

## **Editor Alan Samson recommends Carol Drinkwater's Return to the Olive Farm**

In *Return to the Olive Farm*, Carol Drinkwater returns to her beloved olive farm, *Appassionata*, with a changed perspective about the cultivation of olives as a consequence of her travels. The responsibilities (and headaches) of property ownership have been waiting for her.

What story about France is complete without a baffling and frustrating encounter with the roles and regulations of French bureaucracy, complicated by the additional imposition of rules and regulations required by the European Union? The use of asbestos as insulation, and the couple's inability to overcome obstructions and cleanse the property of a small amount of the material, is at the heart of this story about the poisons we use and are unable to dispense with.

Just as cultivating her olives made Carol a farmer and gave her a new relationship to a small place on earth, her sojourn to Spain and Lebanon has made her an ecologist, aware of the preciousness of natural resources. The bee colony that has regularly summered at *Appassionata* has been decimated while she was away. Shocked, she discovers that insecticide sprayed on the olive trees has poisoned the bees and devastated both the health of François, one of the beekeepers, and his livelihood. Can she spray her trees against the destructive olive fly knowing that the chemical is also killing the bees?

What follows is the story of how Carol and Michel struggle with some difficult choices about how to protect the bees without forfeiting their crop and how they decide to deal with the unavoidable disappointments and inevitable responsibilities that come with running an organic farm. The significant question at the very heart of all of this is "Under such circumstances can *Appassionata* still be home"?

What we find at the end is that Carol is no less in love with her farm and may in fact now be more settled than in any time in the past. This is a fascinating and ultimately life-affirming tale in which the author takes stock of her life and the turns it has taken.