

for hopefully not too long before being sold en masse beneath the fluorescent glow of the mega-mart meat counter. I have, it seems, been part of the problem.

Berry cuts me a little slack, but it's slack found only in my own ignorance: In my fluorescent grocery store trance, Berry determines that the consumer like me is "amid an astonishing variety of products ... denied certain significant choices." In such a state of economic ignorance, he writes, "it is not possible to choose the products that were produced locally or with reasonable kindness toward people and toward nature." So ignorance got me chicken stink, but maybe the stink will set me free, jolt me from the easy, lazy trance.

So here I am doing a walk-through at Laughing Stock to observe how a small, local farm operates. Beneath the long-sleeved coveralls he wears to work in, Atkinson has on a forest green Laughing Stock T-shirt, canvas work pants and knee-high rubber boots. He is of medium height and lean in build; both his skin and straight hair show touches of tan from work in the summer sun.

Atkinson lives on the 50-acre property of Laughing Stock Farm in the upstairs level of a bright, woodsy two-story house with his wife, who is a school teacher, and their young son; his mother tends the ground floor of the house, which was built with lumber planed from trees grown on the property.

Atkinson would chide me a little for my grocery priorities. He might say that I should be able to know who I'm buying from, that I should be able to look that person in the eye as a neighbor and community provider, and that that is a trust. And if I'm going to look at the price of groceries, he might say, I ought to be



JAMES BATEMAN

'You don't own the land. You only hold title to it.'

— Paul Atkinson

looking at the *true* price of the items. It takes a significant investment of time and capital to produce a dozen eggs, or a roasting hen, or a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. I am deluded if I believe that a dozen eggs can really be produced for the 79 cents they cost on sale at the grocery store.

To pay that 79 cent price tag undermines the smaller scale farmer who must charge a price true to the nature of the work: the food and shelter for the laying hens, the labor to tend and care for them, the work involved in gathering, cleaning and packaging the eggs for market. At Laughing Stock, there are nine cows to look after; a handful of goats and sheep; 40 to 50 pigs and piglets at any given time; hundreds and hundreds of turkeys and

chickens. Up until a year and a half ago, when he could afford to pay a decent wage for part-time help, Atkinson tended to all of this work himself. About half of what Atkinson feeds these animals is locally grown whole grain, along with excess milk products from Springfield Creamery (Nancy's Yogurt) for protein; he imports the corn and soy parts of the feed, but is consciously trying to be less dependent on such imported elements.

Atkinson loves farming very much, though he admits as we walk past the cattle loafing area in the barn — a space about 15 feet wide by maybe 30 feet long layered with two years worth of dung, hay, dirt and cobwebs, all destined for compost — "You're always behind."

Atkinson raises hens for eggs, as well as

turkeys and pigs to sell as meat. He's built himself quite a reputation, providing pork the last 18 years to Alice Waters' renowned Chez Panisse Restaurant in San Francisco, as well providing meat and eggs to local eateries such as Marche and Sweetwaters at The Valley River Inn. He keeps a few goats and head of cattle to help tend the pastures, which have remained chemical free for at least 25 of the nearly 40 years his family has been on the land.

Atkinson, who has farmed for most of his 51 years, says, "I've been an activist for more than 30 years — in the past mostly on land use issues. Our best farm land was disappearing, so I've been a strong supporter of Oregon's land use laws." He has watched and fought as high-quality agricultural soils in urbanized areas have been destroyed by development, affecting an agricultural industry already in the community. "Only 1 percent of Lane County soils are Class I [top grade] soils," he says. "Yet Gateway Mall and the new hospital site are located on land containing these soils, and west Eugene has industrial and commercial development on land containing Class I and Class II soils."

But land is only one part of the picture. "I've been involved in land issues over the years," he says. "And I've watched the best farmlands disappear anyway." In the last 10 years, particularly the last six or seven, he decided to move beyond just advocating for sound land use laws. "The solution," he says, "isn't at the governmental level. I mean, the government could kind of verify it — that people here support their own farmers, support their own land protection. But, *people* have to make individual decisions that will say, 'This land, this community, is ours to take care of.'"

City of Eugene Leaf Program 2003



Collection Round One

Nov 3 – Nov 7	North Eugene
Nov 10 – Nov 14	Central Eugene
Nov 17 – Nov 21	Southeast Eugene
Nov 24 – Dec 5	Southwest Eugene
Dec 8 – Dec 12	West Eugene

Unimproved streets are normally picked up during the second round.

It's Easy to Rake, Recycle and Reuse Your Leaves

- Use leaves for mulch or compost (call 682-5542).
- If you pile leaves in the street, don't mix them with debris.
- Put leaves and other debris in your yard debris container.
- Take leaves to local yard debris recyclers (Rexius and Lane Forest Products).
- If you want more leaves than you have, request a leaf delivery by calling 682-4800.

For the Safety of All, Keep Bike and Traffic Lanes Clear!

- Place leaves in a row at least a foot away from the curb so they don't block gutters and clog storm drains.
- Pile leaves at least 15 feet away from parked vehicles.

For leaf services outside city limits, call Lane County Public Works Hotline at 682-8565.

For more information, call 682-5383

www.ci.eugene.or.us/pw/leaves





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