

FROM THE EDITORS

Just before this Summer issue went to press, I spent a few days visiting my 93-year-old father at his home in Pennsylvania, where one of my brothers is his primary caregiver. Recently widowed (Mom died in February), Dad is physically frail and has advanced dementia. At this point he says little, relies on a wheelchair, and cannot do much for himself. Just two years ago, though, he was still pretty active and sharp. He assisted with my mother's care (ironically, she had dementia first, although hers never got as severe as his is now), and he spent long hours outside in his extensive gardens every day. He's had a bad knee for decades, and as it got worse he walked with difficulty and often had to sit on the ground to pull weeds, but he still did it, relentlessly. I even joked that he would happily die there in the garden, and that we'd just take him by wheelbarrow to be buried under his beloved blueberry bushes.

Both Dad and Mom grew up on small dairy farms, and each came from a long line of forebears who "use[d] land for growing food or raising animals," as the online Merriam-Webster dictionary for English-language-learners defines farming. For the first few years of their marriage, they carried on that tradition, with their own acreage and herd of cows just up the road from Dad's parents, until their barn was hit by lightning and burned to the ground. Then Dad enrolled in Penn State's "Aggie" program for awhile, eventually dropping out to find work managing herds for larger farms. His career path then shifted: he went to seminary and became a minister, which to me was his primary identity during my youth. But he and my mother never stopped "using land" in the manner of farmers — even when, as was the case in the years of parsonage living, they didn't own it. I well remember their passionate soil-tilling and food-gathering, both when I was a teenager (and didn't appreciate it) and when, as an independent young adult, I would ask their advice about my own first gardening endeavors.

My brother — the one who is caring for Dad — went through a farmer-wanna-be phase as a preteen, although it may have been motivated largely by the desire to drive tractors. Otherwise, I don't remember him showing any particular interest in growing food or tending plants, until my father's recent severe decline. As Dad became less able to garden, John started to express a desire to somehow keep things going in my parents' honor and memory, and he is doing that. This year he planted a vegetable garden on his own, and during my visit last week I admired his efforts and shared in the harvest. We encouraged my father to eat by

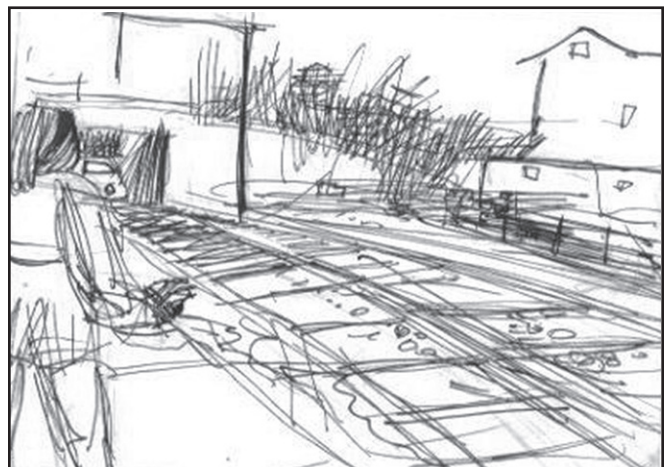
saying, "These tomatoes are from your garden, Dad," even though we can't know what he comprehends.

Here in Wisconsin, I've been "urban farming" with my partner, in our own quirky and ever-expanding way, for a decade and a half. Honeybees, egg-laying hens, meat- and fiber-producing rabbits, fruit trees, and seasonal vegetables of all description have figured into our land-use adventures so far, although we still have a long way to go to realize any dreams of sustainability or even real cost-savings. But the whole issue is dear to me, and even the small extent to which we can help produce what we consume is rewarding on many levels.

I was especially happy when Dianna Hunter agreed to write a review for this issue of *FC*. In the essay beginning on page 5, Dianna, once a dairy farmer herself, introduces us to women who farm and those (also women, in these cases) who write about them. Dianna ponders the apparent dearth of new writing that specifically examines the gendered aspects of farming and food. At least a few of the books she highlights, though, do "theorize explicitly about dominance, subordination, and social justice."

Also in this issue: Charlotte Perkins Gilman as a "somewhat wayward subject for feminist scholars"; disturbing questions about young Siberian girls recruited as fashion models; the gendered aspects of video gaming; new reference works about grant-seeking, media, poetry, and the history of the women's movement; and guides to some websites and scholarly journals you really should look at.

○ J.L.



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