



“I’m hippie, cosmic-farmer Steve. I grow food for people when I can, and live with Chela here on Green Eagle Farm. We have 20 acres in total, and farm maybe 4 or 5 of those acres. We also enjoy woods, swamps, and a lot more of the natural world than just a garden.

I grew up in Jenison, Michigan. My parents always had us on the very edge of towns, so I spent so much of my upbringing out in nature. My mother had started out as a nurse, became a homemaker, and then went back into nursing when all the kids were gone. And my dad worked a white collar job at a steel company in Grand Rapids.

I started at MSU studying horticulture and psychology in 1976, and I remember one of my humanities professors at MSU – he was very radical, and quite an interesting character –had a lot of the hippie students at a big bash at his house at the end of the semester. He called it “Seekers and Sought,” and we’d have discussions about a lot of different things, including consciousness raising. Anyway, this professor gave me a choice at one of his bashes. He came out of the house and said, “Spaghetti’s ready – with or without?” I said, “With or without what – hash?” “Meat!” I had never even thought about it – I even ate a Whopper on the way to the party. But that was just a crescendo for me. I realized I didn’t have to eat animals, and so I just stopped. I had to learn a whole lot of things from there. You know, about agriculture about how to feed myself on a plant-based diet. I started studying what my body actually was. And that was a huge part of what led me here.

I dropped out of MSU when I got more interested in going and seeing the world. I stuck my thumb out and travelled around for a little bit; went to a lot of Rainbow Gatherings. I found this farm at an auction in 1987, so I’ve been here for 35 years now and Chela has been here for 27 of those years. Before she came to the farm, she had waited tables, had done bartending, and also some substitute teaching and taught some art classes. So we started from scratch; we weren’t trained or brought up on a farm family.

We sold to different places like ELFCO, Travelers Club, and Wolf Moon, but started selling to the Meridian Market back in 1996. And then we started selling at the Allen Farmers Market in 2005. Before I lived here on the farm, the last place I lived was Allen Street, kitty-corner from the market. Even Chela lived on Foster Street and her grandmother went to the old Allen Street School. So, we have a connection to this place, to the Eastside. It felt right and comfortable, and it seemed more personal at this market.

Then we started selling to Veggie Box. Sometimes we have more things than what we can sell at a farmers market, and Veggie Box is a great choice for helping to distribute things. I don't have to deal with stores, and Kat is flexible and fair. It's really nice to have this opportunity, this outlet, to get food out into our communities, and it lets you support a lot of us farmers all at once. With Veggie Box, you're directly supporting the local economy. But more than that, small-scale farms. And that's important. Us farmers, we live here in your community and our money is spent here in your community. And this program gives you a real nice sampling of what can happen in Michigan. One farm won't have as much diversity as what Veggie Box can provide, so I think that's really neat.

Everyone knows in their heart what feels good to eat. If they have choices and they're not struggling financially or dealing with other factors, I think most people know what the nurturing choice is, and want that. I love going to markets and seeing neighbors meeting and talking...over the years, you see people passing but also babies being born; you're seeing people struggle and seeing them celebrate. You know, food isn't separate from all this. Food brings us together – that's the emphasis.

We're not sure how much longer we will be doing this to the extent we have been, so we hope people have learned from us over the years and we can still share information. This year we are redirecting our focus a little. We're doing a little less production so we can get back and tend to and deal with things we've had to let go over the last several years.

Anybody can grow food, and you could grow a lot if you had the land and the proper cooperation. Really, I think a lot more people should get involved and make it a priority to work with the land. It's an enjoyable endeavor, and you'll be healthier for it. It's much needed to counteract how imbalanced we are on the Earth. Habitat destruction and so much pollution in order to haul food across the planet to someone else. We are more separate from the food system than we ever were, and we need to change that. We need to integrate and not live separately from nature. Get involved in your own food procurement and growing. Together, we can heal this land.”