

BOOK REVIEW

WES JACKSON. 2021. **Hogs Are Up: Stories of the Land, with Digressions.** (ISBN-13: 978-0-7006-3059-2, hbk). University Press of Kansas, 2502 Westbrooke Circle, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-4444, U.S.A. (Orders: kansaspress.ku.edu). \$26.95 US, 192 pp., 5.7" × 8.7".

About the Author: Wes Jackson has a gift for storytelling! This was not obvious in our former time living on the same floor of Schuyler Hall at Kansas Wesleyan University. Yes, I knew Wes when we go back to the 1950's before he was a famous author, conservationist, co-founder of the Land Institute, and won all of those awards. We probably were not very serious students then struggling to just "get by." He always was a tremendous speaker!

About the Book: There is a lot in this book to make you think, to challenge your values, and enough humor to make you smile. There are many in the conservation movement but only a few that have four generations of family history living close to the soil caring, nurturing, and preserving soil for posterity. Living on the land, protecting the soil with farming practices that used horse drawn implements, treading more lightly on soil that goes back to the pre-tractor days before everything became entirely mechanized the way thousands of acres are tilled today with mega-tractors having enclosed cabs, radios, tv's, and GPS navigation systems. Wes takes the reader back to another day and time where the soil was "a living organism" and you could smell it and become part of "the good earth."

The Foreword by Robert Jensen explains what "Hogs Are Up" means. The Jackson family conversations were punctuated by his mother saying "Hogs Are Up!" and that meant it was time to change the subject often with digressions to something else. This phrase was a signal to interrupt the family conversation to insert a non-sequitur digression. This part of the book describes the importance of storytelling of which Jackson is a master.

Some of the content based on topical headings are: Introduction, One Thing Leads To Another, My Rural Life, Schooling, Formal and Informal, Scientifically Speaking, Ideas I've Run into along the Way, Living in the Industrial World, What is to Become of Us?, and Conclusions: Hardening Off.

The Introduction contains a lot of Wes Jackson's own family history where he grew up in rural Kansas near Topeka, the state capital. Here is where the Jackson family lifestyle of building your own home, growing your own food, and his parents raising six children, sets the stage for Jackson's storytelling and connections to Kansas State University, the land grant college in Kansas, not the University of Kansas where Wes finally ended.

Everyone will have different topics that have special interests but I enjoyed My Rural Life, My Life with Plants and Their Ecosystems: 1936–1952 because there is a lot of botany in it. The vegetables grown were like a who's who of the Plant Kingdom without using the word botany.

Schooling, Formal and Informal, brings back memories of the same professors at Kansas Wesleyan University Wes and I had, but the story about Wes getting a D in botany in a course that Dr. Albert Robinson, Jr taught is worth repeating. It takes soul-searching to tell a story about getting a D in botany your junior year in college, and perhaps, because of not making a C in your academic major course of study, dramatically changing your life. At the same time Wes was starting guard on a championship football team that won the KCAC conference. Wes has often referred to this time as "The Golden Age of Wesleyan." There were four of us that went on to the University of Kansas with letters of support from Dr. Robinson at about the same time and all of us eventually received our doctorate degrees. Here is where the individual personal attention of our KWU major professor who had faith in our ability to do graduate study made a major difference in our life choices. Where would we be today if that one person had not come along and influenced our lives? Wes shares his botanical experiences at the University of Kansas while doing field and cytogenetics research on the genus *Ratibida* that will appeal to fellow botanists who enjoy collecting plants in faraway places. And the quirkiness of plant taxonomists!

Okay, here comes Dr. Wasserman and Doc Horr (that was his name), the former a language and humanities professor at KWU, and the latter an unforgettable professor at KU who taught general botany and ecology. You will be smiling and laughing when you get through reading about these faculty and their eccentricities. However, both were brilliant exceptional scholars!

I found the topical section, An Appeal to the Russians especially illuminating, poignant, and worthy of special recognition of Russia's contribution to botanical knowledge most significantly by Dokuchaev, the father of soil science, by Vavilov's centers and origin of cultivated plants, and by Dobzhansky's book *Genetics and the Origin of Species*. Everybody should get Jackson's book just to read this section of only 11 pages.

There is more! Ideas I've Run into along the Way is a passage that is a must read but especially David Defeats Goliath. Jackson goes back and forth with this metaphor comparing how David defeats the giant warrior Goliath and The Land Institute's search for perennial grains, a Natural Systems Agriculture, and Ecosphere Studies.

Living in the Industrial World and Satan is on the Other End is a story about the Mennonites bringing Turkey Red Wheat to the Peabody and Hillsboro, Kansas area, my home area. They were pacifists (conscientious objectors and did not believe in war and killing people), deeply religious and remembered Sunday as the Sabbath or the Lord's Day, so did not harvest crops or work in the fields, and maintained a simple sustainable way of life without electricity and modern conveniences. Most spoke German like my mother. There was always Satan on the other end looming with electricity, household appliances, and modern farming implements.

There is a little bit of Wes Jackson in of all us, and also in a sustainable ecosphere, but you must get this book and read it to find it!—Harold W. Keller, Professor Emeritus, Botanist and Mycologist, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.