

JULIETTE DE BAIRICLI LEVY- GRANDMOTHER HERBALIST, R.I.P.

“The true farmer should cultivate his own medicines in his own fields, and he should not consider himself as being a farmer if he has to resort to outside help for keeping his animals in health and healing them when in sickness”

“Science is proving the ruination of true farming; the only thing that I, and countless others, have noted as flourishing alongside science, is disease! ---disease of the earth, disease of crops and disease of animals and people who feed on the diseased produce.”

Who uttered these powerful indictments to farming? Was it the dearly departed Chuck Walters? Livestock consultant Jerry Brunetti? The prescient wit Hugh Lovel? Maybe even this author? Well, in actuality, although all these persons have said something to this effect, the truth is, these elegant quotes are taken from a revered and dog-eared text in my library, the 1952 edition of “The Complete Herbal Handbook For Farm and Stable by Juliette de Bairacli Levy. We have come here today though to grieve the loss of and celebrate the life work of this woman who on May 28th, 2009, passed gently in her sleep into the other world. Following her death in Burgdorf, Switzerland, she leaves us a vast library of written words, brilliant insights into the sacred and artisanal world of herbal healing.

Born in Manchester, England in 1912, the young Ms Levy was educated in veterinary medicine at the Universities of Manchester and Liverpool but left after four years and just short of her graduation because she was horrified by what she felt as the crude, over-simplified and just plain toxic techniques of vivisection and drugging being taught. Thus began a journey of discovery that would inspire many thousands of others along the way. Her herbal guide states that she knew that “the great doctor Paracelsus also forsook the medical universities of the world and lived with the gypsy and peasant herbalists in many parts of Europe in order to learn the *true* medicine”. This led to her lifelong travels to live and work with such peoples in Mexico, France, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Israel, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and England.

Remember this was one of the darkest of times in Europe. Fear-cult suppressors of humanity were rising around the world, Franco was exterminating Gypsies, Jews, homosexuals, artists and intellectuals in Spain, Mussolini was killing in Italy and the reign of the Third Reich was spreading the dark stain of death of joy and creativity throughout Europe. Even after the war, fear spread throughout the US as McCarthy and his cronies stomped out anything counter-culture. England passed the Veterinary Act in 1949 requiring mindless lock-step adherence to the serum and drug industry mandates. Standard Practice acts likewise prohibited the practice of folk remedies and medicine. Even in our age of 2009, fear and industrial models prevail and laws are created to protect the industry. Parents who for religious or folk beliefs seek alternative healing for their ailing child risk prison and loss of custody of their children. We need the seekers of wisdom to guide us out of dark times.

Shortly after her departure from veterinary school and entry into the world of folk medicine, Ms. Levy found a new ally in the late Sir Albert Howard, a fan of gypsy, peasant, and Nature's remedies himself. Sir Howard inspired her in her studies and published her first herbal studies in his journal *Soil and Health*. She says of Sir Howard that he was "so far-sighted and knowledgeable above the agriculturists and scientists of his time, knew well that herbs grow upon the earth for good reason and are an important part of Nature's chart of wholeness. He believed, as I believe, that man's neglect of the medicinal plants is one of the basic causes of human and animal disease."

As the words come to life from the pages of Ms. Levy's books, one can hear the echos in virtually every modern day herbalist. The opening words to her herbal for farm as stable begins by stating "the best method of giving herbs to the farm animal is by planting them in the pasture lands and alongside the hedgerows where the animals graze. Farmers who wish to have their farms entirely free from animal disease should plant medicinal herbs as surely as they plant corn, kale, cabbage and other foods.". This is the message that can be found in Jerry Brunetti's cornerstone work entitled "Health from the Hedgerow" (available on tape from AcresUSA bookstore). Calling this "the art of the ancient farrier" she talks of gypsy horse traders who graze their horses in the pastures near hedgerows. The horses actually eschewed pastures devoid of "weeds" that were too closely grazed, and planted with only one type of "quick-growing grass. The horses would actually "leap out of any such fields!". These horses, unlike their over-domesticated cousins, could work hard all day without breaking down.

Her herbal consists of studies detailing the use of 32 common wild plants. In the same manner in which the Spanish Navy prevented scurvy by traveling with citrus seeds to plant wherever armada ships stopped to water or provision, the most important wild herbs are cultivated and propagated by nomadic peoples so that no matter where they travel, so that there would be medicinal herbs. Some of the most popular and powerful wild herbs include comfrey, elder, stinging nettle, cleavers, plantain, red clover, yarrow, dock, and dandelion.

She also brings to light medical uses of common garden plants and herbs that can be cultivated and brought to the garden or farm. The most powerful include lavender, balm, marigold, marjoram, mint, parsley, rosemary, rue, sage, and, of course, garlic. Occasionally, in this day, certain herbs can be obtained for medical uses from herbalists or herbal shops. She explains several of the most important to use and these include slippery elm, eucalyptus, fenugreek, senna, skullcap and witch hazel.

Few can condense the major philosophical and psychological underpinnings of medical thought as Ms. Levy. She opens her farm and stable herbal by stating "there must be a reason for the present-day disuse of herbs and the popularity of chemical and vaccine therapy. Personally I think that apart from the prevalent lack of time, or laziness, which makes the modern farmer loath to busy himself with preparation of his own medicines, the cause is modern commercialism and the power of advertisement. The present-day

farmer has been educated to consider disease as inevitable and the only scientific cure as being in the artificial remedies of the modern veterinary surgeon who, through over-rigid orthodox training and himself under the influence of advertisement, is too often a mere vendor of the products of the vast and powerful chemical and serum manufacturers. For the vested interests in modern medicine are stupendous. Businessmen who have never owned an animal fatten like breeding toads upon the ailments of farm stock which need not know sickness at all if they had daily access to the herbs of the fields.”

As I write, the sad news of the loss of Juliette Levy spreads throughout the herbal healing and folk medicine community. Famed herbalist Matthew Wood has studied herbals from the far corners of the world and recognizes the truth in the Levy legacy. He states “I believe that the truest and most pure form of Juliette’s work comes through in her 1955 book “The Herbal Book For the Dog-A Complete Handbook of Natural Care and Rearing”. In this classic, actually the one that initiated a paradigm shift in my own veterinary career, Ms. Levy’s Turkish roots come through and she discusses her life and times living and studying the medicines of the nomadic Bedouins of Arabia. The Bedouins, famed breeders of horses and Afghan hounds, the world’s oldest breed of dog, formed the foundation for her body of wisdom she entitled “Natural Rearing” which incorporates breeding, genetics, nutrition, training, environment as well as herbal medicine.

Other renowned herbalists, veterinarians, pediatricians and holistic doctors have their favorite books as well. The “modern grandmother” of herbalism, Rosemary Gladstar counts Ms. Levy as a mentor and friend, likewise the foremost herbalist especially in the realm of women’s medicine Susun Weed has devoted much of her time to the propagation and advancement of the pearls of wisdom found in Ms. Levy’s work.

Documentarian film maker and author Tish Streeten has created a beautiful documentary of the lifework of Juliette Levy entitled “Juliette of the Herbs” which can be acquired through www.julietteoftheherbs.com. Tish, along with Juliette’s children Raffi, Luz and Gunter, have created a webpage at the above site as a tribute to Juliette and encourage others to add their stories or just come visit to learn more about this remarkable woman.

“The knowledge to which we are entitled is not confined within the limits of our own country, and does not run after us, but waits until we go in search of it. No one becomes a master of practical experience in his own house, neither will he find a teacher of the secrets of Nature in the corners of his own room.” Paracelsus, as quoted by Juliette Levy

“Herbal medicine has grown as the herbs themselves, which are spread over the face of the earth, healthful and ineradicable. For this medicine has clean roots, free of all commercial exploitation of animals, and, above all, it is part of Nature’s own all-wise teachings.” Juliette de Baracli Levy

William G. Winter, DVM is a free-lance journalist and teacher. He is primarily interested in awakening the world to the human health benefits and the environmental bonus that comes from raising 100% grass-fed livestock using sustainable practices and the magic of holistic herd health. He is also the herd health consultant for producers of livestock for Thousand Hills Cattle Company and lives in Minnesota where the grass grows green and lush, and all the producers children eat right and are therefore above average. Contact him with your concerns, grand concepts, and rave compliments at holistic@visi.com or www.willwinter.com.