

THE EARTH IS ALIVE!

200 years ago Japan had a lot of political problems and natural disasters. Issa, my favorite haiku poet, was in his final years. He wrote a poem which in effect said he had to leave everything to the young people while he slept comfortably through the night. I feel very much the same way. This divided country has some very serious problems and quite nearby there have been tremendous wildfires. This dangerous change in the climate will, I'm told, very likely become the new normal. And like Issa, at my age I have to leave a lot to the younger folk. Today at Starcross, this is being lived out in a very practical way.



Restrained by the growing list of mobility problems, I sit at my desk and watch a flock of young people scurrying by with the food that nature has provided. Tons of blackberries are at their ripest. Beans come into the kitchen to be prepared for eating now and preserved for the future. The pumpkins are growing, the fancy ones for our own use, and the ones for carving we planted for the children who come to our Food

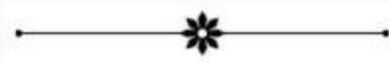
Pantry. Today the first corn arrived in the litchen. When I was given the privilege of testing it, the milk from a kernel shot halfway across the table! Great quantities of



cucumbers, lettuce, radishes, carrots potatoes, etc. are all being gathered up from the organic gardens and put to good use. In the orchard, apples and pears are just days away from harvesting. The young people from faraway states and countries are happily moving out at a pace that I can only vaguely remember.

There is more. Wildflowers and tall sunflowers are growing side-by-side. As a backdrop, wonderful olive trees are dancing in the wind and showing the silver underside of the leaves. At the same time these trees provide a happy and safe home for many quail families.

In a few weeks, this will be a very active area as the olives are picked and turned into that delicious oil that Sister Julie and friends create. But for now these groves are places of peace.

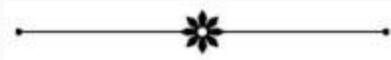


The poet and farmer Wendell Berry (1934-) feels that we lost something of our national soul when our fields were looked upon only as places for the production of wealth. A farm should also be a home. I'm very pleased that groups like the local Sonoma Land Trust believe that Starcross meets that category and are working with us to guarantee that this land will always be preserved.

Right now, I'm very concerned about the rising of hate. Coping with the problem is a somber and tragic process. But it's very important to remember that that's not the only thing going on. While I am emailing back and forth with friends, our Sister Julie is out checking the olives. I recall something she wrote when she was mowing the many rows in preparation for the harvest. She started at dawn when it was cooler, in the process disturbing a couple of jackrabbits and a wild turkey. The many birds nesting there just chose to ignore her. After she finished a very long day this is a reflection she wrote,



Up one side of the row and down the other, and a third pass through the middle. The tractor hugs the ground. I feel like I know every inch of this land, every bump and ridge and gully. And while I do what I can to take care of it, I know that in reality, the land is taking care of me.



I learned a very valuable lesson from Charles “Sparky” Schulz (1922–2000), the magnificent cartoonist of “Peanuts.” He told me never to read a newspaper first thing in the morning or last thing at night. And Sparky was absolutely right!

I often forget that the night is part of the day. If the daylight hours have been difficult and there are very unhealthy things going on in our country or in the world, the night is a time of purity.

Sometimes I sit beside my cat listening to the crickets, there are so many of them at



this time of year. It is really a choral fantasy. And, of course, there are the toads. They care nothing at all about what goes on in Washington, D.C. They travel happily down the gravel paths and at least one is almost always outside my bedroom window. What is the world like to a cricket, a toad, the occasional owl that flies by, or the gray fox that makes her way to the water fountain at 2 o'clock in the morning?

Looking up there are the stars, calling us to look so deeply into the beautiful unknown. Meteors have quite regularly traveled across the sky, letting us know that everything is both new and fresh, as well as eternal and permanent.

By whatever name we identify the divine presence in our existence, it is there with the crickets, toads, owls and stars. Here is a universe so much more real than what I can find in a newspaper or on a computer. Here are the seeds of hope, no matter what we have experienced during the daylight hours or fear in the hours to come.



My friends, I will step back from these Friday Reflections for a few weeks in order to

concentrate on a little book a number of you have asked for. For the next few weeks friends, especially Katherine, Barbara, Julie and perhaps some of you, will bring forth copies of Reflections I have written in the past that have had a special meaning. I hope many of you will join in this effort. There will be details on how to do this soon.

Brother Toby