

John Harrison,  
960 No. 5 Road, Richmond, B.C.

Interviewed: March 29, 1973.

Born 1915 - Newcastle<sup>N.S.</sup> Wales, Australia. 1931 - Came to Canada,  
returned to Australia in 1933, then to Richmond.

1938 . . . to live at present address farming 70 acres on No. 5 Road  
1/2 mile north of Steveston Highway.

1960 - Freeway divided farm in two severing eastern from western  
portion . . . travel down No. 5 Road along Steveston Highway over  
an overpass back up freeway road on eastern boundary of farm . . .  
a 5-mile return trip . . . just a few sheds located on the far  
half . . . only recently water available there, as supply cut off  
when road put through.

Deed to farm said 82 + acres, while boundaries stayed constant,  
number of acres lessened, freeway took six acres away, municipality  
took road allowance now acreage is 69.

#### Reason for organic farming movement

After World War 2 there was a great demand for foodstuffs,  
sugar was rationed in wartime so little preserving . . . great  
pressure on agriculture to obtain heavy yields . . . met partly  
by heavy use of chemical fertilizer . . . from heavy feeding of  
unnatural synthetic substances the plants reacted . . . plants  
became more subject to insects and diseases.

By-products or war-invented products such as nerve gas,  
insecticides, became pesticides after World War 2 . . . different  
chemicals controlled the pests; insects and weeds appearing on a

farm . . . these were effective, cheap to use and gave excellent results, got boost in yield, insects killed BUT a few years later had more insects, needed stronger chemicals . . . losing the biological battle . . . answer - do what Nature does, Nature the Master Farmer for millions of years.

What Nature Does

1. Plants grow in a mixture, not a monoculture (all one plot of peas, one of corn, etc.).
2. As plants grow and die, remains are left on surface of soil, acted on by organisms in soil which convert into plant food.

Man knows nothing about nutrition . . . and relatively little about biological science. Man is attuned to pure sciences, e.g. send a man to the moon.

Because man doesn't know plant needs, can't depart from process known as right practiced by nature for millions of years supplying the earth with a green mantle.

Man has been arrogant . . . scientists know about individual things but this is removed from the unit or concept of totality that plant is growing.

Need - food to feed generations of people, and at same time improve the soil . . . chemical agriculture does not do that in our country . . . some underdeveloped countries have better health, their problems are disease. We should eat all the food - not just parts.

We are producing incorrectly . . . in manufacturing process losing nutrients, soluble minerals . . . in industry, processing, methods destroy minerals.

Ways to assess difference between natural, artificial methods of growing - 1. Taste test: e.g. flat testing peach . . . so lacking substances responsible for flavor.

2. Scientific separating out of minerals and enzyme activity by filter paper.

3. Numbers and kinds of fungi family in soils.

Man never achieved optimum quality in growing food.

Also grown on the Harrison farm are oats, clover and feed for milk cows.

Hardier and early types of plants are chosen, because of weather conditions.

Summer Dawn, a bush tomatoe has been replaced because of reaction to rain damage by Fireball and Summer Fire tomatoes . . . Beefsteak is just a name. New varieties of plants developed for commercial purposes where plants must mature all at same time for machinery reasons . . . problem - plant loses vigor in process so need to breed back to old, wild varieties but these are becoming extinct . . . move in England to attempt saving natural flora. 1970 - major corn producing area in U.S. lost 15% of its crop because of inherent weakness to fungi activated by set of weather conditions . . . add monoculture to plant vulnerability results in serious problem of world food supply. Six million acres of arable land in B.C. not yet touched.

Shortage of food cause by: economics, distribution, politics.

Russian communal farms couldn't produce enough food so half acre given to farmers to use themselves and grow own food on, sometimes under lights . . . half of food in Russia today comes from these half acres . . . can't pull men from labor market to

farm, . . . they are created from generations of farming . . . .  
 when you destroy agriculture you destroy your nation. Last year  
 Russians lost 25% of their wheat crop then bought 1/3 American food  
 supply so now U.S. has 2/3 of what is required for winter of  
 1973-74 . . . if have a major crop disaster in U.S. this year there  
 won't be bread on American tables.

Leading meteorologists in U.S. (Crick) warned the U.S. government  
 of major draught in mid seventies and extend through wheat growing  
 areas into Canada . . . then money becomes valueless . . . Russia  
 gambled, hit bad weather . . . U.S. had good supply (950 million  
 bushels) so series

1. Economic factors
2. Weather
3. Biological . . . genetic vulnerability

. . . agriculture management.

Food has become an article of commerce instead of sustenance  
 of life.

Not good to produce food from coal tar, completely synthetic  
 . . . if from a plant to make soy bean taste like T Bone steak this  
 is a palliative. Important that food must be grown naturally . . .  
 basic that energy comes from sun into green leaf to you . . . a  
 complete unit . . . the more you do to plant between green leaf stage  
 and the time you eat it the more you take away from it . . . term  
 "enriched food" is a hoax.

. . . story of chemicals on English test plot.

Book written on a new science - Biological Transmutations  
 written by a Frenchman, not yet translated into English. A soil  
 association has published one book on it.

Soil condition is key in controlling leatherjackets . . . a problem attacking young plant runners . . . must replace plants . . . not bothered by leatherjackets once plant is established . . . also attacks lawns . . . have to reseed.

Organic Movement - will spread . . . Harrison attended a conference in Versailles in 1972 of an organization involved in this farming which has 4,000 members who control 125,000 acres . . . organic farming provides 5% of the market in France . . . so large in Switzerland they have own bank . . . largest electrical firm in Japan's chief biologist produces organic foods for co-operatives. . . At conference were 3,000 people from 14 countries . . . 3 publishers from U.S., Harrison from Canada.

Europeans have found their errors in farming . . . they have seen the results of pesticides in small farm areas . . . here farmers grow food for organizations.

Typical Day for Planting March 29th

Lettuce, leaf and head  
Carrots, onions  
peas (day before)  
winter onions (day following)

Then potatoes. Repeat plantings to May 15th.

May 15 to May 24: frost sensitive seeds -  
Cucumber, squash, beans, corn, tomatoes

May 24 -

Savoy and Red Cabbage  
Cauliflower  
Broccoli

Seed directly where growing, not transplant, then thin. No longer plant broad beans . . . not so popular . . . no volume sold . . . applies also to romano beans, pickling cucs.

Labor

Have regular crew of half dozen, add some, plus employ Chinese labor contractor who brings out workers, plus own family . . . has wife and nine children.

Project

Teach how to grow own food, give lot of ground, supply own seed . . . lectures, for last two years, ages 17 to 60 . . . in return do some weeding in Harrison's carrots, some responsible . . . variety of people take part.

American edition of his book "Good Food Naturally" out in April 1973. Canadian edition published by J.J. Douglas, West Vancouver.

Sales - on own stand, in health food stores (25-30) Vancouver, carrots for juice, recently Woodward's Stores through the year.

Costs more money to grow vegetables organically - have to weed by hand instead of chemicals.

Currently only using 1/3 to 1/2 of farm because can't sell it all . . . getting higher yields . . . now concentrate on techniques.

Carrot juice doesn't keep long, popular but perishable.

D. Cleland