

I was in the garden after our morning barn chores were finished today. It was time for my daily check for tomato hornworms. I didn't find any this time, and that disappointed the chicken that wait outside the fence for something tasty. I did pick three overgrown cucumbers, a little pumpkin, and a big zucchini to split for them. They eat the seeds and flesh until nothing is left but the outer shells of the vegetables.

I heard the tractor and left the garden to meet Runo by the lane. He had the water wagon hooked up, and it was time to go to the creek for a load of water for the sheep. We have a transfer pump that quickly—two to three minutes—fills the 300 gallon tank on the wagon. Since we pasture our sheep flock in many areas where there is no natural water hole available, we haul water to them.

It may appear odd to some people, but the water run is often the highlight of my day. True, our lives may seem pretty ho-hum to people accustomed to living differently than we do, but I maintain that water hauling, especially in hot weather, is fun.

I ride on the wagon on the trip to the creek. It isn't far; we take the lane to the road and then go less than half a mile west to Coe Creek that flows along that side of the farm. Runo takes the pump from the wagon and sets it on the road, attaches the hoses, and starts the motor. I hold the end of the hose in the opening at the top of the tank and hang on tightly! When the water comes, it has a lot of pressure and comes quickly. I could never be a fireman—directing even the flow of this water would be a challenge. Holding the hose in the tank is enough. And, on a hot day, it doesn't dismay me if I am splashed a little.

On the way home I often sit on the tank—a cool place to rest and enjoy the ride. But, what I see on the ride back and forth to the creek is what makes the short trip so pleasurable.

Across the road from the farm is a wooded area—white pine, birch, aspen, hardwoods, and brush. While most land is commonly identified by association with a particular family, this section has always been known as Nineteen. For, indeed, it is Section 19 of our township. I was a spectator in this scene of nature as we moved along. I saw trees and shrubs, cattails, willows, grass and flowers along the road, and birds. A red-tailed hawk soared above the trees and crossed over the road, harassed at one point by some blackbirds. And, of course, there were the inevitable deer, the resident does and their fawns that cross over daily from Nineteen to feed on the tender new grass in the paddocks where the sheep pastured earlier.

Even though this has been a very dry summer, with all of us wishing for rain every time a cloud appears in the west, the predominant color of Nature is a vibrant green. I remember that when our uncle and aunt returned from visiting a son in northern California years ago his first comment upon coming home was, "Michigan is a lush country."

And that, we think, is true. Although it is so dry, the fields are full of blooming trefoil, the roadsides are verdant, and the country still looks healthy.

When we returned from the water run, Runo took the full tank to the

sheep pasture, and I went back to the garden to search out some more overripe vegetables I could split for the chickens. When they saw me, they came running, knowing that goodies were on the way. And the stresses of the day fell away for me, too, after my little mini-vacation on the water wagon.