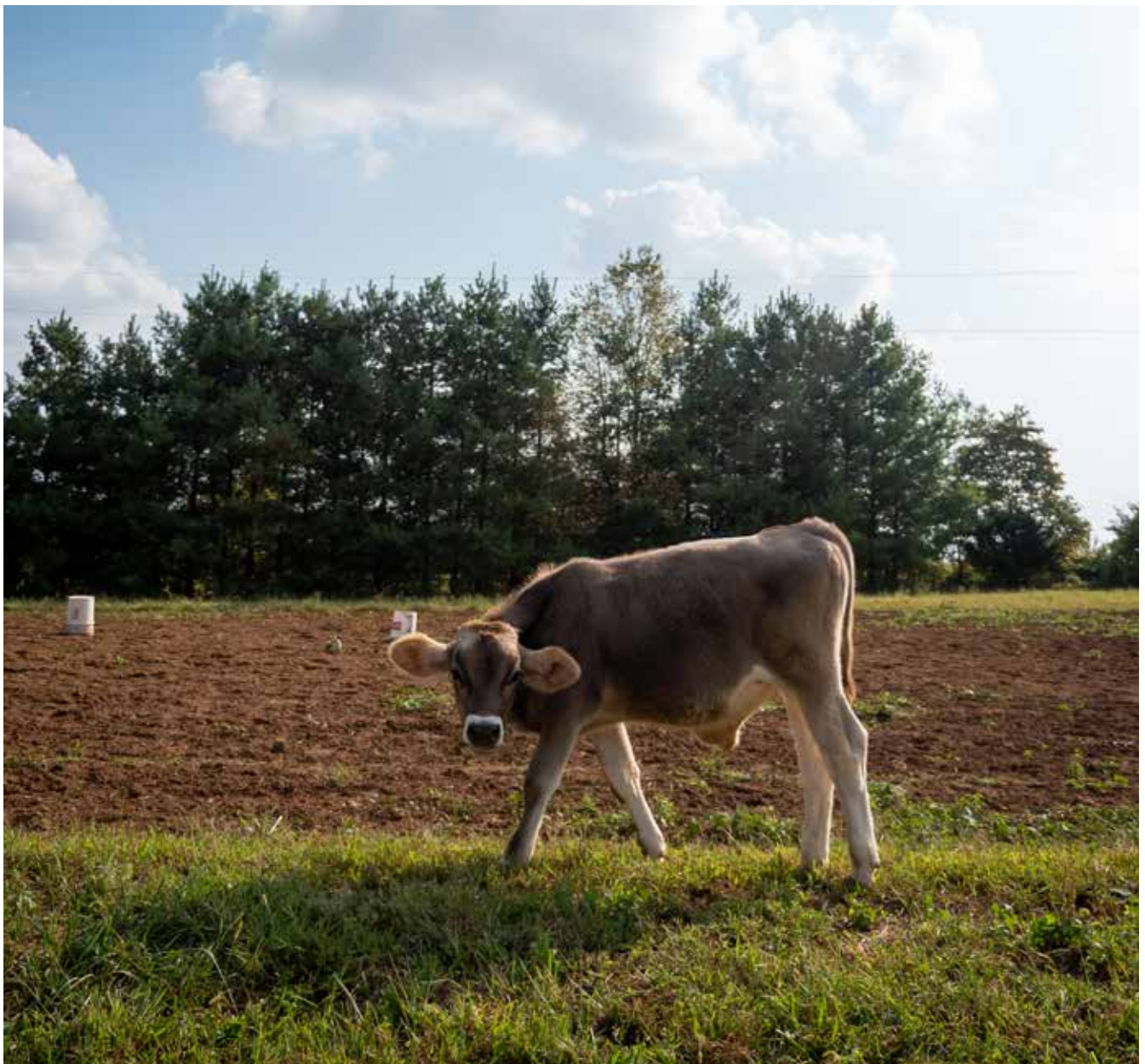




THE BERRY CENTER NEWSLETTER



Fall | Winter 2019

GREETINGS FROM THE BERRY CENTER

Mary Berry, Executive Director

I hope all of you are enjoying a beautiful fall. The cool sunny weather that we are having right now has been a welcome relief from a very hot and dry summer – and we’ve had a little rain. Our days at The Berry Center are busy and I am thankful for the staff that comes in every day ready to do what it takes to move our programs ahead. (Please scroll down to read updates on all our programs.)

There are some changes at The Center worthy of note. We have hired Loren Carlson as Director of Advancement. She has been here since February of this year and I can’t quite see how I made it from 2011 to now without her. Beth Douglas started in June as Our Home Place Meat Marketing Manager. Beth and her husband Kylen are raising calves for our program. As Sandy Canon, Our Home Place Meat director says, “She immediately embraced the work at hand.”

President Eisenhower’s Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson exhorted farmers to “Get big or get out,” in 1954. Sixty-five years later Sonny Perdue, President Trump’s Secretary of Agriculture, said basically the same thing after a meeting with dairy farmers in Wisconsin. Both these men served Republican administrations so lest anyone think that I am risking The Berry Center’s 501(c)(3) status by making a partisan political statement let me assure you that my disappointment in the agricultural leadership of this country is bipartisan. It is worth noting that the decline in rural America has been steady through both Democratic and Republican administrations. The unbridled economic forces of the free market have remained unchecked by both the left and the right. This is why the example of the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative is such an important example for our work at The Berry Center. Starting in the forties, for once and for a while, our raw materials weren’t taken at the lowest possible price and the resulting health of the land and the people was beautiful to see. I do understand the paradox this presents because of the problem of tobacco. And, the paradox is deepened when one considers that toxic and erosive corn and soybean production has not brought health or prosperity to our countryside. So, I say, as my father and I have said many times, the program is our inspiration not the crop.

In spite of a 40-year-old local food movement and

much talk about the problems of climate change and the role that agriculture plays in our changing climate I see no reason to think that the prevailing doctrine is not still “get big or get out” because that is what is happening!

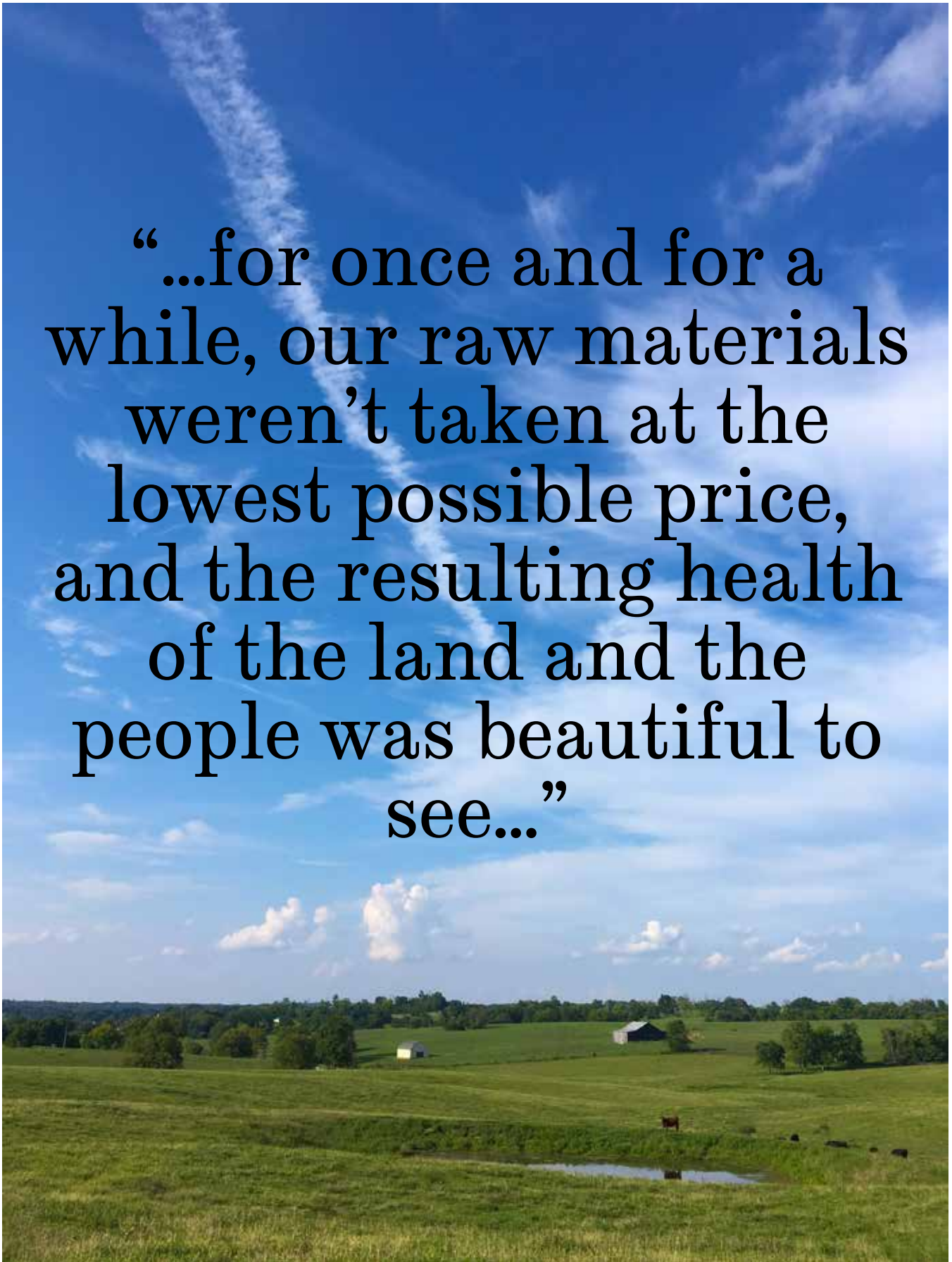
Meanwhile the Democrats are proposing “A Green New Deal” that will fix, as far as I can tell, all the ills of our economy and culture. I like the idea of harkening back to a time when politicians saw themselves as servants of the people and didn’t essentially tell them to go to hell, which is what Sonny Perdue just did in Wisconsin. However, I don’t believe the Cavalry is coming and I know for sure that we can’t wait for them. I propose that there is a way to start right now. Along with the support of CSA’s and farmers you know at Farmers’ Markets, look for ways to support real efforts to work on a local food system.

I see our partnership with the farmers of Our Home Place Meat as the closest we can come to a New Deal program right now - and without waiting for any kind of official permission. For this to work we need a constituency of people willing to say, “Yes indeed, we will join with you to support good perennial farming practiced by the farmers you are working with.” We are following the principals of supply management and parity pricing that were the hallmarks of the Burley Tobacco Program. Farmers didn’t have to be subsidized because supply was managed and a parity (fair) price was paid. We can’t abandon our farmers to the only two choices they have now - either small entrepreneurial farming or large industrial farming. We must work for something in the middle.

Rural America has been abandoned to corporations and technologies. If our public servants would only look at places like Henry County and try to learn what’s here and the really terrible predicament we are in, they might be able to construct a public policy platform that would give people a real choice. But as long as we are treated as a sacrifice zone and there is little to depend on or hope for, enlightened choice at the ballot box is too much to ask for. What we have on our hands is a cultural problem. We have to think more deeply than we have. We have to use better standards. I see no other standard possible than the health of our land and of our people.

Thank you, as always, for your interest in The Berry Center. - MB

“...for once and for a while, our raw materials weren’t taken at the lowest possible price, and the resulting health of the land and the people was beautiful to see...”



Henry County Farmland near Lacie, Kentucky. Photo by Kate Weiss.

LESSONS IN HOMECOMING

Dr. Leah Bayens, Director

Wendell Berry Farming Program Of Sterling College

The first cohort of 12 Wendell Berry Farming Program students has arrived and is settling into life in Henry County! They completed a two-week intensive course, punctuated by farm walks with Steve Smith, Den Berry, John Grant, and the Valley Spirit farm families. They explored African American cemeteries with members of the Oddfellows and NABVets organizations. They traipsed along Little Six-Mile Creek with naturalist Lynn Garrison, literally dug into a streambed with state geologists at student Lizzie Camfield's Campbellsburg farm, disassembled a high tunnel with Carden Willis, had a chat-and-chew with Our Home Place Meat farmers, learned about TBC's initiatives with staff members, and listened in to Tanya Berry and Ben Aguilar talking about the forthcoming publication of *For the Hog* Killing photos. They set a high bar for the long-block semester, which commenced in mid-September. They have been driving mules and oxen, reading poetry on Fords Lane, exploring indigenous history at the confluence of the Kentucky and Ohio Rivers with archaeologist Steven Mocas, and earned Master Grazer certification. The students are proving themselves even more outstanding than we expected, and the community's warm reception has been humbling.

By way of introduction, we would like to share with you the following essay, excerpted from Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College student Rachel Breeden writing in response to a quote from Wendell, from the documentary *Look and See*: "You can see all the way to the stars almost any place you are. To live in a place and have your vision confined by it would be a mistake. But to live in a place and try to understand it as a standpoint from which to see, and to see it from there as far as you can, is a proper challenge, I think."

We are putting culture back into agriculture and community into education. Prospective WBFP applicants may contact the Sterling College Office of Admission by email at admission@sterlingcollege.edu or by phone at (800) 648-3591/(802) 586-7711 ext. 100. - LB



WBFP student Rachel Breeden with Bright and Lion, WBFP teaching ox team. Photo by Jennifer Palmer

Essay by Rachel Breeden, WBFP of SC Student

My sister is a wanderer. Every week she has a new dream and a new place she's going. I have never been that way. Heck, I've never even moved out of my parents' house - so far. Farming is referred to as husbandry for a good reason. I am a married woman, and in a sense, have "confined myself" to my spouse. But how much better do I know that man because of it? We share secrets and moments that no one else will ever know or understand. Land, like people, changes over time and although the place may look the same, a loving eye will notice a few more grey hairs, or a new scrape on his hand. I have lived on this farm my whole life and it changes every year. There will always be something new, no matter how much it may appear to stay the same. A year ago my husband and I were

thinking about finding a neighboring farm to purchase. I remember so clearly sitting in our old tobacco barn as the rays from a setting sun filtered in between cracked boards, and I could see the dust swimming in the light and I knew that I had to stay. It is those moments of peace and near perfection that make farming more than a job. It is a sigh of content at the head of the trail or a few quiet moments watching a cardinal in the snow. That's what makes this place home and what makes the hard days worthwhile. It is this collection of moments and peace that never grow old. I could live in them forever.

Even the neighboring farms have a history that is entwined with ours. When my family first moved here from Detroit we were slow to be accepted into the community. But one neighbor, Jake Noel, answered our questions and taught us how to call the cattle; he even sold us our first three cows. His grandson bought the farm last year, and we still work closely together putting each other's cattle in the right field or fixing the dividing fence lines. Most folks have forgotten the worth of a good neighbor. The history of a place is more than just where your feet stand; it's not only your history but the land next to yours. No farm would survive on its own.

Your neighbor's struggles and victories are in part your own. I think I would feel like an emigrant anywhere else, and often do feel quite out of place when I've worked or gone to school further north. In Glencoe no one chuckles when you say "going to town" because they were probably "in town" for something the week before, and Grant County, though a fair distance, isn't as far from Northern Kentucky University as everyone seems to think. Sometimes I think about the fact that I could travel the rest of my life and never see all of the amazing places there are. I could go to different countries and the rainforest or the desert, but would I know any of them? And after a life of travel there would still be places I hadn't been. I wonder, would it bother me? Every place has a story, and they all deserve to be learned and loved. Those peaceful moments can be found other places, I'm sure, but I have shared a life with this one and I'll never be able to divorce or replace her, grey hairs and all. Each place or tree and field has a past, and some of it is known to me. The thought that I might get to tell these stories, or explore this place with children of my own, gives me great hope for the world to come. If they can learn to love them and cherish them as I have we might just turn out all right. - RB



The students and faculty of the Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College joined the staff of The Berry Center for an orientation and welcome session.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Michele Guthrie, Archivist

The Archive at the Berry Center documents the work of Wendell Berry, John Berry, Jr. and John Berry Sr., and reveals their affection for rural communities, rural people, and rural culture. This work required determination and intentionality which Mr. Berry Sr. and Jr. and Wendell showed all their lives; the Archive contains the proof of it in their own words and deeds. The Berry Center Archive contains a record that can be found nowhere else— speeches, articles, correspondence, institutional files, drafts, notes and commentary - of three of the people at the center of the American agrarianism. It provides a window into the character of these men, the focus of their work and their lives, a background for the agricultural history of our state, region, and nation.

By 1989 the Tobacco Program, (Producer's Program) the premier farm program of the New Deal, had increasing numbers of critics in Congress and that boded ill for the future of the Program. Government agencies as well as other agencies which should have supported farmers in the marketplace, were instead supporting and giving lip service to the forces arrayed against them.

Though this was a disappointment to him, by the end of the eighties, John Berry, Jr., President of the Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative Association, was trying to prepare farmers for a future without tobacco or the Producer's Program.

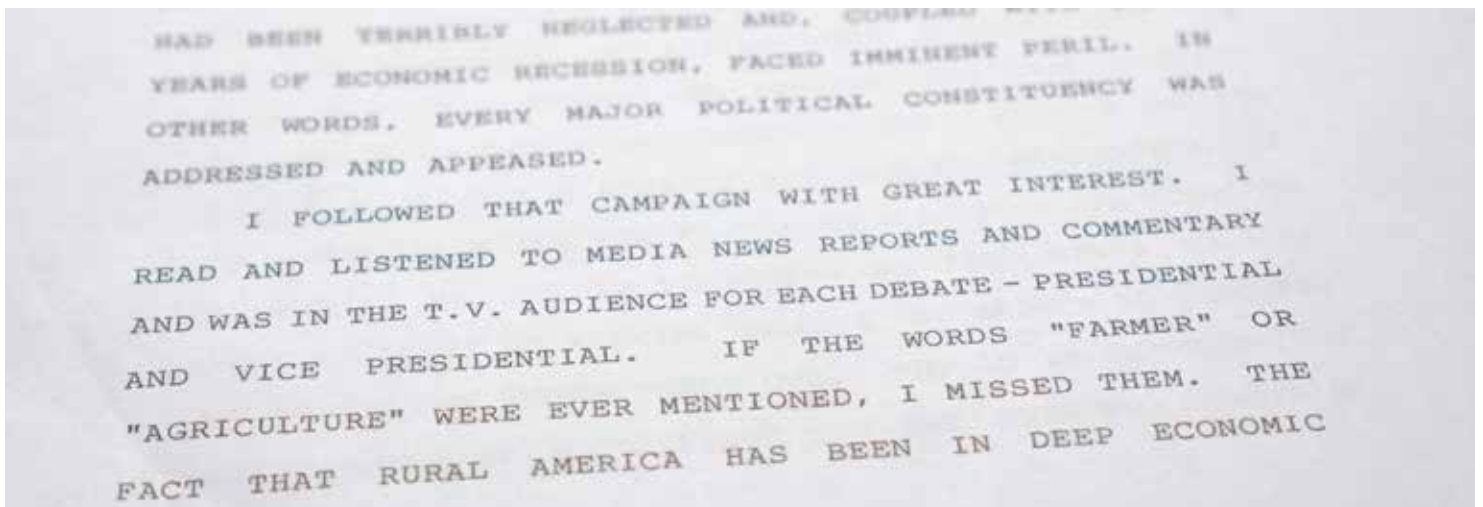
In notes for a speech titled "Challenges Ahead in the 2000s," he suggests that farmers keep an open mind

to different crops, keep an open mind to different ways, be good neighbors, share equipment, swap labor, exchange ideas, love one another, and be sources of comfort and support to one another.

The first two items are practical advice. The others are all informed by the biblical exhortation in the Gospel of Matthew to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Many of these same ideals, which John Berry, Jr. believed in were actually institutionalized in the Producer's Program and realized through its implementation. It was set up so neighbors were not in competition nor was there competition between large growers and small. In Kentucky, for instance, it was not unusual for farmers to share equipment or swap labor. Two permanent photo exhibits at The Berry Center - "Tobacco Harvest: An Elegy" by James Baker Hall and "For the Hog Killing, 1979" by Tanya Berry pay tribute to this ideal.

During the eighties farmers had experienced a cruel economic depression. Low farm prices, the demands of increasing industrialization, and the phasing out of farm programs that in any way limited production or featured support prices allowed them to fail. Nevertheless, the last suggestion in "Challenges Ahead in 2000s" is for farmers to be involved in politics. "Our current policies [are] no accident. Don't give up. (It's not the time to give up but to get up!)" He said, "Save farms and farmers, you save rural communities!"

In 1992, the national Democratic platform committee for what ended up being Bill Clinton's



An excerpt from John Berry, Jr.'s speech to the Indiana Farmers Union Annual Convention on January 29th, 1993

presidential nomination gave short shrift to the agriculture / rural life plank that John Berry, Jr. had written, refusing to include it in the Democratic platform. Mr. Berry responded that a “sufficient and sustainable agriculture” was essential to any nation. He wrote that “free market” policies were a formula for disaster. He believed that “thirties farm programs with parity pricing and regulated production” - cooperative farm programs like the Tobacco Program - were the answer. This echoes John Berry, Sr.’s 1987 assertion that a program like the Producer’s Program could be used for any crop.

John Berry, Jr. further counseled, “Call the party back to its principled and correct stand of the thirties and nominate a candidate who understands the problem well enough to articulate the solution.” In other words, he’s telling us to learn from the past, depend on what has worked, reject what hasn’t,

intentionally decide to do what is right though it’s hard and complex, scale it appropriately, and to continue to talk to one another. Wendell Berry’s poem, “A Letter (To My Brother)” begins:

“Dear John,
You said, ‘Treat your worst enemies
as if they could become your best friends.’
You were not the first to perpetrate
such an outrage, but you were right.”

Their words and their work, catalogued and preserved in The Berry Center archives are vital to us and are the touchstone for our work, consistently helping us focus our thinking, giving us hope, and finally, helping us to uphold the democratic ideal of continuing to engage all, civilly. - MG



A portion of the Archive of The Berry Center containing the papers and records of John Berry, Jr.’s time in the Kentucky Senate

MILK FED, GRASS FED, ROSE VEAL

Sandy Noble Canon, Director
Our Home Place Meat

A few weeks ago, on Saturday, September 7, Our Home Place Meat welcomed our farmers and their families for an end of summer picnic. Along with the staff and Board members of The Berry Center, we were delighted to bring together our fine partners with Trackside Butcher Shoppe and the inaugural class of the Wendell Berry Farming Program along with their families and faculty members. This event was held in celebration of our second harvest season with our founding farmers. We feel it is important to celebrate them not only in our marketing materials and publications, but in person, face to face. We pride ourselves on bringing our farmers together in fellowship, and helping them enjoy the fruits of their labor along with other proud members of our community. We also appreciate any excuse for ice cream, in this case supplied by OHPM farmers Curtis and Carilynn Coombs at Jericho Farmhouse, showcasing the kind of diverse farm economy we hope to continue fostering.

This fall, our harvest season continues on throughout the holidays, and we'll be making Our Home Place Meat Rose Veal available to help you and yours celebrate through various direct shipped offerings. Speaking of celebrations, our Executive Director, Mary Berry, helped our dear friends at Lorentz Meats in Cannon

Falls, Minnesota, a model institution for regional, ethical, and sustainable meat processing, celebrate 50 years of their good work. We'd like reprint some of her words from that event here to emphasize why our model of production supports good farming, and why it belongs on your dinner table.

A local food economy that is better farming, better food, and better for our planet—that's Our Home Place Meat. If you'd like to know where and how you can purchase our fantastic Rose Veal, please visit us at ourhomeplacemeat.com - SNC

**Excerpt from a speech given in commemoration
of the 50 year anniversary of Lorentz Meats
by Mary Berry**

Mike Lorentz and I met at a meeting of the American Grassfed Association in San Diego and he said that he would be glad to be helpful to us if he could be. It seems that he meant it. He kept in touch with me over the ensuing years and when we did get a small processing facility, called Trackside Butcher Shoppe, up and going in Henry County, Mike and the people at Lorentz Meats welcomed and spent time teaching them there. The business owner's names are Chris Wright and John Edwards. They wanted me to

pass along to the Lorentz family their congratulations, their thanks, and their great respect, (I think a truer word might be awe) for what you have accomplished here. Your example gives them something to learn from and strive for. When John and Chris opened their business they had serious trouble with an inspector. Mike gave them exactly the right advice. It went something like, set your own standards and keep them. Set them higher than the inspector is asking for. This is the kind of advice a good man gives and wonderful when such advice is given to someone who can hear it, and in this case it was heard. As a young person taking up a life of farming I was the recipient of much good advice. I had to get a good deal older than I was then to appreciate it. The gift of passing on



One of the hats gifted to the founding farmers of Our Home Place Meat to commemorate our first annual OHPM picnic.

knowledge to younger people that will keep them from making mistakes they don't have to make is the work of a good culture.

As it has turned out, there is much to connect the work of Lorentz meats and the work of TBC. I started The Berry Center in 2011 to continue the work of my family on behalf of small farmers and land conserving communities. After a lifetime of farming it was my realization that a forty-year-old local food movement had not changed the culture of agriculture where I live. That, in fact, things had gotten worse for our small farms and small towns. This is something that unfortunately we have in common with most rural places. In KY's case the loss of farmers and farmland can be tied directly to the loss of The Burley Tobacco Program, which ended in 2004. My grandfather, John Berry, Sr., was the principal author of the program. It was the only agricultural program that we know anything about that served the interests of the people it was supposed to serve for over 60 years.

Farmers and people who do work with their minds and their bodies have been disrespected for generations. In processing plants all over this country the welfare of

people *and* animals are disregarded for efficiency. At The Berry Center we believe that an education system meant to get people out of doing their own work is wrong. We believe that an agricultural system that is destroying the land and the people is wrong. We believe that an economy that is destroying the source of what we must have to survive is wrong. We believe that the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" turns out to be an economic principal. Lorentz Meats has set its own standards just as Mike told the young men in Henry County to do. In their core values they say that they consider all their partners. They talk about having a passion for their work. They clearly care about the health and wellbeing of every employee and every animal. The standards we use for good work in this country need to change and Lorentz Meats show us a better way.

One of the traits of a good worker is a willingness to stick to something, of course. At The Berry Center we have people working everyday to move the programs we have started forward. Lorentz Meats says of itself, "We don't take the easy way." Taking the easy way has gotten us into a good deal of trouble. It has changed the standards by which we do our work. And, ultimately, the easy way has cost us as we should know by now it always does. "What are people for?" my father asked in a book of the same name published in 1990. To live for the weekends, to get out of as much of our own work as we can, to do work that means nothing to us except a paycheck? We have one given life; how do we want to spend it? Lorentz Meats, as a family business, honors good work and offers others the chance to do the good work with them.

At The Berry Center we believe that good food is a cultural product. That farmers not only have to be able to afford to farm well, they need a culture that supports good farming. When Lorentz Meats says "we don't take the processing of meat lightly or callously." They improve the culture of agriculture. When they say, "We have a commitment to national niche brands and to the farmer that brings in one animal." They improve the culture of their community. When they say, "We seek tools and knowledge to help the industry and are willing to share" they strengthen the work of us all to improve our own agricultural communities.

The Berry Center is too young to get congratulations for much yet but we get them anyway. I am, of course, grateful for them and either pass them on to the good people I work with or I say what is true: I have an inherited vision passed down to me from the seven generations of farmers who came before me. Lorentz Meats is an inherited vision. Its growth honors the values set forth by its founders. This is radical now. -MB



Mike Lorentz with Mary Berry at the 50-year anniversary celebration of Lorentz Meats



WBFP student Gabe Francisco introduces North and Star, ox team in training, to ALL Fall Festival attendees.

THE ART OF THE COMMON PLACE

Virginia Berry Aguilar, Director

Agrarian Culture Center and Bookstore at The Berry Center

The 2019 Agrarian Literary League program began on September 28th with the ALL Fall Festival on the grounds of The Berry Center. This annual event is a celebration of Henry County culture, from arts and crafts to food and music.

At this kick off event, the Agrarian Literary League committee handed out copies of this year's community read, *Payne Hollow: Life on the Fringe of Society* by Harlan Hubbard. This little book, first published in 1974, tells the true story of how Harlan and his wife Anna came to build their home at Payne Hollow along the Ohio River in Trimble County, Kentucky in the 1940s; how the couple lived not only "off the grid" but also outside the money economy for over 40 years until their deaths in the late 1980s.

The life that Harlan and Anna made on seven acres of marginal, sloping land required great work and skill in provisioning. The Hubbards were carpenters, masons, gardeners, beekeepers, homemakers, and gracious hosts. As Wendell wrote in his 1990 "meditation" published by University Press of Kentucky, *Harlan Hubbard: Life and Work*, "The number of enterprises and the number of jobs that Harlan and Anna would

accomplish between them in an ordinary day would astonish the average citizen of the modern world." But, at the same time, "Their life included times of leisure which occurred dependably and more or less regularly and which emerged naturally and directly from their working time. They were, after all, resting in their workplace and working in their resting place. They did not, like the workers of the modern world, "go" to work or to play. At times, their work was their leisure, and it was virtually always their pleasure." The Hubbards found pleasure in reading aloud to one another and playing music together everyday - Harlan on the violin or viola, and Anna on cello or her Steinway grand piano.

Harlan also found joy in his artwork. A talented and curious artist, Harlan made woodcuts, watercolors, pencil sketches, and paintings of the Ohio River Valley that he loved. In his 1962 journal, Harlan wrote: "I do not paint with any idea of expressing my emotions. That would seem to me in bad taste. One should paint to express his joy in what he sees, and thanks for that joy." Rather than exchanging money for goods that he and Anna could not produce themselves, such as clothing and hardware, Harlan would trade his artwork. For



Director Morgan Atkinson takes questions and shares stories with the audience at the ALL screening of *Wonder: The Lives of Harlan and Anna Hubbard*

her work in typing the original manuscript of *Payne Hollow: Life on the Fringe of Society*, Tanya Berry was paid a painting of a riverboat with the Kentucky River High Bridge in the background.

It is the hope of the ALL committee that the example of the Hubbards will inspire members to consider a life made beautiful within the limits of a particular place. As Hubbard wrote in his December 1955 journal: "To arise in the frosty morning at the point of daybreak, climb the hill and cut wood while the sky lightens above the soaring trees; to eat this wholesome sweet food; to use my body, hands and mind at the endless work I have to do; to read by the firelight, to sleep warm and snug; all this shared and enjoyed by my loving partner - what manner of a man originated this idea of a happier life beyond death?" - VBA

You are invited to join the Agrarian Literary League's celebrations at the following public events. All events are free but some may require reservations. Please visit the Agrarian Literary League of Henry County Facebook page, or contact Virginia at bookstore@berrycenter.org for more information.

November 2, 2:00PM | The Locker, New Castle
Theater Downstream presents "Sonata at Payne Hollow" a play by Wendell Berry. Reservations requested.

November 9, 11:00AM-4:00PM | The Berry Center
Kentucky Arts & Letters Day with Kentucky authors: Wendell Berry, Silas House, Maurice Manning, Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, Frank X Walker, Bobby Ann Mason, Gurney Norman, Ed McClanahan, Carolyn Whitesel. Also featuring Guy Mendes and an exhibit of his photographs of Harlan and Anna Hubbard on display in The Berry Center gallery. [Reservations requested.](#)



A selection of the printed works of Harlan Hubbard available at The Bookstore at The Berry Center



THE BERRY CENTER

The Berry Center is putting Wendell Berry's writings to work by advocating for farmers, land conserving communities, and healthy regional economies.

Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, published in 1977, awakened a national and global conversation on the dire state of agriculture. The Berry Center was launched in 2011 to continue this conversation and preserve the legacy of Wendell Berry's work and writings and the exceptional agricultural contributions of his father John Berry, Sr., and his brother John Berry, Jr. We are putting these inspiring writings and histories into action through our Archive at the Berry Center, the Agrarian Culture Center and Bookstore, Our Home Place Meat—A Local Beef Initiative, and The Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College. The core of our work is to advocate for farmers, land conserving communities, and healthy regional economies.

Our work seeks to provide solutions to essential issues that are rarely in public discourse and certainly not reflected in agricultural policies. "What will it take for farmers to be able to afford to farm well?" and "How do we become a culture that supports good farming and land use?" These are just a few of the questions that The Berry Center is addressing. We believe that the answers—while firmly rooted in local work—are central to solving some of the world's most pressing problems including the devastation of natural resources and biodiversity; rapid onset of climate change; economic and social inequities; and the collapse of healthy farming and rural communities. We welcome you to join us in this work.



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Our Home Place Meat


Loren Carlson- *Advancement*

Beth Douglas - *Marketing Manager
Our Home Place Meat*

Michele Guthrie - *Archivist*

Darra Smith - *Office Manager*

Friends, we hope you have enjoyed reading about how our work at The Berry Center is building an alternative to destructive industrial food and farm systems. We believe that successful farming is embedded in ecology, community, culture, and neighborliness. Our programs are building local food models, educating the next generation of farmers, reclaiming rural culture, and honoring agrarian leaders and history that can provide a vision for the future. If you can, please help support this important work with a one-time or recurring gift via our donation portal at berrycenter.org/support/membership.



**CLICK HERE TO JOIN
THE BERRY CENTER
BY GIVING A GIFT THAT
SUPPORTS HEALTHY FARMS,**

**Thank you, Friends, for another year of your support in this vital work,
and Happy Holidays from all our family to yours. - TBC**



THE BERRY CENTER