



RFD

AUTUMN 1974 • 50¢



Autumnal Equinox 1974

Here it is.

No longer a fantasy, R.F.D. exists.

As gay people living in the country we felt a need for things that urban-oriented gay publications and adamantly heterosexual country magazines could not provide. We attended gay meetings and scheduled conferences at gay conferences hoping to meet people who were also into country alternatives.

This spring at the Ann Arbor Gay Conference the connecting link was Stevens McClave. He had left a too isolated rural lifestyle in Oregon to be again among city gays, and told us of other men still there. From our correspondence across 2000 miles, the enthusiasm for a publication grew. And grew as we began communicating with friends of friends, and with friends of friends of friends who, we discovered, shared much the same fantasy as we did. So the work for R.F.D. began. The death of Stevens a few months later prompted urgency and finally this first issue--Rustic Fairy Dreams--has come true.

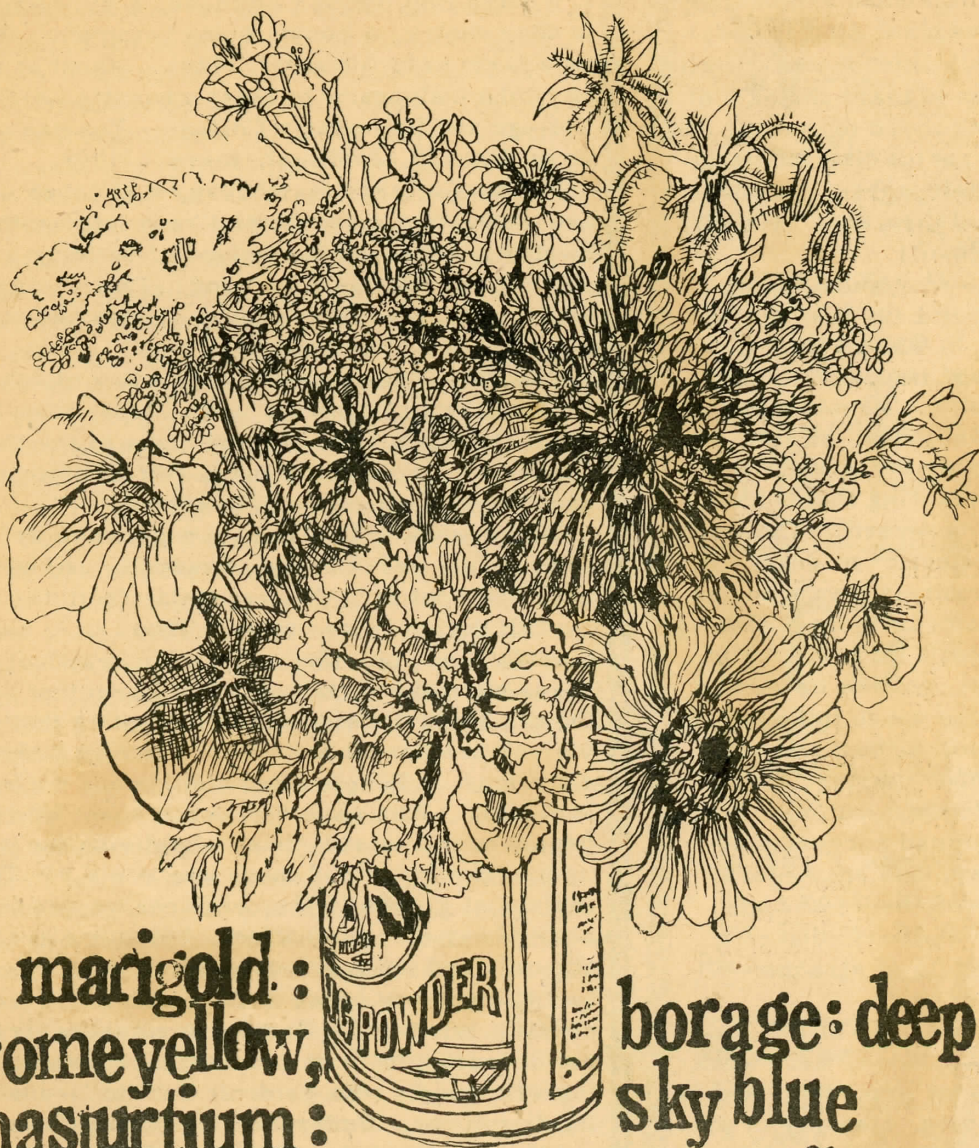
We hope to break down the feeling of isolation from things gay that many of us experience in rural settings, to build some sense of community among rural gay people, and to provide the means of sharing with each other our thoughts, feelings and ideas about our unique experience as gay country people.

R.F.D. is a reader-participatory venture. You write, sing, dance and are R.F.D. We need your contributions of material, energy and love to survive.

No women have contributed material for this first issue, but we hope it is not so male-oriented/dominated to prevent Lesbians from using this magazine for communication with each other. And perhaps, with the Earth as our common ground, we can begin a much needed dialogue between gay women and men.

Responses to articles herein will be gladly forwarded to the writers by the R.F.D. staff. Love,

Allan, Cari, Don-Tevel, Olaf, Ollie, Rick and Stewart



marigold :

chrome yellow,

nasturtium :

orange, bachelor's buttons :

cornflower blue, zinnias :

cadmium red & pink,


Queen Anne's lace : white & pale green,

yarrow : cerise, mustard : pale yellow,

onion : mauve, can : red, blue & yellow

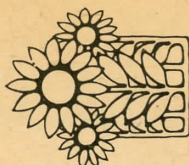
THE MOTHER EARTH NEWS

- THE \$25 HOME
- BLACKBERRIES
FOR THE PICKING
- WORK FOR CASH
- HOW TO USE
A STRAIGHT
RAZOR
- TRY NATURAL CHILD BIRTH
- WORKING ON A FREIGHTER
- THE EFFORTLESS
ORCHARD
- RECYCLING HUMAN
WASTE
- and MORE INSIDE!



NO
QUEERS

by ALLAN TROXLER



A RE

None of us gave it much thought. Stewart mentioned sending a note to Mother Earth News (MEN), among other publications, gay, rural, and alternative. It was brief and well put: country isolation, need to share, especially among gay people, classified ad or Position and Situations (P&S) listing, send details please, thank you. At one time or other all of us had paged through MEN, looking for advice, new ideas, recipes, ecological uplift, and everybody in the country knows that the P&S section is the best of all outhouse reading. When I lived in Vermont for two lonely years, a new MEN in the mailbox was sort of relief from the reality of the big cold house and the water-logged garden. There were articles about growing okra in Alaska and peas in Belize, cement sailboats, shit-powered go carts, houses built of railroad ties, and eighteen ways to use elderberries. At least as interesting as all the heterosexual diversions of the local library. But then there were other articles, too, about repairing roofs, and somebody's exemplary garden a few villages away, and canning, and how to make money doing one fairly obvious thing or other. Which spoke to my condition, with neither sympathy nor tact. You, too, could be busy getting your life together, you sorry faggot. Back then there were just two or three pages of P&S listings, I'd skip over "Mary and I and our three kids" and look for "single men" or "Bob and Steve" entries, reading between the lines. Getting depressed that no other queers wanted to live in the country. Was I crazy? I had always assumed I would end up living in the country. Was it a vestige of the straight ways that had got me as far as Boston, where I came out? The latest issue of MEN was stacked with the others out of the way. It was a present from Mother and Daddy. There had been a spat about my not registering to vote, resulting in a subscription to the New Republic. Then a few months later, the first palliative MEN arrived.

Plainfield, the village I had come to from Boston, is home for the usual locals, a small liberal-hip college, and a growing number of freaks. My house was in the village center, and I got to know some of the old people fairly well. At first I felt pressured to come on industrious, not too freaky, and definitely not queer. But as my fantasies of a house full of craftspeople (preferably men gay like me) faded and depression set in, I found the old people tolerant of failure, and I loosened up. Oc-

THE MOTHER ...it tel

June 25, 1974

Stewart Scofield
Malcolm Heights C
R.D. #2
Malcom, Ilwa 501

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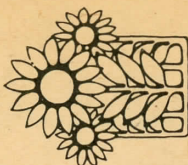
Have a happy day,

Nancy
Nancy Bishop
for THE MOTHER EA

P.O. BOX 70, HENDERS

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A REJECTION

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THE MOTHER EARTH NEWS ...it tells you how (six times a year)

June 25, 1974

Stewart Scofield
Malcolm Heights Collective
R.D. #2
Malcom, Ilwa 50157

Dear Stewart,

Many thanks for your letter.

We here at Mother have agonized, soul-searched and argued with each other regarding the running of P & S listings for gay people. The outcome of all this was a decision--very much against our personal beliefs--to make it an editorial policy not to run such listings. We consider our message to be the most important aspect of the magazine and--unfortunately--many of our readers are not young, hip, open-minded folks, but are little old ladies in tennis shoes.

Have a happy day,

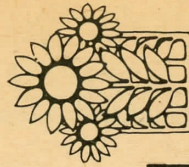
Nancy
Nancy Bishop
for THE MOTHER EARTH NEWS

P.O. BOX 70, HENDERSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA 28739

casional bouquets of wildflowers and homemade cookies for the neighbors came back as meals when I was sick, and patient lessons with the scythe.

One afternoon I was struggling with the shovel against the tangled hydrangea roots snarling up an old flower bed that I wanted to reclaim for bulbs. After an hour or so of trying to look like I knew what I was doing while working up a hopeless sweat, Mr. Dukette came out of the house next door, ambled over with a mattock, and suggested as how I might want to try it. Later, as I flailed feverishly at the last of the roots, Mrs. Dukette's brother, the village grave-digger and odd-jobs man, stopped by and asked, "You trying to tucker that thing out?"

by ALLAN TROXLER



A REJ

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June 25, 1974

Stewart Scofield
Malcolm Heights Co
R.D. #2
Malcom, Ilwa 5015

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A REJECTION

When I mentioned to Charles on the commune on the hill that I didn't want to pay money for car repairs, he sneered at the notion of bartering with me. What did I have that they needed, their model organic garden, their boundless skill and energy for building houses, and all their ways of making money? I sputtered around and could only come up with "a sense of design". Which fell unnoticed in the bustle. I resented the confident masculinity which set the tone there.

At the puppet theater farm, people waived the responsibility for self-awareness and sexual honesty for a child-apprentice status under Peter's patriarchy. I wanted to make friends there, to share music, mask-making, sex and visions. Mostly, the puppeteers were committed to some other process, which looked painfully like somewhere else. Where male abuses female, where female submits, where the Man calls the shots, where one's energy is paid in at the price of self-denial.

The few faggots I knew were as unsettled as I. It was hard for us to support each other when all around us people were living straight lives in hippie clothing. The endless discussion of gardens, house building, the food coop, and getting ready for the winter drowned out my violin playing and singing. Where the needs of the soul were so often met with a claw hammer or a chain saw, I became a defiant grasshopper to such ant-ness. Which was not at all what I had set out to do. I had wanted to make toys, set up a printing press, dry flowers for Christmas wreaths, and find others to play music with. But for me that required the freedom to explore the drawings towards and movings away among us, to find both emotional equilibrium and a sense of accountability. To love, be loved. There were several women who were willing to pause when I was depressed, and who would occasionally share their joy and pain with me. But I got impatient of the compromising

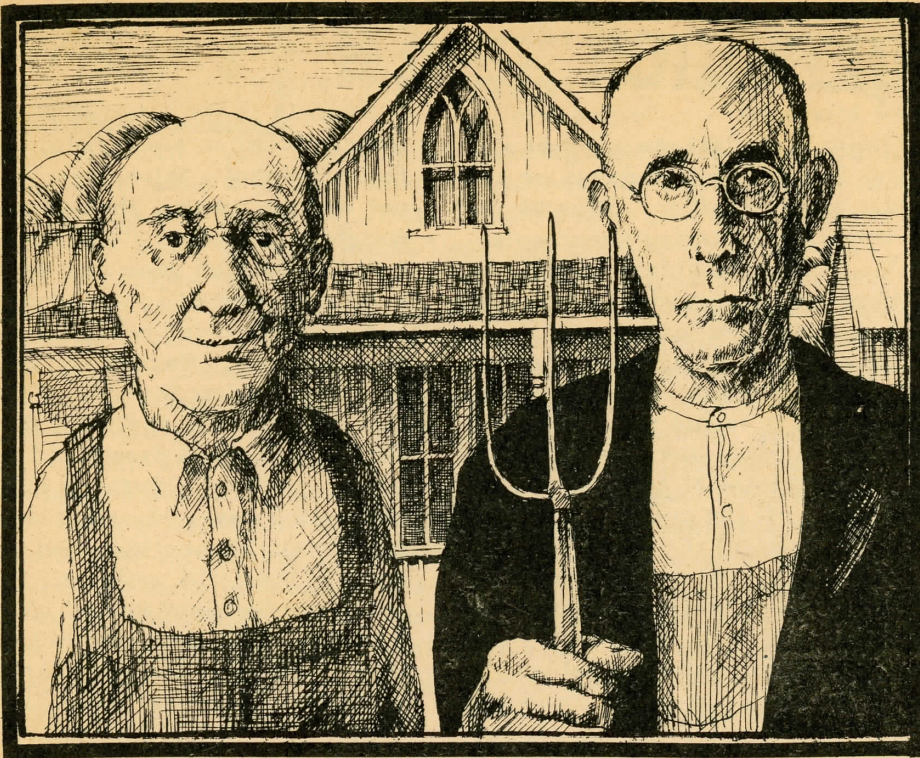
relationships they sustained with the same straight men who gave me such pain.

"How to Run a Model Farm on Human Power!! Complete instructions in the next issue of MEN.... Hitch arm A to strap 4, hook knee X to shaft 2, place foot 1 on treadmill, insert cock into socket, clamp bit in teeth, etc."

.....
So I left Vermont and moved to southern Oregon. Our farm is several miles out of town, which means I'm not in contact with straight men so much. The hot dry summer and muddy temperate winter don't encourage such ambition as in Plainfield. Mostly, a sort of seedy anarchy reigns. Volney, the old farmer I know down on Frontage Road (whose wife Arlene invited Carl and me to her Tupperware party last fall) plants ground cherries and spaghetti squash and zinnias with the corn and beans in his rambling garden. The Vermont town meeting gives way to those occasional days when you happen to be in town and notice the VOTE HERE sign outside the Community Center. "VOTE HERE It Is Your Duty As An American Citizen To Vote, RIGHT OR WRONG" It doesn't much matter, right or wrong, since Wolf Creek is ruled from Grant's Pass by the County Commissioners.

The disorder here is more accessible. People freak out in public. Yesterday I spent with Nelly, Fran, and Patty, lesbians from the next farm, who are struggling with a new configuration of lovers and needed a relatively objective fourth to mediate. People talk about occult things, and celebrate the full moon. At the college in Plainfield there was a feminist studies program. In Wolf Creek the women have big festivals with much dancing and music. All which has allowed me new freedom to be myself, with Carl and with our community of friends.

There are times when a certain Wild-West mentality is abroad. Gun-waving locals square off with the hippies. A brawl at the freak-run Inn



brings down the pigs. And then we, the gay ghetto, get scared by how red of neck people around us can be, local and hippie both. And there are set-to's with the Jehovah's Witnesses, who came by last week with a tract on homosexuality special for us. In a way, Wolf Creek seems outside the pale of MEN. There are a few freaks who hustle to corner the spring manure supply, and are always ready with unwanted advice, but most people are glad for food stamps and the swimming hole. What worries me about Wolf Creek and MEN (and, with modification, Plainfield) is the potential alliance of rural old-timers and newcomers under the banner of Order. Wolf Creek seems often on the edge of somebody or some number of people "taking things into their own hands". In the bar at the Wolf Creek Inn it's not clear where the knife-toting loggers stop and the knife-toting hippies begin. One tough honcho looks pretty much like another to this faggot. As the straight men in town discover that their differences aren't so great, where will the hostility be transferred? To women, for

sure, and probably to the growing gay presence. In Plainfield what may happen is an increasing tendency among once-radical freaks to compromise further and forget their libertarian convictions in the interest of creating institutions that serve conservative locals. Which will put the pinch even harder on queers.

Stewart's letter spoke of joys, fears, isolation, and building community among brothers and sisters. The reply from MEN and a reading of recent issues bespeaks a commitment to efficiency, self-sufficiency, and intolerance. Listen to the voices of MEN's "young, hip, open-minded" readers in recent P&S listings: "I'd like to find some females interested in developing a family unit (as co-wives)... I'm a male, (31) into TM"... "hope to hear from unattached ladies... who would like to begin to put into practice some of the things we've been learning from Mother"... "a Cancer lady (21) with a beautiful love like yours in her heart (growing every day) needs a warm or westerly place to reside in June"... "Mike would like to hear from earthy chicks interested in living the good

A REJECTION

life". . . . "Absolutely no drug or legal hassles tolerated". . . . "we're into clean living". . . . "please don't reply if you're into alcohol or drugs or are a fanatic of any kind". . . . "this big old farm would bloom under a woman's touch". . . . "John and Mary. . . we're hard working, honest straight people". . . . "any American Indian gals around?"

With young, hip, open-minded correspondents like that, who needs "little old ladies in tennis shoes"? (A phrase which leads one to wonder what the good folks at Mother call "gay people" off the cuff.) Many of the articles reflect the same benighted consciousness. "While the guys debated on the best trees, Naomi and I hunted wild plants for supper." "Each female member (of this model utopian super-family) will have one child and then undergo voluntary sterilization." "You can make enough to buy a shawl for your old lady." Homosexuality is a threat to such prescribed thinking and living.

Also, the irrepressable materialism of MEN's articles is dissonant with the commitment to simplify and cooperate that I and my gay friends have here. "You can even turn a tidy profit". . . . "and once you've settled into your new employment (life style). . . ." Here's a fellow who has "freed himself from the system" and now lives as he likes "running his own store, which has paid for itself five times over in the last year, and now owns an inventory worth \$15,000." Which makes him "the third largest retail depositor in the local bank" and he now lives the "Good Life" with his wife Joyce on a nearby 190 acre farm where they're 75% self-sufficient ("we do everything by MOTHER"). "Before Jay's Navy hitch was up, the dog had produced litters worth over \$2,000." . . . "an unforgettable way to earn money."

What ecological system encourages expensive pets? Since when are you free from the system by calling the sheriff on shoplifters while you

flaunt the third largest retail wad in the local bank? "I just wanted to make a little money," Denny says, "but I'm getting rich."

Success is the word in MEN. Each article bounces along from start to finish without a false step. If you're not making money, then your squash weigh in at 50 lbs. ("and mature broccoli bigger than your own head!"), you've converted your car to propane and you're cutting twice the wood in half the time. Except for angry letters about some fool-proof technique that didn't work, the MEN farm is a time-and-motion dream. As a faggot, I find our farm a difficult place for untangling years of conditioning about work, competition and success. Most of the MEN articles I read make me feel inadequate. Why aren't I cutting twice the wood in half the time? Because the chain saw doesn't work, after several butch freaks assured Carl that it was a good buy. And there's no dealer around who services that make. And Carl cried when I asked what was so difficult about getting in the wood. And I hate the shattering roar of chain saws and I hate being up in the hills where the loggers have gutted the forest. There are so many ways of surviving I want to find work that both has intrinsic meaning and is consonant with our gay communal vision. MEN may "Tell you how (six times a year)" if you are hardworking, honest, straight people who see the return to the land as a return to oppressive, traditional American values. But for faggots, it is a lie.

Clearly, the folks at MEN are worried about losing subscribers from printing gay notices. A readership that depends upon, or tolerates, the exclusion of gay people, blacks (I can't recall in four years of casual reading, seeing a black face in MEN and feminists, is not the rural community I am looking for. Hopefully magazines such as Country Women and R.F.D. will serve the feminists and gay people who are still thumbing through MEN, wondering where everybody is.



a long nonrecipe

The lentils and millet got cooked in the morning along with the breakfast grains. The oven takes a while to heat up with our woodburning stove and a lot depends on how the fire is tended. I still haven't been able to consistently get a 350 oven, but for lentil loaves it doesn't need be very hot or consistent. I started with a bunch of recipes and now find the loaves stick together pretty well no matter what I put in them. We had a lot of millet and some lentils so I cooked them together in a ratio of about two parts water to one part grain and legume. More hot water was added toward the end to cook it a little longer. Toasted sesame seeds done in a dry cast iron skillet were ground. (It's important to chew them all and they are needed to make a complete protein.) Onions, garlic, and celery were chopped. I like to use grated lemon rind, but I forgot about the one I juiced the day before that was still in the compost bucket. Molasses and vinegar can make it sweet and sour. Brewer's yeast disappears in baking as far as taste though decreasing nutritional value remains a question in my mind. There was some soured milk, so that was added along with the oil, making it mushy when mixed well. Whatever seasoning you like seems ok--cayenne for zip, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce (it's not vegetarian), marjoram, sweet basil, on and on. Sprinkle sesame seeds in the oily loaf pans. The oven got up to 250, so I put them in and two to four hours later someone else took them out to cool. They were nice and crispy.

The circular one was filled with cottage cheese (yogurt is good too) and garnished with lots of fresh parsley. Got lots of compliments. Thanks....

I love you all. Boyd



Coming Home

Carl Wittman



Coming back to the farm after our trip east has been harder for me than I had foreseen. My moods shift quickly. Three hours ago I felt more discouraged and aimless than in many moons. Our visits to Vermont, New York City and Iowa had already heightened my awareness of the problems of life here. And a host of other problems awaited our return.

In Plainfield, Vt., where Allan used to live. There are so many people who seem to share some of my sensibilities. Mostly dance and music. If only I could teach my country dancing with enough serious students. And be able to do part singing, without having to blaze a trail in the process.

The dancing here is, of course, imitable. I'm sure nowhere else has the battle against sexism emerged so victorious--we expect to be excommunicated by the standard-bearers of country dancing in Scotland.

And the dancing has been restored to its original social function--sharing fun, love, childlike joy with neighbors. But will we ever combine all these qualities with the joys of precision, technique, and progressively more demanding material?

And as for the effort last winter to start a choral group--there just are not enough willing-and-able voices to get it off the ground, at least not yet.

In New York we were enchanted with Charles Ludlam and the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, doing Camille. I cannot recall a more direct theatrical experience--not having to translate straight theater into my gay terms. Its sexuality, its politics, its humor, its pathos were all so totally accessible. Its genius, of course, is largely attributable to the individuals who make up the company. But the creation of such a phenomenon

could not happen here. The opportunities to involve oneself in any creative expression is so limited here. Even big cities can barely support their artists; funky Josephine County, redneck Oregon, hardly has any to support, and won't when they appear in large enough numbers to aspire to. Must the artist leave? And for myself, not an artist by trade, where does the time and energy come from, between irrigating the orchard and fixing the pick-up truck? Camille's audience was predominantly gay--there are not enough open homosexuals in Josephine County to fill a single row in the tiny Evergreen theater for one night.

I realize that gay men in the city are deprived of much of what we have here and cherish--the banal but important clean air, the fresh food. And more particularly as a homosexual, the space and time to pursue a relatively open and honest loving relationship--without the constantly destructive and distracting city phenomena: sexist advertising, fear of violence, intricate sexual games. Allan observed that city friends he visited recently will never afford themselves the quiet to enjoy the new recording of Messiah which brings us such joy.

And more. I know most of the people in my daily life here well enough to say "I'm feeling..." or "You hurt me when..." or "I like you"--and expect to be understood. What would happen inside me as a result of the myriad incidents in daily life when I wouldn't know the other person well enough to talk openly? Ulcers, tobacco, alcohol, therapy, coffee, uppers, and downers? Mind you, there are problems in communication here too, but I do feel that there is an honest beginning of therapeutic community, and my defenses are slowly dissolving.

But back to our trip. Leaving New York and gay theater and all the movies and concerts and museums--yes, even the gay cruising establishments (although the glitter of it all generally recedes as I get closer to it--and the seamy desperation becomes magnified. And I am grateful that daily life here

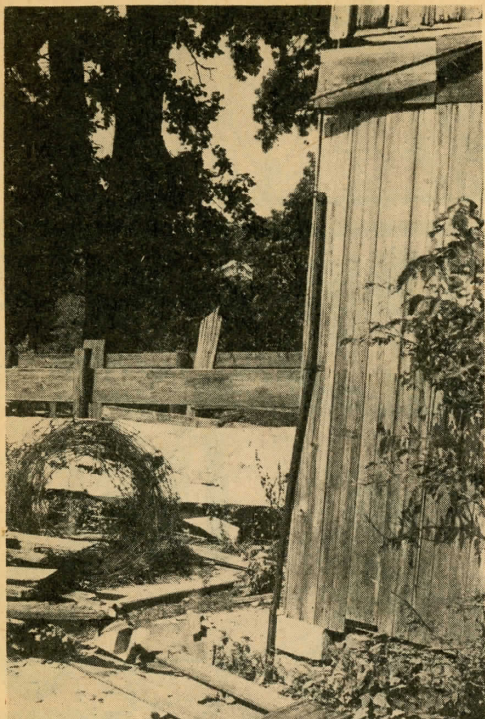
does not force me to deal with my various contradictory stances about cruising and anonymous sex).

The third place on our trip that made homecoming hard was our visit with Stewart and Rick and Don in Iowa. Being with even a handful of other gay men who want to live in the country was good. And conspiring to put out this issue of R.F.D. very exciting. It has become a cliché among us: wouldn't it be fine if there were more gay men sharing our lives? Coming home made that all so real, so painfully true. Our closest friends and neighbors are Lesbians--last night at folk dancing there were thirteen women and three men. Among those women are a few whose friendship I value second only to Allan's. But I envy the sisterhood they share, the women's festivals they organize, the bonds they have with gay sisters in the cities, and bisexual and straight women here in Wolf Creek.

And then our return itself--Nellie and Elayne were to have stayed at the house, and kept up with the chores. A few letters from them had intimated of difficulties in our absence. But hope springs eternal, and I had had visions of our mandala-shaped vegetable and flower garden flourishing, the orchard watered, and a happy warm welcome.

A parched garden, the big cabbage leaves shriveled, pepper plants dead, scores of patches stunted by drought. Yes, many vegetables still there, but the disparity between June dream and August reality too much to fathom right then.

Out of an otherwise deserted house stumbled David, son of our neighbor Ruth, mumbling something about nowhere else that he could go, and there not being enough water. An intransigently clogged sink drain, abandoned in frustration, made the kitchen nearly unusable. The orchard watering chart indicated that only a fraction of the trees were watered. A dozen or more apple trees stripped to near death by grasshoppers, their protective nets unmended. And our outdoor bed, the one immediate escape from it all, cheerfully occupied by Ruth and Jean.



My first reaction is grief. My ego is defined so heavily by orchard and garden. Why am I here? What's the use?

And right on grief's heels are anger and bitterness. Where are Nellie and Elayne? What mockery of community is this? My self-righteousness blossoms, I find only fault.

And as I lay in Allan's arms, he talked to me slowly and calmly. My stomach too tense to eat, I am even too knotted to cry. I see, yes, that it is unreasonable to expect anyone else to care as much as I do about my own projects. My vision, or visions, are more elaborate than they know. Nellie lives on the edge of crisis up on the hillside; and Elayne never pretended that she would live here forever. So where is the technology or interest in maintaining our Byzantine irrigation and plumbing system to come from? I drifted off to sleep, even tenser with the realization that I shouldn't blame them, or hold them responsible.

The morning brought the first confrontation, with Jean. Not even a principal in the drama, she happened to be

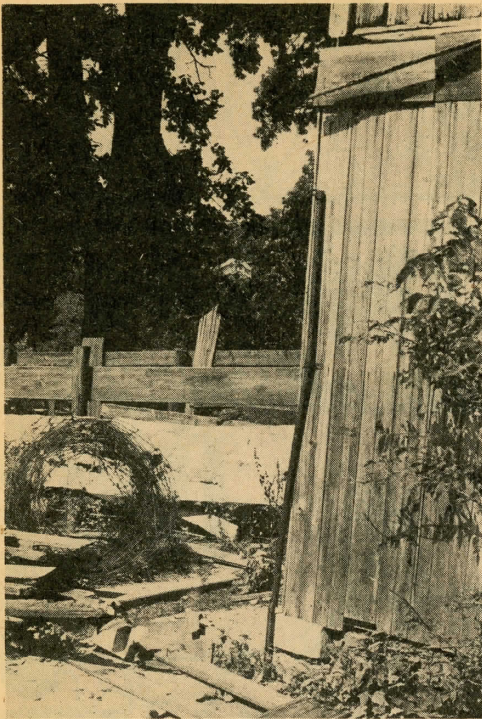
the first person to come by. She offered much evidence to prove that the damage was unavoidable, that they had tried very hard.

I managed to explain why it hurt so much. Between tears, I realized that the water system is overextended, that I am overextended. My pain comes from not wanting a life of fixing drains and killing grasshoppers, particularly when the projects are all totally dependent on my constant presence, and they demand all of my time. And yet I am not willing to see them perish. The anger turned inside next. I felt foolish, self-deceived, to have thought that all would have gone well. The community that I had talked so glowingly about on our trip east was far thinner, more tenuous, than I had convinced myself of believing.

The last few days have been marked by work spurts--the orchard is all watered again, the garden I've ignored after a five-hour soaking; the house is again clean, the sink drain fixed. Neighbors offer us vegetables, enough to put up. And I am back to building the new house, now nearing completion.

But often I am glum, occasionally unhappy, often disoriented. No extra energy to put into other people, no scintillating discussions, I forego an important community meeting on police brutality, for fear of being bummed out. I have lots of hostility for anyone who plays a record I don't like, or interrupts my quiet, or infringes on my territory. I think about Stevens, how the frustrations of life here made him leave; the droughts and the rains, the absence of "culture", the distance from gay brothers. I realize how hard it is for Allan, who wasn't even here when I committed my energies to the orchard and new house, but who has to live with their realities. I weigh whether I want to live here at all.

But the roots are deep, and none of my disillusionment can despoil the very real beginnings of a good life we have painfully and joyfully assembled. So I say now, in a quiet, content mood--will I feel that way tomorrow morning?



My first reaction is grief. My ego is defined so heavily by orchard and garden. Why am I here? What's the use?

And right on grief's heels are anger and bitterness. Where are Nellie and Elayne? What mockery of community is this? My self-righteousness blossoms, I find only fault.

And as I lay in Allan's arms, he talked to me slowly and calmly. My stomach too tense to eat, I am even too knotted to cry. I see, yes, that it is unreasonable to expect anyone else to care as much as I do about my own projects. My vision, or visions, are more elaborate than they know. Nellie lives on the edge of crisis up on the hillside; and Elayne never pretended that she would live here forever. So where is the technology or interest in maintaining our Byzantine irrigation and plumbing system to come from? I drifted off to sleep, even tenser with the realization that I shouldn't blame them, or hold them responsible.

The morning brought the first confrontation, with Jean. Not even a principal in the drama, she happened to be

the first person to come by. She offered much evidence to prove that the damage was unavoidable, that they had tried very hard.

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