



WEEK OF JULY 3RD 2017 #27/52



In Loving Memory of Nigel Walker

By The Boys, Eric & Andrew

These past couple of days have been the toughest of our lives but have also shown the impact our dad has had on the world. The outpouring of support shows how a community can be built and how he has brought a diverse group of people together over everyone's desire for healthier food.

Growing up on the farm we have been with him while he has been working night and day to make sure the farm runs smoothly. From the early morning drives to the market to driving out to the pump at midnight and every time in between. While most kids were just learning basic math, he was teaching us how to use a credit card machine at the farmers' market. He made us go to a Spanish immersion school so that we could learn to communicate with the crew on the farm and it has been an invaluable tool. He taught us the value of taking care of the farm crew as they are a big reason the farm has been able to succeed and will continue to succeed. When additional help was needed with anything from packing the CSA boxes to planting, we were sent out to help the crew and learn some of the skills.

Following his dreams of farming has given us a unique start to our life that we would not trade for anything in the world. He showed the guts to try out new things that were big risks and he proceeded to the next idea when the last one reached the end of its course. When the many seed magazines came in, he spent hours looking through to find a new, exciting and unfamiliar variety.

Every day of his life dad was learning about ways he could improve what was being done on the farm and wanting other people to learn also through the stories in the newsletters and tours around the farm.

Dad has always said that it is not his farm but the members' farm and it will continue being so.

Without your support our dads' dreams would never have been attained.

Thank you for your continued support.



How Do I Write This One?

By Lorraine Walker

Through tears. I am sure this will be the hardest newsletter I will ever write. Our family has been greatly comforted by the outpouring of love from everyone. Reading the many stories has put smiles on our faces, but they bring more tears as well. I think for Nigel's parents it has shown them, in a very real way, the impact their son has had on our world here in Northern California. For me personally, I know what great a man my husband was. We both knew what a great team we made, and how much of an impact we had and would have "once he was better".

It is hard to come to a full stop after so many years. Nigel and I are both fighters, so it feels almost impossible to be at the end of this road. It's like running full speed and you are expected to stop immediately because the road came to an abrupt end. Instead you run right into a solid wall of pain.

Nigel's was a life that was cut far too short. He really had such passion for our land, our crew, our community, and the right way of doing things. He kept researching farming techniques, equipment (and sailing) right until the very end. Some of his most clear words near the end were strawberries, lavender and tomatoes. It was so obvious his mind was still working the farm, even as his brain was taken over by cancer.

Thankfully the end did come rather quickly. Nigel had been doing quite well for the last couple of weeks; eating, drinking, we had his pain under control. Everything changed Friday night, but he slept through most of it and quietly and without any warning he just stopped. I had the feeling he quietly went down, down into the ground that is his beloved farm. So I hold onto the fact that his energy lives on with us, all around the farm.

How do we honor such a man? Nigel and I do not follow any religion, so there will not be a service. His children and I have decided to wait on a full memorial to honor his life until next summer. Quite frankly, I need the memory of time to do something I feel is worthy of him. I want to be fully present and not so overwhelmed by grief. He deserves something special and impactful and I can't even begin to think about the specifics of an event like that. In the meantime I am making the Care Share a fund in honor of his memory, and hope to really get that launched. I am hoping it will have grown tremendously so that next summer we can celebrate the work we are continuing in his honor. And it gives our family from England a beautiful reason to all come together here at the farm one more time.

I do know that Nigel impacted many of your lives and lots of you will want to have an opportunity to celebrate his life. We have more summer events coming up and I can assure you that all of them will be perfect times to do that. I know this will be a summer filled with stories and memories and probably quite a few tears. Please come to the farm and do that. It was truly Nigel's greatest joy to have his CSA members sitting around a campfire, just hanging out, talking, sometimes playing music, watching kids get excited about burning marshmallows. Please know that we always considered this your farm as much as it is ours, if you want to come up to camp any time this summer just let Noelle know ahead of time. The farm is here for you to connect with and enjoy.

Cameron and I will have so much on our plates the next few months. I would like to enlist your help with the newsletter by asking for some stories from our members. Your stories about your experiences on the farm, or cooking meals from the box, how you came to be a part of Eatwell would make a lovely addition to our newsletter and help us with our social media campaign. Pictures if you have them are really great! We will try to keep stories relevant to the season, so we might hold onto some until the appropriate time, but please feel free to email them in - organic@eatwell.com.



A Tribute to Nigel

By Alix Wall

Nigel Walker, the farmer who many Bay Area parents credit with getting their children to eat turnips and radishes, and whose lavender display brought a bit of Van Gogh's Provence to the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market where he was a mainstay, died Saturday, July 1. The founder of Eatwell Farm was 56.

Born in Leicester, England on December 24, 1960, Walker was the grandson of a farmer. The eldest of three

boys, he was the only one of them who liked to spend time with his grandfather as he worked the land. He studied farming at Writtle Agricultural College in Essex. Though the school taught conventional farming, Walker fulfilled his practicum at an organic farm. He also studied in Israel, working on organic farms there and learning about drip irrigation.

When he met his ex-wife Frances at a farming conference in the U.S., he decided to stay, and moved to California in 1992. He established Eatwell Farm in 1993 on 105 acres in Dixon (near Davis), quickly putting it on the map with its Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes. It has around 900 members today, and many of them say belonging to a CSA has positively impacted the way they eat, especially in introducing foreign vegetables to their children.

The farm grows numerous varieties of fruits and vegetables (Eatwell is especially known for its heirloom tomatoes; Millennium Restaurant in Oakland has offered an annual multi-course meal showcasing Eatwell's tomatoes for over a decade); wheat; lavender and chickens.

Walker, his twin boys Eric and Andrew, and later, his wife Lorraine, whom he married in 2011, were fixtures at the Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA) farmers' market at the San Francisco Ferry Building from its inception, and in fact, until Walker got sick, he was known to never miss a Saturday, "not after his twins were born, and not after our wedding," said his wife Lorraine.

Walker fancied himself a horticulturalist, rather than a farmer, speaking often about how as long as the soil was treated in the right way, vegetables would grow without the need for additional compost or other fortifications. "What I've really come to understand is that if I make sure the crops have everything they need, then all the vegetables I plant look after themselves," he told Bay Area Bites in 2014.

Walker never stopped innovating, using his own fields as his laboratory. When he saw that the organic feed he was using to feed his chickens came from China, he knew he could do better. "How could I call our eggs local when the feed was coming from China?" he wrote on his blog in 2008. He leased an additional 40 acres next to his farm to start growing wheat for the chickens. This also meant building silos on his land to store it, and selling wheat berries at the market. The market stall features a cast-iron hand-grinder where customers can grind the wheat berries into flour themselves.

Marcy Coburn, executive director of CUESA, first met Walker about ten years ago, when she toured Eatwell as director of communications for the Ecological Farming Association known as EcoFarm. "We saw his biodiesel truck, and his water pump using solar power," she said. "He's always been such a seeker of new and profound technologies that would have a greater impact not only on conserving environmental resources but on the farming side. He set the pace for so many farmers in terms of that."

Eatwell is one of the farms that has been at the Ferry Building's farmers' market since its inception, and several people noted that the prime spot it held was no accident. Coburn noted that Eatwell and the market really grew up together, and Walker made his presence felt by not only never missing a Saturday, but in numerous other ways as well. "He really held not only himself accountable but the other farmers and CUESA accountable too," said Coburn.

She recalled conducting a seller's meeting when she was brand new on the job; whether to open more markets was the topic of discussion. "In the time he had been at CUESA, sales had dropped for him and he really felt that adding more markets could dilute the same pool of people and not add to the success for



farmers," Coburn recalled. "He's so smart, and he just spoke from the land, from his personal experience from what he's seen. He's really an advocate for farmers, but not afraid to challenge when things needed to be challenged."

Elianna Friedman, the founder of a non-profit that teaches cooking skills to kids, was inspired to found Bay Leaf Kitchen while having lunch at Eatwell. A CUESA staffer at the time, Friedman had been invited to the farm for lunch with her colleagues. She recalled, "I was in awe of how much they know about how food is made and how it's produced," she said. "I knew it would take me years to learn everything they know, and I thought that kids should meet them and experience this."

By the time Friedman asked if they would host her summer camp, she suspected the answer would be yes. They are hosting seven sessions of kids this summer. "Nigel was always the first to volunteer or try a new program or demo," she said. "Anytime you went to him to ask him something, he'd be down for it, and he was always happy to do anything educational."

While Lorraine didn't have any farming experience when she met Walker, she said his passion for building community around the farm was infectious, and she brought the link between the kitchen and the field, which is why they worked so well together as a team. "I had the home cook's perspective, and he really encouraged me in that area and pushed me into a bigger role on the farm," said Lorraine. "One of the greatest things about him is that compared to a lot of farmers, he empowered everyone on the farm to do their job and make it their own. She continued, "It took a long time to get his guys trained to think for themselves, and have enough confidence in their abilities to make decisions, but the fact that Eatwell has been doing what it's been doing without both of us this past year, is a testament to Nigel."

In February of 2012, Walker was diagnosed with stage 3 multiple myeloma, a cancer of the bone marrow. The CUESA community rallied around him, holding a fundraiser for him at Tacolicious. "The support given to me in my time of need was enough to make a grown man cry," he said then. During his illness, Walker started a program to allow CSA members to donate their boxes while on vacation to cancer patients. His wife intends to continue this, and hopes to obtain funding for it, allowing it to grow.

While Walker was able to beat the cancer into remission in the fall of 2013, it returned in 2014. During the past three years, he ran the farm despite undergoing numerous treatments and hospitalizations at UCSF. He continued to look at the glass as half full, but the cancer returned to his brain in May. Walker was also known for treating his crew like family; many of them have been with him for many years. As to Eatwell's future, Lorraine and the crew are determined to keep it going as a legacy to her husband. "He made me promise that I'll never miss a market, and I won't cancel events at the farm," she said.

In addition to Lorraine and his sons Eric and Andrew, Walker is survived by his parents Don and Thora Walker, his brothers, Michael and Edward Walker, his daughter, Eleanor Walker, and his stepson Cameron Ottens.

Donations in Walker's memory can be made to Eatwell's Care Share program. It gives its farm boxes to cancer patients and others diagnosed with a serious illness.

Alix Wall has been a member of Eatwell's CSA for 11 years.

This Week's Box List

**Items in Box for 2*

Zucchini

*Cabbage

Chard

*Collards

*Potatoes

*Onions

*Radish

Basil

Peaches or Nectarines

*Plums

Strawberries

