

UC Santa Cruz

Cultivating A Movement

Title

Lyn Garling: Former UCSC Farm and Garden Apprentice Coordinator, Farmer, Entomologist

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/38b6s81k>

Authors

Garling, Lyn
Farmer, Ellen

Publication Date

2010-05-01

Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/38b6s81k#supplemental>

Lyn Garling



Lyn (left) with Heidi (circa 1990)

Former UCSC Farm and Garden Apprentice Coordinator; Farmer, Entomologist

Lyn Garling was the apprentice coordinator for the UC Santa Cruz Agroecology Program (UC Santa Cruz Farm and Garden) from 1984 to 1992. Garling is an entomologist by profession, with a fierce passion for the insect world, ecological literacy, and human justice. Before she came to UC Santa Cruz, Garling taught ecology in Nicaragua after the Nicaraguan revolution, and conducted biological studies in Costa Rica and Mexico. At UC Santa Cruz, she designed and taught the first comprehensive science curriculum for the apprentice program, pushed the Farm and Garden to be more responsive to issues of class, race, and ethnic diversity, and managed the Farm and Garden's roadside and wholesale marketing, among other contributions.

After leaving UC Santa Cruz, Garling moved to Pennsylvania, where she became an education specialist for that state's Integrated Pest Management

program, focusing on outreach to inner city residents at risk from exposure to toxic pesticides used in urban settings. In 1997, she began running her own organic farm, *Over the Moon*, specializing in chickens, turkeys, eggs, beef and pork. National Public Radio featured Garling in an October 2004 special on “Female Farmers: A Growing Trend in America.” She is also quoted in a 2004 article in *The Economist* called “Women Farmers On the Move,” and is one of the subjects of the award-winning film by Megan Thompson, *Ladies of the Land: A Film About Growing*.

Ellen Farmer conducted this interview (which covers not only Garling’s work at the UC Santa Cruz Farm and Garden, but also her more recent activities) on October 7, 2007 over the telephone.

Additional Resources

Over the Moon Farm: <http://www.overthemoonfarm.com/index.htm>

Megan Thompson, “Ladies of the Land: A Film About Growing,” featuring Lyn Garling and other women farmers and sustainable food activists. See <http://www.ladiesofthelandmovie.com/>

Jennifer Ludden, “Female Farmers: A Growing Trend in America” Part of National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered.” Aired on October 30, 2004. Archived at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4132715>

“The New Land Girls: Why the Fairer Sex is Better with Goats, Chickens, and Stockbrokers,” *The Economist*, December 4, 2004.

Farmer: It is Sunday, October 7, 2007. It’s 7:30 pm in Pennsylvania and 4:30 p.m. in California, and Lyn Garling and I are speaking on the phone. So Lyn, I’m going to ask you about your personal background, and then we’re going to talk about what you did here at the UCSC Farm, and then we’re going to talk about what you’re doing now with your farm. So could you start by saying where you were born and where you grew up?

Early Influences and Education

Garling: Well, I was actually born in Portland, Oregon. So I am originally from the West Coast, I guess you could say. But since my dad was in the Foreign Service (as they euphemistically used to call the CIA), we traveled my whole life. Like, when I was two we went off to Cyprus, and then went to Beirut, Lebanon, and then went to Turkey. So I didn't really live back "home" ever. I became a world citizen at the ripe old age of two, and traveled all over the place. Then when I finally came back to the States for good, I was going to college. So, that was a different sort of childhood. I never know how to answer that question about, where are you from. (laughs)

Farmer: Yes. Well, you saw the world.

Garling: That's right.

Farmer: So what did you do for college?

Garling: I went to undergrad at Colorado State University, where I got a bachelor's degree in zoology. And during that time actually is when I had my first real farm experience, because I was working on a dairy farm that whole time that I was working on my undergraduate degree. So that was Colorado State. Then I did a master's degree at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, in entomology. Then I started working on a Ph.D. in zoology (although I was interested actually in insects by that time), at the University of Florida, in

Gainesville, and I never did finish that. I got sidetracked because I went off to teach for a year in Nicaragua. That was in the early eighties, like '82, soon after the revolution. I got sidetracked from the whole narrow focus of academic science. I thought, well, there's a lot of need for ecological literacy and political activity around trying to keep ecosystems from being completely destroyed. If I were going to go into an academic vein, I wouldn't be able to work on that. So I ditched that whole endeavor, even though I miss it, I have to say. Doing science is really fun. But I couldn't ignore the fact that I was doing fieldwork in Costa Rica and the forest was being chopped down around me. Not only that, but there were people I saw who didn't really have enough to eat. Their lives were really hard and it wasn't because they weren't working hard. They were working very hard. So I thought, I need to learn Spanish and understand what the heck's going on here. It changed my life completely and I went off into a whole other tack from that point. So I didn't really finish, all the way to the end, my academic degree.

Working in Central America

Farmer: So social justice became part of your focus, alongside science.

Garling: Definitely. Social justice and also science and ecological literacy. Because I don't think people really understand that we live in a biological world. They don't have a good appreciation for the fact that the world provides for us and you can't just completely trash it. You've got to understand the dynamics, and, yes, use the resources but use them sustainably. So I saw that to be more of

an imperative than whether or not I studied the leg hairs on a spider, or whatever the heck you would do if you're doing academic science.

Farmer: (laughs) Yes, so how long were you in Central America?

Garling: Well, I was in different parts of Central America at different times. I'm giving you the Cliff Notes version—Lyn's life: Cliff Notes. I spent about three months in Northern Mexico in a very arid environment near Monterrey, Mexico, and I was associated with the university there in Monterrey for a little while. Then I spent off and on, probably, about a year in Costa Rica in three separate trips, and did some traveling in South America for a month or so while I was learning Spanish. I spent a month in Guatemala learning Spanish, and then a full year in Nicaragua, and then probably about three months in Venezuela way out in the boonies in the headwaters of the Amazon doing a pilot project there. So I had a lot of different times in different places for different reasons.

Farmer: When you were in Nicaragua, were you affiliated with a certain organization?

Garling: Well, Jimmy Carter was still president when the revolution happened in '79. Carter's response to the revolution was, "Oh, let's send help." Their idea of sending help was sending educators and things like that. Well, meanwhile [Ronald] Reagan got elected, so at first the whole project was put on hold. The entity that was facilitating this was out of Harvard University. It has an acronym that is a mile long, LASPAU [Latin American Scholarship Program of American

Universities]. They had links with the university in Managua and in León the two largest cities. So this organization between the two universities put out an ad in *Science* magazine, and some people who were reading *Science* (because it wasn't me) called me and said, "Hey, they've got this ad in here calling for teachers to go to Nicaragua." Well, I had been involved in Latin American solidarity groups during the revolution. So I thought, well, this would be a great opportunity to go and try something new. But they went back and forth: no, it's not going to go, yes, it's going to go; no, it's not going to go. And then, you had to interview. That was the scary part because you had to interview in Spanish. My Spanish wasn't that good.

Farmer: And this is the Sandinista government people that are interviewing you?

Garling: They were people from the universities in Nicaragua and then also from the project LASPAU, from Harvard. They wanted to make sure you had the right credentials. But also the people from the university wanted to make sure that if you did the interview and answered their questions, you could survive there. It was very rough there. So I did this interview in Spanish. I'm pretty good at faking it, in the sense that in all my jobs I've ever had, it's like, if I can get my foot in the door, I can do the job, even though I'm out on a limb here. I don't know exactly what I'm doing. But I want to go do this, so—

It turns out, I wasn't one of the first people picked. Meantime I had gone to Venezuela to do this pilot project. Then I got a call saying, "Well, these other people dropped out so we're offering you the job." I was supposed to teach

invertebrate zoology, or something like that. Then at the last minute they switched and told me I was teaching—I mean *last minute*, it was like a week before I was leaving—they switched and said, “You’re going to teach ecology.” That was tough because I had already gotten all the stuff ready for invertebrate zoology. It was Christmas break. I was in Gainesville. Nobody was there. The university was shut down. I get this call, “You’re teaching ecology.” I’m like, oh, great! I had never taught ecology before, for one thing. Invertebrate zoology I had at least done a lab in. Ecology is difficult because it’s a huge subject. Invertebrate zoology is very focused so it’s not that hard to teach. You teach about all the amazing little critters. But ecology is like everything in the world and how it’s put together. Okay, no problem! (laughs)

I learned about that a week before I was going to go. Then when I got there I found out the students don’t have textbooks. There were no books in the library there at that time. The students just take everything from lecture notes and they try to memorize it. To me, if you can’t go out in the field and do ecology, forget it. And there were no buses to go in the field.

Farmer: This was during the war, right?

Garling: Well, the Contra war was going on at that time. So I come to class on Monday and half the students weren’t there. I said, “Where is everybody?” Well, they’re all in the army reserve, of course. Whenever there was fighting on the border, they all got shipped out. That made it extremely personal. These were *my*

students. And I'm thinking, this is *my* government shooting at *my* students, by proxy, of course.

Farmer: We didn't know it was our government yet, supposedly.

Garling: Well *we* knew, those of us who paid attention to current events and had a pulse. And of course the Nicaraguans knew. They knew. But Americans, generally speaking, didn't know. They don't know anything. So it was extremely challenging.

Farmer: So you stayed for a year?

Garling: Yes. They wanted me to stay on another year, but by that time I was sick. I had hepatitis. I said, I gotta get out of here. It was a very, very difficult year. I learned a lot, needless to say, but I was beat by that time— Being sick didn't help.

Coming to the UCSC Agroecology Program

So actually, it was soon after that that I ended up taking the job in Santa Cruz, because when I got back to the University of Florida in Gainesville, I had decided that I was not going to continue in academia. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I wanted to do more applied work, more hands-on, more "science in the service of the people." Sustainability stuff, even though at the time it was hardly even called that. "Sustainability" wasn't a word you heard that much.

I had a background in entomology, so I thought, well, biological control, more ecological ways for controlling pests so that you don't use so many pesticides. When I got back to the University of Florida, I didn't have a supervisor, so I talked to the powers that were. I said, "Well, look. I'm not going to stay here." And they said, "Well, just stay one more year because we really need more senior grad students to teach some of these introductory courses like intro biology." I said, "Okay, I'll do that as long as I can take whatever coursework I want and I don't have to stick to this other stuff." They said, "Yes, we don't care." So I took African American history. I took sailing. (laughter) I took all sorts of stuff while I was teaching for that year and then I looked for a job. And the job in Santa Cruz came up.

Farmer: What year was that?

Garling: 1983. I was in Nicaragua all of '82, and then I was back in Gainesville in '83, and I came out to the UCSC Farm in '84. But in the meantime, I saw the job description and I asked a friend of mine about it, who knew Steve Gliessman¹. He's another professor, Jack Ewel. The job announcement was hanging on his door, in fact, and I was over there talking to him about something and I saw it. I said, "Hey, what's this job?" And he goes, "Yes, you oughta do that. You oughta take that job. I know Gliessman and that would be a good job for you." I said, "Well, I don't know anything about horticulture." He said, "That doesn't matter. You know all about ecology. It's the same thing, really." So then I wrote, or called, or applied, or whatever. I can't remember. I got a call to come out for an interview. I did come out for the interview, and had a certain impression of the

place. I didn't think that my interview went particularly well, I have to say. I mean, I thought it went okay. I answered all the questions, but I got the definite sense that there were a couple of people there who were like: "Hmm, I don't think so." (laughs)

Farmer: Do you remember who interviewed you?

Garling: Oh, Jim Nelson, was there. He was the farm manager at the time. And Orin Martin, of course, because Orin has been there forever. Orin was there.² I think Patricia Allen³ was there. I don't think Steve Gliessman was there. But some second-year apprentices were there, Beth Medvecky and Steve Castagnola. He went on to UC Davis and got a degree and did all kinds of wonderful things. Beth went on to Cornell and she and her husband Hilton Kirungo did Manor House Project in Kenya. They were there at the interview.

Farmer: So the job was to be the manager of the apprentice program?

Garling: Apprenticeship Coordinator was the name of the job. You know, basically you had to get along with everybody to do that job. And at that time there were sort of these warring factions. I picked up right away that something funky was going on there. My best friend lived in San Francisco at the time and actually still lives there. I was staying with her when I went back and forth to the interview. I went back up to San Francisco and she goes, "So? Are you going to get the job?" I said, "I don't know. I'm not sure I want that job. All these people are fighting and it's all a tempest in a teapot. It might be too small of a world for

me.” But in the end they offered it to me, and in the end I took it because I saw a ton of potential there. I mean, anytime you have a place where you can teach young people (or any people, not just young people) who are motivated, that’s a best-case scenario.

Farmer: And what did you think of the landscape?

Garling: The landscape? Oh, my gosh, it was gorgeous, of course. Beautiful. I mean, what’s not to like? You’re overlooking Monterey Bay and all that. I’m not really an ocean person. I’m a mountain person; I like the Rockies. But still, it’s really gorgeous. I love the Mediterranean climate. My first twelve years of life were in the Mediterranean climate, in the *real* Mediterranean. (laughs) So I was reminded of living in the Mediterranean. I was like, oh, my God, look at this plant! I haven’t seen this plant since I was a kid. Ice plant and stuff like that. The Mediterranean climate is just fantastic. Yes, it was beautiful, so that was not the problem.

Farmer: But you took the job.

Garling: Yep. I came there in ’84. I think it was after the apprenticeship had already started. I think it was in the summer sometime. I was teaching, so I couldn’t really just leave Gainesville. I had to finish my teaching, get my stuff packed up and do whatever it was I was doing then (who knows what that was), and get out there and find a place to live.

Farmer: A lot of people said, “Oh, you’ve got to talk to Lyn.” You are very fondly remembered at the UCSC Farm and Garden. So, from your point of view, what was your contribution to the apprentice program?

Garling: I think at the time that I came there, there were a lot of divisive sorts of things going on. The Farm and Garden has always had this little bit of an “out-player” type of feel to it, because it’s not really an academic program and it’s not really a credential program like you would have in the community colleges. It’s only a six-month program and it’s got this certificate that you get. And universities in general don’t know what to do with this kind of program. I see this better now. I wasn’t really experienced with certain kinds of politics at the time because I’d just been a grad student. I’d never really worked in universities, seen how they work administratively. When I came there, I was just about the concept. Getting to teach people practical organic farming and gardening seemed like a good idea. But from the university’s standpoint they’re all about research, and teaching people, as they like to say, in the academy, teaching them academic skills such that they’re going to progress academically. I think the university never knew what to do with this darn program, even in its very beginnings when Alan Chadwick said, “The students need to have some spiritual relaxation and communing with nature and working with their hands, as well as doing this intellectual work.” And it just so happened that it grew and grew, and the university was like, “What *is* this thing?”

Farmer: (laughs)

Garling: So the Farm and Garden Project went through all these different phases, and the university each time had to decide what they were going to do with this thing in their midst. I think probably early on in the sixties, because the university was founded then, it wasn't that big of a stretch. But as time went on, and the whole freedom days of hippiedom were behind us, the university administration kept asking, "What the heck is this thing and why do they have teepees?" (laughs) Because when I came there were still teepees; they still had donkeys. They had a couple of goats. It was just funky in that direction.

Gliessman was a relatively new faculty member in environmental studies, and he'd done agroecology work in Mexico. So apparently they said, "Great! Here, you can have this." Well, they up on the Hill said that, but the people who were part of the Farm and Garden Project were like, "What do you mean? We've just been given away to somebody we don't know." So when I first came there, there was all this angst about what would become of the program. Kay Thornley was still there. Kay Thornley had worked really hard to keep the apprenticeship afloat, along with Friends of the Farm and Garden. So there was this sort of feud going on between the research faction embodied by Steve Gliessman and the sort of—get out there and get your hands dirty and the work has its own worth separate of academia—that whole faction. They didn't really communicate very well with each other, partly due to closed-mindedness on both sides. But it was hard, I think, for the people on the ground to take, because the university *de facto* gave Steve Gliessman dominion over the Farm and Garden. When he tried to wield that, everybody is like, "Who are you and why are you telling us what to

do?" Then there was some feuding going on between Jim Nelson down at the Farm and Orin Martin up at the Garden. So it was this and that, back and forth.

I think my contribution there, even though I probably didn't do as good of a job as I could have, was at least bringing people together somewhat. Like between Orin and Jim, we kind of got that worked out. And of course, mind you, I come into this job as a coordinator, but I actually had no "power" over anybody. I wasn't anybody's boss. If you take a job called coordinator, beware. Because coordinator means you must try to herd cats.

Farmer: You're in the middle.

Garling: Right, right. And you don't really have any jurisdiction. Not that that would have worked anyhow, but it occurred to me that the only way to make this work was to get everybody to agree. I think I was pretty good on the ground (it didn't work as well as I would have liked with Gliessman) but with everybody else on the ground, of arbitrating, bringing people together and saying, "Okay, what do we want to do here? Let's decide what we want to do. What's best for the apprentices or best for the program? How are we going to do this; how we are going to do that? Let's brainstorm it and decide who's going to do what and let's all agree." Then if everybody would agree, we'd have something to come back to. I think part of my contribution was mending some of that fear that was developing. The place was splitting apart, I think, when I came.

Farmer: It was pretty much in crisis, it sounds like.

Garling: It was. It was. I think so. It was definitely in financial crisis, because nobody was keeping any financial records. You never knew if you were making any money on anything. We were always in the red, and that's a very dangerous situation to be in in the university, because they take a look at that and say, "Well hell, we're cutting this thing. What do we need this for?" We were always going with our hand out to the university. And then, there was always this bitching and moaning about, "The university doesn't give us any money and they should—" I thought, you know, it's to our advantage if we make our *own* money because we can do our own thing then. We won't be as dependent on them.

So the first thing I did was to help bring people together. Second was, I went into Kima's office. At the time, Kima Murietta was keeping the books. I said, "Give me all the books. I want to sit down with them." I went through everything and I looked at everything that was sucking our life's blood financially, stuff like the donkeys and the goats and things, which didn't really have a place anyhow, because they really did not have a job. There was nobody to take care of them consistently and they were a liability because people would visit the Farm and want to play with the animals. One time we got sued for a donkey biting somebody. So anyway, I looked at those things and I said, "You know what? This is just out." Since nobody else was doing that, I could make those decisions. Of course, I did it together with Orin and Jim and said, "Okay, this is what I see. What do you think?"

Farmer: That was your recommendation.

Garling: Yes. So I started taking charge of the books and also instituting financial records for our marketing. And I actually worked the market for a while, not just the roadside market, but the wholesale, so that I understood what was going on. I took charge of the marketing. I started a recordkeeping system for all of our sales.

So I instituted some things that enabled us to grow financially, and to make some critical decisions about what we were and weren't going to do. It wasn't all about money. Like, say for example, we'd say, "Well, we don't make any money at that, but we're going to do it anyhow because it teaches the apprentices this, that, and the other thing." So that activity would have a certain role to play. But everything had to justify itself, either educationally or financially. So we did that.

Then the third thing I would say I accomplished is that I hammered that learning experience into an actual cohesive curriculum. They didn't really have a curriculum *per se*. I put together the original two-volume reader and started a series of classes that gave people the bare fundamentals of biology, botany, entomology, and ecology and that kind of thing, a lot of field trips, so that they could see other things. Otherwise people would come there and be isolated. They'd be insular. "Oh, aren't we the greatest thing since sliced bread? We're all here doing organic gardening or farming." Well, I happened to have been in the world long enough to know: "I've been in other parts of the world and I'll tell you what you are. You're all highly educated, middle-class, or upper-middle-class, or rich, white people with the privilege to come here and learn organic. And you're able to be very doctrinaire about it, because you haven't had to do

anything out in the world.” I wanted to make sure that they saw other kinds of growers who they could talk to, and get a sense of what they did and why, so that they wouldn’t be so— You know how people who are real inexperienced and idealistic are sort of arrogant?

Farmer: Yes.

Garling: I wanted to make sure they were philosophically challenged as well. (laughs) It’s so funny because there (at UCSC) I was probably the more—right wing wouldn’t be the right word to use—but I was the person who was always bringing in these arguments. You know what I’m saying?

Farmer: Mm, hmm.

Garling: I would say, “Yes, that’s easy for you to say. But what about this? What if you’re a grower and you have these contingencies, and if you don’t make this decision you lose your farm? Or, you’re a Third World country and if you don’t use DDT your two-year-old is going to get malaria and die.” That is a real different decision than, “Oh, we can’t use pesticides! We’ll just let nature take its course.” If you let nature take its course, you don’t have a farm or your kid dies. They were very idealistic, so I tried to help them balance that, and understand that, yes, here we are in la-la land. I mean, we’re out here overlooking Monterey Bay with all the resources you could ever want, and the easiest climate in the world to grow organic food in without being challenged. That’s great, and learn

what you can, but don't get arrogant. Don't think just because it's like this here, you can cast aspersions on everybody else in the world.

Also, I guess a fourth contribution I made was in response to the lack of class, race, and ethnic diversity. We began a scholarship program for people who would not otherwise have been able to attend the apprenticeship. The questions on that application tried to get at the class issue.

The Apprentices

Farmer: So that was a really clear description of your contributions. Do you have any memories, or stories, or things that happened that stand out for you? Like, with various individuals who were apprentices, or things like that?

Garling: Oh, tons of them, of course. It was a really exceptional program in that you saw people grow by leaps and bounds. I often used to say to Orin and Jim (both the Jims, Jim Leap⁴ now and Jim Nelson before), "We should take a picture when they very first come, and then take a picture of them at the very end. Because they don't even look like the same people." They came so alive while they were there. I mean, really. Every once in a while there would be somebody who wouldn't work out, or whatever, but in general they thrived. You could literally see that transformation. And then, knowing that they were going on to amazing things. We had our trials and tribs. I mean, no question about it. One time we got that whole thing where everybody got Salmonella. Oh, my God. That was a nightmare! I mean, bad. Somebody was so dehydrated they were in

emergency, and then we had to track it down, and then everybody had to be tested for umpteen weeks until they were clean. Oh, man! Everything came down around us, because it was like, what caused it? And then the university, of course when anything bad happened at the Farm and Garden we were afraid they were going to shut us down. So they were like, okay, what exactly happened? Just trying to deal with that crisis. That was a big hoopla.

There was always stuff going on. We had the whole thing where a woman got raped, and it turned out that one of the South African students was arrested for it. I get a call at midnight and they said, "The cops came and took away this one guy." There were two South Africans there at that time. I thought, man, they got the wrong guy! Because the one they took seemed really, really nice, you know? Seemed easy to get along with. The other guy was kind of problematic. So that was another huge hoopla.

And then another apprentice had stolen something from a construction site on campus and got caught, so we had all this hoopla about that. It's like being a house mother. You've got this tribe of people and things happen. But the other side of it was you saw people go on to do great things. They'd come back and visit. I mean, the whole Cathrine Sneed thing. My God.

Cathrine Sneed

Farmer: Oh, that was during your time?

Garling: Yes! In fact, Cathrine called me out of the blue one December. She was doing a biodynamics program in England somewhere. Because she had decided that she was going to do this horticulture project in the San Bruno County Jail but did not know anything about horticulture, she had to find a relatively short time period, high intensive training. Somehow she'd gotten hooked up with the biodynamics people, I don't really know how. Which was odd, because she was in San Francisco and we were just down the road. But somehow she didn't know about us. But she, in the meantime, had found out about us, and the biodynamics thing wasn't really working out. So she called me from England and said, "Look. Here's what I'm trying to do. I'm [working] in this county jail and I want to do this with the prisoners. I'm trying this biodynamic thing but I can't stand it. It's too sexist and it isn't what I need anyhow. I want to know if I can do your program." I didn't have the wherewithal to just say yes. That isn't how we made our decisions. She said, "Well, I'm coming back to San Francisco for Christmas so can I come up and see you." I said, "Yes, sure."

So she came up. We walked around the Farm. She told me what she was wanting to do. I said, "Okay, here's the deal. You're going to have to apply like everybody else. But you'll get in, so don't worry about it." She was the first person I ever told that. It was just against protocol. But between Orin and Jim and myself, we always allowed each of us to have one apprentice that we took out of the pile and said, "I want this person." Because we always made the decision together, the three of us, and we went through: maybe yes, maybe no, definitely no, definitely yes—we went through the pile like twenty-nine times until we came out with the people that we selected. But each of us was allowed a

freebie, the freebie being, maybe this person doesn't express themselves well in writing but you see something in there anyhow? So if the other two people threw that application in the "no" pile, then you'd go in and fish it out and say, "I've got a hunch about this person." So we were always allowed to have one freebie. (laughs) So I went in to Orin and Jim and said, "Okay, whatever happens with these applications, I don't care who you pick. I only want one person and if we run the whole program for this one person it will be worth it." And that was Cathrine Sneed. That's how she got in, although I'm sure she would've been picked anyway! We're still in contact. We're still friends. But talk about somebody who *did* something with the training!

Farmer: She came to the Back 40 celebration and talked.⁵ She gives presentations to people and opens their eyes. She's still working in the jail.

Garling: It's amazing. Cathrine lives for the people she works with. She's unique, that's for sure. I had never been down to the jail once she got her program up and running. I was always too busy. Finally, one time she was having an open house. You know Wangari Maathai?

Farmer: Yes.

Garling: She won the Nobel Prize recently, but back then in the eighties she was just starting planting trees with all the women. And somehow Sneed was very, very good at aligning those constellations to get everybody in a place for a bunch of PR. She gives away power. She never claimed that any of this was because of

anything she did. She always gives it away to other people. "It's because of this program. It's because of this guy, my boss. It's because of the mayor." Of course she says that, and it's sort of true, because everything has to be working right. But it's not *really* true, because if it weren't for Sneed, nothing would be happening. But it's very politically astute, because when you give away power in a public, positive venue, then they like the program.

So anyway, Wangari Maathai was in the United States because she was getting some kind of a prestigious ecological award in San Francisco. And I don't know how this happened, but Sneed somehow got ahold of her and said, "Look, what we're doing here in the jail is the same as what you're doing there with the villagers. It's just a different kind of disenfranchised people. So we want the City of San Francisco to give you an award too." (I think it was the city, maybe it was the county. I don't know who it was.) But anyway, Sneed was making a PR event to tell everybody about everything. So she called me up and said, "Look, you have got to come up here and you've got to come to this thing. I'm telling you. Get up here. I want all the kick-ass women I know to show up." I said, "Okay, okay." I'd never been there. She'd long graduated. She was up there and working for a few years.

So I go up there and go through security. I get there and there's this greenhouse and there's this beautiful farm there. She assigned me to two of the—she used to call them the crooks. (laughs) One guy was a little Latino guy and the other guy was this big African American guy. She goes, "You show her around. She was my teacher. You show her around." I was so— I could barely speak I was so

choked up. These guys are showing me around. This big black guy is holding this rabbit. They had rabbits, and he's holding this rabbit and he's petting it, and he's saying about how they like these bunnies. I can't believe what I'm seeing. The little Latino guy is showing me the garden and telling me the stuff they like to do. I mean, they're like *emoting*. I was just—like somebody had hit me in the chest with a hammer. I couldn't speak. I was *so* blown away. I thought, you know, everything—all the hard work, all the fighting, all the politicking, all the carrying on, all the long nights, all the long days, all the long everything—it's all worth it because it had an impact beyond yourself. You never *know* that. You don't know that as a teacher. You just don't know. It was so amazing.

But it didn't end there. I go back to the greenhouse. They're going to have this ceremonial part where Wangari Maathai shows up. I'd already known about her, because of what I read. I'm thinking, oh my gosh, I'm going to meet Wangari Maathai! This is great. So I'm sitting there talking to some El Salvadorean woman who's there in jail but she's working in the greenhouse taking care of the plants. So I'm asking her about the plants and she's saying, "Yes, I really like taking care of these little plants and watching them grow." And I'm like dying, right? I'm dying, really seeing the regenerative power of working with living things. So then I see this car pull up and this woman gets out. Who do you think it is? It's Angela Davis. Angela Davis subsequently moved to Santa Cruz and I took her class and all that. But to me, at that time, Angela Davis was like— I mean, she was in the same book as like Zeus or something mythical.

Farmer: (laughs)

Garling: She was mythological. The last I had heard of Angela Davis she was the most wanted woman in America and in Canada, or something. I mean, to me, Angela Davis was a myth. She gets out of this car and she's coming over, and Sneed grabs her by the hand and says, "Come over here. I want you to meet somebody." I didn't have time to recover. She dragged her over to meet me.

Farmer: Ohh!

Garling: Angela Davis is so genteel, very soft spoken, polite. She has a way about her. I was already dying. Now I'm like having an out-of-body experience. Meeting Angela Davis. That was off the chart as far as I was concerned. So she comes over to me, "Oh, hi," and Sneed says something glowing or whatever, and tells her I'm an entomologist, or something like that. So Angela Davis starts asking me something about her houseplants. "What should I do with these bugs on my houseplants?" And I remember having this out-of-body experience, where I'm outside of my body looking down and saying, "You are answering Angela Davis's questions about *bugs* on her houseplants! *This is not happening.*"

So then Sneed says, "Okay, you guys. The two of you have to read this award and give it to Wangari." Like I said, Sneed gives everything away. She gives us this little speech thing that says, "Whereas the city of San Francisco, and whereas—" You know, that kind of thing?

Farmer: Yes.

Garling: In front of the press, with these pictures being taken, and we're supposed to present Wangari Maathai with this award or certificate. I'm thinking, no way. You have these three, talk about kick-ass women, African and African American women doing this incredible work and I am *not* reading this "whereas" thing! Angela Davis is like, "Well, *I'm* not reading it. I don't want to do it." I said, "Well, I'm not doing it." So we had that: "I'm not, I'm not." Sneed is like, "Yes, you are." I said to Angela, "Okay, let's switch off the whereases. You read one and then I'll read one." So we did that, but I'm telling you, at that point I just— You know how when something is so overwhelming you can't remember it?

Farmer: Yes.

Garling: I just lost track of everything. And I never got a picture of it, either. I really wanted a picture of it to prove that it happened. (laughter) That was the biggest thing for me, Sneed's jail project really. It came home to me at that moment, that all this hard work was for something. I just had my little part to play like the rest of the team.

I don't doubt that all the other apprentices have gone on to do great things, but I just never got to see it. You don't know. Think of your own teachers that had an influence on you somewhere down the line. *They* don't know they influenced you. It could have been your sixth-grade teacher who taught you world history. The teachers don't get to know that because of them somebody remembered something and decided to do something. So that was huge for me. It was good.

Moving On

But like I say, by the time that I left [the Agroecology Program] had evolved to a certain point and needed something else. So many changes had happened from the time I got there until the time I left. I was there about eight years, I think. It had grown tremendously in that time. Everything had changed.

Farmer: You said things didn't work out that great with Gliessman. Did you get along with him?

Garling: Well, he had come not too long before me, actually. I think we were both thrust into positions where the playing field was already set. And we were moved into position. Here's Gliessman and this is what he's supposed to do, and here's the apprenticeship coordinator, and here's what they're supposed to do. I think we were both feeling our way. I think if we were sitting on the couch right now having a beer and talking about it, we could decode what happened exactly. But at the time we were both surrounded by all of these other players, with demands on us to perform in a certain way. This is my interpretation. I really don't know how he would interpret it. We seemed to be at odds more often than not. I had a lot of difficulty trying to navigate how to be promoting and advocating for the apprenticeship and the Farm and Garden and still be able to hear what he had to say and get along. So it was a difficult time.

Farmer: Did you get another job? Is that what happened?

Garling: Well, there were at least two precipitating events in my leaving, and then three really, if you count the fact that I felt like I had done all that I could do there in terms of what my skills are, or my interests or strengths. I felt like I was kind of done. I didn't know what to do next. And it needed something that I couldn't do. So there was that.

Then there was the fact that there had been a person hired between Gliessman and the rest of us, and that was Jackie Lundy. I got crossways to her somehow during the time that the first big budget cuts were coming down from the university. I knew without being told that when Agroecology got cut, that Lundy and Gliessman were going to take it out of the apprenticeship budget. I knew that because, generally speaking, we were considered the ones who were able to make income from tuition and sales, therefore we were going to have to make up Agroecology's shortfall with the university budget. It wasn't so much that I couldn't accept that, but I wanted to work with them as a team to figure out how to make the transition. We had this executive committee who was supposed to make decisions collectively. And I was afraid what was going to happen is they were going to by-pass the committee and just *do* it. They were going to say, "Okay, you're going to start working part time. And you're going to have to fire this person, and you're going to do this, and you're going to do that." I had worked really, really hard and put my heart and soul into building that program, and it wasn't going to be okay with me if that's how they were going to handle it. So I wanted to know. I knew the budget cuts were there, and nobody was talking. Everybody was like, "Oh, Jackie's on vacation. Oh, Steve's in Mexico." I thought, fine, I'm calling up the campus. I just want to know the amount so I can

prepare my own budget for discussion. They had some functionary up on campus who handled the budget. So I called her. I said who I was and what I wanted to know. I just wanted to know the numerical amount of the budget cut to the Agroecology Program. As far as I was concerned, all university budget information is public knowledge. So I asked her. She didn't tell me. And I was on tenterhooks. I thought, oh my gosh, nobody is going to talk to me. We're going to have an executive committee meeting and they're going to *tell* me how the cuts are to happen. And I felt insulted, frankly, as one of the members of the executive committee, that we couldn't have this conversation together, that it was going to be handled that way. It was really upsetting to me. See my plan was really, if I knew the numbers I could come up with a plan. I was the program manager, right? So if somebody told me the numbers and said, okay, we're going to cut you by \$30,000, what are the scenarios for this? I can accept that. I'm a grownup. But I can't accept if they just tell me who should be cut inside of my program.

So anyway, it got bad, because we walked into that meeting, and indeed, Jackie Lundy, who had miraculously just that minute gotten back from vacation, all the rest of the time not being available, said (sigh) okay, this is how it's going to happen. And then after the meeting she said she wanted me to stay there. She wanted to talk to me. So I stayed there. And she handed me this two-page letter that was a reprimand, an official reprimand that goes into your file. She needed to build a case against me in order to have a reprimand, but she didn't have a case. Because, frankly, I worked like a slave for that place. And she had all this weird stuff in there. The letter was this long, drawn-out piece. I was flabbergasted. You could have never in a million years told me that that's what

was about to happen. And it was all because I “went over her head” to ask about the budget. Basically the reprimand was because of that. I was so insulted. I was insulted beyond belief.

I thought, that’s it for me. I would have left that second if I could. But my partner Heidi was sick then. Heidi had cancer, so I couldn’t afford to leave my job. So instead of being able to stomp out in righteous indignation and that sort of thing, I responded to the reprimand in writing and it got removed from my file, because by the light of day there was nothing substantial in it, or that could be substantiated.

So basically I felt insulted beyond belief by my so-called upperlings. I had already pretty much done my job anyhow. And then my partner was sick and dying. I could see that eventually, once Heidi was dead and gone, I had zero reason to stay there. Done. It was an evolutionary thing anyhow, even if those other things had not happened. The reprimand in the large scheme of things is just a stupid thing that happens to people who get crossways of their supervisors. I had really given my life’s blood to the place. I felt so insulted by this bureaucrat. (laughter) I would have left anyhow, because it was time for me to go. They needed somebody different. It was time for me to do something different. But I had the triple whammy, so—

Moving to Pennsylvania

When I left I wasn't going "towards" anything. I was going *away* from there. I didn't come to Santa Cruz with the idea that I wanted to live there indefinitely. Nobody can afford to live there. I wanted to farm, and there was no way I was going to farm there. I didn't want to become a part of somebody else's cooperative. I actually was interested in animal agriculture, and because of the dry summers there, it's not feasible. You can't afford land. You don't have any water. I didn't want to grow veggies. There were already a ton of people doing that. I came East mostly because I knew somebody who said, "Hey, come here for a while." It was Carolyn Sachs who worked at Penn State. She had just bought a house here and said, "Oh, come to Pennsylvania for a while. We have a sustainable-ag group." It was brand-new. Pennsylvania was thirty years behind California in sustainable ag, maybe longer.

Once I got here, there was so much to be done. It was an incipient movement here. I mean, Rodale's here, but Rodale seemed very insular at the time. The state as a whole is very, very conventional ag. I didn't come here with the intention of staying, but after a while I was like, gee, I kind of like it here. It rains. You can have a much smaller acreage to farm in, and it's just getting started, and there's so much work to do, and the sustainable-ag group was a dynamic small group of amazing people. PCO (Pennsylvania Certified Organic), is just now, I think, ten years old. It was created since I've been here, whereas CCOF, I don't know how old it is.

Farmer: Thirty years, or something like that.

Garling: Okay, there you go. So PCO just got started. Their sustainable ag group just got started. It was only two years old when I got here. I felt like I could be useful here.

Farmer: So how did you get hired there?

Garling: Oh, you know. (laughs) It's so easy for me to get a job. I tried *not* to work, but I'm no good at it.

Farmer: Oh, you wanted to farm.

Garling: Well, I didn't want to do anything at first. I was blown to bits. I mean, Heidi had died, and I had left everybody I knew, and I was in this place with people I didn't know, and I kind of went into this huge slump for a while. But I'm not very good at doing nothing, and of course I needed income. So word of mouth, same old thing. Carolyn knew this guy, Ed Rajotte, who was in charge of the IPM [Integrated Pest Management] program here at Penn State. He had gotten a grant for something and he needed to hire somebody to do it. In fact, he called me when I was still in California, when I was trying to get ready to move out here. He said, "Hey, I got this grant. You want to take this job?" I said, "I don't know. I've just been working really hard for eight years. I'm exhausted. I don't want to work. I'll think about it." When I got here I went to see him after a while. He told me what it would pay and stuff like that. Since I didn't really care

about the job, I said, "I could do that job. But I'm not working full time for that money. I'll work part time." He said, okay.

Pennsylvania Integrated Pest Management Program

I started working for him and I'm still working for him. I'll tell you what, Ellen. It's not *for* him, it's that we work as a team. He and I are the same age. He does certain things and I do certain things, and we strategize about money and programming and hiring and all that. We're like klick and klack, yin and yang, you know? We work great together. I have all the freedom in the world. I can do whatever I please with the programming. I write grant proposals all the time, which is difficult, but I don't care. I figure the government might as well be spending money on the stuff we're doing currently in inner city Philadelphia.

Farmer: Tell me about that program.

Garling: Well, in the integrated pest management program we're responsible for "promoting IPM throughout the Commonwealth in all sectors." That's a huge task to do. One of the things that I started realizing was that the conventional farmers, they don't want to hear it. Especially grain farmers or dairy farmers don't really want to hear about IPM, scouting for pests, and don't use too many pesticides on your fields. I got tired of talking to them. I realized the other ninety-eight percent of the population that are non-farmers use lots of pesticides without any education about these chemicals. And once you get into the inner city, people use a *ton* of pesticides because they've got lots of roaches and rats

and stuff. If you look at the poison control center data, lots of calls are coming in about kids under five eating rat bait and insecticides, and all this kind of stuff. It's criminal, in my opinion, the way that stuff is legal and commonly available to the masses. So we're doing these outreach and education programs with a partnership with an urban community. We've created the "Philadelphia School and Community IPM Partnership." It includes health workers, nurse-family partnership, asthma workers, tenant groups, neighborhood groups, lead poisoning groups—I mean, every possible kind of group you can imagine. We have two people hired there now, two and a half, actually. And we're doing surveys to find out what they—people in these homes that have a lot of roaches and stuff—what practices they're doing to get rid of their pests. We're trying to educate about if you're going to use a pesticide, use only these, not those. Prevent the pests instead of nuking them all the time; asking, what's the connection between pests and pesticides and asthma and other kinds of chronic illnesses?

It's going very well. It's just a bottomless pit of need. To me, that makes the work worthwhile. I'm full time in the IPM program here in State College. I go down to Philly for meetings, giving talks, and strategic planning. We're going to try to get funding from within the city. We're trying to make a strategic plan that can get implemented across the city. So it's also political work.

I'm involved in a couple of national things, too, helping create standards for IPM in schools, to improve pest management practices around kids. I'm involved with the National Center for Healthy Housing in national efforts to get IPM into

public housing. Besides farming, I'm involved in a lot of different things locally, nationally and in the city itself.

I know how to write grant proposals. I do have to say that that is one of my skills. I close my eyes and I imagine the reviewer. I think, above all else this is a person who does not want to have to slog through a bunch of jargon. They want to know, what are you proposing to do and why, and they want to know it chop-chop. So I do a whole bunch of edits of these things, but I try to hone it down. If I only had thirty seconds to explain this to the person, how would I explain it and be very precise and clear. Then I back it up with a lot of very pointed references. I build a case almost like a lawyer about why this is important. I take all the references, and I make all these statements in the sequence that I want to make them, and they're all referenced—boom, boom, boom, boom—and then the final argument. It's like a clock. It seems to work. (laughter) I love the idea that by words alone I convince the government to give me \$320,000.

Farmer: That is a talent.

Garling: I think so. Words alone. If I calculate it out in dollars per hour of effort, I do pretty well. (laughs)

Over the Moon Farm

Farmer: That's great. So that's your day job. And then you have a farm.

Garling: Correct.

Farmer: I wanted to ask specific questions, because people can actually see the film, hopefully.⁶ So you're raising animals, that's your farming. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Garling: Well, my true love, my first love in farming is actually cows.

Farmer: Dairy cows?

Garling: Dairy cows. But having a dairy is too time consuming, too expensive, too financially risky, and starting from scratch is very difficult. So since I have a town job, a "job-job," I can't really have a dairy. Then the older I get, the harder it is to even conceive of having a dairy, because it's such hard work. Plus, I do want to travel and do other things in the world too. It's hard to balance my desire to be rooted with my desire to travel, do things in the rest of the world. So dairying was not really an option, because it was so hard to get into and expensive. But what was going on here in Pennsylvania during the time I started working with the sustainable-ag group, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), was that everybody was getting into this rotational grazing. Because it rains here, you can do that with a relatively small amount of land. So on a farm I was renting for a while, not this farm, I started raising some dairy heifers. You can just raise them up and they get big and you sell them. That's how you get to play with cows without having to milk them. So I was doing that for a while.

Then during that same time all of a sudden this whole “pastured poultry” concept came up, you know, Joel Salatin,⁷ and all that stuff. I went to one of his presentations. I thought, huh, I bet I could do that. So I started out with like fifty chickens and tried it, you know, got them butchered and sold them, and people liked them and I liked them. Then I kept doing it, little by little, and I built up my client base that way. Plus, that was cash flow. You raise a heifer; you don’t get any money for two years. You keep shelling out and shelling out, and hopefully she’ll be okay and bring a good price. So I started raising chickens, who cycle in eight weeks, and little by little got more customers.

Then meanwhile, in the midst of all that I ended up deciding to buy this little farm, which is in the same general area, so I didn’t have to lose my customers or do anything different. I bought this farm in ’98. At the time I only could afford the homestead. It’s only five acres total, with the house and everything that’s on it. So I couldn’t really do cows here, even though I had some heifers at the time. I brought them with me and then sold them. I thought, oh well, I guess I can’t do cows. But I was continuing with the chicken business. And then in 2000 another piece of land right across the way from me came up for sale, which is really ironic and odd. It was actually forty-some acres and I went in on it with my neighbor, because neither one of us could afford it, so we split it. He got half and I got half. So I put in a rotational grazing system out there and started getting heifers again.

Actually, what I’m doing now is one of the Amish guys sends me his heifers for the summer and I raise them for him and he pays me once a month. That’s nice

because it's cash flow and I don't have to buy and sell. I don't like buying and selling cattle.

Farmer: Yes. How do you do that? Do you have to go to an auction?

Garling: Well, I would do it privately, because now I know lots of farming people. You've got to be really careful at auctions and if you send something a lot of times you don't get a good price. So for a while here I raised my own beef. I got steers from my neighbor. But then, after the barn burned down a couple of years ago, I had no way of handling them. Meanwhile I'm selling a thousand chickens a year, and the customers started asking about pork and beef and stuff like that, so I branched out. I also raise turkeys. Everything is done organically and the farm is certified. Everybody wants that kind of meat. So that's little-by-little how I got into meat. I never really meant to get into meat.

Farmer: Are you a meat eater yourself?

Garling: I'm not one of those people who has to have meat every day or anything. Sometimes I think of quitting it altogether, because I'm not all that crazy about killing things all the time. I would still rather have a dairy where you milk them. I'd rather have a dairy and hens and honeybees. You milk them; you get eggs out of them; and you get honey out of them. But you don't have to be constantly killing everybody. You know? But I'll tell you, grass-fed meat is something you can do while you have a job elsewhere, because you feed them and water them in the morning; you go to work and you come home, and you

feed them and water them at night. Well, you can't really do that with dairy very easily. It takes way too much more time. And you can't do it with vegetables because you always have to be harvesting and selling exactly when everything is ready. It doesn't work.

Farmer: Do you slaughter your own chickens?

Garling: No, an advantage of this area is that there're a lot of small butcher shops around. You can get USDA-certified for the beef, or there's a Mennonite guy and his whole family who does poultry, and they're really good at it, and fast. So I don't have to actually do the killing. That's good because I don't really want to do the killing and the cleaning. It's a big mess and it has to be sanitary. And he's all set up to do that, so it's just as easy. You take the chickens in a crate the night before and leave them there. He processes them first thing in the morning. And you go back and pick them up. I have a trailer with a freezer on it. I pack them in ice in the freezer and take them to where I distribute them.

Farmer: Do people order them ahead of time?

Garling: They do. But I also have plenty extra, because people half the time forget, or I pick up customers in the middle of summer by word of mouth. I don't like to turn them away: "You didn't pre-order so I can't sell you guys chicken." It's kind of a pain because I never know exactly how many to raise, but I've done it long enough that I have kind of a feel for it.

Farmer: For the market. Well, that's interesting. And you said you do turkeys for Thanksgiving, right?

Garling: Right.

Farmer: Big ones, male and female?

Garling: Yes, but many people don't want a big turkey. It's so weird. They say, "Well, how big is that?" And I say, "Twenty pounds," and they have a heart attack. Go figure. I say, "Well, you just bought a six-pound chicken. Now you want a twelve-pound turkey?" I mean, it's almost impossible to raise a mature turkey that weighs twelve pounds.

Farmer: That's too small?

Garling: It's too small! I have to get turkeys in July. July, August, September, October, November. The turkeys are like four to five months old. The chickens are eight weeks old. They can weigh five to six pounds sometimes. It's a pretty unthrifty turkey that's only going to weigh twelve pounds after all that time.

Farmer: Yes.

Garling: People are like, "Ah, it can't possibly fit in my oven!" I'm like, "Yes, you can." I put a thirty-six-pound turkey in my oven, and I don't have a big oven.

Farmer: Well, people don't have as big families as they used to.

Garling: That's why God made freezers! You cook a turkey and you take the meat off the carcass. Oh! People are so weird. Anyway—

Farmer: I think people have been trained by the agro-industrial food system to want—

Garling: No kidding.

Farmer: —things to be more convenient.

Garling: They want it convenient. They'll call me and say, "Do you have chicken breasts?" I'll say, "Yes, but it's attached to the rest of the chicken."

Farmer: (laughs)

Garling: (laughs) They only want chicken breasts. I say, "Eat the goddamn chicken." You know?

Farmer: When I was a child my mother taught me how to suck the bones. Does anybody do that anymore?

Garling: She knew what was good. I have the gamut. I have people who are like, (vampire voice) "Give me the organ meat. I want to eat a liver." And I have other

people who, if they see a liver, they just about faint. I have people that are so fruffy and weird, and then I have other people that are like “Rosemary’s Baby.” They want to eat raw liver over the sink and suck the marrow out of the bones. It’s hilarious.

Farmer: (laughs) How long have you been raising meat?

Garling: Well, I’ve lived here since ’98, so that’s almost ten years here. So a couple of years before I moved here. Let’s just say ten years. Starting with chickens, and I probably added pork and beef—oh gosh, four years ago for pork, five years ago for beef, I don’t really know.

Farmer: How do you like raising pigs?

Garling: Pigs are a riot. I love the pigs. As long as I don’t have to shoot them myself I’m okay. Like I say, if I had my choice I wouldn’t be doing meat, just because I don’t like all the killing. I’d grow my own meat for any meat that I wanted, maybe one pig a year and one batch of chickens, that’s it. I don’t have to have meat every day and I don’t really care about beef. If it were just me, just for our household, I would get ground beef from somebody else. I wouldn’t even bother raising a whole cow, buying a whole cow or anything. But the people that eat meat, they want clean meat. I have customers who’ve said, “I’ve been a vegetarian for years because I couldn’t get the kind of meat I wanted.”

Farmer: What do you think about the people that say a big part of our ecological problem is that people eat too much meat?

Garling: It's definitely true that meat is ecologically expensive. I haven't done the math on the acreage, but meat and milk take a lot of acreage to farm. Milk, too.

Farmer: When you have those nice pastures with the rain falling, that helps.

Garling: See, for us here, like with the beef now, I'm sourcing beef for my customers from a guy I know. It's only grass-fed, no grain. Ruminants have this tremendous ability to convert cellulose to protein. So the whole point there is they don't *have* to eat grain. I feed the chickens grain because they have to grow a certain size by a certain time, and the pigs too, because I'm seasonal. But if I were growing for my own use they wouldn't get as nearly the amount of grain that they get because I have to do it in a hurry. With beef, any of the ruminants can do perfectly well without any grain. And if they're just on hilly ground here that you shouldn't be farming anyhow because you shouldn't be tilling it, and they're eating grass, well, I don't see a problem with that.

Farmer: Joel Salatin says that they just bite off the top, and the roots stay in the ground, and the grass grows back so they're actually really pretty good about sustainability.

Garling: Definitely. See, if I were to have a dairy, which would be the best-case scenario, the dairy cows would only eat grass. I wouldn't feed any grains. They would just eat grass and they'd convert it to milk and cheese. What could be better?

Farmer: Mm, hmm. Except for the lifestyle, because you're stuck there [doing the work of milking etc.].

Garling: Well, it's not the "stuckness" so much, although there is that. It's the financial risk. The price of milk sucks compared to the costs of feed, machinery, animals. Do you know what a good cow costs? Two thousand dollars plus. You know what you get for milk? Let's just say you get \$22 for one hundred pounds of milk. One hundred pounds of milk, \$22.00, is about fifty cents per gallon. And that is an *excellent* price—even now the price for conventional milk can go as low as \$12 per hundredweight, and rarely exceeds \$16.

Farmer: How long does that take? How many days is that?

Garling: Well, it depends on the cow and the stage of lactation and all that, but the point I'm making is that that's not very much money compared to the cost of the cow, the cost of feeding a cow all year long, the cost of the equipment, the cost of the trucking: the cost, cost, cost, cost. You have to pay pay pay. And then those milk prices go up and down, up and down.

Farmer: You're talking organic milk prices?

Garling: Well, those are going to do the same thing. Like, right now in our area the organic outfits aren't taking any more dairies on because they say we have enough organic milk.

Farmer: Well, they're trying to keep the price up.

Garling: Well, there's that, but the small companies are competing with Horizon and Aurora and the other big ones. I don't know what's going to become of the whole thing.

But ecologically speaking, that whole argument about meat needs to be fine-tuned somewhat. Pigs are incredibly thrifty. They'll eat anything. On a farm, the pigs pay for themselves because they'll eat all your old rotting pumpkins. Like right now, I've got pears falling off the trees, apples off the trees. They'll eat anything. They're like a garbage disposal. It's great. And they'll till the soil. Like in the past I've done it where I've moved them out into the garden after the garden dies back and they'll till everything up, dig it up and pee and poop on it. Then I move them someplace else. I use them like a rototiller. And then, like I say, they'll eat anything. So if I were growing them for myself, slow, they would hardly get any additional feed. They'd get whatever I had. It is true that because I'm growing for market I need them to grow faster and a consistent size by a certain time. Because I have to do it within the time that— I don't farm in the wintertime. They're raised outside.

I think ruminant animals have a place in a climate like ours where it's hilly and you shouldn't be tilling anyhow, and it rains and you got a lot of grass that grows. I don't think meat has to be as ecologically expensive as it is in the way it's grown conventionally. But, at the same time, we can't grow as much meat if you're going to use the techniques I'm talking about. So you have to limit the amount of meat that you eat. Otherwise, what? Where's it going to come from?

Farmer: In the film, you made a very strong statement about the price ceiling on food, that people really do determine the price of food. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Garling: Well, people are used to paying a certain price for food. But if you talk about the *true* cost, the true ecological cost— Like, if I raise a chicken and I sell that chicken for \$2.55 a pound plus the butcher fee, and you get a five-pound chicken, you're paying like fifteen bucks for a chicken. People are like, "Holy Moley, I can go down and buy a forty-nine-cent-per-pound on-sale Tyson chicken down at a store." And I'm like, well, yes, you can. But they don't understand that the only reason that that chicken is cheap is because those huge operators are massively subsidized by your taxes via commodity subsidies: the corn and all that stuff, and they can afford to sell stuff cheap. This system also got rid of independent producers. The same thing happened in the hog industry. They use antibiotics and all this other stuff that makes the chicken grow really fast; they take on water so the actual texture of the chicken is mushy. They hire all this labor, usually Hispanic or poor, that costs them two cents an hour or

whatever the heck, you know? They have an economy of scale, millions and millions of chickens. I can't compete with that in price.

But consumers are used to being able to go to a store and see a certain range of prices, and those prices are low. All of the environmental costs and everything else has been externalized there. Now it's going to be a little different because ethanol is causing corn to become scarce. So corn is finally going to become more expensive. But corn is still subsidized, meaning you're paying for it in taxes. You just don't know it. You just don't know it. I met with a senator here recently. We have a Women in Ag Network here in Pennsylvania [Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network (PA-WAgN)], and we met with this one senator, Bob Casey, who is now on the Senate Ag Committee. He asked to meet with us to talk about the Farm Bill. We go to talk to him and I said, "You know, the Farm Bill, if you look at the commodities program, that is the biggest thing that is competing with independent, entrepreneurial farmers, because we get no prices for it. We don't get a kickback from the government, because we're not growing anything the government pays us for. If I were growing corn, I would automatically get paid by the government the difference between my cost of production and what I could get for the corn. So it's a no-lose situation because they're always going to front me the money that I would have lost. Plus, I get my money for my corn. I get a government check *and* I get the payment for my corn. Well, if I'm not on price support, I don't have that." So they're already making sure that all the big corn growers stay in business. And then that makes the corn cheap for the meat producers and the big factory farms, but I can't compete with either, because I don't have the cheap corn.

Farmer: Was he listening?

Garling: Oh, yes, he was listening. He's a pretty good guy. He was listening. But the entrepreneurial farmer, unless something happens fast, we're at this point where in the conventional ag realm, like where I live, all the farmers around me (unless they're Amish, which is a different case), but all the English, which means non-Amish farmers, are old, including me, actually. And they're all going to retire, and none of their kids are on those farms. I shouldn't say none, but few. And what's going to happen when all these people with—yes, it's conventional knowledge, but they do know how to farm—what's going to happen when they all go away?

Farmer: And is their acreage going to get bought up by the big conventional farms?

Garling: No. Just because here in this particular region the Amish will probably buy these farms. So they'll stay in relatively small farming. Plus, we have lots of hills here. Really huge conventional farms want one hundred square miles of flat land. We don't have that. Closer to State College, the farmer will go into housing development.

Farmer: There was something in the Farm Bill about disaster relief or disaster insurance, or something like that.

Garling: Yes, there's always something like that, but again, large farms tend to utilize those programs. But still, the farmer takes all the risk in food production. Say you're buying chicken from me. Well (in fact this happened a few falls ago), Patty and I went away. The chickens were fine. Everything was fine. It was supposed to rain. It was no big deal. And we left our apprentice that year, Liz, home at the farm. We went someplace overnight, or maybe it was two nights, I don't remember. And so this rain, instead of being just rainfall, turned out to be tropical storm somebody or another, and it rained, I don't know, four inches in an hour or some ridiculous thing. The chickens were out in their movable pasture poultry pens in a low spot in the field, and the field flooded. It killed every last one of them. Two hundred chickens! Okay, for me (and those chickens were going to be butchered the following week) that's—let's see, two hundred chickens, let's say times ten dollars, that's two thousand dollars lost, right? And I only make about three bucks a chicken, so I not only lost what my so-called profit would have been, but I lost everything that I had in them. You, as my customer, lost nothing. You don't get to buy a chicken; that's what you lost. The farmer bears the entire risk.

The farmer lives in that space between nature and the production. And it's constant vigilance: Is it too hot? Is it too cold? Is it windy? Is it snowing? Is it raining? Is it this? Is it that? Oh, my God, I have to call the house, make sure to batten down this, make sure to batten down that. And if something happens, we bite it.

So these disaster relief things, that's fine, for what it is. But it's like a finger in the dike, you know? It's just a little tiny piece of the overall risk. The price risk is real every single day. The prices of everything go up, but what we can charge for our products can't go up to match. The foxes got in the pullets [young hens]. Out of twenty pullets, the foxes ate twelve of them, maybe more, I don't know. So that's egg production I don't have for two years. You get the picture.

So the thing is, like I said to this senator, the Farm Bill has ten chapters. Putting little band-aids on here and there isn't going to do it. To me, the question that we the American people, or you, or the senator have to ask yourselves is: "What do we want the Farm Bill to do for us? What is the future of American agriculture?" And then, make a coherent vein that runs through all ten of those titles in the Farm Bill. Otherwise it's just band-aids. Instead, what do we get? "We'll give them a little more disaster relief here. We'll give them a little bit of rural development money here. Let's give them a couple of million dollars." I said, "That ain't gonna cut it. All these old farmers are retiring and nobody wants to farm. Why? Because they work like a damn dog and can barely make a living. There's a disconnect between the fact that we as a society are living this middle-class life value system—gotta have a car, gotta have a college degree, gotta have insurance, gotta have health care, health insurance. If I raise a thousand chickens and I make three dollars a chicken, I make three thousand dollars a summer on chickens out of all that work. Three thousand dollars in a whole summer. Most people make more than that in a month! And they don't have any risk associated with it. Why? Because they go to a job and get a paycheck, which is why people don't want to farm. It's not because they don't like it.

Farmer: But that's why they want to do industrial farming. Because they say people are going to starve if somebody's not farming, so let's do it the most efficient way we can think of.

Garling: Well, if you look at the truth— I mean, there's efficiency and then there's efficiency. They are "efficient" in large part because they can externalize all of the ecological costs, use cheap labor, and they have massive subsidies from the government. In the US, without Mexicans, we would not have cheap meat and vegetables and fruit, or maybe any food at this point.

Farmer: That's also not going to go on forever.

Garling: No, it isn't. That's what I'm saying. Everything's changing now and I'm not sure what's going to happen. I'm really not. It's not just here. One of the things I said to the senator, I said, "You know, we've become a net food importer in the United States. It seems to me to be the ultimate irony that we would be importing *food* from China, a country that used to be starving, and limited its growth to one child. And we're just la-da-da going along letting our farms die, and now we're going to import food from China? You think it's bad that we're importing toys. Wait until we've become dependent on them for *food*. Or on anybody else for food, for that matter. It's ludicrous. We have some of the best soil and best climate in the world."

I mean, I like avocados and if we want to get a few extra avocados from Mexico, that's fine. And I'm for trade. I'm not anti-trade or any of that. But it needs to be

fair. If we want to have agriculture in this country, we need to pay attention. Because it's going to go away if we don't.

Farmer: Yes, and that's food security.

Garling: Yes, there's nothing that is more important than that, I don't think. They don't seem to see that. They think security has something to do with guns, I guess. I don't know.

Farmer: So have you ever thought of, or heard of any public policies that you'd like to see enacted that would help small farmers?

Garling: Well, there was a report that USDA put out. They had a small farm conference or something. I think it was in '96. They had a full book full of excellent recommendations. There's a whole list of things that you could wish for and are actually attainable, if we as a society would set our minds to it.

Farmer: Was it programs where people could actually get funding because a small farm was valued as a local source of food, and that kind of thing?

Garling: I didn't read the whole thing cover-to-cover, but much of it had to do with marketing strategies and certain policies about land ownership and access to credit.

Farmer: But still the rugged individualist as a farmer.

Garling: Well, they had significant suggestions about key revisions to government policies. But I don't know that you could make it other than individual farmers, frankly, because it's such a difficult enterprise. I mean, co-ops are really difficult to do in this capitalist society. It didn't go that far. I don't think it was very radical *per se*. But the key recommendations I was looking at in the report, it was like: "That's a good idea; that's a good idea." And my guess is that it's sitting on somebody's shelf in Washington and hasn't been used.

Farmer: Okay, but the good ideas are plain and they're out there.

Garling: Yes, it's a very good document. It was a small farm conference, and they got together in these focus group things to say okay, what do we need, and divided it up by policy, and by markets, and by access to land and credit. There's a national small-farm center that put it together and they did a very good job. But small farms don't have a lot of clout. There're not that many of them. And if you consider those kinds of statistics—like, they say only two percent of people are farming—what kind of a political base is that?

Farmer: Yes, and compared to the big donations coming from the big corporations, come on.

Garling: Exactly! Or anything else that's not the two percent.

Teaching and Outreach

Farmer: Your day job still allows you some time to do some teaching, it sounds like, or at least contribute to education.

Garling: Yes, the kind of teaching I'm doing is mostly— Well, I guess in the sense that it's similar to the apprenticeship in that it's adult education. It's not academic teaching, *per se*. I don't really like that line in sand—this is academic and this isn't—because a lot of what we did at the apprenticeship was derived from academic understanding.

Right now, I'm doing awareness building of health implications of pesticides. I bring to bear the biology, and explain these critters that everybody seems to be deathly afraid of, and say, "Well, they're just creatures and here's what they need and here's why they're here. And if you understand this and where they came from, you're much better equipped to try to prevent them from becoming a problem." I try to demystify these pesticides, too, because people just treat them so cavalierly. I say, "Do you know what this stuff is? Let me tell you what this stuff is." "Oh, my God. I had no idea." "Of course you had no idea. Why would you know about this?" I teach a class on IPM for school nurses and say, "You all had chemistry, toxicology etc. in school. So, you tell *me*, what is "Raid?" They give me that look, the one I love to see on faces when I'm teaching—the light suddenly went on! "Omigod, I have *no* idea what Raid is."

Farmer: Yes, the writing on the can is so tiny you can't even read it.

Garling: Yes, and then when you do read it you're like, *say what?*

Farmer: The words don't mean anything.

Garling: Well, it doesn't say, "This chemical is a neurotoxin," or, "This chemical is implicated in cancer." It doesn't say anything. It just gives you a really long name. And you say, "Another long name like everything else I have in a can somewhere." Like, my latest thing is in the low-income urban neighborhoods there's a brand called "Landlord's Formula Roach Killer." It's a spray, cherry-scented. So it smells like cherry. There's one that's cherry, and there's one that's pine, and one that's something else. So I wrote to my friend who works at EPA and I said, "You know, Kathy, how about this? You can have pesticides as air fresheners." I can totally imagine, because people do not know that these pesticides are poisonous, saying, "Hey, it stinks in here. Let's spray a little of this, and if it kills bugs it'll be fine, that's all for the good." So right now I've got a bunch of emails in my inbox. She's trying to track it down. Like wait a minute, how did this happen?

Farmer: Cherry-scented pesticides.

Garling: Isn't that good? Kills roaches and smells like cherries, perfect. Also, people have this misconception that if it smells good it's safe. If it stinks it's dangerous.

Farmer: Well, people hate it when their industries go away. So they keep trying to keep them going.

Garling: Well, they *can* keep them going. Most of these pesticides are mostly water anyhow. They make a killing on homeowner pesticide formulations. Now they can just put stuff that's less toxic in it and they'll *still* make a killing because people want to spray. There're so many people with the attitude towards insects of, "Ew! Kill it." Well, fine. At least don't kill yourself while you're at it.

Oh, people are such idiots sometimes. I'm telling you, I do all these public outreach things and there're some people who are very thoughtful, you know, and you tell them this is a dangerous pesticide. There are other people that are averse to other life forms. They tend to be suburban people. Nothing else that lives, unless it's Bambi, or their dog or cat or pet bird, really has any right to exist anywhere near them. They just cannot tolerate it. I can't understand that. They'll say, "Well, how do I get rid of whatever (fill in the blank, you know). I start asking them questions. Let's say they have millipedes in their basement. Well, there's only one reason why they would have millipedes in their basement, because millipedes do not want to be in their basement, and that's because there's some rotting leaf litter near the door that leads to the basement. Because that's what millipedes eat. So I say, "Do you have a stairwell that goes down to your basement?" "Yes." "And are there leaves down there from last fall?" "And they're like, "Uh, yes. How did you know?" I'm like, "Well, that's what millipedes eat. And they're in your basement because they got in there accidentally under the door." They want to know what can they spray to get rid

of millipedes and keep them out. That's what they're asking me. I say, "Well, if they really bother you— They can't hurt you; they don't bite; they don't sting. But if you sweep them up or vacuum them up and then seal that thing and clean up the leaves you won't have any trouble."

Now, some people are cool with that. Other people don't want to hear it. They will keep coming at me, "What can I spray to get rid of them?" I lose patience with that. These millipedes, I mean, *you* are living in *their* world. And you insist on nuking them. For what? They're helpless little creatures not hurting you, just trying to live. And you want to kill them with a poison. There's something wrong with that, and there are so many people like that. And I come across them constantly. They want a silver bullet, even if the silver bullet is potentially dangerous to them. I cannot get through to that kind of a person.

There was this excellent interview with E.O. Wilson in *National Geographic* magazine about a year ago. There was a reporter interviewing Wilson (and reporters are really bad, too, because they want something sensationalist). This reporter was asking him something about ants, I guess. They got on the topic of ants. And Wilson came from ants. I mean, that was what he studied, and when I was in grad school that's what I studied. I find them fascinating. They're social insects. I totally adore them. Not every minute of the day, like when I had army ants crawling up inside my pants and stinging me I wasn't happy, and that kind of thing. But they're really fascinating, and we as a society have a knee-jerk reaction about everything being a pest, you know. So this reporter was kind of egging him on about negative impacts of ants. He's saying, "Yes, but aren't ants

like, can't they be really like, cause a lot of damage and this and that and the other?" And Wilson was saying, "Well, there are thousands of species, and most of them do this, and they do a tremendous service because they recycle these materials." This guy kept going, "Yes, but; yes, but." He kept doing that.

Finally, Wilson said, "I've never seen an ant that I didn't think was beautiful." That was the end of the interview. (laughter) I don't know if that was the end of it, but that's where they stopped it. And I thought, what can you say? That guy thought Wilson was a nutcase. And Wilson is just putting up with this. That reporter will never get a clue. You deal with that all the time. You just see this. It's anthropocentric arrogance. We think we are the center of the universe and everything needs to bend to our will and therefore we're going to spray every last dandelion. For what? It's a mentality I just can't abide.

¹ See the oral history with Steve Gliessman in this series.

² See the oral history with Orin Martin in this series.

³ See the oral history with Patricia Allen in this series.

⁴ See the oral history with Jim Leap in this series.

⁵ On July 27-29, 2007 the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems had a weekend celebration for their fortieth anniversary. Cathrine Sneed was a featured speaker at this celebration.

⁶ Garling is featured in: *Ladies of the Land: A Film About Growing*, 2007, Megan Thompson.
<http://www.ladiesofthelandmovie.com/index.html>

⁷ Joe Salatin runs Polyface Farm in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and has pioneered pastured organic meat farming. He has written several books about his life and methods and was featured in Michael Pollan's book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. See <http://www.polyfacefarms.com>.