

*Remarks made by Judith LaBelle, President of Glynwood, on accepting the Russell Wright Award for Living in Harmony with Nature, presented by Manitoga on May 22, 2011.*

It is a great privilege for me to accept this award on behalf of my colleagues on the Board and staff of Glynwood. We are very grateful to Manitoga for this very special recognition.

Now at first blush it might seem odd that Manitoga, with its emphasis on “good design for everyone” would bestow this honor on Glynwood, which works to help communities save farming and strengthen the regional food system.

Even our landscapes couldn’t seem more different. Rather than the intimate woodland garden setting that we are enjoying today, Glynwood is based in 225-acres of rolling farmland. It is a working landscape populated with Black Angus and Ancient White Park cattle, goats and pastured chickens and heritage White Spot pigs. [You can thank them – and our farm staff - for part of the meal we have enjoyed.] We use this land to experiment, innovate and demonstrate farming practices that we want to encourage throughout the region.

What had been the Perkins family’s country estate now houses Glynwood’s offices and a conference and meeting facility with overnight accommodations that is the home base for Glynwood’s community-based work, our research and other programs. You may be familiar with our recent analysis of *“The State of Agriculture in the Hudson Valley”*, or our leadership in recreating the infrastructure needed by the region’s independent livestock producers. Or you may have participated in one of our community events, like last Sunday’s Sheepshearing, or one of our workshops, which range from designing a kitchen garden to the small-scale processing of chickens.

For several years we have worked to strengthen the Hudson Valley’s identity as a world class landscape that produces world class food, and support the transition to high value products. So this fall we will be

conducting an exchange between orchardists and hard cider and spirit producers from the Valley and Le Perche in Normandy, France. This will be coupled with the creation of a cider route map, supported by a McHenry Award from the Open Space Institute, and cider week in New York City and the Valley to celebrate and encourage the renaissance in the production of this important value added product.

And at the same time we are developing a program to support new farming enterprises – a masters program in farm business administration, if you will – to ensure the long-term success of the next generation of farmers here.

*So – Manitoga, Glynwood, what's the connection?*

To me, it is that both teach us that good things don't just happen.

The best designs – like Manitoga – or a beautiful farmscape are so elegant that they appear effortless. And therein lies the irony. Because they appear so natural – so pre-ordained - it is easy to overlook the skill and care that it took for Russel Wright to create Dragon Rock, or the deep cultural knowledge and commitment to place and business acumen that it takes for a farmer to be a good steward of his or her land while producing the food that we need.

The same is true on the regional level. Distinctive regions with vibrant communities and robust economies do not just happen. They are the result of hard work sustained over long periods of time by both the public and private sectors.

The Hudson Valley – and the Highlands have long been especially blessed in that regard with families and individuals that cared deeply about this region and provided strong leadership for its protection: the Rockefellers, the Harrimans, the Perkins, the Osborns, the Eristoffs and the Davises – Franny Reese, Pete Seeger, Bob Boyle, John Adams - the list of extraordinary families and individuals goes on and on. All supporting the amazing web of civic organizations devoted to protecting and enhancing this special place.

And you are part of this tradition, too, of course. You are here today devoting your time and resources to celebrate and support Manitoga.

And I know that many of you are also involved with the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Boscobel and the Shakespeare Theater, the historic society, the Depot Theater, Scenic Hudson, OSI, Black Rock Forest, Constitution Marsh, and many others I haven't mentioned - the list goes on and on.

Glynwood is fortunate to be located here, in a place with a strong tradition and culture of individual commitment, responsibility and involvement.

We often say that if we *cannot* create a strong regional food system here, in the Hudson Valley, with the extraordinary markets that are so close, then where can it be done?

And if we *can* create a strong regional food system here, in spite of the lack of infrastructure and high costs of doing business, then we can show that it can be done anywhere.

I suggest that the same is true of our landscape. If we *cannot* protect and enhance the extraordinary landscape of this region, given the talent, resources and commitment of the people in this room, then where can it be done?

And if we *can* protect and enhance this extraordinary landscape, in spite of development pressures that chip away and a society that too often trades things of true importance for short-term gain, then we can show that it can be done anywhere.

Then we can show that good design – on every level – is, *truly*, for everyone.

As we know, good things like this don't just happen - they require dedication and hard work over a long period of time. But as I look around this room, I am confident that we shall make them happen here.

Thank you very much.