



# The Good Life Center Newsletter

Fall 2016  
Issue #5

## OUR MISSION

*To uphold the legacy of Helen & Scott Nearing through preservation of the Historic Forest Farm Homestead & educational programs that teach skills in sustainable living, social justice, organic gardening & the non-exploitation of animals.*

## Bringing the Nearings' Core Values into Today

Greetings!

In November 2015, the GLC board decided to take steps to use current technology to make the Nearings' work more available and increase it's relevancy to our members and society. We believe this will result in more involvement from our local community and more visitors to our website, Facebook page and to Forest Farm itself. To this end we have begun the process of revising and updating our website, and this summer made high quality video recordings of our Monday Night Speakers Series for the first time. Thanks to our web whiz, Josh Saltmarsh, for setting up the GLC YouTube channel! The videos may be seen on our website at [www.goodlife.org](http://www.goodlife.org). Click on "Library and Videos". Scott's lectures are being digitized and shortly be accessed there as well, under "lectures".

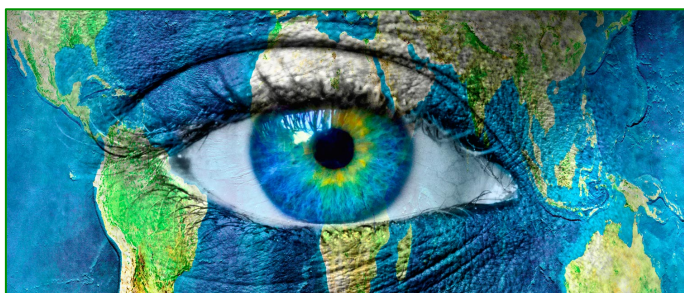
We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the GLC e newsletter and we welcome your feedback and comments.

Happy Fall from the Good Life Center Team!

- Bob Jones, Chair

## LIFE RULES: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

- Ellen LaConte



In 1973, the year *Living the Good Life* was published by Schocken Books, subsistence living and owner-builder housing were rarities. The book was favorably compared by the New York Times to Thoreau's *Walden*, the Nearings became minor celebrities, and Forest Farm turned into a destination point for those hungry for the more fulfilling, less consumptive alternative that the "Good Life" provided. Today, as we face a critical mass of environmental, economic, social and political crises, not

a single presidential candidate has seriously discussed these issues.

Building upon the lessons of the Nearings' *Living the Good Life*, "Life Rules" explores the terrain of systems thinking: the subtle, interactive co-operation between parts and wholes, mutually sustaining relationships in nature and between natural and human communities, which I encapsulate here, in the following Ten Commandments of Sustainability:

1. Communities shall produce no waste that cannot be consumed.
2. Communities shall use inexhaustible forms of energy.
3. Economies shall be relatively equitable, common-good systems.
4. Life's basic units of economic activity shall be local, interdependent, mixed-species communities.
5. Communities shall organize, regulate and govern themselves within limits set by their environments and by the larger communities of which they are a part.
6. Communities shall seek stability and adaptability rather than perpetual growth and expansion.
7. Communities shall distribute leadership according to task and demonstration of appropriate skill-sets.

8. Communities shall exchange information and pool intelligence in real time.
9. In hard times, communities shall cut back to reduce both population and consumption.
10. Communities shall operate in ways that are inherently democratic.

These Ten Commandments and the ways in which some human communities are already adopting them, while others could, were foreshadowed by Scott Nearing:

*"Humanity could play a creative role in accordance with our capacities and our destiny as an integral part of the joint enterprise to which our sun furnishes light, warmth and vibrant energy – life itself." - (Civilization and Beyond)*

***The largest economy - the ultimate provider of goods and services - is not the global capitalist economy. It is Life itself..***

*"Life Rules"* is also the territory of economics (*eco-nomics*), asserting that organisms and their inorganic surroundings evolve together as a single living system, no part of which can be damaged or destroyed without affecting all other parts.

Ecology, Gaia theory, systems thinking, biomimicry and holism teach that plant, insect, microbial and animal species are collaborators in the creation and maintenance of ecosystems and that all life is dependent on the health of those ecosystems. Life is the ultimate interactive game, one we'd do well not to lose.

The largest economy - the ultimate provider of goods and services - is not the global capitalist economy. It is Life itself, and we forget this at our peril, for if we fail to assist in its maintenance, it will fail to maintain us. Climate change and species extinction are its forward guards.

Life Rules builds upon the lessons of Helen and Scott's *Living the Good Life* wherein "good" means kindly, wise, just, cooperative and contributory (to use Helen's word) as opposed to easy, wealthy, upwardly mobile and perpetually expanding. If we could live in ways that work with life instead of at cross purposes to it, self-subsistence would become community and bioregional subsistence and there would be no need for a global monetary economy of any kind.

We must go beyond civilization's economic systems as we've known them. We can realize the lessons of the "Good Life", or, on this planet, Life could rule us out.

- Ellen LaConte is the author of *Life Rules: Nature's Blueprint for Surviving Economic and Environmental Collapse* (New Society Publishers.)



## A GRANDDAUGHTER'S MEMORIES

- Elena Scott Whiteside



Elena with Grandfather Scott Nearing and her father, John, 1971.

Recently I found some photos, taken in 1971, of my parents John and Masha Scott and me at Forest Farm. And there was my grandfather, Scott Nearing! What lovely, sweet memories these photos inspire. I recalled the many times my sister, Elka, and I would come up together to visit during the 1950s when we were in school and college.

This time, in 1971, I must have driven up with my parents for a visit. Whenever I visited, I stayed a few days, maybe a week. There was always something to do, but Scott and Helen never pushed the work. They led by example and never made me feel guilty if I didn't join in and help out. I liked picking blueberries best - we could do that with lots of great snacks - blueberries! I remember going out to the cove to help pick up seaweed to put on the garden, and driving with Helen in the truck to do errands - dropping things off or picking things up, or going to the post office.

Helen made our meals - great vegetable soups and salads, fresh from the garden for lunch. And my favorite supper meal (when I was much younger) was freshly popped corn and hot chocolate.

During the 1960s, after my children were born, I made time to see Scott and Helen, although my visits were much less frequent after I moved, in 1975, to Ohio, where I lived for the next 20 plus years.

I missed the family party in May of 1983 for Scott's 100th birthday, but I did see the photos - what a great turn out! My son, Nick, was there - he was living in New York at the time. In June of 1983, I made the trip with Nick (21) and my daughter, Sylvia (17). As always, Scott and Helen met us with a warm welcome. On August 6, 1983, Scott turned one hundred and passed away shortly after that. I was so thankful that we had that one last chance to enjoy being together.

I never called Scott "Grandpa" or "Granddad" or "Grandfather". Not even "Dedushka", Russian for grandfather. He was always "Scott". Funny, one of the things I heard from him more than once was: "I do not talk about people. I talk about ideas. Talking about people is

*gossip and I don't have time to gossip."* And here I am, one of six grandchildren, talking about him! But I want everyone to catch a glimpse of this side of him: He was caring, kind, thoughtful, ready to listen, memorable, always teaching and enlightening, a warm and wonderful grandfather. I am so grateful for all the dedicated people who devote their time and energy to the Good Life Center, making it available for a larger audience. And I am thankful that we can come up and visit for the spring meetings. Thank you all so much!



## UBUNTU!

- Dr. Jane Eagles

*"I am me because of you Ubuntu, Ubuntu. You are you because of me, Ubuntu, Ubuntu!"*

This African Rhythm song, sung by my grandson's fifth grade class at their promotion ceremony into Junior High, was rendered with especial gusto by a student standing in front of me who appeared to have some kind of disability because he walked with a limp. Hearing him sing his heart out, though I could not make out all of the words, brought tears to my eyes as he and his classmates prepared to enter the next stage of their lives.

*"It's not fun to be happy when others are sad, so instead we can all be happy together."*

The origin of the song comes from a story about an African village where a competition for the children was held in which they had to retrieve a special fruit, highly prized by all. The children lined up at the starting point of the race, but instead of one or the other darting ahead they all joined hands and ran together so that no one got to the finish line first, and all arrived together to share the prize! When asked why they did it this way, the answer came back - *"It's not fun to be happy when others are sad, so instead we all can be happy together."*

That sentiment resounded in the gymnasium of my grandson's school as the kids joined in celebrating each other. One by one they received their diplomas, and ALL were cheered by their classmates - scholars, athletes, kids with disabilities, kids somehow different than their peers, or just plain, regular kids without any particular distinction.

*"I am me because of you. You are you because of me.."*

As I watched this next generation start on its path to adulthood, the words to the song came back to me, *"I am me because of you. You are you because of me..."* and yes, I believe we are who we are because of the impact we have on each other.

The song goes on to say that we are each unique and in valuing that uniqueness we are in reality one big family. If only we could see that those who are different are contributing to who we are, as we contribute to who they are. May we each give to others that which is the very best in ourselves, and, treat others as we wish to be treated. *Ubuntu!*



## REMINISCENSES

- Jack Brondum - Good Life Center Steward



My first exposure to the Nearings was in 1969 when Scott gave a lecture on the steps of the Fogler Library at the University of Maine in Orono. I had to ask the person standing next to me who he was. His talk that day was on world affairs and the aggressive role played by the United States. Anti-Viet Nam War sentiment was on the rise then, although it would be another year before the

campus would be beset by strikes and shutdowns. In 1971, after I'd started veterinary school at Cornell I discovered *Living the Good Life* and, like so many, found it inspirational. I returned to Maine each summer until 1976, living in a lakeside cabin in South China and growing a substantial vegetable garden on a 30' x 50' plot behind the cabin. I've lost count of how many times I've read the book since or how many copies I've passed on to people who've shown an interest in the '60s-'70s Back to the Land movement and, more recently, sustainability in general.

*They instilled in me a sense of stewardship of the Earth and its resources...*

Cornell's library system was exceptional and offered a number of holdings about or by the Nearings, including the difficult-to-find account of Scott's sedition trial for distributing anti-war literature (*The Great Madness*)



during world War I. I read them all avidly, inspired by the independence and raw principals of the couple that sprang from the pages. I decided to read whatever they had written and purchased more of their works - trade publications like *The Maple Sugar Book*, *Black America*, and *The Making of a Radical*, plus those they published under the aegis of their *Social Science Institute: The Conscience of a Radical, Man's Search for the*

*Good Life, Economics for the Power Age, Fascism, United World, The Tragedy of Empire*. Nearly all are autographed by Scott and/or Helen.

The Nearings established political awareness in me and shifted my politics leftward, where they have remained. They instilled in me a sense of stewardship of the Earth and its resources, skepticism for authority, an awareness of and involvement with the world outside the U.S. and a deep sense of the importance of building confidence in oneself and not fearing to take on tasks that might appear daunting. In my life, this has taken the form of involvement in local politics, civil dissent and agitation in the name of multiple causes, learning to speak five languages, living abroad for extended periods in three nations, considerable travel, continuing to grow a portion of my own food and making the furniture in my home. Without a doubt the Nearings influenced me in ways I'm barely cognizant of and cannot necessarily name..

On December 31 I retired from 35 years of practicing epidemiology. I remain active, however, my vegetable garden is limited to five raised beds and a composter in my back yard. I continue to till the soil each spring, if less vigorously than I did in the Maine gardens of the '70s. Recently, I gave copies of *The Good Life* (Schocken Books )to two young women who are deeply committed to living sustainably and educating others, particularly about its relation to climate change. I suspect I'll soon be rereading *Living the Good Life* and *Continuing the Good Life* to prep for the dinner discussion we've planned in the coming weeks.

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## GO PAPERLESS!



Tell us if you would prefer to be contacted only by email. Send a quick email to Mary Hildebrand: [hildebrandsm@yahoo.com](mailto:hildebrandsm@yahoo.com)

## DONATE!

Friends,

The GLC cannot carry on without your support. *Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the GLC!* <http://goodlife.org/donate>

Visit our website [goodlife.org](http://goodlife.org) and check out our Facebook page.



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*Thank you from the GLC Team!*

