

[Page 22 - Anne Morrell, Margaree Valley "Seasons of My Life"](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 45](#)

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I was kind of a rainy-fall-day job, usually. Did most of it in the fall or the spring. ("Burning brush is not much fun,/ But it's work that must be done.") All this land was grown up in pasture spruce, when we came. So we had to clear all the fields. Which meant ripping out the trees with a tractor. And then piling the brush and burning it. Every year there was a burning project somewhere, I never really liked doing that job. 'mi- U''b/K y''m''m'CMm'x'm in Wj MK 'm, ("Lambs and calves are coming now./ What would we do without Elsie the cow?") After the first couple years, I~took it all over Garry finally said, "Look, I really don't like milking the cows and looking after the animals, and you do. So why don't I get the kids off to school, and make their lunches, and put them to bed at night, and you do the chores," I said, "Fine with me So for the last 5 or 6 years, that's the way we did it. You know, he'd help if I needed him. But otherwise, I was on my own I delivered maybe 3 or 4 (calves), Most of the time they were okay on their own. That kind of stuff doesn't bother me. I always felt I had a better sense of what the animals were going through. Like, when we went out at night--say we were someplace and we were having a good time--I'd say, "We have to go home and milk." I knew how the cow felt, full of milk, having nursed children. You know, I just felt I had a better sense for the animals in that way, and what they were going through. (I think a lot of people went to the coun? try for freedom and things like that--but you pile enough animals on yourself, you never see your own gate.) Yeah. We started getting more animals when the kids were little. We said, "Look, we're stuck here with kids, an5rway. We might as well have the animals." And there's a few times that it's been a drag. Like, going away together. I think we only went away together as a family once. And we were just fortunate that we had a friend who had no children, and was raised on a farm, and knew how to look after things, who was willing to come up and spend two weeks. But other than that, it's just--you can never get away to? gether. And I miss that. But it's one of the things you have to sacrifice, I guess. There's times now I think I should get rid of them, and then I'd have freedom to trav? el and do stuff. But I still have a house. You've got to keep everything from freez? ing. What are you going to do with the dog, the cats? It's all or nothing. ("The sugar maple, it's time to tap,/ Fill the pails with sweet sap.") That would be early spring. That was from the days when we used to make our own syrup. When we first came we put a steel roof on the barn. So we tore off all the old shingles, and we had this huge pile of dry shingles. So it was great for boiling down sap. And then when we re-did the house, we had an? other pile. So whenever we had a good sup? ply of scrap wood, or a lot of slabs from the mill that were dry, we made syrup. The last time we made it, actually, was when I was pregnant with Ezra, He was born in April, just at the end of the syrup season. So that last week, I just sat by the fire and threw shingles in it, and boiled down sap, and read books. I gathered the last sap on the day he was born. It never got boiled down. ("Christmas dinner with our friends./ And so another year ends.") We really miss it. We were talking to friends the other day. She was complaining: in Nantucket she feels like she'd like to invite somebody that doesn't have family or would really



appreciate a nice meal, but she doesn't know anybody there like that. She remembers the days that us hippie immigrants that had no family here would get together and have a nice Christmas dinner and good time. (And eat organically.) Right. (22)