



In archival papers some lesbians described the 147-acre OWL Farm as the place where they felt safe for the first time

one woman described learning to use a tool one day and teaching another woman how to use it the next. In this early period hundreds of women passed through OWL Farm, and many chose to stay for months or years. Some lesbians described it as the place where they felt safe for the first time.

Some who lived on the land held outside jobs or conducted fund-raisers to support the community. Donations of \$5 or \$10 trickled in from women throughout the country to support this new vision of an open women's land. Other communities around the country began to spring up, modeling themselves after the trust.

For a while in the 1990s, fewer and fewer women came to stay at the farm. A core group had left, and not as many travelers passed through. The board members eventually surmised that one reason for the falloff was the difficulty of trying to live in a place where a new person could suddenly show up at the door and command as much power as a woman who'd been living there for 10 years.

The trust knew they had to do something or say goodbye to OWL. In 1997 they changed the structure; OWL Farm still welcomes women visitors for up to a two-week stay, but now there's an approval process for becoming a permanent resident.

Cory and Rae Milecar currently live at OWL Farm with their newborn daughter, Maradaya. Cory had visited for years and always dreamed of living there. When she brought her new partner for a weekend visit last year, she smiles, "She wasn't on the land more than two hours and said, 'We're moving here.'"

Cory is anxious to share her love of OWL with other visitors. "If you ever come out, you'll know what I mean from the moment you step onto the land. You feel a real spiritual connection with the land," she asserts.

Cory and Rae welcome women to come and stay for a few nights. "There's nothing like getting back to the earth, coming back to nature and the old way of doing things," Cory says. She invites women and their children to camp or stay in the main house. "I want people to know that there's a reawakening at OWL—that she's alive and well."

The farm has a large organic vegetable garden and an orchard with apples, pears, cherries and grapes. A stream runs through the land, and woods and meadows welcome women to explore nature. Ni Aodagain says the land is open to all women, but it attracts 99.9 percent lesbians.

Oregon Women's Land Trust is playing host to a fund-raiser Garden Party from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 13. Besides a delicious lunch, you'll find women from surrounding women's lands with produce and crafts for sale and with helpful gardening tips.

"It's a wonderful place to come if you just want to get away," notes Cory. "If you want to escape the rush of the city, and you want a place to come and relax." **JO**

For directions to OWL FARM call 541-643-2565.

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