

Just
Say
you heard
it
through
the

Viva VINE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VIVA VEGIE SOCIETY
Edited by Pamela Teisler



Vegetarian Advocacy Taking Root

• • by Pamela Teisler • •

"WELL, JESSE, HERE WE are, but I'm not sure I'm ready to start yet. Give me a minute to gear up for this, would ya?"

"Maybe we ought to go to another corner," Jesse said.

"No, this corner is fine," I replied, but I'm afraid he was right.

I had a problem getting up the energy (read: *nerve*) this time for some reason. I just didn't seem to like the scene here at what was the last of 6 concerts given recently by the Grateful Dead at The Garden. I perceived the people — not just the "dead heads" here at 8th Avenue and 33rd Street — as unfriendly. Everyone who walked by seemed to be in a rush to get where they were going. This was a crowd that was going to be either brutally indifferent, I thought, or quick with the "comments."

Finally I felt I could hesitate no more and pulled on my head stocking with the plastic fruit on the top. Then, on with my sandwich board. I handed Jesse his headband with plastic fruit on it.

Not long after, our first person approached. "I am a vegetarian," she said.

"Good for you," I began sincerely. "I believe we need..." But off she walked. I hear a lot of comments like this that just filter into my ears from passers-by.

I make it my business to instigate conversation about vegetarianism with what I call my vegetarian street advocacy which is

the hallmark of my group, The VivaVegie Society. My sandwich board which I don, I should mention, reads, "Ask me why I'm a vegetarian," and of course the plastic fruit on my hat attracts a lot of attention; there's no doubt about that.

My group and I have been out many times over the last 2 and a half years on the streets of New York City, educating, angering, delighting, and upsetting a lot of people about the facts of our society's meat centered diet.

"So why are you a vegetarian?" I hear from a teenager before me. "Ah, my first victim," I thought.

"Well, I have my *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* right here, which I compiled; my reasons fall into 3 main categories. One, I believe it is much better for my health; two, a vegetarian diet alleviates an enormous amount of stress to our environment; and three, the meat centered diet which most Americans have adopted supports an atrocious system of factory farming in our country."

"But how do you get your protein?" the teen inquired.

"Protein?" I say, as a curious man with a disheveled hat sheepishly walks up.

"The truth of the matter is," I continued, "people in this country get far too much protein, especially animal protein. There was a mammoth sized epidemiological study that was done in China several years ago which proved that the optimal requirements for animal fat and protein are much lower than we previously thought. In fact it has been virtually proven that a diet exclusively, or primarily made up of plant food is the healthiest."

At this point the man with the disheveled hat chimes in, walking away as he is speaking, "but what about plants; don't you care about plants?"

The man walked away too fast to get his answer. Jesse, however, decided to respond to the query for the benefit of the

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Editor's Update

WASHINGTON MAILING In early November, The VivaVegie Society put out a mass mailing of its *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* to all 540 U.S. senators and congresspeople to their

Washington offices. Only 6 responses have come back.

(See insert here for a sample of one of the personalized laser generated cover letters that accompanied each flyer — or send SASE to The VivaVegie Society.)

Perhaps it's early. Still, 540 letters represents a lot of people, people who, amongst other things, should be in the business of putting out correspondence.

Why so few responses? I have a theory.

Elected officials, as we know, usually answer correspondence with form letters. You write them about crime, they have a letter for it. You write them about the deficit, they have a letter for that. I don't think that our representatives have any idea what to do with *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*. No form letter is ready

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Calendar

- Sun., Jan. 9: A DELIGHT IN A SUNDAY AFTERNOON (brunch and food prep. demonstration), 12 Noon to 3 p.m., sponsored by Tien Vegetarian House, \$15 donation; 150 W. 22nd St. Call 212/229-1256 for reservations.
- Sundays, Jan. 16, Feb. 20, and Mar. 20 (or otherwise, the third Sunday of every month, barring last minute changes or other conflicts): VEGAN SOCIETY OF QUEENS POTLUCK, 2 p.m., Flushing, Queens; call Hubert at 718/263-7160 for details.
- Tuesdays, Jan. 25, Feb. 22, and Mar. 22: BREAK BREAD... FOR A CHANGE (vegan potluck) 6:30 p.m., Greenpeace offices, 462 B'way @ Grand St, 6th Fl; See flyer enclosed or call 718/797-4175 for more information.

Schedule to distribute *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* in VivaVegie-style vegetarian street advocacy (call ahead, 212/966-2060, to confirm and to arrange meeting location):

- Sundays, Jan. 23 and Feb. 13: WORKING THE NYC SUBWAY PLATFORMS (too cold to be outside, we say), 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Call ahead for meeting place. (The VivaVegie Society frequently goes out with its street advocacy on short notice. Call to learn of unscheduled events. 212/966-2060.)

four new people who had gathered around us. He explained, "first of all, there has been only one study that supposedly proved that plants have feelings. It was done in 1968 on only seven plants. No one else has been able to repeat this experiment. And the scientist who conducted it is also unwilling to repeat his own experiment. Upon such flimsy findings the media seem to love to speak about the feelings of plants. So we really have no evidence of plants being able to feel pain; and the fact of the matter is, if you really care about plants in this regard, you would definitely want to become a vegetarian as it takes 16 pounds of grain to produce one pound of beef. It follows, therefore, that quite a bit of wheat would have to suffer quite a bit of agony on its way, via the cow or steer, to becoming a pound of meat. Next question..."

"But eating meat is natural; man has always eaten meat," said a person who just joined us.

"One hundred and some years ago slavery was also considered natural," I responded, "but as people moved on in their understanding of things over time they learned a different perspective. Slavery today is thought to be barbaric. I predict that this is how future generations will perceive meat diets. People will become aware of all the really powerful information that I itemize in this document," at which point I held up a copy of my *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*. "Vegetarianism will be the diet of the 21st century; there is simply no question about that. Our mother Earth just won't let us go on with this excessive meat centered diet. People will learn, despite what industry and consumerism tells us, that a meat centered diet is devastating, not only to human health but also to the world ecology. To paraphrase the well known Dr. John McDougall, I do not think that man throughout history has been feasting on meat and/or dairy products three times a day, seven days a week as we do today. In fact, we in the west, in the U.S. in particular, are suffering these days from the diseases of the kings and queens of old — just look at the prevalence of heart disease and stroke, the gout, cancers and diabetes. These are all largely



due to our excessive animal-based diets. As for mother nature not letting us go on this way, I would like to quote a man who is very involved with this issue, a Dr. Michael Klapper, who writes, 'The price tag on the supermarket chuck steak does not include the loss of irreplaceable topsoil; yet future generations will pay dearly.' The fact of the matter is, today we are virtually stealing from future generations every time we chose animal foods for our plate."

At this point a person wearing a large anti-fur button on his lapel walks up with a smile on his face. "What about the animals?" he asks.

"What about the animals . . . ? There are no laws to protect animals used for food in this country," I expounded. "There is absolutely nothing to prevent a company from keeping a million hens row upon row in tiny cages in one facility. What kind of sanitation problems do you think this kind of intense confinement causes? But when you alone eat hundreds of chickens per year, you add a lot to the need for this

kind of production."

"Of course, there are ethical questions regarding the decision to eat or not to eat meat. Do we as humans have any right to confine chickens or pigs or veal calves in tiny cages? Do we have any right to administer drugs to these animals, a necessity when confinement is so intense? Again, there are no laws to protect animals used for food in this country. You know the story of the veal calf that lives its entire miserable life in a shipping crate. These animals are not auto parts, although that is how they are treated. No matter how much you want to think otherwise, food animals are sentient beings who feel pain, become curious, and have individual personalities (ask anyone who has a chicken or a pig for a pet). These are creatures, who just like you and me desire to fulfill needs and natural instincts."

Most of my audience took their leave at this point, some first taking a moment to pick up a few sundry pieces of literature I had on hand. The guy with the anti-fur button, however, took a moment to purchase a copy of my *101 Reasons...* It was going to be a productive day after all.

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for us. In fact, of the 6 respondents, three (Sen. Coverdell, Sen. D'Amato and Sen. Kennedy) were not relevant to our primary concern — vegetarianism. We got a Christmas card from Sen. Feinstein, which was nice, but hardly addressed the issue, and one (Sen. Bradley) completely missed our point.

Only one response was thoughtful and showed genuineness. California Congressman Henry A. Waxman's letter appears in the "Grapevine" section on the next page.

What this experiment in civic duty should tell us, I think, is that this notion of vegetarianism is greatly misunderstood, even unknown. Consequently, we vegetarians need more than just a little PR these days on our behalf. We need visibility. We need to become a viable constituency to our government, the media and the general public, something to contend with. We need a written agenda, a platform; and I dare say, we need to take The Vegetarian Party out of mothballs (as I understand it, a vegetarian party did exist at one time!)

About a year ago *Vegetarian Times* announced that in the U.S. the ranks of those people who consider themselves vegetarians is growing at a rate of 20,000 per week. Do our elected officials, the media, the man on the street know anything about us? Do they know we're here? It's time for us vegetarians to get

noisy and be seen, which brings me to my next point . . .

OUR PLACE It's absurd! Here in New York City we don't have a vegetarian community center.

"What's a vegetarian community center?" you wonder.

Well, it's one of those things I bet you'd agree is so obvious that no one's ever thought of it.

It's funny though; when I bring up the idea of a vegetarian community center to anyone who'll listen, heads tilt and then they say, "Yeah! This is New York City. Why *don't* we have a vegetarian community center?" Then I hear, "What's a vegetarian community center?"

My vision of a vegetarian community center is a storefront in lower Manhattan with tables and chairs for people sipping nut milks and carrot juice; a bulletin board hangs on the wall with a giant calendar filled in with notices of events and outings; there are hiking trips or ski trips regularly; there's a wall full of books and literature about vegetarianism for sale. There's a singles club run through the center; the database on the computer grows daily. The VivaVeggie Society has an office — a home base. New York 1 (the local cable station) would happen by and do a feature on this new phenomenon, the vegetarian community center. The re-birth of The Vegetarian Party begins here. . . I have a dream tonight.

grapevine

letters from readers

Dear Ms. Teisler: Thank you for taking the time to share your views with me. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, I want you to know that I take your concerns very seriously. I am fortunate to have the benefit of your thoughts, and will keep them in mind in the months ahead. Again, I am grateful for your letter and look forward to hearing from you on all matters of concern. With kind regards, I am

Sincerely, Henry A. Waxman,
U.S. Congress, 29th District, CA.

[Ed. note: VivaVegie Society members should write to Cong. Waxman to thank him for his concern and apparent understanding of our point of view. See editorial on page 1.]

Dear Pamela, We broke another barrier! I was invited to speak at Yale University School of Medicine! My topic: Vegetarianism: -Your health; -Impact on the earth; -Ethics.

As for your nut milk recipe, last issue, it is excellent, but for infants, use only the truly natural ingredients from trees and earth.

—Loving best wishes, Jo Willard, Pres., Natural Hygiene, Inc.

Dear Pam — I finally got to read the *Vegetarian Times* piece on you — and it was *very* good! You are an American original, so I'm glad more people now know about you. (Are you getting more mail now?) Today VT; tomorrow *People* magazine! Any Oprah invites? —Charles Patterson

[Ed. note: It was VivaVegie Society member Charles Patterson who I have to thank for getting me that great "Potpourri" feature in *Vegetarian Times* (Dec., '93 issue). (Mr. Patterson is the author of *Animal Rights* (Enslow Publishers), a powerful presentation of the arguments for animal rights with the younger reader in mind.) The VT "Potpourri" feature writer Amy Rosenbaum Clark, it happens, knew nothing about my vegetarian street advocacy, 101 Reasons..., The VivaVine, nor The VivaVegie Society when she called to set up our interview, and upon Mr. Patterson's recommendation alone she told me that VT would be running the piece.

Indeed, the mail has poured in since the VT article ran. The VivaVine now has about 12 new subscribers, and several hundred copies of 101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian have been sold as a result. I'm happy that more people know about VivaVegie Society activities, and I hope that other people become activists (or even veg-evangelists!) because of the exposure. No offers yet however from *People* or *Oprah*. (Note: call 1-800-398-2504 to order a copy of Mr. Patterson's book.)

Dear Pamela: I have a few thoughts about the nut milk story you published in your last issue of *The VivaVine*, but first, a few words about processed food in general. When the idea of "recipes" came into the world, it surely was

the invention of those whose main interest was the taste of food, and/or to make food more elegant and to please one's fancy. However, those who write recipes generally do not consider the detrimental effects on the nutritive value of food and therefore a recipe's ultimate effect upon health.

When food is cooked, processed or treated in any way, the living enzymes are destroyed and the minerals and vitamins are lost to evaporation and exposure to light, air and water used in preparation. That is why the kitchen is the greatest enemy of food, and therefore health. As for nuts, they are an excellent food and a prime source of protein. They should be eaten raw and not processed in a grinder or blender. The physical structure of the nuts, as well as of vegetables, is designed by nature to house and protect the nutrients in the 'living food,' a gaseous substance contained in thin sacks or globules. The gas is invisible, colorless and odorless. When food is ground, many of the tiny globules are broken and the nutrients are evaporated into

the air and the food value is lost. The only justification for using a blender is to enhance a party or a special function where the health of the participants is of secondary consideration.

If one mainly eats processed, devitalized, demineralized foods to the exclusion of whole foods, he or she is therefore forced to eat in larger quantities to obtain sufficient nutrition to sustain life. This overworks the functional organs of the body and leads to various deficiencies and ailments.

The function of the mouth is to break down the structure of food and chemically prepare it for the hydrochloric acid and gastric juices of the stomach where it is further liquefied to move through the small intestine. Nature objects to mechanical assistance (grinders) and interference in her function of digesting. If you do use the grinder, then do not go all out to make a fine powder. The tiny particles still contain some nutritive elements. Leave as much dissolution of any food to the chewing process so it can be mixed with saliva at the same time.

Recipes tend to complicate, while the masters of wisdom admonish us to "simplify, simplify everything in your life." Simplification avoids bondage to the taste buds and relieves the house-wife [Ed. note: or house-husband!] of unnecessary work and saves much of her/his time while improving the health of family members. The taste buds can be retrained to appreciate natural, raw and simple food. —Sincerely, Louis Warter

Dear Friend of Animals, You are the gift recipient of a Farm Sanctuary turkey adoption from Jean Thaler. Your commitment to animals is helping us save the lives of suffering farm animals, and educate people about the cruelty of "food animal" production.

—Yours, from Farm Sanctuary, Watkins Glen, NY

[Ed. note: The above letter came to my husband Alan Rice and me from Farm Sanctuary notifying us of our wedding present of a turkey adoption from Jean. Also with the letter was our adoption card and the picture of Sneakers with his friends shown here at left. Contact Adopt A Farm Animal Project, P.O. Box 1509, Watkins Glen, NY 14891, 607/583-2225 to

sponsor a rescued farm animal at Farm Sanctuary. You will be supporting their excellent advocacy work on behalf of farm animals at the same time.]

To order a copy of the second edition of *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*, send \$1 and a stamped self addressed envelope to: The VivaVegie Society, Prince St. Sta., P.O. Box 294, New York, NY 10012. Obtain additional copies for 50¢ each (60¢ each, foreign or retail). And to pass out to all of your friends: \$20 for 50 copies (\$30, foreign or retail), and \$35 for 100 copies (\$50, foreign or retail). Checks should be made payable to The VivaVegie Society. Multiple copies, over 2, come postage paid.

The VivaVine welcomes letters, articles, manuscripts and graphics, for publication or reference. Deadline for submissions for next issue is February 10. The VivaVine always needs help at mailing time. Next issue mails at the end of February.



2nd Annual Holiday Vegan Potluck a Huge Success

Vegetarians came from out of the woodwork on December 23 for the second annual holiday vegan potluck sponsored by EarthSave New York, The VivaVeggie Society and the Vegetarian Society of New York. Seventy people came to the offices of The Network for a Sustainable New York on 28th St in Manhattan hearing about the event nearly entirely through word of mouth. Tony White, the primary organizer of the event, introduced special guests after announcing the formation of his new group **Break Bread ... For a Change** which will sponsor ongoing potlucks at the New York offices of Greenpeace (see enclosed flyer and/or calendar on page 1 for details). • **Lorna Sass**, author of *Recipes from an Ecological Kitchen* was on hand with copies of her book to sell and sign, as was **Rynn Berry**, author of *Famous Vegetarians* • **Hubert**

Davis was honored for consistent culinary excellence and the longevity of his monthly Queens potlucks (7 years). • **Joe Yu** of Tien Vegetarian House let people know about his catering and vegetarian food consulting service. • **The VivaVeggie Society** sounded the hope that the momentum of potluck "mania" continue, and announced that a vegetarian street advocacy flyer distribution was scheduled for the following day. And finally: • **Manny Goldman** entertained us with the warm sounds of his portable keyboard.

The 31st World Congress for Vegetarians will be held August 8-13, The Hague, Holland in honor of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Foundation Day of the Dutch Vegetarian Organization. A truly global conference is in store. For more information write: Stichting Vegetarian Congress Holland '94, Larenseweg 26, 1221 CM Hilversum, Holland.

So, what is The VivaVeggie Society?

The VivaVeggie Society takes vegetarian advocacy to the streets. VivaVeggie advocates confront Mr. and Ms. Pedestrian to get the facts out about their healthful, ethical and environmentally conscious vegetarian diet.

Advocates assemble where there is plenty of pedestrian traffic. They come equipped with brightly-colored T-shirts with vegetarian messages, and plenty of fact-filled information. Founder Pamela Teisler wears the outfit shown on the reverse side of this newsletter. The mission? To distribute, for donation, the flyer, *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian*, written by Pamela Teisler and inspired by John Robbins' book, *Diet for a New America*. The VivaVeggie Society has been, and will be in the future, involved with various projects such as **World Vegetarian Day** and **The Great American Meat Out**. Donations can be sent to the address below.

BGH: The First Test

While food and drug companies sit on the verge of bringing hundreds of genetically engineered products to market, the City Council of Chicago startled the nation by unanimously passing (50-0) an unprecedented ordinance, which requires that grocery stores and restaurants display signs identifying **genetically engineered foods**. (Current federal policy will allow most of these novel substances to be sold untested and unlabeled.) These genetically engineered products raise a number of very serious questions regarding human health, environmental safety and ethical implications. The deliberate or accidental release of some of these man made organisms into the environment may lead to forms of "biological pollution" which have never been experienced before. Genetically engineered products often contain genetic material from dissimilar plants, animals, viruses and bacteria. Eating a product containing even one animal (or human) gene would be repugnant to a vegetarian (or even a non-vegetarian!), or prohibited for those with guidelines about the way they eat. The genetically engineered bovine growth hormone was recently approved by the FDA and will be in grocery stores all over the county in early February. Join The VivaVeggie Society, 212/966-2060, and the Washington based Pure Food Campaign, 202/775-1132, to demonstrate opposition, and try to nip genetic engineering in the bud by discouraging commercial uses. Perhaps New York City can be convinced to follow Chicago's lead!

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SUBSCRIBE TO THE VIVAVINE

For \$5/yr., (\$7, foreign) receive 5 bi-monthly issues (no Jul./Aug. issue) plus a complimentary copy of *101 Reasons Why I'm a Vegetarian* and your very own personal membership card to The VivaVeggie Society.

Cash or check with your request should be sent to:
The VivaVeggie Society, Prince St. Sta., P.O. Box 294,
New York, NY 10012