. You can argue that animals should not be eaten, but if they were to roam freely, they'd be eaten by predators. You are providing them with a better lifestyle when domesticated than if they were totally wild. Farmers like to use the phrase "They only have one bad day their entire lives." And that's true. It's more than

you can say for most humans.

There is also the economic benefits of supporting local. The farmer, the slaughterhouse, the butcher, the restaurant all keep the money in our local economy, as opposed to buying your Perdue boneless skinless chicken breasts at Walmart. The Perdues and Walmarts of the world then take your money to Washington and pay their lobbyists to make life easier on them and harder for the local farmer, butcher, restaurateur, etc. It's just so simple and obvious how much of a profound impact spending your dollar locally matters.

Ed: When you were working with these farmers was it difficult to get these animals to you?

Ricky: When I was in New York we were working with one farm. That was one of my favorite parts of the job. I would take our refrigerated van and drive from Stone Ridge across the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge, over the Hudson River to the farm and slaughterhouse. It was a beautiful drive from the shop all the way to the farm. I'd get there and see a 1000 lb beef being cut into eighths so a single person could handle it for loading and unloading. I saw how the rail system, which was reminiscent of the steel mills, would bring down the animal and facilitate in breaking it down. The farmer would hand it to me, I would throw it into the van piece by piece and bring it back to the shop.

In California, the animals were delivered to the shop by either the farmer or a local trucking company that worked directly with the farms and slaughterhouses. At The Wurst, the farmers deliver to us personally. I love this model because it not only allows the customers to interact with the farmers, but it also allows the farmers to see what we're making with their product and hear directly from the customer how much they enjoy their products.

Ed: I am sitting here on 32nd and Morgan St and it's a stone's throw away from the historical Stockyards of Chicago where we were once the hog butcher of the world. So this automated system you are talking about was similar to the systems that were here on a much large scale.

Ricky: Henry Ford actually got his idea for the automotive assembly line from the meat packing houses of Chicago. He saw how efficient the system was.

Photo Credit: Annette Reyna

Ed: What is amazing to me that in the face of this you are able to demonstrate a way to support local farmers and take the welfare of animals seriously. And you learned this by working with Applestone. You then left New York with this philosophy and went to Berkeley, California and started working for another Butcher, right? Was it because they also had this philosophy? Were there many butcher shops that followed this philosophy at the time?

Ricky: Yeah, I went to work at The Local Butcher Shop in Berkeley. There is an increasing number of these types of places. In almost every major city there is a whole animal butcher shop. When I decided to move from New York to California it was to better myself as a butcher. It was to learn everything front to back, upside down and inside out. When you set up your butcher case in the morning, you look at the weather. You know what the forecast is going to be for the day. If it's going to be gloomy, cold and rainy I am going to put beef stew meat into the case. If it's sunny and hot I am not going to put beef stew meat into the case because I know no one is going to be making stew or soup. Not only was there a drastic climate difference and how you would set up your case, but when I went out to stage there, they broke everything down differently than what I learned with Josh. I had to relearn everything. I never set up a case at Applestone because we put everything in the vending machines. Aaron and Monica have extensive backgrounds in the food industry and are excellent at what they do. They have a small kitchen at their shop and taught me a lot of different ways to use the whole animal in a kitchen setting. If learning from Josh was my coarse grit, working under Aaron was the fine grit. He polished my skills.

Ed: Selection and seasonality was an important factor?

Ricky: The other thing is the different climates. Everyone likes to use the term grass fed beef. But how do you raise grass fed beef during winter in the midwest when everything is under 6 inches of snow? California doesn't have that problem.

Ed: You basically busted your chops at The Local Butcher Shop in Berkeley. Is that when you decided that you were going to open your own butcher shop?

Ricky: No, I was there for a couple years before the thought even entered my mind, the goal for me was never to open my own shop. It's hard. It wasn't until I met Steve Howe in Crown Point, Indiana that I started thinking about it. I basically heard about him from his sister, whom I grew up with. She posted on Facebook that he was pasture raising pigs and I was just looking for a source of good meat for my family back home. I reached out to her to see if there were any shops that carried his product and she said they only sold it out of their farm store, but that he would be interested in hearing what I have been doing. I got his contact info and emailed Steve and told him what I was up to and that I wanted to get his product to my parents.

He called me back and said he was interested in what I was doing. He then said if we don't find places in Northwest Indiana to sell this type of meat soon, the farmers that are raising these types of animals will most likely go out of business.

After having that conversation with him I began entertaining the idea of "maybe if I went home and did this it would have a bigger impact there than it would here," because there is no shortage of these retail shops in the Bay Area. There is Clove & Hoof in Oakland, The Local Butcher Shop in Berkeley, Fatted Calf in San Francisco and Napa. I mean take your pick, wherever you want to go in the Bay Area they have sustainably raised meat. But around here in Northwest Indiana, it's non-existent. There isn't anybody that brings in whole animals and breaks them down nor do they give a fuck about how the animal is raised if they are breaking them down.

Ed: Yeah, I mean, I remember when the pandemic started we witnessed the horror of the big meatpacking corporations basically forcing workers to slaughter meat in those confined spaces and slaughterhouses without any PPE mandates. You once mentioned to me the challenged of the modern slaughterhouse and the issue of the supply chain in which you can't support farmers who choose to do ethically raised whole animal slaughtering? Can you speak about the current system of butchering meat and maybe that could give us an idea of what's wrong?



Photo Credit: Jennifer May

Ricky: Sure. The slaughterhouse is the weakest link in the chain. Going back to what you just mentioned - the conditions people are working in. I mean, you've read The Jungle by Upton Sinclair. It's still the jungle. Only now with labor laws and health inspections. The thing is slaughtering animals is not glamorous work. It's not something that most people want to do, especially Americans. The workforce is often put in subpar conditions. You have very few small independent slaughterhouses these days. The big guys have taken over everything.

We're lucky we still have a couple small independent slaughterhouses around here. We work with Hobart Meats, which is 15-20 minutes east of here. We also work with Slagel Family Farm, from whom we get a majority of our beef from. They have their own USDA processing facility on their farm. They have figured out a way to eliminate the weakest link in the chain. Not only do they raise the animals, they have their own slaughterhouse. When you can do both of those things you're not dependent upon any of these big guys. You don't have to schedule your appointment a year in advance. If there's something that goes wrong and an animal breaks its leg, you can take it yourself without having to worry about getting it into a slaughterhouse in a year or whatever it may be.

Ed: The big guys took over much of the farming and it seems like there are very few farmers left that are able to continue this traditional farming. What is something that has to happen in order to encourage this and to support it and it make it viable?

Ricky: So, here's the thing. This is where it gets political. I don't think there's anybody on either side of the political spectrum right now that is absolutely ecstatic about the way things are going. You get to vote every couple of years every four years and your voice is heard, supposedly.

Every single time we spend money we get to vote. So if you're buying from my shop versus Whole Foods or Walmart, you are directly supporting your community not only through my shop but the farms that we work with and the slaughterhouses that we work with. Whole Foods has great marketing but it's not local. It's not nearly as good as people think it is.

Our prices are considerably lower than Whole Foods. My big question is how do you get people to recognize the value in what we're doing? The reason that the meat in

Walmart or any of these big box grocery stores is so cheap is because you've already paid for it. Those farms receive government subsidies. Not only for the feed that the animals consume, but for them doing what they're doing. They raise way more pork than you would normally raise, take it to the big slaughterhouses, then ship it all over the globe for super cheap prices.

And when people come in and they say my stuff is expensive there's usually one of two routes in how I respond. Like Socrates said, "Let thy food be thy medicine and let thy medicine be thy food." Would you rather spend your money on food or medicine? I think the answer is clear. You would rather eat good food, than take a pill. The other thing is you've already paid for the meat that you're seeing at a big chain grocer. You just don't realize it. You paid for the food that those animals consume and you're paying for the government assistance that that farmer is on because he cannot make a living off of what these corporations, The Perdues of the world, are paying him to do that. You're also paying for government assistance for the employee at Walmart who is selling you your subsidized meat because they don't make a livable wage.

Ed: Is there a way for small farmers to get subsidies for this more holistic approach towards farming or is it just because of lobbying in the industry itself? Has big agribusiness made it super difficult for these farmers to tap into these grants or funding?

Ricky: That would be a question for the farmers that I work with. Based on my knowledge of the way the farmers we work with operate, I don't think they're necessarily interested in handouts. I think they're insane in the same way that I am. I'm going to choose the most difficult path and prove to people that it can be done this way. Because if it was easy, everyone would do it. Lead by example.

Ed: Can't we try to make it easier somehow? What are we going to do to convince people to support these types of products? What would you like to see in every town or city? Would you want to see a Wurst Meats shop in every town? Would you want to be able to support more farms? What are the things we can do to grow awareness of eating and supporting locally sourced food.

Ricky: Well, I think with necessity being the mother of all invention, it's not so much what we do as much as what we don't do. What we should not do is allow the Walmarts and the Whole Foods of the world to infiltrate our communities because then it makes it much harder. Not only are they taking up a large swath of property that could be used for a farm, but through pricing and other methods making it impossible for farmers or mom-and-pop shops to operate within their own community. I think the first thing is getting away from these big box stores.

The second thing on my end is that I have to unteach bad habits to a lot of our customers. Not everybody knows how to eat a whole animal. We have all these things that are unfamiliar to the average consumer. People are familiar with three different cuts on a thousand pound beef: New York, rib eye, tenderloin. They'll say "That's all I eat. Why is it so expensive?" A big part of our job is teaching people that there are a lot of other great cuts available on the animal that aren't so expensive, a lot more affordable, and often times a lot more flavorful. Right now we are in the process teaching people how to eat a whole animal not only through The Wurst, but we also just took over the kitchen at Fuzzyline Brewing. Al Robertson cut his teeth brewing with you guys and just started his own brewery in our hometown of Highland, Indiana. He and I always wanted to do something like this and we're finally able to put it together based on the experiences we gained from people like you and Josh. We're hoping not only to provide similar experiences to the people we bring on as coworkers but also to provide an experience in our hometown that was seriously lacking. We were fortunate enough to cross paths with great, community-minded teachers and now we're hoping to pass that knowledge along to our community.



Hank Hock Terrine, Country Pate, Pork Liver Mousse, Pork Pies from The Wurst - Photo Courtesy Ricky Hanft



Ed: I have watched you do this and it's incredible and beautiful to see. It gives me faith that more initiatives like this will happen and that more people may will support these efforts. What kind of advice would you give to someone who wants to get involved in this parallel supply chain or modern economy. Tell us the horrible things that it takes to do a butcher shop or USDA facility or starting a farm. Is it about having a lot of cash resources or a lot of patience or minimizing your risk?

Ricky: I think I know what you're getting at. In terms of the pitfalls you'll run into as a whole animal butcher? This is not a line of work that you get into to become rich. This is about trying to leave behind something that makes a difference. Hopefully it is an opportunity to make a living in a way that allows me to sleep at night knowing what we're doing is positive in numerous regards.

Because I did my training in New York and California the things that always stood out to me being from Northwest Indiana is the cost of living. I was used to having an affordable cost of living prior to going to New York and California. My mind was blown at how expensive everything was. You also get what you pay for.

When I moved back the biggest concern was to do my best to keep my overhead low. Of course I was going to try to make it as inexpensive as possible but then I started to realize the true cost of doing business. And it's much higher than you realize. That being said, our costs are far lower than they would be in California or New York.

On a positive note if you are interested in doing something along these lines and you don't live in Chicago or Berkeley or New York City, you have an advantage that you don't have to pay those prices. Not only do you have to pay the prices that are associated with the actual animals. You don't have to pay the prices that are associated with taxes with real estate with insurance and the cost of labor. By bringing down your overhead and by paying less for animals and insurance and taxes and all those things it allows a bit more freedom in our budget to pay people a decent living wage.

It's also all about balance. For example, when we did deer processing, I had never processed a deer in my life. I've never shot a gun in my life. I've never gone hunting. But I needed a quick way to make money to finance this retail build out. I know how to use a knife and I know how to break down an animal. When the first animal came in, I

learned how to skin a deer. I didn't tell the first customer that, but I figured it out. But through that experience I met this whole interesting swath of people that I learned from. They're much more conservative in their beliefs than the New York and Berkeley retail customers I was used to serving. I'm a bit more left leaning, but I'm also open minded and I like hearing why people feel the way that they feel. From the old guy that was offended that I had chorizo as an option because only Mexicans eat chorizo, which is of course untrue, to the drum instructor at Dynamite Music down the street, who was collecting deer bones to make percussion instruments out of them.

We were doing merguez. I made a point to do a Latin sausage and an African sausage because I knew I was going to be dealing with a more conservative, "America First"-type clientele and I think there's a lot that you can learn through food. Like maybe if they just try merguez made out of venison it'll get them thinking about other African cuisines and what other good things come from that region of the world.

But I had some of the most conservative people I've ever met in my life coming in and they're like "Man that merguez .. that chorizo. I just need more of it..." So we were able to bridge that gap of cultural difference in a small way.

Ed: I think that might be the most beautiful thing about your endeavor is that you're able to go back to a different time when you maybe don't have to have your politics on your sleeve. Things are so polarized. But through food you're able to communicate with people and introduce new cultures and ideas to them in ways that they never suspected.

Ricky: When a deer is hit by a car here, the local police department calls this local veteran named Tim. In his younger days, he would break down the deer and he would distribute the meat to the less fortunate families in the community during the holidays. He's getting up there now, pushing 70. He doesn't have the physical capability to do it anymore. He asked if I would be willing to work with him on that. So he goes out to pick up the deer that got hit, field dresses it and then he would bring it to me.

I would break them down, turn it into sausage, ground venison, steaks, whatever - and then he would go and distribute that to local families that didn't have food on their table for the holidays. He's very conservative.

We do not see eye to eye on anything politically, but we were able to get together for the greater good and set those differences aside and collaborate on things. I think that's what it comes down to. How can we find the common ground? It's easy to turn on the news at the end of the night and see where we're all different. But there are so many more things that we have in common and if you look for those things as opposed to looking for the differences, you'll find a lot of positivity in the community. That's absolutely what we want to do at my shop, at Howe Farms and now at Fuzzyline Brewing - bring people together and focus on the things that bring us all together. Through that we believe we can make a positive change in our community. Thanks for showing us how to do it, man.

Ed: Right on man. ♦



Lamb Shoulder Chops - Photo Courtesy Ricky Hanft

We Are All Going Back to the Soil. An Interview with Diamond Jack

BY ED MARSZEWSKI



I met Diamond Jack in 1993 when he submitted an article for *The Lumpen Times* when we first started publishing again in Chicago. He showed up with a stack of papers, full of research, newspaper clips and a handwritten story about an informer for the FBI.

He became a frequent contributor to the magazine doing underground weather reporting on social justice issues around the region. Jack would be in Chicago in the winter and at his farm in Wisconsin in the spring and summer. I never had a chance to visit his farm despite his many invitations, but he would always stop by the lumpen house or lumpen office and offer some of his purple potatoes and other vegetable matter. I recently sat down with Jack to talk about his reasons for getting a farm and becoming a hermit and sought advice for those interested in moving back to the land.

Ed: Let's begin with you telling us a little bit about yourself.

Jack: I was born on the south side of Chicago, I went to High School about 2 miles from the Co-Prosperity gallery at St Ignatius on Roosevelt and Morgan Street, just west of the University. I went to Loyola University on the north side on a scholarship for running. I call it a police scholarship because I got a lot of my speed and endurance running from the Chicago cops and they also were largely instrumental in my quick start, each race started with blowing a gun off. So instead of getting a ride to jail, I got a ride to college. And I want to give the Chicago police credit where credit is due. I knew that this running would be a positive thing in my life. I had the talent and the desire has always been there. I haven't stopped running since.

After I left school. Vietnam was going on and I wound up making bombs at the Joliet Army Ammunition plant. It was really awful to make these things being dropped on brown people in Asia. It was that or spend 4 years in jail. I had a real desire to be part of the hippie movement that came along and the Yippie movement that followed the "turn on, turn in and drop out" period coined by Timothy Leary. But back then I thought you had to have a good plan between tuning in and dropping out. You couldn't just drop out. But back then a lot of people thought they could go join a commune, thinking that was their plan and the cool thing to do. You had to have your own plan or be part of someone else's. When it wasn't a cool thing anymore, and the commune wasn't working out, the movement changed to "turn on, tune in, drop out, and drop back in," they didn't keep their eye on the prize of "finding the other" as Timothy Leary suggested finding and got a consolation prize of claiming they're hip.

Ed: Are you suggesting people were dropping out as a type of recreational act?

Jack: Well, it was the thing to do. A lot of young people did. It was mainly a reaction to the Vietnam war. But I had a plan and it was to use the system against itself to get out of a system and basically to buy a farm. And I did. I paid it off in eight years. Mathematics and psychology were my degrees. While I was paying my mortgage I was working high paying jobs for various corporations. I used that money to get out. I basically drove a beater and lived in a broom closet. I took all the money I could, saved it and got out and went to my farm. Another positive aspect of this way of life is a healthy habit of simple

consumption for survival and avoided the consumption of convenience and personal image. Not wanting to consume things that would cost a delay in going it alone, my plan was to become self-sufficient first. Then I was able to do whatever going it alone would bring. Going it alone is scary. In general, especially living in an urban area, one's degree of connectedness with nature is practically nil. This disconnection to nature increased with the emphasis on the consumption of conveniences and the hectic fast pace treadmill we put ourselves in to afford those conveniences. That can be overcome.

Going it alone was difficult and necessary. The anxiety of being alone in nature is a neurotic and infantile perception. Believing that can't face it alone is in everyone at one time or another. We usually quickly go back to the safe space of urban living for a reality of the world outside as defined by the culture. Something that Timothy Leary was not noted for as much for as his psychedelic suggestion of dropping out was to "find the other." Nature is not working against you. Culture is working against you. So culture is not your friend as it tells you how to live your life and distracts you from the natural with stuff to consume and the energy spent to afford it.

Dominant culture is not your friend. I also owe a lot to Terence McKenna for a lot of these insights. I came to that enlightened way of life, both psychedelically and/or being alone in nature for enough amount of time to shed one's personal cultural imprinting.

The use of psychedelics dissolves the boundaries of culture's mirrors of the ego as well as the ego itself "finding the other(s)" as Timothy Leary suggests is everywhere when the boundaries around the ego start dissolving. A new perspective of the other emerges when one becomes a hermit. The two together have a lot to do with reduction in the amount of stress when confronting the natural world head on and alone.

A lot of people say they have the experience of being in nature. In the psychedelic experience there is the urge to surrender to nature. But they really haven't surrendered to it and let go of the cultural imprinting in their heads. So being a hermit in nature has a very important role in successfully disconnecting from that imprinting even without the use of psychedelics. I did so in nature even before I discovered the fungal diversity of the farm after fertilizing in the spring. Psychedelics exist in nature, too. So don't be afraid to go it alone.

It takes an act of surrender to the unknown. Either way culture gives everyone their reality and has the individual ignoring their own direct experience. Nature is scary to be in alone and you'll feel the urge to return to the "real world" that's safe. Don't drop back in! Become a hermit first and shake your cultural programming. There should be a hermit app to disconnect and be successful at it by now. And there should be one where you are able to connect with the one and only internet, the 'planet' without the 'e', some kind of morphogenetic service supplier. I'll check in with Elon Musk on this.

I was trying out my plan of being a hermit and figuring out what I wanted to do. This was a critical part of dropping out. You never know what you want to do after school and that stuff because you were rarely given a choice or even think about it much. For me I had to do nothing. When I got up in the morning I did what I felt like. That's a great feeling. I worked a long time and I knew that I wanted to live my life thinking, whose life is this anyway. While learning to farm I raised a bunch of sled dogs in northern Wisconsin. and we went mushing. All the co-existential evolution of the wolf with man to me was and is the most visceral connection with nature. All my co-evolved wolf mushers are buried on the farm.

Ed: The appeal to you was to get out and be a hermit?

Jack: Yes. But what appealed to me was the remoteness. I could reassure myself that I dropped out by the reactions from people in the town because after moving here I discovered this xenophobia. In a lot of these rural communities or very remote areas the people are afraid of outsiders in general. Decades ago in the late 50s the community I am living in was a mining town. And when the mining companies left to go to other countries, they left the town folks sitting on their last dime and swinging their legs. 95% of the people who lived there left the town. Since then the community that was left after the companies took off survived. They are pretty happy in general and demonstrate a self-sufficiency without the mining companies. But they want to go back to the "good old days," thinking jobs will be there. They have a mining history, psyche. and culture.

They also have the hard memory of losing a family member in the mines and the family being compensated with \$32.00 and a ham by the mining company.

I got to know the people and they got to know me. They didn't accept me at first because I was an outsider, but after 47 some odd years they forgot that maybe I am not from there. When I arrived in 1973 I stayed away from the community, except for the county fair and the farmers market as part of my hermit plan.

However, this xenophobia was interesting. For example, in the middle of the 90s the KKK came to town to demonstrate. Seven different groups from the town opposed the Klan coming to town and it was unusual to see an all-white community be against them. So, any outsider, even the Klan, was not welcome to the town. But it's legitimate. After decades of exploitation especially by the mining companies, you can understand their suspicion of outsiders.

In 2015 an illegal open pit mine was in operation a mile from the farm where I spent a lot of time outside. A permit was given to the mining companies for a gravel crushing operation making it legal. The mining company cut down all the trees on a forty acre site and proceeded to dig a big hole in the planet. They left enough trees to effectively hide the operation, especially from the main highway that it bordered. The blasting and piling operation was emitting arsenic and asbestos fibers into the air. This was happening very close to me and my neighbors. I always wanted to participate in the community, so I made sure I had the ability to provide something valuable. So I decided to blow the cover on the operation by carrying a sign that read "Warning: Open pit mine blasting, toxic air, falling debris" during morning and afternoon traffic times of day. This back-fired on me when my farm house invaded by mining goons and they broke both my legs

The locals had goons that work for the mining company. The town members couldn't say a thing against the mining company's activities or there would be repercussions. But for years I did and so did so with a few others. One woman, who went by the name of 'Krow' received a 7 year prison sentence for not giving the court names of her friends that were allegedly behind some kind of mining sabotage. The judge in the case who sentenced her was a longstanding judge in that county for many years. He was convicted for drunken driving and wore ankle bracelets during the trial. Today, the mining is making big holes in the earth again and poisoning the water and air with open pit mining.

Ed: Xenophobia seems like it's everywhere. Obviously in urban areas like Chicago you see it. Chicago is a segregated city. When I was growing up people feared anyone outside of their own block, parish or neighborhood. The various ethnic groups distrusted each other. It seems like in the rural environment this tribalism is similar. There is fear of outsiders, they don't like urban residents.

Jack: In a rural environment the people are pretty tight. They have been around for generations. But now the outsiders are the corporations. The local hardware stores are closing and today the farming community is getting whipped again. At one point they became pretty self-sufficient and money circulated within the community. They farmed, hunted and the farmers market was the main way of circulating their produce. Nobody from the outside disrupted that and they had their own hardware stores etc. Back then you would grow your own or know your grower. And it mattered because you want to know where your food is coming from. Now the Walmarts, the factory farms, and chain hospitals are interrupting this world.

Ed: What were you growing? Because I remember getting your purple potatoes.

Jack: Yes, I had purple potatoes and one some prizes at the county fair. First place for my soil. And I also won first place for my garlic. It grows well. I also grow golden seed root working for me. It takes 5 to 6 years to be able to harvest their roots. It's like ginseng.

Ed: How did you even know how to choose these crops or grow these things?

Jack: Some of the folks around there helped me. I wasn't just throwing seeds in the ground and things would just come up. I had some learning to do, but it was only for myself so there was less pressure. People around me could have a good garden or big garden and make enough food for the entire winter if they put it up and canned it. And when you grow your own food it always tastes better. One neighbor was my mentor. He helped me out a lot. I was also just hands-on. I like to get my hands in the soil and it's a philosophical thing. It is another way to have good connection with the other and not dampen my direct experience by cultural distractions. The word "religion" comes from the Latin, religio - "to link back".

With religion you have to have something that is impossible to prove. So that is what you must believe and have faith in. But the religio that I was looking at is the soil. That's where everyone came from. There's not a need for belief or faith so that you fall in line with the brainwashing of belief in a super natural existence. When you put your hands in the soil you don't realize how much life is in there. I prefer knowledge, things like evolution, for my religio. And got my software and mind apps from "the other," - using the data entry portals of my eyes, ears, nose, taste, and touch.

I also refer to our planet as the planet without a letter "e". It's one organism, one plant, the whole planet without the "e". I look at myself today and see a very well evolved plant that got his roots out of the soil and grew feet instead of roots and I am now walking around spreading the seed so that the plants can establish themselves around the planet without the "e". This is a tip I got from the birds and the wind. It's a conspiracy on the part of the plants to want to flourish. The plants themselves show how the natural growing process works. The plants grow from the bottom up and the soil grows from the top down. Everything on the planet without the "e" grows like this, even you, Ed. We are all going back to the soil, to the religio - where you came from. It's a way to look at the cycles of nature and how everything else develops from that too. You have a respect for the land with just that insight.

Ed: I like being a root with feet Jack. So hey, what kind of advice can you give to someone who wants to move to a rural environment or what would you say to someone that wants to drop out like you did 47 years ago?

First remember what I mentioned before about the determination and surrender to go it alone. There are a lot of farms around that are reasonably priced. Instead of paying rent and all the overhead expenses of living in the city, it's much more reduced out there. If you want to drop out or not participate in the dominant culture I would make a plan. Make sure it's no one else's plan. Because if it's someone else's plan you are going to be a part of it.

Ed: You mean as an individual you have a plan? Would you suggest going in as a collective or group of people on a plan?

Jack: If that's what the individual wants to do then yes. Be around like-minded people that share values of respecting nature. You should purchase a farm with no chemical use. You also need to be in a more remote area as it becomes a lot more affordable and adds more motivation to go it alone. Unless you have a lot of money. But most people don't have money. And make sure you pay it off as soon as possible to keep your overhead down. Bit also you can hermit from home. And the internet can help you with disconnecting sooner. Use the internet to get information for your plan and connect with other like-minded folks. I'm going to check this morphogenetic internet thing with that Elon Musk. Maybe there will be a service provider in my maple tree outside someday.

Also just get a garden started. Put various vegetables you think you'd like to grow and see what you are successful with. You can grow two to three crops that you can take to a farmers market. Starting with a garden will give you a sense of self sufficiency because you are putting your hands on it, you are preserving it, and you are living on it all year. Maybe you want to go out to the forest to select cut trees to heat your home in the winter. There is nothing wrong with that as long as you select cut. Then I would say start participating with the community if you want to be part of the economy.

Ed: Thanks, Jack! ♦

FUZZYLINE



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Illinois Arts Resources

Communities across the Land of Lincoln support local artists while welcoming visiting ones from around the world. This partial directory of arts resources was compiled by Illinois Humanities Program Manager for Statewide Engagement, Matt Meacham.

North

Rockford Art Museum

711 North Main St, Rockford, IL 61103
ROCKFORDARTMUSEUM.ORG

The mission of Rockford Art Museum is to foster creativity and build community through visual arts. The RAM Permanent Collection consists of modern and contemporary American art from the 19th and 20th centuries through today, from American Impressionist paintings to Chicago Imagist works to outsider art in new and mixed media; sculpture; photography; and contemporary glass. Regional art with an emphasis on Illinois artists remains a steadfast focus. It hosts the Rockford Midwestern Biennial.

West

Arts Quincy

(a.k.a. Quincy Society of Fine Arts)
ARTSQUINCY.ORG

Arts Quincy (QSFA), purportedly America's first Arts Council, was founded in 1947 "to encourage and stimulate the practice and appreciation of the Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and Arts-in-Education" in Adams County, Illinois. Arts Quincy works to make the arts more accessible to all the residents of Adams County, develop new members for its member organizations and create earned income opportunities for individual artists.

Farwell House in Frederick

(Schuyler County)
6925 Hill Ln (formerly Mansion Hill Rd),
Frederick, IL 62639
FARWELLHOUSE.COM

The Farwell House, founded in 2016, is an arts organization that hosts exhibitions, workshops, and cultural events, as well as artist residencies. It is located in a house built in 1867 by an agricultural merchant in Frederick, an unincorporated community of fewer than 200 residents near the Illinois River in western Illinois's Schuyler County. The multi-purpose arts facility housed in a historic home emphasizes engagement with rural western Illinois.

The HUB Arts and Cultural Center

210 N. Congress St., Rushville, IL 62681
THEHUBART.COM

The HUB Arts and Cultural Center's mission is to create and maintain a connection between the arts, rural culture, and our local communities through exhibitions and educational experiences.

Quincy Art Center

QUINCYARTCENTER.ORG

The Quincy Art Center is a not-profit art museum celebrating visual arts since 1923. We are located in the East End Historical District of Quincy, Illinois in a carriage house built in 1887 and a modern wing built in 1990. The Arts Center has an extensive gallery and offers many classes, workshops and community events.

Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive Fall Festival

PO Box 525, Canton, IL 61520
SPOONRIVERDRIVE.ORG

The festival which takes place this year on Oct 2,3, 9 &10, 2021 involves numerous artists, artisans, craftspeople, arts venues and shops, etc., throughout Fulton County.

The Spoon River, which starts at Medina, has carved a wide scenic valley through Fulton County as it flows from London Mills to the south and east where it joins the Illinois River near the southeastern corner of the county. Fulton County offers unusual beauty of the colors throughout the Spoon River Valley, which inspired founders to hold the first Fall Festival and to organize the Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive. The Scenic Drive's Fall Festival has been held each year during the first two full weekends of October since 1968.

Central

Cedarhurst Center for the Arts in Mount Vernon

2600 Richview Road,
Mount Vernon, IL 62864
CEDARHURST.ORG

Cedarhurst is an extensive, multi-purpose arts facility, including several galleries and studios. It often displays work by artists from southern Illinois and surrounding regions – hosts and annual Cedarhurst Art and Craft Fair featuring artisans from throughout the Midwest and South.

Coles County Arts Council

PO Box 163, Charleston, IL 61920
OLESCOUNTYARTSCOUNCIL.ORG

The CCAC's mission is to promote, enhance and develop the arts for the people of Coles County in an effort to provide the opportunity for all segments of the population to enjoy, appreciate and participate in the arts and thereby create an improved quality of life. The council sponsors or provides assistance to a number of organizations and activities throughout the year, including dance performances, concerts and community outreach opportunities.

Decatur Area Arts Council

125 N. Water Street, Decatur, IL 62523
DECATURARTS.ORG

The Decatur Area Arts Council is a multifaceted arts organization presenting and supporting a wide variety of activities. DAAC introduces and promotes the arts, enhances arts educational opportunities, and increases the impact of and access to the arts to improve the quality of life in the community.

Doudna Fine Arts Center

Eastern Illinois University's Doudna Fine Arts Center is a cultural beacon for all of central Illinois. Designed by Antoine Predock, the building stands as a stunning example of modern architecture, uniting form and function, and provides a state-of-the-art home to EIU's School of the Arts (comprising the Departments of Art + Design, Music, and Theatre). The Doudna presents performances by EIU students and faculty, by school and community groups in our region, and by artists from around the world who engage diverse audiences and work with our faculty, students, and community members in master classes. Part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Doudna also supports and encourages the Humanities and the Sciences to showcase their dynamism and creativity and frequently collaborates with EIU's Tarble Arts Center, an accredited art museum. The New and Emerging Artists Series epitomizes our mission to join with our community in a celebration of human creativity and artistic inspiration.

City of Effingham

VISITEFFINGHAMIL.COM

Widely known in the area for the Cross at the Crossroads, Effingham is an arts and culture friendly town of roughly 13,000 people. It has several organizations, galleries and studios to visit alongside many wineries.

Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield

420 S 6th St, Springfield, IL 62701
HCFTA.ORG

The Hoogland Center for the Arts is a theater complex at 420 South Sixth Street in the central city neighborhood of Springfield, Illinois. It houses three theaters and five smaller performance and exhibit spaces totaling 80,000 square feet (7,400 m2) with an adjacent parking deck.

Macoupin Art Collective in Staunton (Macoupin County)

115 E Main St; Staunton, IL 62088
MACART.ORG

The Macoupin County Art Collective exists to teach art and crafting techniques to students of all ages and abilities through in-house workshops and community outreach programs.

The Pharmacy Gallery and Arts Space in Springfield

623 E Adams St, Springfield, IL 62701
PHARMACYGALLERY.COM

The mission of the Pharmacy Gallery & Art Space is to cultivate and celebrate expressions of multidimensional artists. They strive to be a catalyst and forum for advancing, discovering, and connecting through contemporary art. They enrich and educate the community through innovative cultural events.

Springfield Area Arts Council

420 S 6th St, Springfield, IL 62701
SPRINGFIELDARTSCO.ORG

A multifaceted arts organization presenting and supporting a wide variety of activities, the Springfield Area Arts

Council is dedicated to developing and sustaining arts and culture initiatives in Springfield and surrounding communities, something they've been doing since 1976. Their mission is to enrich the community by promoting all art forms and providing creative opportunities to participate in and enjoy the arts.

Springfield Art Association

Main Campus: 700 N 4th St,
Springfield, IL 62702

SAA Collective Gallery: 105 N 5th St,
Springfield, IL 62701

SPRINGFIELDART.ORG

The Springfield Art Association is a community based, non-profit organization, that promotes and supports the visual arts, provides art education opportunities for the greater Springfield area, and preserves and interprets historic Edwards Place and the collections of the SAA.

Tarble Arts Center

2010 9th St., Charleston, IL 61920
EIU.EDU/TARBLE

The mission of the Tarble Arts Center is to engender appreciation for and involvement in the arts for the people of east-central Illinois and Eastern Illinois University through the presentation of exhibitions, performances, programs, education, and a teaching collection. The center is a regionally significant institution.

South

Carbondale Community Arts

304 W. Walnut St, Carbondale IL 62901
CARBONDALEARTS.ORG

The mission of Carbondale Community Arts is to expand available avenues and develop new resources for learning and participation in the arts by our community, with a strong focus on area youth and to encourage the emergence and development of cultural opportunities throughout Southern Illinois. CCA hosts opportunities through arts and humanities-based exhibits, programs and special events.

Expressions

Expressions is a program on WSIU TV 8 in Carbondale which features a wide variety of artists from southern Illinois and surrounding regions, hosted by Najjar Abdul-Musawwir, an artist and professor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Little Egypt Arts Association in Marion

601 Tower Square, Marion, IL 62959
LITTLEEGYPTARTS.COM

A regional co-op, the Little Egypt Art Association believes that promoting and sustaining the arts enriches the cultural life of the community and gives rise to and enlightened citizenry, more deeply aware and appreciative of the traditions and heritage of the region.

Shawnee Hills Pottery Trail

POTTERSTRAIL.WIXSITE.COM/POTTERY-TRAIL

Shawnee Hills Pottery Trail is an annual shared pottery experience. Everyone is invited to spend some time exploring the beautiful Southern Illinois landscape and the diverse group of potters that make this area home.

Varsity Arts Center in Carbondale

Visual And Performing Arts Venue
THEVARSITYCENTER.ORG

Varsity Arts Center is a performance art venue and event center in downtown Carbondale, Illinois. The building, the former location of the historic Varsity movie theater, is currently undergoing re-branding and renovation. At present, they have two of our three performance spaces up and running, including the newest: The Balcony Stage, a 137-seat listening room and small performance area with state-of-the art light and sound. In 2017, through community support, they were able to equip both of their functioning performance spaces with film screening equipment. Bringing movies back to The Varsity was a big step in their revitalization efforts.

Southeast

276 Art Exchange in Equality (Gallatin County)

166 W Lane St, Equality, IL 62934
[FACEBOOK.COM/276ARTEXCHANGE](https://www.facebook.com/276ARTEXCHANGE)

276 Art Exchange sells fine arts and heritage crafts made by local artisans. Customers can purchase high-quality works of art, hand-made heritage crafts, local literature, locally-made food products, and other items unique to Southern Illinois.

Southwest

(& St. Louis Metro East)

Artisan Guild of Southern Illinois

317 North County Rd, Mascoutah, IL, 62258
ARTISANSIL.ORG

The Guild is a group of people who gather to learn, teach and share skills in many forms of artistic expression. Their goal is to instill a love of fine craftwork and to provide an outlet for creativity and craftwork for Southern Illinois.

Belleville Art on the Square

ARTONTHE SQUARE.COM

Art on the Square is a juried fine art show located in beautiful downtown Belleville, Illinois. This major annual festival in the St. Louis Metro-East involves numerous artists working in many genres/media.

Edwardsville Art Center

6165 Center Grove Rd, Edwardsville, IL 62025
EDWARDSVILLEARTSCENTER.COM

The EAC is dedicated to offering the Metro-East communities cultural experiences that are educational, entertaining and affordable. The Center sells work by local and regional artists, offers classes, and presents an annual art fair downtown.

Hettenhausen Center for the Arts

("The Hett") at McKendree University in Lebanon

400 N Alton St, Lebanon, IL 62254
MCKENDREE.EDU/THE_HETT/

The "Hett" is Southern Illinois' premier performing arts venue, presenting world class dance, drama, classical music, and jazz, and is the largest building on the 100-acre campus at McKendree University. Mackey Mitchell teamed with S.M. Wilson and Schuler Shook to design the performance center which has helped redefine the university and the area as a new destination for live performances. It has also contributed to increased enrollment in the university's arts programs.

Jacoby Arts Center

627 E Broadway, Alton, IL 62002
JACOBYARTSCENTER.ORG

Jacoby Arts Center nurtures and promotes the practice and appreciation of the arts through education, exhibitions, cultural programming, and outreach initiatives.

The Art Center occupies the former Jacoby's Furniture building in downtown Alton. The Main Floor features an Artist Shop, Art Galleries & Performance Space, while the Lower Level features an Art Classroom, Ceramics Studio, and Artist Studios.

The Jacoby Furniture store opened on Broadway in the late 1890s. For years the store had a morgue in the basement, a funeral chapel on an upper floor and sold caskets.

The original section of the building has 14-foot tin ceilings, hardwood floors and massive columns that offer a distinguished setting for art displays, music and theater. While home from college during the mid 1940s, to update the store Jack Jacoby wrapped and plastered the building's original 1890s cast iron columns to create the distinctive modern sculptural forms.

Mississippi Valley Art Guild in Chester (Randolph County)

MISSISSIPPIVALLEYARTGUILD.COM

The Guild is an ongoing group of artists/craftspersons on or close to the Mississippi River valley south of St. Louis.

Schmidt Art Center

WWW.SWIC.EDU/THESCHMIDT

On the campus of Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville, The William and Florence Schmidt Art Center exhibits visual images that inspire, inform, and connect college and community. Exhibits of art and cultural artifacts that meet the highest contemporary aesthetic standards and related cultural programs expand visual literacy among the Southwestern Illinois College community and the adults and children of southwestern Illinois.

Sunshine Cultural Arts Center in East St. Louis

sunshineculturalartscenter.org
630 N 59th St, East St. Louis, IL 62203
Offers various arts activities, classes, etc., emphasizing African American genres/traditions. The mission of The Sunshine Cultural Arts Center is to transform the lives of the youth and families of the Metro East through culturally-informed, nationally recognized programming.

Tiadaghton House in Lebanon (St. Clair County)

TIADAGHTONHOUSE.COM

The Tiadaghton House features art, antiques, and American craft, as well as three resident artists with on-site studio/galleries. They house work from more than 60 artists, most who are from the Lebanon region.

Performing Revolutionary: Art, Action, Activism

by Nicole Garneau, ed. Anne Cushwa, PhD



The result of five years of practice-based creative research focused on Nicole Garneau's UPRISING project, *Performing Revolutionary* presents a number of methods for the creation of politically charged interactive public events in the style of a how-to guide. Bringing together accounts by participants, writers, theorists, artists and activists, as well as photographs and critical essays, *Performing Revolutionary* offers a fresh perspective on the challenges of moving from critique to action.

Coming Summer 2021: Audiobook of *Performing Revolutionary!* Available on Audible

intellectbooks.com/performing-revolutionary
nicolegarneau.com

What's in a name? Journeying to the core of #cottagecore

BY CASEY LARKIN MAZER CARSEL

The wildly fashionable hashtag that is #cottagecore is propped up by a largely queer, white community. Though #cottagecore naysayers will describe both it and its antecedents as superficial at best and problematic at worst, the value cottagecore as a philosophy places on fluidity and independence from the grind of late capitalism remains worth consideration.



A TikTok-, Tumblr-, and Instagram- fueled trend of individuals baking their own bread, making their own clothes, growing herbs, raising chickens, sitting on grass, and/or befriending animals, #cottagecore is a romantic vision. It is a modern pastoral scene in which the fast modes of contemporary culture are rejected in favor of something more eco-friendly and more self-contained.

Most of what can be glimpsed of this trend on social media platforms is cute animals (including fluffy cows, cats, fish, and frogs, so many frogs), baked goods, picnics, flowers, and linen dresses. Traditionally feminine activities such as sewing, cooking, and foraging are most upheld in cottagecore, and variants on the subculture include farmcore and goblincore.

While at a superficial glance, cottagecore's emphasis on traditional activities aligns with the alt-right tradwives movement, which seeks to remind the woman her place is in the home,

cottagecore's general vision is to the opposite effect: an independence largely away from the needs of men and capitalism, achieved by living from one's own two hands.



Cottagecore's ancestors include the womyn's lands of the 1960s and 1970s: lesbian separatist utopian dreams of all-female co-ops where women could be freed from their reliance on men—a significant burden in an era where it was difficult to even buy a car or receive loans without a husband's support.

Womyn's lands disappeared over later generations as the social stigma around lesbianism lessened and the financial burden of land taxes increased. The problematics of lesbian separatism also destroyed the dream by excluding any strand of gender or sexual orientation other than cis lesbianism. Further feelings of alienation were spurred for many by the overwhelmingly white demographic of womyn's lands' leaders and populace.

In this era, the escapist fantasy at the core of womyn's lands has transformed from an all-female co-op to something a little more fluid—though still largely white—in cottagecore. However, many would argue that cottagecore has not successfully shed the problematics it inherited.



Though this revolution is queerer, it continues to subsist on a romanticized vision of an agricultural lifestyle that is founded on the conceit of a rural escape to and a sustenance from a land that is likely not the cottagecorer's. As Chicagoan Ro White notes for Autostraddle, one "can't reclaim stolen land".

This criticism is strengthened by #cottagecore's "homesteader" aesthetic, and the relationship of such an aesthetic to the colonial history of the United States of America and other settler states. In a period in which people are being asked to stand their ground and face their privileges and responsibilities in relation to more marginalized populations, such an aesthetic seems to fall towards escapism.

But maybe that's being too fast to picture cottagecorers as cishet WASPs. Often they are, but more often they are queer individuals seeking to avoid not culpability but rather the rigid conditions of late-stage

capitalist convenience culture, intrinsically linked to a series of criteria that lock one either in or out of contemporary mainstream acceptability and respectability.



The aesthetic of #cottagecore thrives off the non-digital while making its presence largely known in digital realms. Though critics would call it insincere for the dichotomy between its analogue aesthetic and its dissemination on social media platforms, this reality reflects the philosophical underpinnings of subcultures as a genre: to make do, in your own way.

If anything, the dichotomy emphasizes a flexibility in which the present moment isn't completely rejected, but the worst parts and practices are set aside in favor of an older way of moving through daily life, and contemporary commodity and convenience cultures are displaced in favor of slower and more intimate processes.

Further, just because digital platforms are where cottagecore is most visible doesn't mean they are where it's best understood. There is a pleasure in sharing these experiences but the pleasure in the experience itself is an offline one, social media being documentation rather than total result.



Quarantine has likely influenced the growth in cottagecore adherents. As many of us find ourselves with an unusual amount of free time on our hands, for better or for worse, the versions of activities that take more time (making clothing, growing vegetables) become more accessible in some ways.

My personal interest in cottagecore came about in the form of an accusation by a more social media-savvy friend, who called me #cottagecore when I stopped by his house to pick up onionskins for ecodyeing. Not knowing anything other than the sounds and roots of the word I already knew he was correct.

I bake breads, I bake babka. When my clothes fall apart I sew them back together. When my socks get holes in them I darn the back to life. I have been known to sculpt and fire my own ceramic wares. Most of my wardrobe is linens and cottons in muted earth tones. I work to keep 32 plants alive. I

make my own broths and I can my own jams. But I rarely photograph these activities outside of documenting my visual artworks, and I have never used a hashtag in earnest. After many hours of passive personal research, and many more of active professional research, I find my interest in cottagecore lies not in what I can find under #cottagecore on Tumblr (except for this really cute radish-patterned sweater that is unfortunately only made for infants) but rather in the associations that spring from the term itself. I would argue that it is the subculture at large, and the philosophy embedded therein, more than its digital skins, that individuals continue to flock to.

I am consequently reticent to offer this blog or that TikTok as an authority of cottagecore, because social media isn't the most important part. If every image looked the part anyway, it would feel a little less real. I don't want to consume my cottagecore in a curated feed, I want to forage for it.



Elza Rudalevige, writing for Lithium Magazine, noted that it would be "reductionist" and "condescending" to diminish cottagecore to a set of visual markers, and to subsequently dismiss it as "cute", as so many female-dominated activities are dismissed. With or without the term in tow, many have taken the values behind the aesthetic form to heart.

Devoid of a single fluffy cow in sight, perhaps cottagecore is not immediately recognizable as #cottagecore, but at its best the imagery isn't what makes it. At its best, too, it isn't an all-encompassing ideology that you either live your entire life in or gracefully bow out of. Rather, it is a series of approaches that are open to the individual.

A hashtag isn't going to hold much more than what can be easily consumed, and the digital persona of individuals as well as concepts is never going to be their fully nuanced selves. Though social media gave cottagecore its fame, it doesn't have to be the extent of its life. Cottagecore as a subculture—or even better, as an approach—can be so much more.



In early 2021, I grow increasingly concerned that my efforts to connect with traditional practices, especially those of my ancestors, could be a simple side-effect of the #cottagecore trend. When I dye fabric, when I embroider, am I looking to save money, connect with my heritage, or just look good?

Am I trying to create a new old country right here? Pogrom-free but with all the neat quirks and maybe even a couple of musical numbers? Do the problems of that outweigh the sincerity of the effort? When does my life stop being mine and become a mixture of HBO's *Girls* and *Fiddler on the Roof*? Am I too late? Is that a problem?



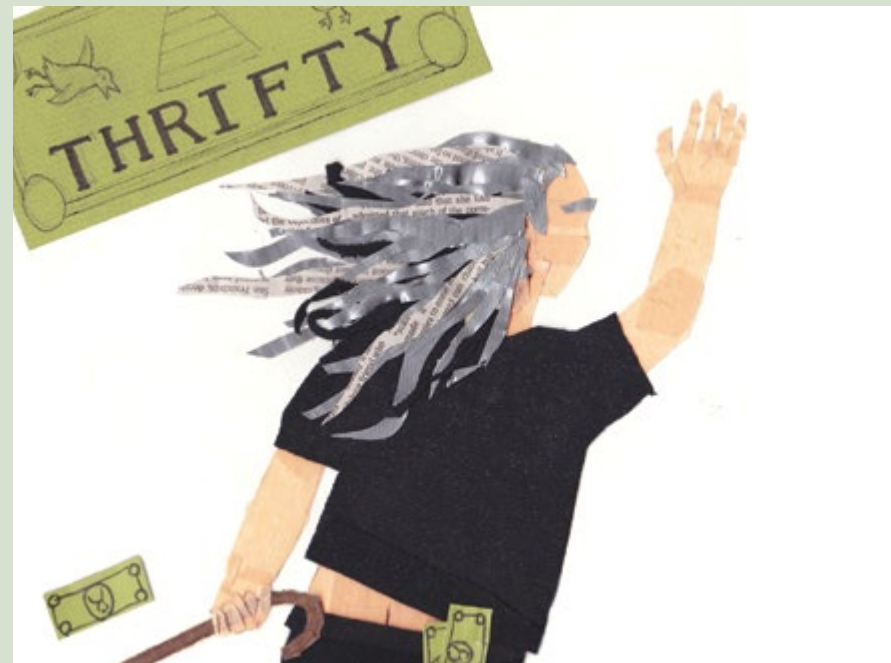
Seek and you shall find in cottagecore a malleable spirit of slow labor, of harmony with nature, and, of course, of cute animals. Take from it what you, as a minority or a majority, need to find the most authentic version of yourself, but don't do it just for the 'gram, and don't forget the cost that others, both close and removed, paid for you to be able to do so.

#cottagecore, and the subculture that it summarizes, can mean just as much as any social media trend (very little), or it can be a way forward for those who relate to the philosophy at its core. Think on that; meanwhile, I'll be here, baking, sewing, and plant-growing. You may call that #cottagecore but I'd just as soon call it a good day. ♦

Casey Larkin Mazer Carsel is a New Zealand-born, Jewish editor, writer, and artist based between Auckland and Chicago. Her practice focuses on how communal narratives are constructed and passed down through generations and across the world, and how these stories shape identities and make connections. What is held onto? What is forgotten? What is lost in translation? She has previously contributed creative and "straight" writing to *Bus Projects*, *RM Gallery*, *Ocula Magazine*, *Clark House Initiative*, *Adam Art Gallery*, *Newcity*, and *The Seen*, amongst other publications. In 2019 she co-founded *Plates Journal* with Unyimeabasi Udoh.

The Moment of Truth Music Review: Thrifty

BY JEFFREY DORCHEN



I can't save numbers of people in Jerusalem or Gaza, or even Tel Aviv, for that matter, with the skills I've, maybe foolishly, chosen to cultivate. I'm a writer. Sometimes even an artist. All I can do is process things, such as the current iteration of brutality by the Israeli Occupation against its unwilling Palestinian wards, its painted birds, and I've been doing so with the help, these days, of the words and overall attitude of Palestinian American poet and novelist, Naomi Shihab Nye. That processing will take some time. It's going to be a collective effort. I hadn't considered the collaborative nature of a poet. My thought has always been that some writing is solitary. But nothing human is ever truly solitary.

Longtime Chicago theater and music creator Beau O'Reilly was close friends with the recently-departed Michael Martin, whose last request of me was that I review Beau's record. Today, I'm talking about Beau. And by way of talking about Beau, I'm talking about collective endeavors.

Beau has a new record out. What can you say about a record by a man who is twelve centuries old in thunderstorm years but has a new girl baby, and includes a song, not about that girl baby, though her vocals are featured on it, but about the boy baby that was posited earlier on and received so many gifts in the mail he opened an imaginary emporium?

Maybe I just said it.

But probably not. The new record, *Thrifty*, by Beau O'Reilly, available from Uvulittle, is an expression of intentional community. It's one of the things lately which, like hearing about the courtyard at Cary's Lounge, or anything at all going on at Cary's, makes me want to come back to Chicago. Beau wrote all the lyrics, except a few, and sent them out for different musician friends to write the music and turn them lyrics into songs. Then those and other friends came together/apart, in that covid way we've all resorted to and begun to polish, to record them. All during the 2020 plague year, that's what happened.

Soil, earth, plant, and tree metaphors will be relied on heavily in this discussion. A few words about Beau's words: his diction and expression arise organically from strata of influences layered over a bedrock of the imperative to create. There has never been any question to Beau - or at least I've never detected any - that the writing, creating, rehearsing, and playing with others would go on. I feel this is probably true of all of those involved in this record. But that's the

foundation of lyrical discovery I've always seen and felt in Beau's writing.

The lyrics always involve the ongoing world and its inhabitants outside the writer/singer. Rarely do I hear the word "I" in the lyrics. "We" seems the preferred first-person pronoun, "you" and "they" and their myriad antecedents fleshing out most of the crowd populating the singer's world. Or that's how I hear it. And if I'm wrong, well, then maybe it's because there's always something mediating between identities in the songs: a scarf, a bat, a sky, a mutually-known other, a memory, a name one wants another to say, a button, a table leg, a toad. The songs aim outward, into the world.

The collection of musicians involved make this a tree with roots deep and wide, reaching into various communities of Chicago independent music and storefront theater. I first met Beau in 1988, when he and collaborating stage presence Jenny Magnus were the hub, at least as I saw it, of ongoing musical, literary, and theatrical extended families. And the music that grew within and around their co-evolving stagecraft became a singular organism, grown out of folk elements, cabaret elements, rock elements, and lyric influences diverse as Bertolt Brecht, Edith Piaf, Irving Berlin, Allen Ginsburg, Jagger and Richards, Basho, torch songs, blues songs, romance language political laments - I still hear those elements, as particles of the music that is its own undefinable being.

I was going use the label, "art song," but apparently that is something with a rigid definition, and I don't want to argue definitions. The instruments are firstly the voice - Beau's primarily - and include plucked and strummed strings by, among others, Theater Oobleck's *Baudelaire in a Box's* Chris Schoen and T-Roy Martin, who's also on tuba and trombone at times, and both of whom have played in Beau's Crooked Mouth String Band; a satisfying bass clarinet by Dez Desormeaux of Mambo Zombies with longtime Neo-Futurist Heather Riordon's accordion on several tangos; the singing saw of Experimental Sound Studio's Ralph Loza; worldwide master jazz trombonist Jeb Bishop; and many guitars, pianos, drums, fiddle, and voices provided by the thickening forest of brilliant members of the community Beau has formed of his friends and family.

The music composers range widely, too. Multi-instrumentalist and singer Vernon Tonges' setting of "Bring It Over Here" allows Beau's dynamic range a big space fly

in. Singer-songwriter and author of the excellent book, "This Land That I Love," contrasting Irving Berlin and Woody Guthrie as anthemists, John Shaw, set the somehow-familiar-on-first-hearing "Honeyed Mouth." Stephanie Rearick's piano on "The Hook," to which she wrote the music, incorporates so much of what I've imagined above are the influences on Beau's musicality. On "Falling" there's majestic piano by DePaul music professor and avant-garde composer Jeff Kowalkowski, who also wrote the music for the song and provides additional vocals. Julie Williams's featured vocals on the song for which she did the setting and co-wrote the lyrics, "Love is the Province," have an almost Mo Tucker clarity of timbre, although Julie's pitch is far more stable. Longtime O'Reilly creative partner, Miki Greenberg, set the words to "Head Up the Freeway," and his vibrant piano on that song is a blood- tonic to hear again. Chris Schoen set "Bat and Fist," featuring beautiful fiddle by Old Town School of Folk Music's Colby Maddox, and fattened up with rich background harmony vocals that are uncredited, but I believe I detect the Roches-esque tonal purity of Jenny Magnus. Jenny and Beau wrote it together. Jenny wrote the words and music to "Anglesmith," on which her exceptional supporting vocals are a unique instrument unto themselves.

Court Dorsey, one of Beau's "oldest and closest friends," has the only other words-and-music credit, with "Love Around the Corner," a song the optimism of which would sound foolish if not informed by well-earned awareness.

Life is hard, things break, bats shriek, gods have it in for you, people die. Making one's life about art is a struggle, unless one hits the fame lottery, or has a supernaturally sunny disposition, and even then. All these artists are survivors of a capitalism that lives to penalize those who dare to wring their own personal treasure out of life, and to offer that treasure to those who accept such rare, handmade, idiosyncratic currency.

I don't mean to reduce this record to a small victory in the war between good and evil, life and death, freedom and slavery, but that it is a monument to the struggle for a rich community life against an increasingly atomizing and punitive social ethos pressing down on us all is undeniable. These are talented artists making art at my eye level, making music at my ear level, and I'm not a tall man, but they take me to the tops of trees. This music is also the thirst that is the drink, and the soul soil to grow more music in. ♦

Again, the record is *Thrifty*, by Beau O'Reilly, available from Uvulittle.com. Beau will be performing on Saturday, online and in person at 8pm Central Time at Constellation 3111 N. Western Avenue, livestreaming on <https://youtu.be/1pphP8ddTKo>

eventbrite.com/e/beau-oreilly-tickets-150836663521

uvulittle.com/catalog/beau-oreilly/thrifty

Please remember to make a donation to the artists if you livestream it.

This has been the Moment of Truth. Good day!

The Buddy Store Shopping Guide



Brass Shield Earrings

by Twenty Thou
\$35.00

Shield shaped earrings made with brass lamp base stock in various designs.

DIMENSIONS:
Approximately .5 to 1.5"

MATERIALS:
Brass with sterling silver posts and backs

Twenty Thou
(Woodlawn)

Nicold Pittman is a Chicago based jewelry and accessory designer. Twenty Thou is her own personal student loan bailout, her goal is to sell twenty thousand pieces to pay off her student loans. She strives to create unique, simple jewelry using copper, brass, sterling silver, gold fill, and rose gold fill. She is always on the lookout for interesting stones and beads to make her work stand out including leather, bone, wood, and even fossils, porcupine quills, and sea urchin spikes.



Head Vessels

by Sydnie Jimenez
\$65.00

These small, slip cast head vessels. For these vessels the artist sculpted an original form, made a mold off of this, and then slip cast them individually. Once out of the mold each piece if altered to have different facial expressions and hair styles.

DIMENSIONS:
Sizes variable approximately 4 x 4 x 4"

MATERIALS:
Glazed cone 6 clay

Sydnie Jimenez
(Pilsen)

Sydnie Jimenez was born in Orlando, FL but spent most of her childhood in North Georgia, from which she draws much inspiration. Much of her work centers around the representation of black/brown youth and self expression as a form of protest and self care to protect against a Eurocentric society founded on white supremacy and colonization. porcupine quills, and sea urchin spikes.

LUMPEN, ISSUE #138, VOL. 30



Quirks

by Gail Placko
\$30.00

Quirky monsters made entirely from upcycled cashmere and hand-dyed fibers.

DIMENSIONS:
Dimensions variable 9 x 15 x 4"

MATERIALS:
Cashmere, stuffing

Gail Placko
(Belmont Gardens)

Gail Placko created Quirks to extend the life of unloved cashmere sweaters. Her mission is to rescue them, and transform them into lovable companions. Like humans, they too have some of their own quirks, thus the name.

SUMMER 2021



Dos Santos - Money Chica Vinyl

by Sonorama
\$12.00

A very unique collaboration with Chicago's own DOS SANTOS and Austin's MONEY CHICA. Each band put work into both tracks combining 2 forces into this one of a kind release. Written and recorded at Beto Martinez's own Leche House Studios. We have pulled all of the stops for this release. Red translucent vinyl with full color labels. We have Arturo Fresan's custom artwork which will be screen printed onto thick chipboard jackets, complete with a printed insert with track list, musical, and artistic credits. LIMITED TO 500 COPIES WORLD-WIDE. Includes unlimited streaming of Dos Santos & Money Chica Split 7" via the free Bandcamp app, plus high-quality download in MP3, FLAC and more.

DIMENSIONS:
7" , 2 songs

MATERIALS:
Vinyl album

Sonorama
(Pilsen/ Little Village)

Sonorama is a Chicago-based DJ collective that is known for energizing dance floors and sound waves with a unique blend of vintage Latin sounds. Founded in 2010 by Charly Garcia and brothers Edgar and Marlowe Baca, Sonorama is a group of insatiable diggers and lovers of music on vinyl. In early 2015 the trio launched the debut of Sonorama Discos, marking their interest in seeking and releasing contemporary bands and music with similar leanings to Latin America's sonic past and an ear for fresh approaches to that tradition. When the guys aren't busy DJing an event, you can catch their selections via podcasts, the occasional playlist or you might just run into them at your local record store.

71



Deep Dish Pizza Sign

by Southwest Signs
\$60.00

Every sign is hand-painted and unique, so design and colors will vary from sign to sign.

DIMENSIONS:
24 X 36"

MATERIALS:
Paint, paper

Southwest Signs
(Clearing)

Founded in 1960, Southwest Signs is a family run business located on the southwest sides of Chicago. They specialize in unique, Chicago-style, hand-painted signs with their signature primary red, blue, and yellow colors. Their expert work can be most commonly seen at grocery stores and restaurants, but has also been sought out by the film industry and artists for its classic, one of a kind style.

THE RURAL ISSUE



The Quarantine Times

by Public Media Institute
\$45.00

On March 17, 2020, Quarantine Times started publishing the works of over 250 artists online after the city-mandated shut down brought life as we knew it to a halt. Now, almost exactly one-year later, Public Media Institute (PMI) is thrilled to announce the publication of The Quarantine Times book on March 20, 2021. The 500+ page tome features over 151 contributions from Chicago-based artists, social workers, and thinkers responding to the crises of 2020.

Designed by award-winning designers Jeremiah Chiu and Itsayana Campa of Some All None. All proceeds from sales of the book benefit the non-profit Public Media Institute.

DIMENSIONS:
9 x 11", 532 pages

MATERIALS:
Softcover book, full color photos

Public Media Institute
(Bridgeport)

PMI is a non-profit 501(c) 3 community based, art & culture organization located in the neighborhood of Bridgeport. Their mission is to create, incubate and sustain innovative cultural programming through the production of socially engaged projects, festivals, spaces, exhibitions, and media. PMI has published several periodicals including Proximity Magazine, the international arts and culture journal, as well as Lumpen magazine, Materiel Magazine, and Mash Tun Journal. Their main exhibition facility is the experimental cultural center, Co-Prosperity: a 5,000 + sq ft visual arts and performance space that is also home to Lumpen Radio WPLN/105.5 FM. The Buddy store is the newest arm of the PMI non-profit.



Universal Beings

by Makaya McCraven
\$29.00

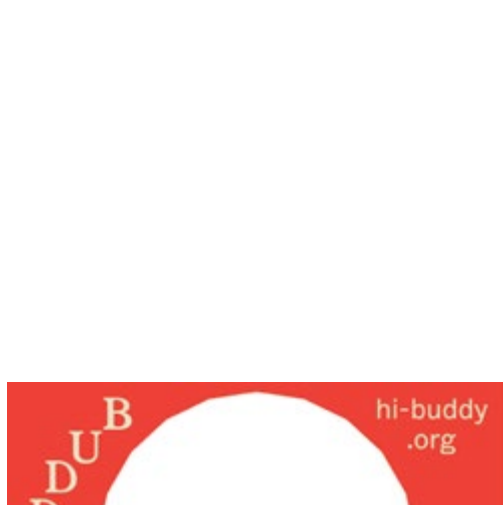
An addendum to Makaya McCraven’s critically-acclaimed 2018 release *Universal Beings*, which *The New York Times* said “affirms the drummer and beatsmith’s position as a major figure in creative music,” *Universal Beings E&F Sides* presents fourteen new pieces of organic beat music cut from the original sessions, prepared and produced by Makaya as a soundtrack to the *Universal Beings* documentary film. Directed by Mark Pallman, the *Universal Beings* documentary follows Makaya to Los Angeles, Chicago, London and New York City for a behind the scenes look into the making of the artists breakthrough album, taking the viewer through the story of Makaya’s life, his process and the community of musicians that helped bring this project to life. The *Universal Beings* documentary and *Universal Beings E&F Sides* album release July 31st 2020.

RUNNING TIME:
22 tracks, 90 minutes

MATERIALS:
Vinyl

International Anthem
(Bridgeport & Los Angeles)

International Anthem is a Chicago-born recording company that produces and promotes progressive media. Founded by curators from the Uncanned Music family, the IARC label was established to be a productive and distributive outlet for the group’s original music programming. The mission of International Anthem is to make positive contributions to the changing state of the music industry, and to vitalize the demand for boundary-defying music by presenting unique sounds in appealing packages to untapped audiences.



Corn

by Clay in the Yards
\$10.00

WE ALL COME FROM CORN. Each ear of corn is one of a kind and vary in shape and size. 2020

DIMENSIONS:
Approximately 12 x 3 x 3"

MATERIALS:
Ceramic, corn husks, wire

Clay in the Yards
(Back of the Yards)

Clay in the Yards is Javier Jasso’s project. From Mexico and Chicago, Jasso works with clay, fire, and found materials. He also hosts non-profit ceramics classes at his Back of the Yards studio.



F-This by Nicole Marroquin

by Hoofprint
\$50.00

This series by Nicole Marroquin features four pissed-off femmes in varied compositions and colorways. 50% of proceeds go towards BLM organizations, while the other 50% funds the continuation of this project with Nicole Marroquin. With the money generated from sales, \$4k has been able to be donated to the following organizations: Black Visions MN, Chicago Bail Fund, and Voices of Youth in Chicago Education.

DIMENSIONS:
18 X 24"

MATERIALS:
Screenprint on heavy cardstock

Hoofprint
(McKinley Park)

Hoofprint is a Chicago-based printshop and publisher specializing in fine art editions utilizing screenprinting, lithography, etching, and relief processes. They work collaboratively with emerging artists to create limited edition prints. Print partners Liz Born and Gabe Hoare co-founded Hoofprint in 2012.



White Sage CBD Balm

by Sky Island Apothecary
\$35.00

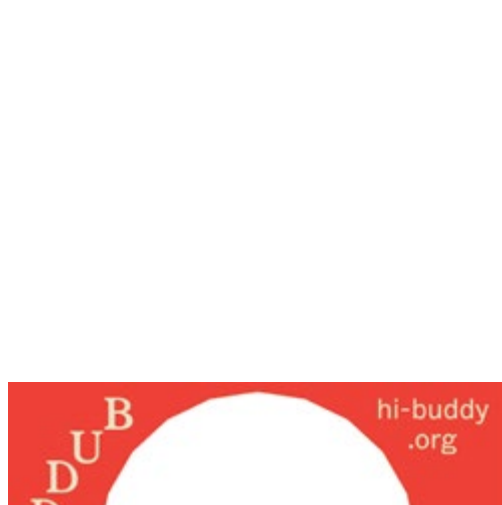
Massage into tight and sore spots to encourage relief of pain and tension.

DIMENSIONS:
120 mg

MATERIALS:
white sage infused olive oil, beeswax, CBD isolate, vitamin E oil, patchouli, lavender essential oils

Sky Island Apothecary
(Humboldt Park)

Teas, tinctures, lotions + potions. Sky Island’s beautiful, effective botanical concoctions to help you get through this thing called life. Made by women in small batches on Chicago’s west side.



Library Excavations #10: Health and Safety by Marc Fischer & Public Collectors

by Half Letter Press
\$6.00

In this edition of the Public Collectors Library Excavations series the focus is on a 1970s booklet series published by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. University of Illinois at Chicago’s Richard J. Daley Library has a vast Government Documents collection. This edition of Library Excavations was created using that collection, which is freely accessible to the public. It focuses on a series of booklets issued between 1975-1978 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

DIMENSIONS:
5.5 X 8.5", 36 pages

MATERIALS:
Softcover book

Half Letter Press
(Avondale)

Half Letter Press is a publishing imprint and online store initiated by Temporary Services—Brett Bloom & Marc Fischer, who have published booklets as an element of their collaborative work since 1998. Half Letter Press was created to publish and distribute book and booklet length works by themselves and others, and to use this endeavor to build long-term support and expanded audiences for people that work creatively in experimental ways.



Commando by E'mon Lauren

by Young Chicago Authors
\$10.00

E'mon Lauren's poems take artifacts, language, and ephemera from life on Chicago's Southside and Westside to create a manifesto of survival and growth. These poems from Chicago's first Youth Poet Laureate grapple with sexism, racism, love, and class with a style that announces Lauren as a poet to watch. Commando is an aesthetic stick up, hallelujahs in a handbag with a handgun. The first collection from the city's first youth poet laureate is a manifesto for a soldier at war.

DIMENSIONS:
5.5 x 0.3 x 8.3", 40 pages

MATERIALS:
Softcover book

Young Chicago Authors
(East Village)

Through creative writing, Young Chicago Authors helps young people from all backgrounds to understand the importance of their own stories and those of others, so that they can pursue the path they choose and work to make their communities more just and equitable. Founded twenty eight years ago by Bob Boone, YCA has become a home for teens and young adults looking for ways to express themselves and find a diverse community to inspire and support them. YCA's programs ignite academic development and illuminate opportunities for post-high school study and work. Effectively, YCA offers young people a view of a tomorrow that is better than today.



Ice Dye Socks

by Forever Friends
\$15.00

Hand dyed for your wearing pleasure by Forever Friends using an ice dye method.

DIMENSIONS:
Fits like a S/M

MATERIALS:
Cotton blend, pigment

Forever Friends
(Bridgeport)

Forever Friends is a collaborative clothing line by Jim Dye & Reuben Kincaid.



Pocket Object

by Clee McCracken
\$40.00

One of a kind keychain art object created for Pocket Object.

DIMENSIONS:
4 x 3 x .5"

MATERIALS:
Vinyl, thread

Pocket Object
(Traveling exhibition based in Chicago)

Pocket Object is a traveling exhibition of small, keychain-based editions by hundreds national & international artists organized by Chicago-based artist Noël Morical. The project asks artists across multiple disciplines and mediums to each produce a small edition of keychain-sized objects available for cheap purchase. The tiny totems are meant to jangle on your hip, tumble in a tote, or simply be a small scale reminder of the practice of a favorite artist or friend. The small, dangling works are each priced at under \$100 and explore the endless variability of small scale sculpture.



Blondie

by Kyle Riley's Arts & Crafts
\$100.00

Hand-painted, free standing, one-of-a-kind object.

DIMENSIONS:
15 x 17 x .5"

MATERIALS:
Painted wood

Kyle Riley's Arts & Crafts
(Little Village)

Kyle Riley is a self-taught artist in Chicago, Illinois. He creates self-described folk art-inspired wooden cut out sculptures and larger, pattern oriented, abstract paintings. His subjects include plants, animals, and people. All are one of a kind, and meant to bring joy to the viewer.



Cement Peanuts

by Nick Van Zanten
\$6.00

A basically useless object rendered even more useless. A lovingly handcrafted replica of mass produced garbage. Superficially identical to foam packing peanuts, these cement packing peanuts are in fact different in every important way, making them a pleasing decoration or paperweight. Should not be used for shipping except as a joke.

DIMENSIONS:
1 x 1 x 2"

MATERIALS:
Cast cement

Nick Van Zanten
(Pilsen)

Nick Van Zanten is an artist who works in an eclectic range of media. Born in Chicago ('88), Van Zanten received a BFA in painting from Pratt Institute ('11) and an MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago ('18). Nick has been an apprentice at the Fabric Workshop & Museum, taken part in residencies including Yaddo and Wassaic, and has exhibited at Roots & Culture, Paris London Hong Kong, Shoot the Lobster and elsewhere.



Castings

by David Nasca
\$100.00

2019

DIMENSIONS:
12 x 6 x 8"

MATERIALS:
Cast plastisol, epoxy, aquarium gravel

David Nasca
(Pilsen)

David Nasca (b. 1990, Buffalo, NY) is a visual artist working primarily in sculpture. He teaches at the Chicago High School for the Arts and has been involved with many DIY venues around Chicago.



Movements for a Room

by Shir Ende
\$125.00

Movement for a Room
2020

Edition of 7 + 3 Artist Proofs
Set of 4 \$125
Set of 4 artist proofs \$95

DIMENSIONS:
9.5 x 12.5"

MATERIALS:
Screenprint on paper

Shir Ende
(Pilsen)

Shir Ende is a Chicago-based artist and educator. Ende received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Through print, performance, and video, Ende uses a degree of speculative thinking to explore movement within modern space.



New Leaf Collage

by Thomas Kong
\$100.00

Collage by Thomas Kong, Kim's Corner Food

DIMENSIONS:
15 X 12"

MATERIALS:
Mixed found materials

Thomas Kong
(Rogers Park)

Thomas Kong is a visual artist and the proprietor of Kim's Corner Food, a corner store in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago. Born in Korea in 1950, Kong's art-making practice began around age 60, in direct relationship with his religious beliefs and his life running a convenience store. While he stands in his shop selling soda and cigarettes, Kong continuously cuts and places his shapes. His intuitive practice uses product packaging, leaves, cardboard, and other found materials to create a visual language that is entirely his own. The shop is a collision between convenience and art, with every available surface covered with collages and works in progress. Kim's Corner Food is located at 1371 W. Estes and is open daily.



W.E.F.T. Rugs

by The Weaving Mill
\$95.00

W.E.F.T. is a textile education program run by The Weaving Mill in partnership with social services agency Envision Unlimited. They facilitate open-studio workshops in hand weaving, sewing, and object design for adults with developmental disabilities. Focusing on collaborative process, a communal studio environment, and creative use of found and recycled materials, the W.E.F.T. workshops encourage participants to strengthen their creative and technical muscles through regular practice.

DIMENSIONS:
Varies, approx. 30 x 45"

MATERIALS:
Recycled fibers

The Weaving Mill
(Humboldt Park)

The Weaving Mill is an artist-run industrial weaving studio in Chicago. They make limited runs of woven home goods and apparel, focusing on creative use of dead-stock, scrapped, and recycled yarns, as well as supply-chain-forward contemporary materials. In partnership with social services agency Envision Unlimited, they provide textile education workshops for adults with developmental disabilities and host an experimental artist residency program. Through their projects, textile and otherwise, they aim to fill the space between the hand and industrially made and bring the mechanics of textile production into wider view.



Wood Block Neckpieces

by Kang Mankey
\$25.00

Bold, colorful, geometric, adjustable length, power accessories that punch up any look.

DIMENSIONS:
Adjustable

MATERIALS:
Wooden beads, paracord and bungee balls

Kangmankey
(Kilbourn Park)

Gurtie Hansell AKA Kangmankey is an interdisciplinary artist and designer of genderqueer streetwear based in Chicago. They subvert the expectation that so-called "gender neutral" clothing is all masculine coded some way. Instead, they put all gender expressions front and center for everyone to explore. A self-described Craft Store Goth, Gurtie creates "Gender Non-Specific Wearables for Your Gorgeous Spectrumful Ass!!!"

About Buddy



Buddy is a shop, a hub for making connections between friends we have and those we have yet to meet. We are committed to giving artists and small manufacturers in Chicago a place to showcase and sell their goods and artworks to a vast audience of Chicagoans and visitors at the Chicago Cultural Center. This collaboration between Public Media Institute and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) furthers both institutions' goals of providing visibility and opportunities to artists across the Chicagoland area. Through exhibitions, talks, workshops, performances, readings, and product launches, Buddy will work to bring the creative output of our city's neighborhoods to the city center for visitors and locals alike to consume. Buddy is a place that introduces the world to the people making it happen in Chicago, a place that helps them create a sustainable world we all want to work, play, and live in.

hi-buddy.org

Ma
O'Brien's

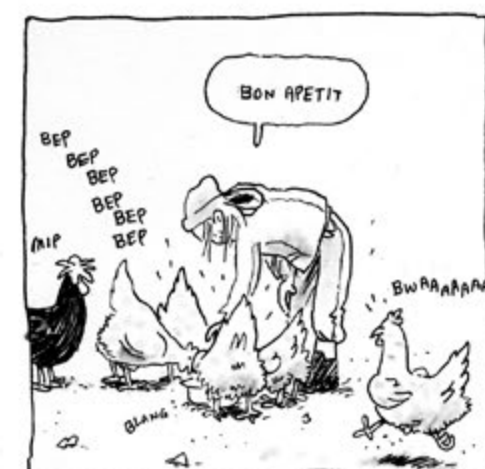
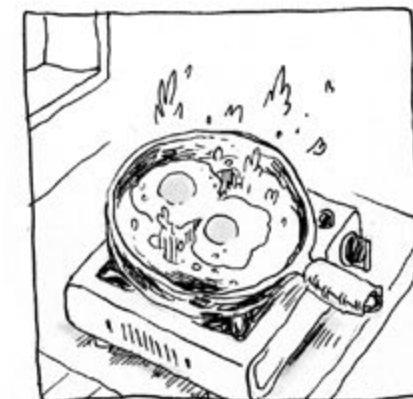
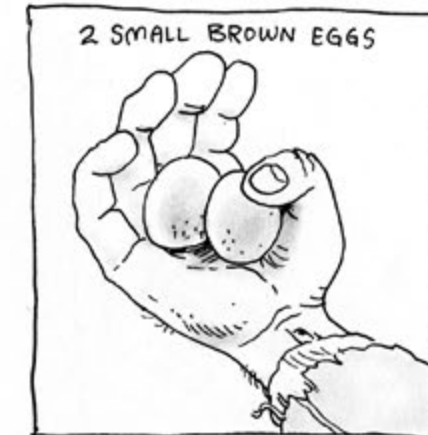
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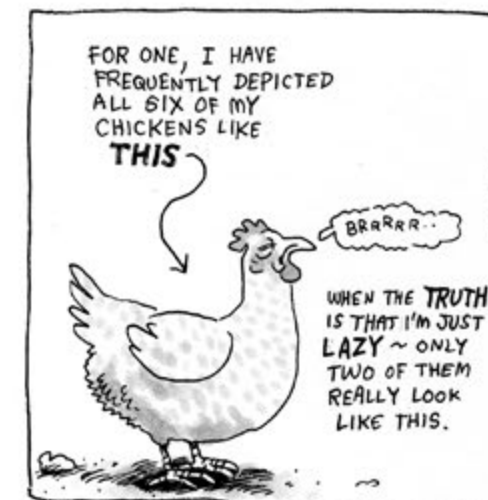
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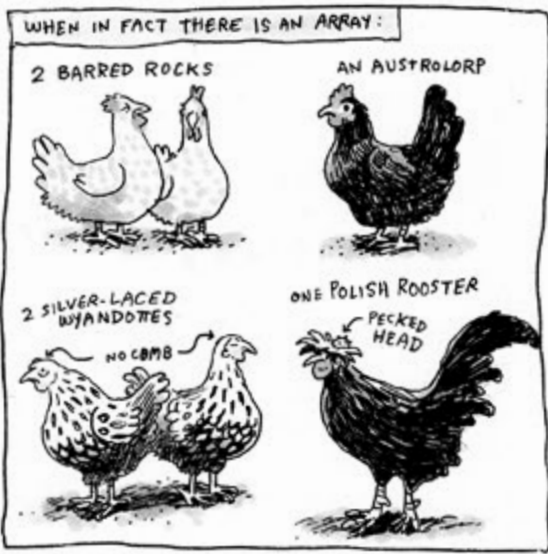
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STARRING GABBY SCHULZ



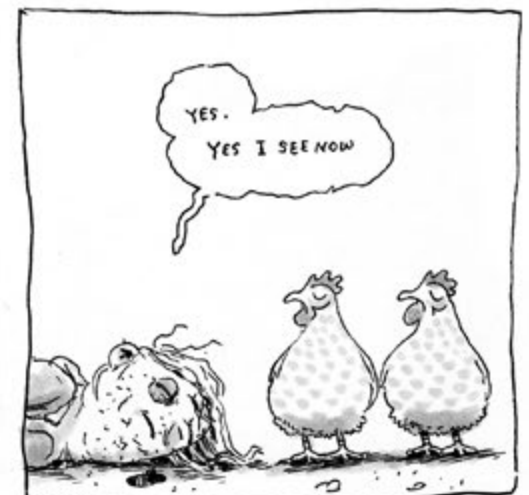
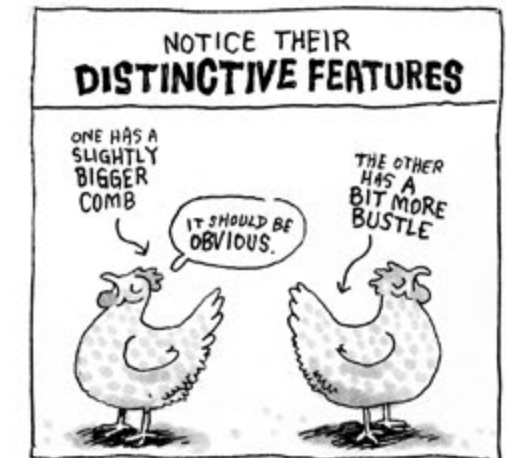
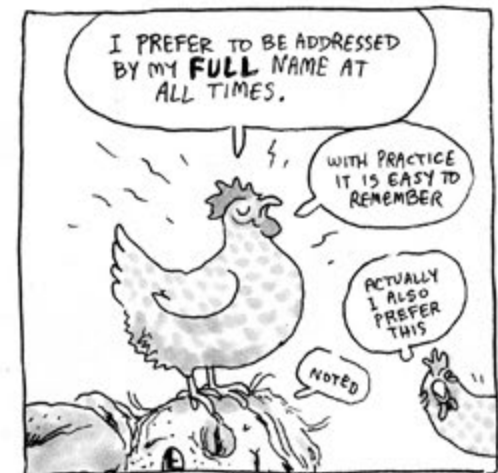
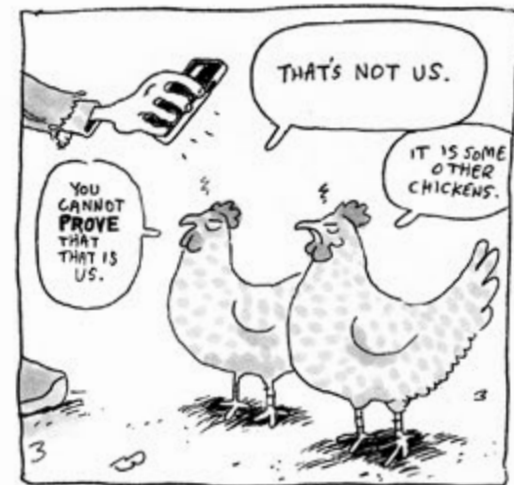
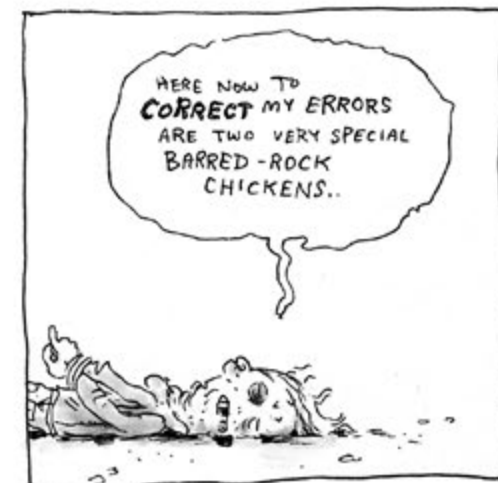
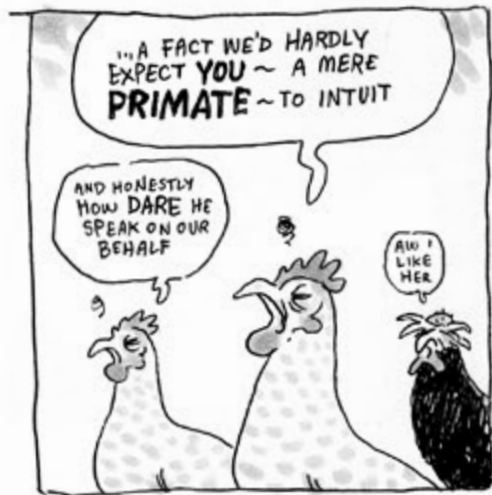
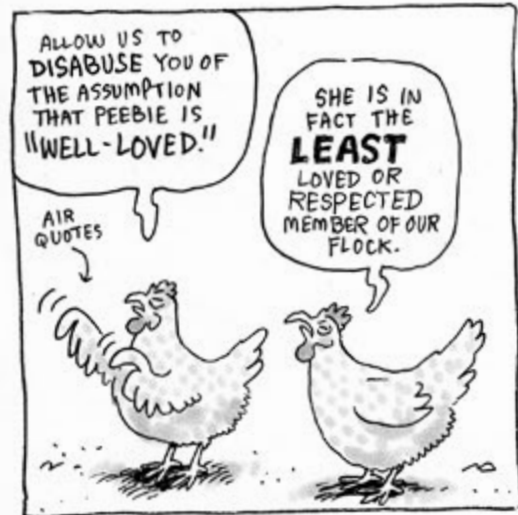
BY GABBY SCHULZ





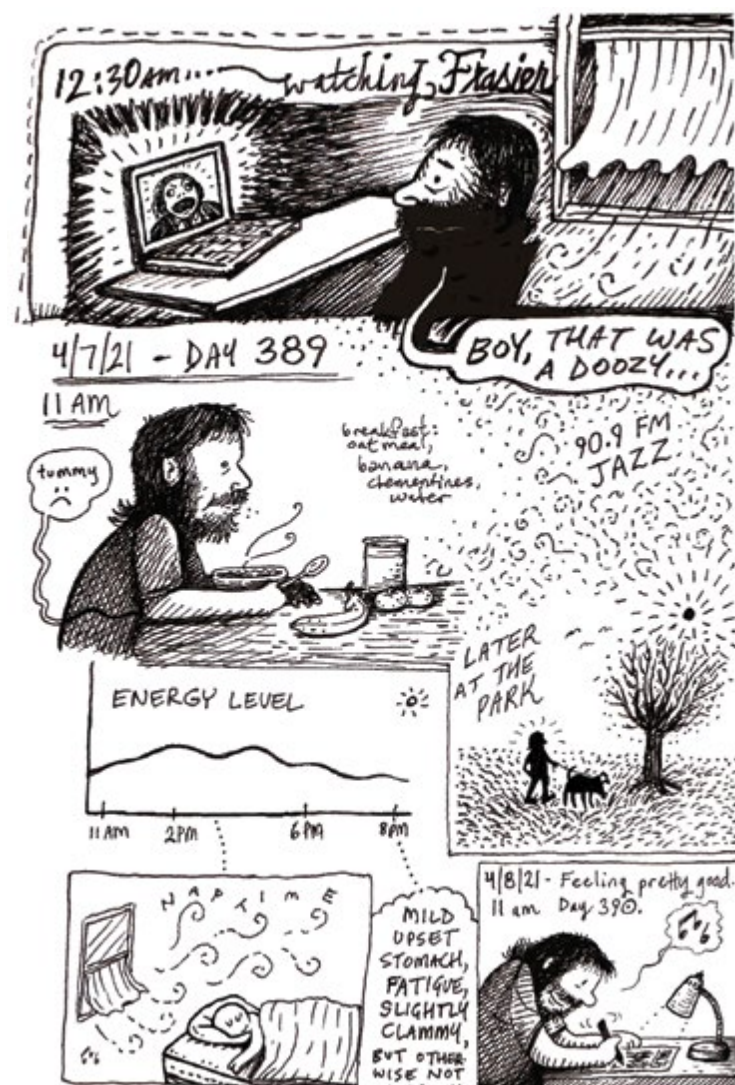
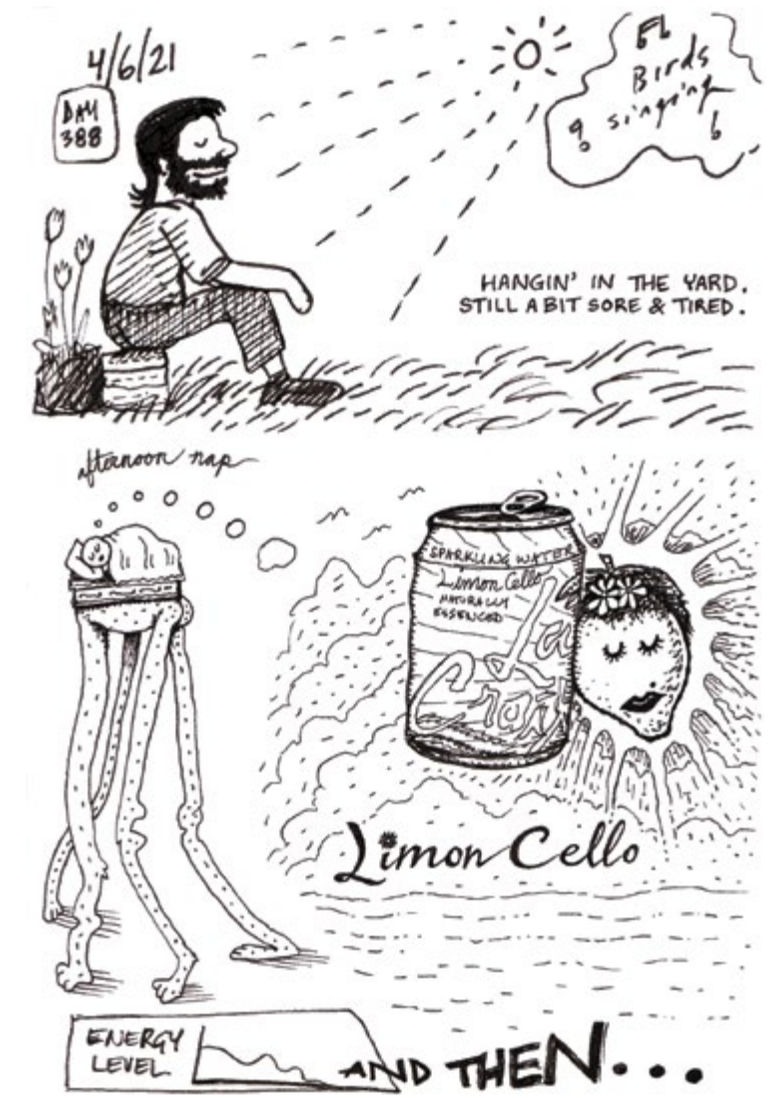
ACTUAL CHICKEN TRUTHS

(REVISED)



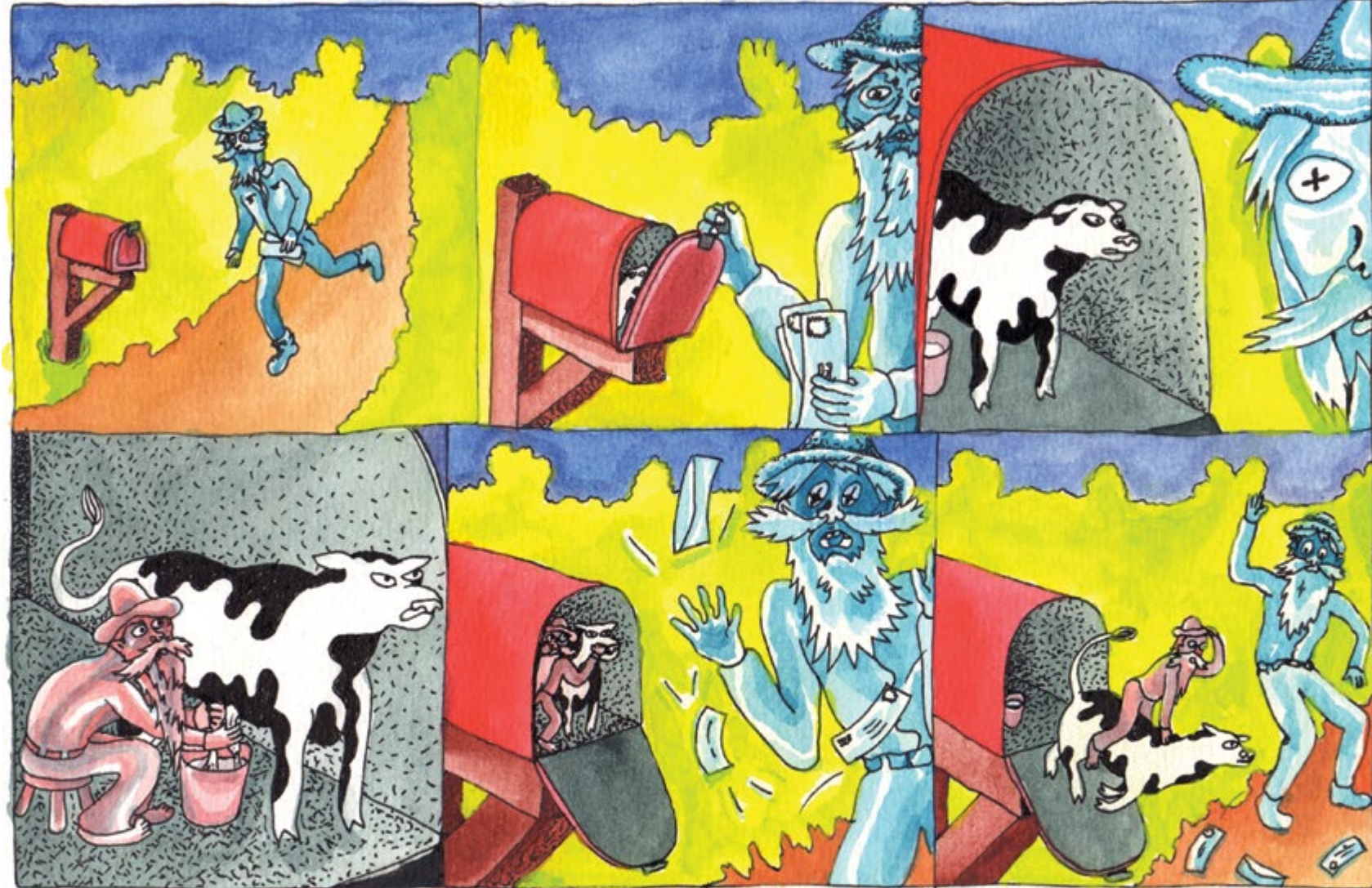
BY GABBY SCHULZ





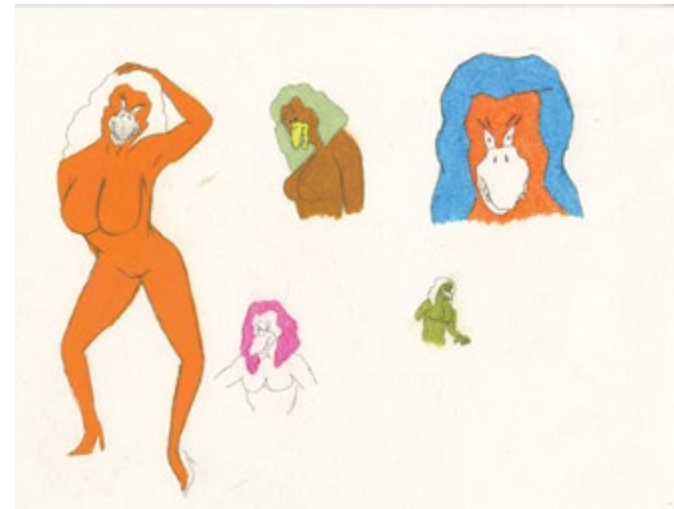
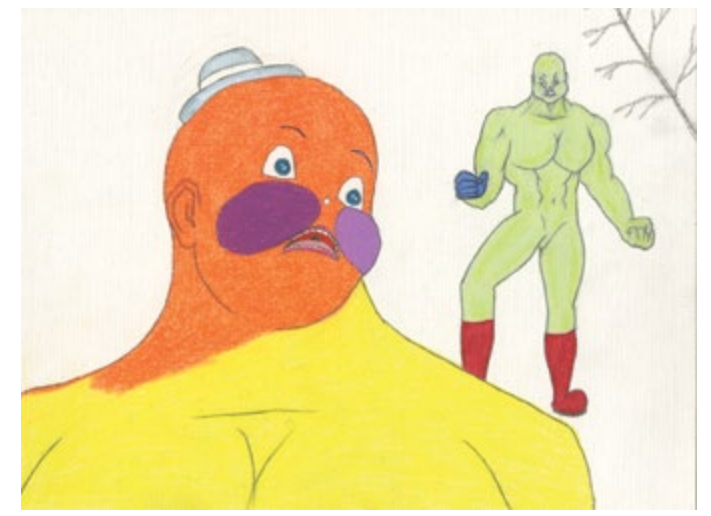
BY GRANT REYNOLDS

FARM



TIME

BY LEIF GOLDBERG



BY AMY LOCKHART

of racism, sexism, xenophobia and neo-colonialism on steroids in the Trump Era." Throughout his life, Gómez-Peña has worked in audio art and radio across multiple genres, from poetic journalism to Spanglish spoken word, and from radical storytelling to collaborations with musicians, poets, and activists. This ongoing series will present samples of his previous work (1980–2015) and newly recorded material created in the last two years and during lock-down.

In a first-ever partnership, Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Public Media Institute, and the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art present a year-long series of experimental audio performances from Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a performance artist, writer, activist, and MacArthur Fellow, class of 1991. The series is an initiative of Toward Common Cause: Art, Social Change, and the MacArthur Fellows Program at 40, a multi-venue exhibition and program series organized by the Smart Museum to mark the 40th anniversary of the MacArthur Fellows program throughout 2021.

Communities Amplified (in Spanish)

Wednesdays / 7-8PM

Communities Amplified presents original Spanish content as part of the expanded multilingual programming on the WLPN airwaves each week.

This project is supported by major funding from The Field Foundation and additional support from The McCormick Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts and the Chicago Learning Exchange.

Q.C. with King Hippo

First and Third Wednesdays / 8-10PM

Q.C. is for listeners who are interested in how soul, jazz, r&b, funk, and hip-hop are shaping new underground music from around the world. Listeners will also enjoy interviews, guest-mixes, and in-studio performances by potent new artists.

mixcloud.com/kinghippo

InbetweenRadio/Stations with Glenn Russell & DJ Mykol

Second and Fourth Wednesdays / 8-10PM

Chicago's only show for and about DJs, vinyl collecting, and Sound Disbursement. Host DJs Glenn Russell and DJ Mykol discuss and play hidden gems of all musical types from all decades. They share tracks from recent vinyl finds and favorite tracks from their DJ events. Each show features a musical theme and/or musical guest!

Distributing the sounds you'll only hear InBetweenRadio/Stations.

mixcloud.com/InbetweenRadioStations

Night Time with Chris Hefner

Wednesdays / 10PM-Midnight

Nocturnal Allsorts.

THURSDAYS

Vapor Radio

Monday-Thursday / 6-7AM

Let the vapor embrace you. New moods. New attitudes. New music.

Numero Group Audio Archive

Thursdays / 7-8AM

A selection of music from the Numero Group Archives.

News, Weather and Traffic with Jamie Trecker

Monday-Friday / 7:40AM

Your weekday update to help you start the day.

Democracy Now

Mon-Friday / 8-9AM

Daily national news program hosted by journalists Amy Goodman and Juan González.

Pocket Guide to Hell with Paul Durica and Elliot Heilman

First and Third Thursday / 9-10AM

Pocket Guide to Hell explores the intersections of art, politics, and culture as illuminated by Chicago's past. Along the way, hosts Paul Durica and Elliot Heilman talk with fine folks doing the work of keeping the past present and show you the places where the city's history resides today.

This is Hell! with host Chuck Mertz

Thursdays / 10-11AM

A brand-new episode of This is Hell! This is Hell is a weekly longform political interview program broadcast in Chicago since 1996.

Eye 94 with hosts Jamie Trecker, Jeremy Kitchen and Mike Sack

Thursdays and Sundays / 11AM-Noon

Dubravka Ugresic called them the "Three Musketeers of Literature." Eye 94 is Lumpen Radio's books and literature show, covering reading worldwide. Interviews with authors, publishers and creators from contemporary literature and beyond. With readings by Shanna van Volt and music from some of Chicago's finest artists. More information and archives at eye94.org

Mashed Potato Time with DJ Karin

Thursdays / Noon-2PM

Mashed Potato Time is all about the glory days of the recording culture that left us with stacks and stacks of forgotten 45s. Karin dusts off her favorite '50s & '60s singles for an all-vinyl show filled with carefree soul grooves, early R&B movers, dance crazes that never were, scuzzy garage gems, and much more! mixcloud.com/karin-fjellman

News From The Service Entrance with Mario Smith

Thursdays / 2-4PM

Music, interviews and people from all walks of life. Famous and infamous. Radio with a purpose. Mario is joined most weeks by Michilla Blaise and producer Jamie Trecker.

Skerd To Dance with Jimmy Kaps

First and Third Thursdays / 4-6PM

Skerd To Dance is mixed live by Jimmy Kaps, featuring special guest local DJs and producers who take over the FM airwaves with vinyl/digital DJ sets and/or live gear performances. mixcloud.com/skerdtodance

The Mutant Hit Parade with Lawrence Peters

Fourth Thursdays / 4-6PM

The Mutant Hit Parade is a selection of classic power-pop and rock that would have been big hits had only anyone given it a chance. Lawrence Peters does.

Attention Deficit Radio with Sergio Rodriguez

First and Third Thursdays / 6-8PM

Bringing you an eclectic mix of jams not bound to one genre. ADR host Sergio brings you gems (old and new) from the worlds of indie rock, soul, jazz, hip-hop, world. ADR comes to you every 1st and 3rd Thursday's from 6pm-8pm. Tune in and you might discover a new favorite artist.

Bi-Lengua Radio with Osvaldo Cuevas

Second Thursdays from 6-8 PM

Bi-Lengua radio bridges the gap of the Americas with themed episodes that explore the collision of culture. Expect an eclectic tour of music and conversation in English and Spanish. bilengua.org

#FeelgoodMusic with DJ Greg #Feelgood

Fourth Thursdays / 6-8PM

Every 4th Thursday tune in for two hours of #feelgoodmusic from 6-8pm. Expect new bangers, throwbacks and classics that'll make you nod your head. Catch the vibe...

Idiot Business with Mike Esposito

Second Thursdays / 7-8PM

Idiot Business is primarily an experimental electronic music show, although hip hop, rock, and comedy do slip in sometimes. The music is sometimes mixed together, sometimes collaged, and sometimes played one track at a time. For Idiot Business, experimental electronic music includes IDM, techno, jungle, electro-acoustic music, noise, and electronic pop, for starters. The goal is simply to provide good experimental electronic music irrespective of (sub-)genre.

Beer Temple Insiders Roundtable with Chris Quinn

Thursdays / 8-10PM

Chris Quinn, owner of the Beer Temple, sits down with craft beer insiders to discuss the topics that matter most to them. Each week features different guests sharing their insights and giving you an insider's view of the evolving craft beer scene.

CHANDO RADIO with the Chandeliers

Thursdays / 10PM-12AM

Presenting the best in modern electronica, Chando Radio combines underground and rare electronic, experimental, and progressive dance music hand picked by Chicago synth ensemble Chandeliers (Lisa Armstrong, Harry Brenner, Chris Kalis, Scott McGaughey) and special guests.

FRIDAYS

CHANDO Mornings

Fridays / 6-7 AM

Hits curated by the Chandeliers!

The Jams!

Fridays 7-8 AM

Classic, Old School and more...these are the JAMS!

News, Weather and Traffic with Jamie Trecker

Monday-Friday / 7:40AM

Your weekday update to help you start the day.

Democracy Now

Monday-Friday / 8-9AM

Daily national news program hosted by journalists Amy Goodman and Juan González.

Out of the Archives!

Second Fridays / 9-10AM

Out of the Archives! share a diverse range of stories told by public housing residents, as well as those working in the field, from our Oral History Archive. The stories in our archive lift the voices of an oftentimes marginalized community and create a space for important conversations to happen. Each episode features a different theme that responds to our mission to preserve, promote, and propel the right of all people to a place where they can live and prosper.

Means of Production with Sharon Hoyer

Third Fridays / 9-10AM

Means of Production is an hour long conversation about Chicago's dance and performing arts scene. Sharon Hoyer, stage editor at Newcity Magazine, talks with dancers, choreographers, performance artists, puppeteers, presenters and performers whose work doesn't fit neatly into any one category.

Rebel Steps

First and Third Friday / 10-11AM

Rebel Steps is a podcast about taking political action guided by the concepts of direct action, solidarity, autonomy and mutual aid. It guides listeners through actions that go beyond protesting and calling your representatives. It's created by Amy and Liz, two sisters living in Brooklyn, NY. rebelsteps.com

Hitting Left with The Klonsky Brothers

Fridays / 11AM-12PM

Hitting Left takes on issues of education, politics and social justice. We're joined in-studio each Friday from 11 to noon, by an interesting and provocative assortment of fellow activists, poets, musicians, journalists... or any friends who happen to pop in. mixcloud.com/lumpenradio/playlists/hitting-left

The Ben Joravsky Show

Fridays / 12-1PM

The Ben Joravsky Show presents the best material from his podcast each week, produced in conjunction with the Chicago Reader and the Chicago Sun-Times.

Tech Scene Chicago with Host Melanie Adcock

First and Third Fridays / 1-2PM

Tech Scene Chicago is an independently produced talk radio show written and hosted by Melanie Adcock on Lumpen Radio. The Tech Scene Chicago Radio show is geared toward the public and discusses how they can become part of the local "tech scene" by giving them the scoop on available technology-related events they can attend in their area. Tech Scene Chicago serves as a subsidiary entity of Tech Month Chicago to help further their mission of advocacy awareness and outreach of S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) throughout the city of Chicago. techscenechicago.com

Gridlock Sound Lab

First and Third Fridays / 4-6PM

Sadie Woods brings you rush hour radio featuring House, Afro Latin Rhythms, Worldbeat, Disco, Funk, Soul, Electro, and Indie Dance music.

Future Rootz

Second Friday and Fourth Fridays / 4-6PM

Future Rootz host a monthly broadcast exploring both vintage and modern Afro-Latinx rooted sounds. The show includes a special guest program featuring prominent artist from all over the world. mixcloud.com/FutureRootz

Lumpen Week in Review hosted by Shanna van Volt

Fridays / 6-7PM

Lumpen Week in Review is the show that covers the past week of news, happenings and programs presented on Lumpen Radio. Each week we present a sampling of news, programs and interviews with guests that were presented on Lumpen Radio.

Karaoke Center hosted by Elise Barrington with Brianna Rock & Peter Laug

Fridays / 7-8 PM

Chicago's PREMIERE and ONLY karaoke radio show where we only play the karaoke versions of songs. We're in the studio singing LIVE and our phone line is open for your voice to be HEARD. Call us at 773-823-9700 to sing live on 105.5!

Star Creature Vibes Radio with Tim Zawada

Fridays / 8PM-12AM

Star Creature Vibes Radio is a penetrative exploration into the alternative world of Disco. The show begs to answer one of the defining questions of the last 1000 years: “What is Boogie?” Host Tim Zawada alongside notable guests from across the globe, play an assortment of underrepresented and left leaning with a large focus on the later 70s to early 80s Boogie Phenomenon with a healthy dose of contemporary Boogie Styles, House and Spaced Out Modern Funk. starcreatureuniversalsvibrations.com

Drum and Bass on Lumpen Radio with DJ DavdM as Sekret Skwrrl

Fridays / 2-3AM

The show is basically an expression of my love for the early days of drum and bass/ jungle throughout the 1990’s into the early 2000’s. I truly appreciate the minimalism of most of the tracks and the raw sound quality of the time.

SATURDAYS

Tech Scene Chicago with Host Melanie Adcock

Saturdays / 9-10AM

Rebroadcast of Tech Scene Chicago.

Bad at Sports Center

Saturdays / 10-11 AM

Rebroadcast of Bad at Sports Center.

Wattz Up! and La Mesita with Yollocalli Youth

Saturdays / 12-2 PM

Wattz Up! is a youth produced and hosted variety talk show that reflects their culture and their communities. After Wattz Up! listeners can enjoy the sweet sounds of La Mesita, bringing independent and upcoming musicians to Yollocalli Studio Y, for a concert live performance and interview. Broadcasting live from Studio Y in the heart of Little Village, youth ages 13 to 24 take over the airwaves with unique stories, cool jams, and lots of lolz. soundcloud.com/yollocalli

Buildings On Air with Keefer Dunn

First Saturdays / 2-4 PM

Buildings on Air is a show that demystifies architecture through wild speculation, good conversation, a healthy dose of lefty political

perspective, and lots of skepticism about the ‘power of design.’ Each show features guests from the many different facets of the architecture world in Chicago and beyond. buildingsonair.live

The Don’t Call Me Sweetheart! Show with Stephen Sonneveld & Andrew Gregory Krzak

Second and Fourth Saturdays / 2-4PM

Radio’s Greatest Program™, The Don’t Call Me Sweetheart! Show is dedicated to preserving the heritage of audio entertainment while using the tools for a progressive and inclusive agenda. Employing classic “show within a show” comedy, and thoughtful radio plays across all genres, Sweetheart also drives firmly into the future with biting social satire, and the creation of new audio formats. It is original radio for independent minds. sweetheartradio.com mixcloud.com/lumpenradio/playlists/dont-call-me-sweetheart/

POP PUNK PIZZA PARTY with David and Bradley

Third Saturdays / 4-5PM

- Pop Punk Pizza Party - “A slice for all, even Joey Ramone” Thanks for listening and sharing this pop punk pizza party with us. We’ll cherish this moment forever! mixcloud.com/poppunkpizzaparty

The Minimal Beat with Bill Ocean & Caitlin Mahoney

Saturdays 5-7PM

The Minimal Beat is Chicago-based music blog. We blog about relevant artists of the day, with no particular genre-specific focus. In addition, The Minimal Beat hosts a weekly radio show on 105.5 WLPN-LP ‘Lumpen Radio’ every Saturday from 5-7PM CDT. We also release music on the private press label TMB Limited. If you would like more information or want to get involved with The Minimal Beat, please write to us. mixcloud.com/theminimalbeat.com theminimalbeat.com

Lumpen Week in Review hosted by Shanna van Volt

Saturdays / 7-8PM

Lumpen Week in Review is the show that covers the past week of news, happenings and programs presented on Lumpen Radio. Each week we present a sampling of news, programs and interviews with guests that were featured on the station.

EurekaCast NOW! With Kai Hubris and Rowan Meadowlark

Saturdays / 8-9PM

ECNI is a New Media collaboration between Tech Brothers New Media Labs and the Simon Amy Institute of Spirit Science. Each week, join Media Disruption Developer Kai Hubris and Professor Rowan Meadowlark as they bring you the latest breakthroughs in science and technology. Find more information at www.awcyfm.com/eurekacast **INSPIRE CURIOSITY, IMAGINE SCIENCE!**

SUNDAYS

Contratiempo Radio with Stephanie Manriquez and Contratiempo's Contributors

Sundays / 9-10AM

Contratiempo radio is a cultural program that showcases Latin American and immigrant art and thought in the United States, and Chicago in particular. Functioning as an extension of and a complement to contratiempo magazine, the program creates a conversational space featuring poetry, music, art, cinema, literature, politics, immigrant stories and much more. mixcloud.com/contratiempo

This is Hell! with host Chuck Mertz

Sundays / 10-11 AM

A brand-new episode of This is Hell! This is Hell is a weekly longform political interview program broadcast in Chicago since 1996. soundcloud.com/this-is-hell

Eye 94 with hosts Jamie Trecker, Jeremy Kitchen and Mike Sack

Sundays 11AM-12PM

Dubravka Ugresic called them the “Three Musketeers of Literature.” Eye 94 is Lumpen Radio’s books and literature show, covering reading worldwide. Interviews with authors, publishers and creators from contemporary literature and beyond. With readings by Shanna van Volt and music from some of Chicago’s finest artists. More information and archives at eye94.org

The Eastern Block/Wschodni Blok with Andrea Jablonski

Second Sundays / 12-2PM

Music of all genres from Poland (and other Eastern Block countries.)

Sunday Record Club with Kevin Hsia

Third Sundays 12-2PM

Sunday Record Club is a show about records—the music, and the collectors and DJs playing them. Special guests join in-studio to dig deep, sharing their most beloved records. No frills and no fillers, SRC is just about playing great records on a Sunday. mixcloud.com/lumpenradio/playlists/sunday-record

Foreign Accents with Maria Tz & Josh Fox

Fourth Sundays / 12-2PM

Dedicated to the pure enjoyment of home listening. The show aims to juxtapose various genres together from different parts of the world, both past and present. mixcloud.com/lumpenradio/playlists/foreign-accents

Pocket Guide to Hell with Paul Durica and Elliot Heilman

Sundays 2-3PM

Rebroadcast of Pocket Guide to Hell

Tete a Tete (in Cantonese)

Airs

A Cantonese talk show hosted by Anita Luk, covering news and current affairs from Chicago and beyond.

Divisive with Leah Gipson and Craig Harshaw

First and Third Sunday 4-5PM

DIVISIVE explores the intersections and interactivity between politics and cultural work. It’s divisive.

Who Gives a S••t? with Host Matt Muchowski

Second and Fourth Sundays 4-5PM

Is it a commentary of the Sisyphean task of life as exemplified by the internet emoji “_()_/” or a question we answer every show with guests such as heavy metal musicians, elected officials, union activists, comic book creators, and other oddballs? Who gives a shit? Either way WGAS is a rollicking 2 hours of surrealist fun, deep conversations. and musical mayhem!

Spontaneous Vegetation with Nance Klehm

Second and Fourth Sundays / 5-6PM

SPONTANEOUS VEGETATION is a monthly show of long format interviews with folks who find the cracks, break up the compaction, remediate the contamination and leave the soil (metaphorically or literally) better for us all

Paid Time Off with Andrew Joseph and Laura Caringella

First and Third Sundays / 5-7PM

The crew behind Chicago-based dance music label Leisure Records doesn’t slack off when it comes to leisure time. Ease out of the weekend with smooth grooves and chilled out floor fillers courtesy of the Paid Time Off DJs. Sleazy yet sophisticated, like a party in your cool uncle’s rec room. It’s the real deal — keep it locked, y’all. mixcloud.com/paidtimeoff

Quiz-o! hosted by Greg-o

First Sundays / 7-8 PM

The first live quiz show on Lumpen Radio hosted by Greg-o and featuring a rotating cast of colorful contestants. High quality game show banter, low quality sound effects. It’s time for Quiz-o

Hitting Left with the Klonsky Brothers

Sundays 7-8PM

Rebroadcast of Hitting Left.

Labor Express Radio with Jerry Mead-Lucero

Sundays / 8-9PM

For almost 25 years, Labor Express Radio has been the only English language labor news and current affairs radio program in Chicago... “News for working people, by working people.” The program covers issues in the labor movement locally, nationally, and internationally. The program also addresses issues of concern to working people such as housing, education, health care, immigrants rights, the environment and U.S. foreign policy, from a working class viewpoint. Labor Express Radio is a member of the Committee for Labor Access, a non-profit entity which is also responsible for the production of the Labor Beat TV program on cable access television in Chicago. <https://www.laborexpress.org>

Lumpen Week in Review hosted by Shanna van Volt

Sundays 9-10PM

Rebroadcast of Lumpen Week In Review.

What Day Is It!?! with Paul Nixon

Sundays from 10 PM -12PM

In order to explain, embrace, explore, exacerbate and enhance our innate human desire to alter our consciousness, “What Day Is It!?!?” will present the listener with an earful of not only the grooviest psychedelic tuneskis, but also an all-encompassing psychedelic radio program experience: a truly mind-altering twist on what radio is from a truly mind-altered mind. By taking the listener on a completely different type of ride each week, the destinations are truly limitless. Songs to make you ask the timeless question, What Day Is It!?!? facebook.com/WhatDayIsItLumpenRadio

K I M S K I

SLAMMING KOREAN AND
POLISH FOOD TOGETHER



