Friday, July 28, 2017

Remarks at the Friday afternoon reception in the Ocean View Field, UCSC Farm

By Daniel Press, CASFS Executive Director

Part of the 50th Anniversary of the UCSC Farm & Garden’s “First 50” Celebration

Thank you, thank you, Assemblymember Stone – thank you for your personal commitment to organic agriculture, in general, and our work in particular. We have long been blessed by strong supporters among our state legislators and congressional delegation. Thank you so much for being here and for the proclamation.

To our guests, welcome, welcome, welcome! In this illustrious gathering are many people in the University and Santa Cruz community, but I want to extend an especially warm welcome back to our apprentice and student alumni!

After over a year of planning, it feels amazing and slightly unreal to have arrived at this day, this weekend celebration of 50 years... 50 years!

That would be 50 years of preparing spring plantings, irrigating, weeding, weeding, weeding some more, and then gloriously harvesting, breaking bread together (or quinoa, or amaranth), learning, debating, protesting, exhorting, planning, building, tearing down, rebuilding, and then doing it all again and again!

That’s over 1,500 apprentice alumni, some 3,000 undergraduates, tens of thousands of elementary school children, over 200 alumni farms and gardens around the country, hundreds of food activists and thousands of beloved neighbors.

It’s 50 years of research on growing fruits, vegetables, grains and flowers as if ecology mattered, as if labor was real, as if hunger existed; it’s decades of questioning and inquiry, of naming problems and inequities, then finding solutions, or trying solutions, or mobilizing, advocating, and persuading.

It’s 50 years of continuity and change ... when you walk around, you’ll see much that is the same: the Farm Center, the cypress windbreaks, the Gatehouse ... and much that’s new, the Hay Barn, the tent cabins, the new fields; your friends have been busy!

As your program shows, we have packed in a whole lot this weekend – it may seem like a lot (you should see what we left out!), but there is so much to say, so much to show, so many conversations to have, so much to eat and drink ... And to you, our elders, we wanted very much to show you that we have kept the faith, we’ve built on what you started and we are gleefully going to hand this off to the next generation...

Before we send you off on tours, we have a little bit more talking to do... And first up is taking a moment to honor Orin Martin, who is marking 40 years with the Chadwick Garden – I know you love him, so you won’t mind me talking a little bit more if I’m talking about him!
Orin, come on up here, I have a few remarks and we have a gift for you. Now, I am going to try to say all this in a sort of Orin Martin meets Jack Kerouac way...just minus the rumpled yellow legal pad...

Yeah, it’s a tough town, it’s a tough garden, it’s a tough gardener...

He rose early, maybe it was today, maybe it was yesterday, pedaled to Cowell’s, enjoying the wholesome good of a bracing ocean swim and ignoring those less-than-idyllic aspects, from viruses to hypothermia to large, toothy marine life...

When he gets to the Up Garden, the fog swaddles the place, dampening it and yet also enlarging his domain, as if miles of russets, pippins, and warrens lay beyond the watery wispy drifts just beyond his sight. To paraphrase, borrow and steal liberally, à la Martin,

“When you see the Fog Lift in the Up for the first time, you understand now why you came this way...”

They call him sage and wise, but he is still a wunderkind, whether in a literate sense, the “garden boy-prodigy” or poetically, a child wondering, marveling again and ever, at the perfectly improbable but equally, self-evidently sensible amalgam of botanical riot that is the Garden.

And then there are his charges, his legions of look-up-to you students, apprentices, learners, listeners, enthusiasts, dreamers, believers; the gospel according to Martin disciples but without all the annoying dogma and sanctimonious piety, the students who seemingly major in Orin, the I-told-you-he-was-right-about-that veterans, proving it daily in their own farms and gardens...truly, truly, good people gathered here today, you all who really know, is he growing plants or people? For Orin Martin, maybe that’s just the same thing...

And what would I, what could I say more about, to and for Orin Martin, after 40 years or 50 or 100? I could quote the Orin himself, saying he didn’t like gardening when he was a kid, it was “an onerous chore my old man made me do when I messed up,” I could narrate his peregrinations before Chadwick, before Santa Cruz, but is there really Orin time before the Up Garden; is that not like asking what stars were like before the Big Bang? Sure, there was something, time, a life, but we know nothing but Orin Chadwick Garden Martin, Orin the Up; defiantly we don’t care that he existed before the Garden, because he now is the Garden and we want it no other way!

So here he is, Orin Martin, the one and only, the star in the Chadwick Garden’s firmament, or perhaps I should say, the Trientalis latifolia, or Pacific starflower, of the Up, the man himself!