



Celebrating 50 Years at Lanes Landing

By Mary Berry

Summer is flying by. The older I get the faster the seasons go. Lost in the flurry of work at The Berry Center is, to me, an important anniversary. Fifty years ago this summer my parents Tanya and Wendell Berry moved to Lanes Landing Farm in Henry County, Kentucky. They were nice enough to bring my brother Den and me with them. Den was three and I was seven. It was 1965.

By then we had lived in Europe, California, and New York City with stays in Kentucky between moves. It is hard for me to believe now but the intention was to buy the farm as a weekend and summer place. My father says of my mother that she has made his work possible. Anyone knows that when he says that he means that she has made the whole of life at Lanes Landing possible. He has told me that at some point in the spring of '65 my mother said to him, "You don't want to spend weekends here, you want to live here and so do I."

My mother was 29 and my father 31. He was a well-published writer and was teaching at the University of Kentucky. He had turned down good offers to teach in New York and in California and a deaf ear to the advice given by nearly all his teachers that he would ruin his career as a writer if he lived in Henry County, Kentucky. He says now, acknowledging always his debt to my mother, that he doesn't deserve credit for it. Moving home was what he wanted to do.

So, this little piece is not about credit; it is about gratitude. My parents' decision to move home fifty years ago made more possible my decision to be at home. And, it turns out, more possible for my three daughters to be at home here in north central Kentucky.

A book was published with the "bound-to-make-my-father-squirm" title, *The Achievement of Wendell Berry*. I feel fairly well qualified to speak of the achievement of Wendell and Tanya Berry. For fifty of the fifty-eight years they have been married they have lived at Lanes Landing Farm. The place is beautiful. The old house sits on a hillside overlooking the Kentucky River. Maybe my favorite place in the world is the front porch of that house looking over the garden site and the old store building that Den does wood working in and past that, the river. I love to think of Daddy sitting there as he does, weather permitting, with his drink in the evening. The porch is surrounded by flowering plants and he loves to watch the butterflies. "It comes to that," he told me recently.

Their achievement is a life of harmony. Imperfect, of course, mainly because of people like me who interrupt it with requests to go to something, talk to someone, write to someone, etc. It seems to me that life there is as balanced as is humanly possible. Writing is part of farming which is part of gardening which is part of cooking which is part of family which is part of community and round and round it goes.

When I was very young I remember wondering at my good luck to be the child of my parents and the grandchild of their parents. I was old enough to have noticed that other people were not as fortunate but not old enough to notice that my family was making me miserable. (I would get to that soon enough.) I still wonder at my good fortune. I have three grown daughters and a granddaughter now. It is impossible not to wake up in the night afraid for them but it helps to know and to be able to put into words what I hope for them and I could hope for nothing better than the example of their grandparents content and happy at home.