



CRUNCH TIME

Ellinor finds the way to a water buffalo's heart



REFLECTIONS

Alex on business, water buffalo and biodynamics



BUYING HABITS

Dagmar likes what customers bring to Sunnivue's Farmstore

AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

DECEMBER 2010

SUNNIVUE FARM and REDEEMING OUR SOIL ECONOMICALLY

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Appreciation

This newsletter exists thanks to everyone whose contributions of time, text, photos and all-round wisdom have been given so willingly: Alan Smith, Herb and Agnes Schneeberg, Sally Vernon, Alex and Ellinor Nurnberg, Alexander and Eva Nurnberg, Dagmar Seiboth, Annette Verhagen, Gail Nielsen, Emma Ferner, Jonas Brauch, Barbara Lowery, Carol and Merwin Lewis, Gordon Price and Jennifer Slauenwhite.

~ Susan Smith, newsletter editor

Thanks to Dave McLean from the ROSE Working Group

Dave, you have been immensely generous! Because of your interest, humour and professional expertise, we are gaining a clearer focus on how to enhance our group's strengths and how to build our capacity to engage in sound decision-making processes and effective communication.

Work in Progress

Accommodating the Essentials



London Waldorf School students harvesting Sunnivue's vegetables ~ see "Firmly Planted Children" p. 7

As a community of urban and rural people, Sunnivue and ROSE work to accommodate many needs including:

- better health for people and the planet through organic food
- local food available direct from the farm
- hands-on connections to rural life and seasonal rhythms
- outdoor work and recreation that enriches people of all ages and abilities
- the next generation of farmers ~ well-trained and deeply appreciated
- housing that meets the longterm needs of Sunnivue's residents
- resistance to the industrialization of food, urban appropriation of farmland, and other counter-forces that restrict small farms' success

Now all of a sudden we also find ourselves with a different and totally unexpected need.

Dreams and Other Necessities: A short history of Sunnivue's farm operation ~ Alex Nurnberg

In 1992 Ellinor and I started a farm business partnership at Sunnivue Farm. This was what people did on farms where spouses were the sole owners of the property. In our case, though, most of our money had just been dedicated to helping ROSE, the land trust, begin its quest to hold ownership of Sunnivue. Since it has become nearly impossible for a farming family to finance a farm purchase while also starting up a farm operation, land trusts are a good step toward sustainable food production. Nevertheless, the farm operation made a completely under-capitalized debut. In those days modest dairy farms like Sunnivue needed at least \$300,000 worth of quota in order to sell milk. We were left with only \$80,000 and the bank would lend us nothing without the farm as collateral. Even so, 18 years later, with much help from good friends and freedom from mortgage payments because the land trust was fighting that battle, our company, Sunnivue Farm Inc., owned 21 kg. of quota. The bank had its fingers in it, as did those good friends. But nevertheless this basically fit with our intentions. The cows thankfully provided a gross income of \$40,000 in 1994 and \$190,000 in 2008.

In 2001 we opened the Sunnivue Farmstore which was very much an initiative of Dagmar Seiboth, as was the market garden whose greens filled the shelves in the store. Thankfully she decided to stay around for good at about that time. The store's gross income rose from \$12,000 in 2002 to \$80,000 in 2009.

In 2008 the farm operation looked pretty good financially. If we could have found the energy to keep up the pace of earlier years, if someone appeared willing to take over our herd of dairy cows in the future, and if we had had faith in the government's quota politics, we probably would prosper today. But we essentially worked for the quota and the bank. There was hardly any financial room in ROSE or the farm operation for maintenance, building improvements or for the farm in general. And the workload was overwhelming. So we decided to get out of the biggest load, the dairy sector, which was binding all this money in quota: \$640,000 just sitting there.

Selling the quota and the herd left us able to buy ourselves free from the bank and most other obligations. We still owe some money to friends and to a Swiss foundation which lent us \$110,000 interest free in 2006, paid down to \$85,000 today. It was given to us on the condition that we make \$5,000 annual payments to any biodynamic or anthroposophic initiative which we found worthy to receive that money. Currently the London Waldorf School receives these repayments. It will be quite a challenge to make our payment this year.

Monthly payments have been considerably less with all the loans paid off but, of course, so is the income. It has taken time to consider how best to balance the missing milk cheque. But in that time our 200 arable acres have given us some revenue from our work with crops and animals.

From the dairy sale we had set aside money for investment to boost our income. That helped improve the store. Then, after considerable hesitation, we made a very big investment in water buffalo ~ which meant investing in all their related costs, like transport, Canadian Food Inspection Agency fees (\$2,500!), feed during quarantine and getting ready to milk them, which has taken a year longer and provided more hurdles than we expected, including the need to use \$30,000 from our investment fund, just to stay afloat.

We want to look ahead, to see the farm as a whole, with a community of people running it together. But our need to find money to cover costs tends to overshadow any view of long-term possibilities.

Now all of a sudden we also find ourselves with a different and totally unexpected need. There are two people. Together their ages total less than fifty years. And their dreams are much like ours. They want to live at Sunnivue, and are willing to prepare the space where they will live. How good that would be! Their presence would re-enliven this farm which sometimes, under the weight of our doubts, has seemed to grow dry and brittle, sprouting question marks instead of exclamation marks. So there is will power and energy. Extra energy. But it also takes extra money to make it real.

If farming produces extra money, it is badly needed to increase productivity. Funds to invest in people and the future must be found where people's incomes are greater than their necessities and where this surplus value can help build genuine growth and solidity in a farming endeavour. These two young people are ready to contribute to Sunnivue's brighter future.

**Please help us further our dreams for this farm by donating to ROSE.
See the attached Membership form for details. We appreciate your support.**

What's the difference?

~ ROSE and Sunnivue Farm Inc.

One distinction between ROSE and Sunnivue Farm Inc. involves money and its close relative, labour. As a not-for-profit land trust, ROSE (Redeeming Our Soil Economically) takes responsibility for owning Sunnivue Farm. ROSE's volunteers therefore strive to obtain funds and human resources to cover the farm's purchase, ownership, maintenance of existing buildings and development of new structures as needed. ROSE secures Sunnivue in this way so that its farmers can channel more of their resources toward the for-profit farm operation whose costs can easily rise higher than the price of a farm.

In practice, some of these boundaries invite flexibility. For example, as business circumstances, time and skills permit, Sunnivue Farm Inc., whose three farmers also serve on ROSE's eight-member board of trustees, helps ROSE financially; it also funds and carries out many building repair and improvement tasks. For its part, ROSE cares about the farm operation and encourages volunteers to help on the land. Typically ROSE meetings begin with a report from the farmers about what is happening on the farm including challenges and successes for Sunnivue Farm Inc.. Some non-farming ROSE members give their own personal financial and skill-related support to the farm operation since improving the viability of small farms is a key principle of ROSE's work.



Introducing Our Water Buffalo!

~ Highlights from Alex Nurnberg's talk at the ROSE Annual Meeting - July 2010 at Sunnivue

The water buffalo's milk is incredibly sweet, hinting of fresh almonds with a fat content of up to 10% and protein around 8% (regular cows' milk would have 3.5 to 4% fat and 3.5% protein). The butterfat does not separate and come to the surface; it is interwoven with the rest of the milk, so buffalo milk always stays immaculately white. It seems to be one of the greatest gifts of nature, presenting us with uncountable possibilities of the finest dairy products like yoghurt, whipping cream and cheeses of all kinds.

The way a water buffalo looks at you is a clear one-on-one event. It's not a thing being looked at and judged by a human being. The life inside their eyes is at least as old as humankind and it shines directly into your soul, reflecting the world and your most intimate search.

Water buffaloes seem to be humble and modest - as long as you don't question their spot in the shade or in the mud pool. Yes, they do like water. When there is water splashing out of a hose somewhere, their eyes produce this incredible longing for something which has been missing in their lives for way too long. That means digging a pond is an absolute necessity if we want to keep water buffalo who are half way happy.



Reflections on ROSE

~ from an address by Annette Verhagen to the ROSE Annual Meeting in July 2010

There has been much success and growth with ROSE ~ buying the farm, having the farm worked organically, education and connecting children to the farm, pioneering a new economy, collaboration on special projects. All of the “out in the world” work is seen by most of us. The not so visible work that goes on year after year is much more difficult to showcase.

As a land trust, ROSE tries to hold this land for anyone who wishes to farm here and provide community support for those farmers ~ present and future.

What ROSE shows to the world is the intricate interdependencies that we all are a part of ~ not only in the human world but the other than human world. And it is a delicate balance to work in community and work with difference in our world.

ROSE is exploring a range of strategies to strengthen our capacity to address the needs of the farm while enriching the volunteer experiences of its supporters. We are trying to find new ways to communicate and revitalize our core values. These values are not missing, and yet we always need to remember them and keep them alive. This takes practice. They need nourishment too.

Between the Moon and an Onion

~ from a talk about biodynamic farming by Alex Nurnberg to the London Seekers - Oct. 2010

Even the most conventional cash cropper needs to let go from time to time and go beyond the weighing and measuring. These days, science is trying hard to reduce our work to those numbers, which seem to be objective. Even if you talk to people about organic farming, make sure you have quite a few numbers at hand, so what you say sounds plausible and true and does not boil down to a thick paste of emotion and beliefs.

And yet, look at Steve, for example! His farming endeavour in the neighbourhood goes well beyond the 10,000-acre mark. He is very savvy, very scientific, but at the same time he never minds coming and walking my twenty-acre field of rye stubble with me, trying to decide what to do next. And here we are, kneeling in the dirt, letting the soil run through our hands, looking up for a forecast and down again for an assessment of what is. And all we talk about is feeling and what we think might happen. No numbers, no GPS, no laboratory...

...The moon, for example, has quite an impact on how plants behave. Once we understand how the moon's cycles work in front of the zodiac, we have the possibility to make this influence a useful one. That is, there are days favourable for anything that produces roots for harvest, like carrots and beets. If you can manage to seed those vegetables on what we call a “root day,” hoe them, weed them and harvest them on a root day, your yield increases and you will have better quality and longer storage. Each and every plant in the field can be influenced in a similar way, leaving only one catch: if you don't want to compromise, and therefore insist on doing everything at the right time, you need to have enough people, because it is difficult enough to adhere to the weather, let alone to weather and moon combined.

And here is some scientific solace: there have been numerous trials carried out, for example, at one of the few departments for biodynamic agriculture at the University of Giessen in Germany, trying to find out whether in the end we can actually weigh the difference? And, yes, you can weigh the difference.

Of course, there are people calling this merely a placebo effect, saying it is not the moon, it is the gardener's belief which makes the difference! But would that not be even more evidence for something beyond physics having an impact here?...

...During the seventies, I worked on a BD farm on the sandy flatlands of Northwestern Germany. I was twenty-three, very smart, and on top of the world. I wrote letters to my friends, mocking the craziness of a farmer digging manure-filled cow horns into the ground to gain some fertilizer; my real strength in those days was probably sarcasm.

Now one day in May, we sprayed silica preparation on hay fields before harvest, to increase the energy content in the grass. Overnight there was a ground frost, turning the whole world visibly white except for the one hay field we had sprayed the day before. As there did not seem to be any other explanation for this other than the rubbish I had been told by the farmer about prep 501 (enhancing the force of the sun blahblahblah), I unwillingly turned around and gave the whole idea of BD farming a second chance in my head.

This preparation also is a great tool to make onions bolt in the field if you use it too early in the growing cycle. You have to learn to use these tools in the right way because they might be more powerful than you can imagine.

Being at Sunnivue

Jonas Brauch

At 22 and with a post secondary education in agriculture, Jonas Brauch has just completed a year of farming at Sunnivue. He first met Sunnivue in Germany through neighbours who had some Sunnivue newsletters. These intrigued Jonas who was especially interested in the water buffaloes that Sunnivue had recently acquired. So arrangements were made, and Sunnivue became Jonas' home for the past year. Before returning to Germany in December 2010, Jonas reflected on his time here and where it may lead him in the future.



I like everything about Sunnivue and the people who farm here. I have done a lot of field work - for example, disking, plowing and cultivating the land for planting; making haylage, and making plenty of repairs to the farm equipment. It isn't always easy, but I really appreciate the life I've had here. Alex and Ellinor even arranged farm work schedules to make it possible for me to travel to British Columbia for a month and see some of Canada.

One of the biggest highlights for me was working with the water buffalo. These are lovely creatures which by nature long to spend time in the water. This helps condition their skin. At present the water buffalo don't have access to very much water. So after about a month last winter when the water buffalo and I got over our shyness with one another, every day I brushed them. This was a way of keeping their skin healthy. But what has made such a big impression on me is the way that the water buffalo respond to being brushed. Unlike Holstein cows, for example, which also like to be groomed, the water buffalo actually give you something in return. As you brush them, they will lay their head on your knees and close their eyes. I have felt guilty tearing myself away from one water buffalo in order to move on to brush the next. This kind of connection with a farm animal is very special.

I really want to return to Sunnivue. Over the next three years or so, I intend to save enough money working on an organic farm in Germany's Black Forest district so that I can afford to come back to Canada.

Emma Ferner

As a youngster, Emma and her London Waldorf School classmates helped harvest beets at Sunnivue. In 2010, she returned to devote six weeks of her summer vacation from university to living and working at Sunnivue Farm.

Until coming to Sunnivue, I never knew milking a cow was as much about intuition as practical skill. Or how much time and effort it really does take for food to go from seed to the table. Sunnivue taught me that a farm is a place of reciprocity; nothing is taken for granted, and you have to give in order to receive. I was proud of the work I did, and it was hard.

I thought getting up at dawn would be a struggle, but never did I feel tired. After a dip in the chilly pool under the stars, refreshed and weightless, I watched the sun begin to creep over the fields, uncovering their potential and chasing the shadowy mist away. What a simple and beautiful time of day.

Sunnivue is a sacred space where reason and imagination mesh, where life is in perpetual motion, and where brain, body, and soul are constantly stimulated and challenged. At Sunnivue I could feel insignificant and completely purposeful at the same time; I could link the earth to my body, and my body to my soul, feeling enriched, vital and inherently good, both in myself and in what I was doing.



Barbara Lowery

After knowing and supporting the farmers, the farm and ROSE for many years, Barbara has a shopping list of reasons why her enthusiasm continues to shine so brightly.

What do Sunnivue and ROSE mean to me? Fresh air, good earth. Community-building at the Farm Store every Saturday it's open. Shared ideas with like-minded folks. Good food and nutrition. A pause in my city-driven frantic life. Insight into the true value of this land. Food for thought. Reacquainting myself with Nature. Water buffalo. Holsteins. Calves. Sustenance of the very best kind -- soul and body nourished in full measure. Children of all ages filled with curiosity. Me asking stupid questions about tractors and getting good, thoughtful and meaningful answers. Learning how to grow.

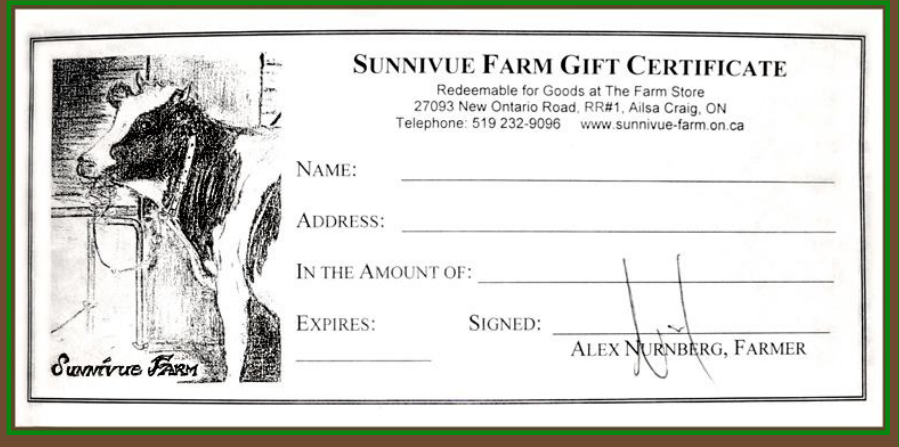


*GREEN GIVING
WITH TASTY BENEFITS*

Add Sunnivue Farm Gift Certificates to your Farmstore shopping list.

Visit the Farmstore
Saturdays 10 - 5 till Dec. 18.
27093 New Ontario Road,
R.R. #1, Ailsa Craig, ON, N0M1A0,

Inquire by phone: 519-232-9096
or email: sunnivue-farm@gmx.net.



AT THE FARMSTORE DURING AUTUMN ~ WINTER

ORGANIC FRUIT & VEGETABLES

a variety of squash, potatoes and apples; onions, carrots, beets, other root vegetables; cabbage, bananas, avocados, kale, lettuce, mushrooms, broccoli

ORGANIC MEAT beef, pork, chicken **ORGANIC BREAD** fresh from the farm's oven

OTHER CAREFULLY CHOSEN PRODUCTS

organic fair trade coffee, honey, beeswax candles, maple syrup,
Weleda and True Botanica health care items



To all our customers:

*Thank you for your loyalty
and extra efforts to stop by
and shop.*

*Your weekly support and
your encouraging words about our changes in the store
brought us a promising outlook for the future.*

*Small farms like ours are in need of people like you who
care about where they shop and whom they support.*

*We are very grateful that with your help we can make a
difference in the world.*

*Thank you.
Dagmar for Sunnivue Farm*



...we should avoid going on botanical expeditions to collect specimens to be shown in the classroom. The children should be taken out and whenever possible, be brought to understand the plant world in its actual connection with the earth, with the rays of the sun, with life itself.

~ Rudolf Steiner

Firmly Planted Children

~ Highlights from a talk given at Sunnive Farm by Carol and Merwin Lewis of the London Waldorf School

Picture if you will a group of children getting up very early to watch cows being fed and milked, walking to the barn under the light of the stars: it is almost a holy experience, one the children will remember as their favourite moment during their stay at a farm...

...Up until about their ninth year children have felt more or less at one with their surroundings. But third-graders tend to lose some of their confidence as they gradually awaken to the realization that the magical time of earlier childhood is coming to an end.

To guide the child's awakening to this "real" world, to meet a child's deep need to be active, and to build a child's inner confidence, many opportunities for practical work are given. In a Waldorf Grade Three, there is a building block and at least one farming block. Children draw plans, measure, saw, and hammer. They sow and they harvest. They are "building their house," settling into their physical body and the earth around them. The children are able to understand the concept of taking care of a specific area; they are starting to become farmers. Their task is to clear a piece of land and prepare it for planting. Weeds are composted - the collection of classroom compost is done by the Grade Three class as their community service - and compost is spread. In spring, salad greens as well as the "three sisters" (corn, beans, and squash) are grown in addition to sowing wheat or another grain and, for lean times, potatoes.

The children's relationship with the natural world continues with animal studies in Grade Four, botany in Grade Five—all evolving into community service in the upper grades, which can involve helping to care for the school grounds and the neighbourhood.



Hockey on the Farm

What do I remember about that day?

I remember the electric crackle of excitement in the air when the goals were marked and folks started choosing sticks and teams.

I remember how I felt when it was my turn in nets.

I remember players running in and out, new ones always joining, old ones dragging their feet from the fun, muttering they weren't ready to go home yet.

I remember a mother telling us how much her little fella wanted to play hockey with us and how once there she had to encourage him into the group of big hulking men and boys and girls, all strangers, but soon the best of friends.

I remember his eyes when he got a nose bleed and how the other boys stood around and watched his little faucet drip bright red into the snow and I remember him charging back into the game after a quick consoling hug.

I remember a big German boy who picked up a stick for the first time that day, quick to laugh, fast on his feet and I think he got a hat trick before he was done.

I remember, when it was over, a round of handshakes and back slaps and brave bragging about meeting right back here next year.

Jennifer Slauenwhite



Everyone Welcome

WINTER DAY AT SUNNIVUE

February 5, 2011 10 a.m. ~ 3 p.m.

Hiking, Cross Country Skiing,
2nd Annual Blindfolded Hockey Stick
Snow Shovelling Contest

Road Hockey

Bring a stick if you have one. Extras are available.

Visits with the Water Buffaloes and Cows

Fun, Friendship and Food

Soup, wieners, bread, cake, coffee, tea and cider are provided.
Additional treats are welcome.

For more information, call the farm at 519 232-9096.

