

---

## To the memory of Ben and Estelle Emmett

by Patrick Wakeford-Evans

These two warriors for the spirit, for Michael, crossed the threshold within a year of each other in or near Albuquerque, New Mexico: Estelle on August 10, 2014; Ben near the same time in 2013. But, this is not where they spent the lion's share of their lives. Forgive me if I speak of them in a mythic narrative but their lives were heroic. In the words of Joseph Campbell, they lived a kind of hero's journey.

Ben was the archetypal Irish farmer who, once he found his plot of land, used his strong hands to pull stones from the land—and there were many!—in order that he could plant his beloved biodynamic garden. He remained true to biodynamics and, throughout his life, taught the many young people who came his way what he had learned. In searching for a place to live, after his stint in the military, for himself and his bride, he found a one-room cabin perched on a rocky knoll near Cedar Crest with an expanse of New Mexico's soil. His hands were his gift; he studied art, making skillful and intriguing pen and ink and pencil sketches. He built

a garden and added on to his humble cabin that which “needed to be built”: his skill emerging as more of a farmer who builds rather than one of a carpenter. Never a night went by, however, when he did not read a lecture from Rudolf Steiner—often accompanied by one beer, a nod to this time spent in Germany as a member of the United States Army. There were many flowers in Ben's garden, mostly calendula as companion plants, but his most prized flower was a giant sunflower who stood by his side during the building of the terraced garden, the terraces contained by the stones pulled from the largely caliche-bearing soil. This tall sunflower, whose hair was close cropped and framed her face, a face that shown like the sun, was his wife and life companion—Estelle.

Estelle was the perfect companion for Ben because she not only helped with the gardening and building but created biodynamic, culinary adventures for the young people who came to study the work of Rudolf Steiner, to join in the festival-life of anthroposophy, or to be married in the garden. It was a real treat to be married in the garden because you knew at the festival afterwards, you would be treated to cake designed just for you and your wife, sweet and layered, with all the things her imagination spilled forth. This was also true if you happened to have your birthday celebrated in the cabin, lined with dark stained pine, the rounded cuts, where grooves made by hungry insects were preserved in varnish by Ben's farmer-hands. If you were very, very lucky Estelle would make a meal for you using her ample arms, her bowls purchased in yard sales and thrift stores, and her humble white porcelain stove that warmed the kitchen. I remember sitting in her breakfast nook waiting anxiously for a first glimpse of the main course which was always a highly guarded secret. The most memorable, and my first main dish was one I will never forget. It remains my favorite dish to eat to this day though I have never found it since, possibly because it was created out of

the heart-mind of Estelle in the tradition of cooking in Estonia, her native land. This dish I can only describe as follows: it was a kind of rounded loaf stuffed with buckwheat, eggs, fish, and all manner of savories, from her and Ben's garden. She cut a slice for me over which she ladled a special sauce. I always thought of her and Ben as my own personal “Felicia and Felix Balde.” Estelle was Felicia because of her love of storytelling with her remarkable warm Estonian accent; Ben was Felix because he was a gardener and an herbalist. They both lived in the hinterlands of Albuquerque in a hut perched on a hill surrounded by terraces of herbs and vegetables, festooned with Mesquite and scruffy piñon trees. They both lived a life dedicated to anthroposophy in every aspect of their daily lives. They were not luminaries on the anthroposophic circuit, so to speak, but are better spoken of in the native tradition of *luminarias*, lighting a path to the spirit.

And I dare not forget Mary Haemerle who rounded out this merry but earnest band of anthroposophists. Mary emerged from Emerson College after a life of nursing and searched for community. Finding none that satisfied her she decided to begin her own. She moved to Cedar Crest, bearing with her the library of Melrose Pittman author of *Genius Astrii* and purchased a piece of property that had once belonged to an established tuberculosis recovery community. A road wound through this property, higher up the crest than the Emmett cabin, creating interconnecting loops which ended back out onto the highway again. In the islands made by these loops “recovery-homes” were built consisting of smallish trailers with a kitchenette a tiny bedroom, a hallway connecting the two lined with storage cupboards and a small bathroom. Centered on the trailers front door was built a cinderblock room, completely rectangular, and painted cross between sea foam and minty green. This was to be Mary's sanctuary where she led study groups on Steiner's work. These groups

happened every Sunday evening and were centered on one of Steiner's basic works or a lecture cycle requested by the ever changing flow of young people who attended the sessions. These sessions were conducted by Mary with the help of the Emmetts who often led sessions themselves. These sessions encouraged free-spirited conversation and were the least dogmatic/doctrinaire meetings on anthroposophy I have ever attended. My devotion to anthroposophy began there. The sessions often ended with a walk that wound through Piñon and Mesquite out into an open area where Mary introduced her legion of young people to the constellations in the myths that bound them together—all with the help of her smallish, poodle-mix Osita (Little Bear).

Tom Baudhuin, who told me of Estelle's passing said "the last of the generation of around here." This generation that has passed weaved a mantle which was passed on to the young people who occasioned there: Michael and Sheri Hughes—both went on and graduated from eurythmy school and have taught in Waldorf schools; Tom and Marianne Bauhuin—Tom a kindergarten and class teacher, Marianne a painter who went on to study with Peter Stebbing and Gerard Wagner; Patrick and Rosemary Wakeford-Evans—Patrick studied at Rudolf Steiner College and became a class teacher, adult educator, and class holder, Rosemary works as a registered nurse and has cared for a series of elder women and frequents the Christian Community. Each of these couples were married in the garden; each attended Mary's study groups; each celebrated the festivals on Cedar Crest; each were profoundly influenced by the experiences with these three celebrants of Michael.

Pause with me now as I weep: with sorrow for the gradual loss of my earthly spiritual teachers and with joy as I envision those who met them as they crossed. I will not be surprised to see them again when, with open arms they greet me when I cross.