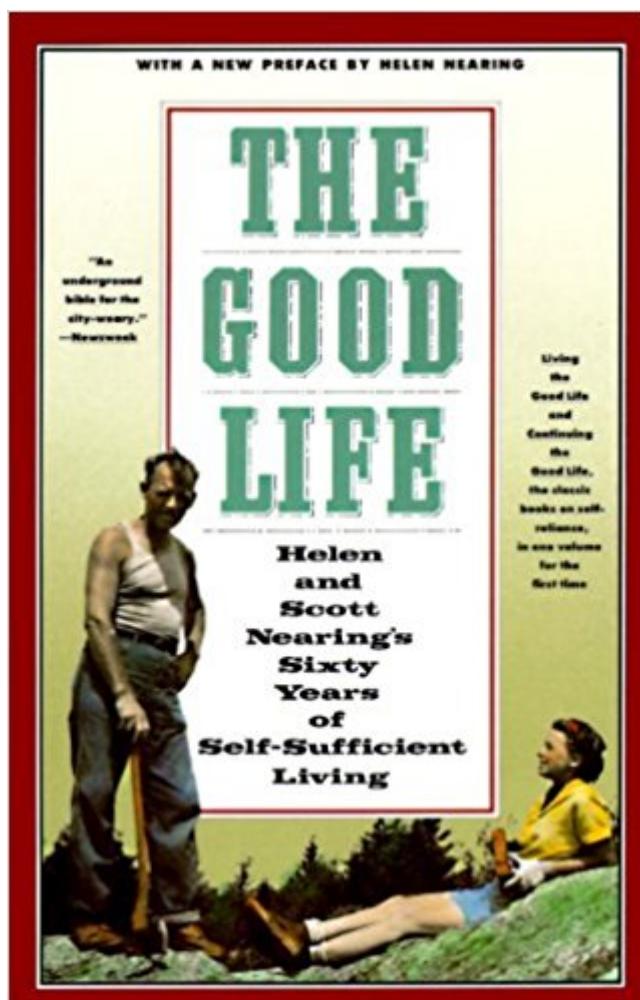


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The Good Life: Helen And Scott Nearing's Sixty Years Of Self-Sufficient Living



Synopsis

This one volume edition of Living the Good Life and Continuing the Good Life brings these classics on rural homesteading together. This couple abandoned the city for a rural life with minimal cash and the knowledge of self reliance and good health.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Helen and Scott Nearing are the great-grandparents of the back-to-the-land movement, having abandoned the city in 1932 for a rural life based on self-reliance, good health, and a minimum of cash. . . . Fascinating, timely, and wholly useful, a mix of the Nearings' challenging philosophy and expert counsel on practical skills." --The Washington Post Book World "A prophetic account of the creation of a self-sufficient little Walden . . . that has been an underground bible for the city-weary." --Newsweek "The Nearings are plain daylight, solid prose, sound information." --The New York Times Book Review "As close to a Walden for our times as we're likely to see." --Yankee Magazine

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Worthwhile read -- few people would want to follow the extremes of self sufficiency the Nearings did,

but this is an interesting treatise on their values and their decades of living much simpler than they could have, if they'd chosen a different path in life. Definitely contains more about their values, but somehow how to info is included - just don't expect it to cover everything one would need to know to live 'the good life'. The Nearings did have a few inconsistencies in the writing of these books - a dismissal of milk for non infants, while later discussing getting milk delivered and also being against animal labor, but having two photos of working horses on their farm. They should have offered explanation for those -- perhaps they could have defended them? It seems they were fortunate to never get appendicitis or cancer or whatever, and didn't need medical care. Hardly reason to look down upon doctors, when they could well have gotten seriously ill despite their vegetarian diet and exercise. I raise an organic garden, but still got breast cancer! Readers should know that the Nearings had some money, and were never at risk of being broke. Few people following their lifestyle would be able to spend the winters lecturing and collecting speakers fees and selling books to supplement their sales of berries or syrup. Nor would most homesteaders have a steady supply of free laborers coming to their home to work in the gardens or build roads, etc. Homesteading without those perks is extremely hard, and takes a lot more than 4 hrs of labor a day.

I read this book more than 15 years ago, a university student in Korea -of course in Korean- where everything was rushing to development or money, without much time to pause and think where we are... We thought that we will be better off -yes it's true in many ways, but we believe we lost something: a simple life harmonized with surroundings including not nature, but also with neighborhood. I may be overestimating but for me, this book affected my life as much as Walden and Laozi (yes, I was 23 years old, and this book was more vivid and real for me than book written some hundreds or -even!- thousands years ago) Now I bought this book and read again, I feel more clearly what this couple wanted to say, not only because it is in original language but also the world we live now -rushing to a place of materialism without knowing why we really have to do- makes this book even more compelling.

'The Good Life' consists of two previously published books: 'Living the Good Life' and 'Continuing the Good Life'. Both books have completely different flavors. 'Living the Good Life' (1954) was written in the Nearings' still youthful and rebellious years, while 'Continuing the Good Life' (1979) shows the Nearings in a mellowed, tolerant old age. Living the Good Life has some very useful information on gardening, food storage, and stone construction. The book is a mix of practical advice and the Nearings' philosophy of living, which includes self-reliance, vegetarianism, and

socialism or communism. The authors do a good job of outlining their "design for living". A plethora of quotes tends to disrupt the writing. The Nearings move from New York City to the Vermont hills, but say little of how they learned "the good life". Much of the book was written as though the authors knew better than the Vermont natives from the start. Surely, there were some humbling moments and follies that they experienced, but none are related. A little self-deprecation would have made the Nearings more likeable. The authors had attempted to establish a commune or socialistic village in Vermont. However, the independent country folk refused to buy into their collective experiments. With only a handful of members, the Nearings made little economic or social progress. With intense scorn regarding the independence of rural America, the Nearings admit failure of their experiment and move off to Maine. 'Continuing the Good Life' abandons the philosophical ranting found in the first book and focuses on practical advice for modern homesteaders. The Nearings even relax some of their own vegetarian beliefs, as evidenced by eating dairy products and occasional eggs. By abandoning much of their preaching, they become more likeable. Although some of their endeavors are amusing, such as building a 1.5 acre pond with pick, shovel, wheelbarrow, and some concrete, we respect them for adhering to their beliefs and having so much energy at such an advanced age.

After observing my husbands family living that life of borrowing money and expecting someone else to pick up the tab when they were in trouble, I never wanted to live that lifestyle. Also I think today is so much like it was back there in the thirty's before the great depression. Self reliant people are happier people I have observed. I really am tired of the people who whining about the economy, while they are sitting in their rocking chairs watching tv. TV they say is too expensive they say. I think just turn it off. Gas is too high. I think just stop driving your large gas guzzling truck and do like I do either stay home or drive something cheaper. I lived back in those depression days, and we didn't whine, we just did what we had to and was thankful for what we had. This is a book I can relate to, I never once heard them whining about their circumstances.

meh not much useful information for the modern homesteader...which is what i was hoping for when i bought this.

I read this book cover to cover and was inspired by this man's endless energy. He's got a lot of great advise on how to keep busy in your retirement years, by stating productive throughout your life. I pick it up again occasionally, just to review the high lights. This is a book that I would loan to my homesteading friends along with my recommendation for reading it.

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