



Volunteer Firechildren — Canton, July 1976

EDITORIAL

This probably has mostly to do with what Clyde said to me the other day. He and Val were in the kitchen preparing dinner. I thought I better help. He was grinding up soy beans into a flour. "Oh sure," he laughed out of some sense of having everything well in hand. "I'll grind flour and you write a poem about it." Well, that put me back about two steps - not in being overly sensitive about being a poet and writing poems - but in that, the talking about and the doing were two different things and Clyde was letting me know it. A reminder and status report at the same time.

It's like this, every night the stars are out. I walk over the crunchy snow looking up at this huge cavern pinpointed with sparks of light, Bright Orion, the Great Bear, Draco the Fire Monster... Some nights I see better than others. It depends how much of a shit kicking day it's been, whether I got my head down in worry and woe or if I'm light hearted, aware, and really seeing where I am. The stars are up there anyway and they don't pay me any mind. Somehow, it's up to me to make them out. Right now, I don't feel very knowledgeable. I know how to string one word onto another but I can't fix a tractor or milk a cow. I don't mind being ignorant. There will always be more out there than I can come to know. I will learn as I go along.

Gary Snyder says poets speak for the other beings of the planet. The wild animals, trees, stone, brooks; those creatures who don't have a voice in any elected assembly. This must mean you feel a connectedness, an empathy with all life. As I work to heal the scars put on the earth I heal myself as well.

In gardening, I have come to realize that it takes more than a handful of seeds and some ground to throw them on. Consciousness - is that the word? Many of those with the skills wouldn't be thinking in such grand terms. We let things get too far away from us, supported by a human life system that prepackages and sells material comfort to those willing to pay the price. It is an exploitive system. The Global Village is a company town. Power. Where is mine? Where is yours? Like the stone's protest to the landblasting road crew, the water fowl's voiced opposition to the marsh-filling bulldozer, I am carved up and pushed aside when I speak out. We don't need poisonous nuclear waste, humming 765kv electric transmission lines, cancer-causing synthetic chemicals, industry at the expense of pollution. These things are bought on time to be paid back in lives. Such a foolish man. Chants into the wind. Who can hear? This is why it turns in on me. It comes home to my being. There are moral questions. How do you live? What is your day made of? Here I have power and choice; as talk wears thin and words do little - you grab ahold of your own flesh and blood, friend. You point yourself down a path of action. Yes, my life matters to me, to those I love, to whoever follows. My riddle is how do I leave more than I take. This is what I work for. My relationship with the earth is as follows, I wish no harm.

Alan Casline/Feb.14,1976/Birdsfoot

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