



Farm Notes

CSA Newsletter

Vol. 24 No. 7

August 20 - 24, 2023



POTOMAC VEGETABLE FARMS
www.potomacvegetablefarms.com
pvfnewsletter@gmail.com

Staycation for One

by Oscar HC

Back in the spring, I jumped for joy when I heard the news that one of the *coolest* publishing and music fests I've had the chance to attend was returning after a three-year pandemic-inspired hiatus. As a self-publishing nerd moonlighting as a badass, this combo strikes a winning chord: Another Caroline Anarchist Bookfair and PansyFest in Asheville, North Carolina. Second weekend of August. Even with the distance and not having a personal car, I decided to request time off and figure out the logistics later. Email Boss Hana: is it alright for me to miss a Sunday market? Yes. Email Boss David: can you cover the Saturday tomato pick? Yes. Okay, great. So, by early June, I had an adventure vacation to look forward to nine weeks out. I don't always relate to time in this way.

Proactively, some may say. My relationship with time sometimes yields crunchy chaos and sometimes soul-nourishing serendipity. Let's time warp a little and find some context.

Someone Special and I are traveling to Asheville

in August 2019 for this rad festival some friends told us about. We're driving from D.C., making the road trip in their car, snacks and podcasts at the ready. That weekend sparked magic. I bartered with creatives using the fourth issue

of a collaborative zine I edited. The cover featured a peach because the theme that year was FOOD. I found an herbalism zine at Firestorm Books that later led me to the herbalism program I cherished and completed in 2021. On the journey back north, after dark, my need for glasses became undeniable. In short, the trip changed my life.

Three and a half years after that vacation adventure, in May 2023, I hugged Someone Special in our shared apartment for the final time. We were moved out, moving in different directions. The car we'd spent many hours in together, that I'd driven countless times to the farm from the apartment, was headed to D.C. Hana offered to save a spot in the farm housing for me when she learned I would be looking for a place to stay on my



The author at home sitting in the rainbow light during their recent staycation.

continued on page 4

My Work is Growth

by Brandon Walker

Agriculture is about working with the land, with vegetable and animal life; and yet to think that this is all farming is-would be an easy misconception to make. I speak not representing any affiliation; but of my heart, as I know it well. For every fool has the potential to become wise, much like the oak that sleeps within the acorn.

Probably the HARDEST thing in the world for farmers (the old and the young) is to KEEP DOING IT. Year after year. Even after flooding and crop failures and all manner of inexplicable events that arrest the attention of the strong and proud and remind them that life is perfectly fair for no one. Land workers around for long come to learn that to humbly endure with grace seems to be it's own reward.

If, like me, you are young and thinking of farming (whether very new, or already on the way) then you must give consideration to how much you are willing to sacrifice in order to achieve the autonomy and sovereignty that the seasoned and wise have earned for themselves. How much grit do you intend to let

the ground and the elements impart upon you? And are you willing to unlearn much of what you think you already know?

It would seem that esoterically speaking, agriculture seems to be about producing goods that come closely from our hands and the technical skills that make the various scales of production possible. And yet, what I talk about when I talk about farming is to illustrate that the human being who is interested in cultivating the growth of who they are becoming will find an expansive and benevolent world within agriculture.

Through endless trial and errors might come the rewards of a gentler kindness and a wider understanding of the relationship between oneself and the greater world. Working with land and with machines and living things seems to help us see ourselves more clearly. And this does touch our very personal and nonworking lives. My point is not that everyone should farm or live in the country or even work out of doors; but that for some people out there, I amongst them, land work serves not as a j-o-b but as a vocation of the soul.



photo courtesy of helen roades

Birds-eye-view of summer lunch time: tortilla chips and tomato sandwiches.



photo courtesy of maggie hirschberg

Laur holding a gigantic tomato that seems to be several tomatoes fused together.

Salad Bowl Serendipity

by Hana Newcomb

I was trying to think of the perfect sized container to sell tomatoes without a scale – instead of selling them by weight, I wanted to sell them by the basket because we had a huge surplus and we needed to find a way to sell them in big quantities. But I thought of this on a Friday, just one day before the markets, and I couldn't find any baskets that matched my imagination. I went to dig around in the shed that has historic relics from past markets and past great ideas, and I found exactly what I needed. I knew the moment I saw it – a stack of small wooden salad bowls. The kind you find in a pile at the end of the diner salad bar. They were left over from a failed attempt at selling

spinach by the bowl many years ago. This time I knew it would work. I told everyone to let the customers pile the tomatoes as high as they could, but not to let them drop on the ground. Just ten dollars a bowl. At each of the markets, the crowd went wild. This game appealed to their innate desire to win, to get something for less, to be strategic. They filled the bottoms of the bowls with small tomatoes and made bulky towers. They piled them high like cairns. The tomatoes flew. For once I was glad that we don't throw much away on this farm, and that I knew where to look for inspiration. Serendipity is partly luck that you make for yourself, because you have to know when to take advantage of your unexpected good fortune.



Six full pounds in a small bowl. Not bad.

Songbook Serendipity

by Maggie Hirschberg (they/them)

Several weeks ago, on a day off, I found myself in downtown Purcellville. I was running errands and enjoying a stroll, despite the July heat. I planned to walk from the library to the coffee shop and get myself a treat (and some exercise). As I approached my coffee destination, I realized that my favorite local thrift store, Blue Ridge Hospice Thrift Shop, was right across the street! I figured I might as well be spontaneous and stop in, since I hadn't been in for a little while and there's always something exciting to stumble across there.

As I entered the store, my legs made a beeline for the book section at the front, preparing to start my usual circuit of the store, and was stopped in my tracks. There, shining in my vision like a veritable Holy Grail, on the "Music" shelf displayed in a basket, was The Joan Baez Songbook! I could not believe my eyes.

Joan Baez is one of my top two, if not topmost, favorite singers. I've always loved folk songs - really any song that tells a story - and I can easily get lost in

them. I don't remember how I first discovered Joan Baez's music, but I fell in love with her voice and songs in high school. I've listened to all of her songs I can get my hands on digitally, own a number of her records and CDs, and even saw her in concert in 2018 while in college (I'm 23, so this all happened within the last 10 years or so).

I've recently become more interested in singing myself, and had only realized a little while before the fateful encounter in the thrift store that Joan Baez even had songbooks. At that point I naturally wanted to get my hands on one, and had the eBay results page still open on my phone when I stumbled across this book in real life! Of course I bought it right away, hugging it to my chest as a precious treasure. And it only cost \$2!! Needless to say, I was ecstatic, practically walking on sunshine for the rest of the day. Even now I can't believe my luck.

I am forever grateful to the serendipity (and the book's previous owner) that landed The Joan Baez Songbook in my hands, and am thrilled to continue my musical journey with help from one of my all-time favorites.

continued from page 1

own. A few weeks after the hug, news of the fest entered my life, I requested time off, and I assumed that together, Someone Special and I would make the journey south again. Some weeks passed. I didn't feel enthusiastic about going together, so I stepped back. I didn't relinquish my already-approved time-off request, and I kept dreaming.

While the weeks were passing, I found healing in my new home. The morning light that shines through my rainbow-refracting "Every Queer is Magic" window cling puts a smile on my face and deep in my heart. The bats at dusk swooshing for dinner remind me an entire ecosystem exists around me. Living in this off-grid rustic room, I've learned about living without air conditioning and rainbow string lights, wall-to-wall carpet and a connected bathroom, all amenities I enjoyed in the previously mentioned apartment.

A generous friend let me borrow a Prius for the summer, to putz about the farm and run errands in town. Maybe it could go to Asheville. Maybe I could make the round trip and be so inspired

that I wouldn't be exhausted when I returned.

The Tuesday before the ACAB Fair and PansyFest my daydreams still include mountains and Asheville accents. My field chores complete, I was standing by the Potomac River, basking in the beauty. I checked my texts and saw a message from my Prius Pal: the emissions test can no longer be delayed, and it's scheduled for Saturday. I released the last sliver of my "going to Asheville alone" fantasy. Seemed like the Universe was whispering, "Stay put."

Leaning into the idea of a staycation, I got ready. I swept my pod better than I had in weeks. I charged the color-changing camping light, the solar lantern, and my favorite hand-held device. My bedside table always has a book or five piled on it, each in various states of read/reading/haven't even started yet. One of them, Jennifer McGaha's memoir titled "Flat Broke with Two Goats," occurs in a region near Asheville. She writes about her life choices and the path to reconnecting with her Appalachian ancestors. The anecdotes she shared from her grandmother remind me of

stories I never heard, but know in my bones I could have. One of my family lines traces back to folks living in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. They come from folks who immigrated from Ireland through Richmond, Virginia, and they didn't have a lot. I know not who they displaced; I carry the weight of their choices with me. Between chapters of the memoir, McGaha shared recipes, and the Spicy Taco Soup ended with a reminder that spicy foods stimulate endorphins and that hot sauce is a great ally during times of distress. I leaned into the cayenne during my staycation as I worried about a friend who was struggling. They say what's a staycation without a magazine, and I had mine: Garden & Gun. The target audience for this publication is in a different tax bracket than me. It reminds me of another family line, the luxurious ones who lived large, and traveled all over. I carry their choices with me, too. Reading G&G is for the escape.

With no alarm set, I woke Saturday and Sunday to gorgeous sunshine spilling through the window. I lingered in bed. I cooked breakfast in the kitchen, alone, only possible because my pod-mates were tending their market duties. I soaked in the swimming pool and enjoyed the sun-deck sans clamoring children. I winked at cardinals and felt goosebumps while staring at the stars. Staycation and plant medicine gave me a chance to witness my healing and to integrate a perspective shift. These four months of pod life have provided spaciousness for self reflection. I can rewrite the scripts my inner voice repeats most often. Release the cruel judgements and regular insults. Call in affirmations and tender love. I can see how far I've come, the growth edges I've moved beyond. Staycation for one, thank you very much.



Flowers galore at the DuPont Farmers Market.