

OWL Farm celebrates 10 year anniversary

by Jemma Crae

It was nine years ago that I first visited OWL Farm. My land partner and I had moved to a 130-acre forested piece of land west of Roseburg two years before in 1975. We felt sure we were the only rural lesbians in the area then. But we were wrong. Slowly we started meeting other country women of southern Oregon. One group of women was only five miles away from us! It was through these connections that I heard of OWL Farm, located near Days Creek, and the incredible women's en-



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ergy happening there. So it was on a beautiful summer's day that I went to my first Oregon Women's Land Trust meeting. I remember a certain feeling when I walked up the path to

the main house. It was one of incredible peace and healing. How strange, how powerful this was in the midst of all the excitement and activity of the day. I looked up the valley and saw the big ashes, the pink log house, the quiet house, and the yurt in a meadow of white daisies. I immediately felt drawn to this land, its energy, its promise, and its potential.

That first day was filled with greeting many women, preparing a huge bowl of salad in the outdoor kitchen, attending the land trust meeting in a beautiful 16 foot yurt, and listening to and sharing women's ideas and feelings. The meeting itself was a new experience to me. All decisions were made by consensus and there was a road woman who kept the women on track. We followed an agenda decided on by everyone. That night there was a circle around a fire and we all sang songs about our power and wisdom. I felt connected to the women and to this beautiful land. I slept in an old abandoned school bus and in the morning I helped milk the goats. I was eager to experience it all and it was all there to experience.

The Oregon Women's Land Trust began in 1975 when several women got together to decide to purchase a piece of land so that women and children would have a safe, healing space to live. It was felt that there should be a place for women, who might not have the means to live rurally, to live close to the earth, to grow their own food and be connected with other women in a communal setting. These founding mothers searched in Oregon for such a place and found OWL Farm nestled in a beautiful valley. OWL (Oregon Women's Land) Farm is 147 acres of forest and meadows. It has three dwellings, a barn, chicken coop, green house, creek and many springs. All of the land, situated in a bowl at the end of a valley, is south facing and ideal for solar energy and growing all kinds of crops. The original women, working out of Eugene, decided to form a Land Trust and set up a non-profit corporation with a board of directors. Corporation papers of the by-laws and amendments were filed with the state. The first land trust meeting was called July 1976 and over 100 women came. There

was great celebration. At that time there were about 13 women committed to living there for a certain period of time as well as various groups of visitors. The spirit of cooperation and energy was high and many projects were going full steam.

Since that time there have been many waves of women living at OWL Farm. Each group added its own special dynamic. It was through these years of experimenting with different ways of living and being that a set of Land Trust Agreements were developed. They symbolize the change and growth of the women of OWL Farm and are as follows: 1. No men on the land except for maintenance and repairs. 2. No drugs or alcohol to the point of abuse to the self or others. 3. No violence to the land, structures or others. 4. Weekly meetings to keep in touch with feelings. 5. The grievance procedure should be used to mediate unresolved disagreements.

The Oregon Women's Land Trust continues to have land trust meetings every three months at OWL Farm. After the meeting a newsletter is sent to our members detailing the events at OWL Farm and our financial situation. Subscription fee is \$3 per year. There are 400 women on our mailing list from all over the USA, Canada and foreign countries. Any woman who agrees with our purpose can be a member. We depend on fundraising events and our members to donate money to pay our \$365/mo. land payment and additional taxes of \$2,000/yr. At times women on the farm pay money toward the land payments and there is a camping fee of \$3/night for our many visitors. OWL Farm cost \$65,000 to buy but through these 10 years we have paid much more than that with interest and taxes. Today we only have \$20,000 left to pay on the land. To me this amount symbolizes the determination and dedication of women to keep OWL Farm alive. I encourage you who read this to come visit OWL Farm, to join our effort and help financially to keep OWL Farm for all of us to enjoy.

Since we are proud of our herstory and full of love for this land, we are going to celebrate our existence with a 10 year anniversary celebration at OWL Farm this summer. It will be a two-day weekend event July 19th and 20th. Saturday will be a special Open House from 11-4. The outside community is invited which includes rural neighbors and friends and the gay men of southern Oregon. There will be a flea market, arts and crafts sale, baked goods and a plate lunch served. On Sunday the women only celebration will start at noon. Events this day include an auction, square dance, music and entertainment, personal theater with Bethroot Gwynn, a potluck supper and full moon circle. Women from all over Oregon will gather to celebrate the land and our achievements. Come and spend time on this beautiful land and feel her special powers. Directions to OWL Farm: Take I-5 to Canyonville. Follow Co. Rd. #1 to Days Creek. Turn left onto Rd. #34. Go 1 1/2 mi. Go left on Rd. #92. Go 1 3/4 mi. Take the first road to the right and go 1 1/2 mi. to a fork. Take the left fork to the OWL parking lot. For more information call Hannah at 673-7649 or write Oregon Women's Land Trust, PO Box 1692, Roseburg, OR 97470, or OWL Farm, PO Box 133, Days Creek, OR 97429.

When I look back and remember the enthusiasm, joy and excitement on all those womens' faces circling the yurt's perimeter on that summer day nine years ago, I feel pride in knowing that women care about this land and its existence. OWL Farm does keep happening through thick and thin, thanks to all our supporters that care and love this magical place.

Jemma Crae is a founding member of GALA and currently co-president. She is a past president of Umpqua Rivers N.O.W. and a member of Oregon Women's Land Trust's Board of Directors.

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