



*Editors: Innes Kasanof; Peg DiBenedetto; Judy DiBenedetto; Karen Rauter; Carrie Bradley Neves; Art: Nina Kasanof*

## **Maggie's Mishap**

For any farmer or rancher, the simple act of going to the barn can be an adventure. On most days, thankfully, walking into a dairy barn is fairly predictable with cows quietly resting, eating or waiting behind the parlor door for milking. Other days, however, prove to be a bit more, shall we say, “interesting.” As our dear friend Donald Bouton once quipped, “There are days you just want to close the barn door, pretend that you didn’t see anything out of the ordinary, turn around and go back to the house.” (Donald was referring to a time when a frozen water pipe had thawed and burst in his dairy barn, filling the feed mangers and gutters full of water.) A while back Tim Johnson recounted a story of hearing the barn cleaner running as he approached his barn for the morning milking. It

turned out his cows had amused themselves the night before by flipping on the switch so the barn cleaner had been running its course for who knows how long. At our farm, our old dog Copper delighted in spending her nights chewing the strings that tethered the young calves. In the morning, we were greeted by calves cavorting around the barn, once neatly piled grain sacks knocked askew, empty chicken feeders and barn cats running for cover so as to avoid the thundering hooves of the silly calves invading their sleeping quarters.

While the above examples were mostly mildly annoying yet rather comical, other trips to the barn reveal much more serious problems. One Sunday morning about a week ago we experienced one of these incidents. On this particular morning, my husband, Chris, and

son, Greg, went to the barn to set up the milking equipment and clean the cow stalls and barn alleys as usual. (It sometimes looks as if the cows had a party in there overnight. The Far Side cartoon is true, perhaps?!) As Greg was cleaning, he noticed some puddles of blood in different spots on the concrete floor. We had been seeing a few of these spots for a couple of days previous but a closer look at the herd failed to identify the source. We had thought that maybe Franny, a cow that had recently needed assistance in giving birth to a large calf, might be bleeding a bit after the difficult calving as cows sometimes do.

Our answer came a few minutes later when Greg found Maggie, a big, dark rust colored cow, standing out in the silo feeding area with a rapidly growing puddle of blood spreading beneath her. Greg called for Chris and together they pinpointed the exact cause: Maggie had badly cut the large subcutaneous vein, called the milk vein, that runs along the lower part of a cow's abdomen. With about 250 ml of blood per second coursing through this vein, quick intervention was necessary to save Maggie's life. Our veterinarian, Dr. Leigh Wilcox, comes from over by Jefferson so we needed to stop the bleeding until he could get to our farm.

With farmer's ingenuity, the guys went to work fashioning a makeshift bandage to fit the 1350 pound patient. Using vet wrap (a



roll of stretchy bandaging material), lots of paper toweling and baleage tape, a serviceable bandage was made that effectively stopped the bleeding until the vet and his technician arrived—rather quickly, I might add—to methodically and skillfully suture the large, messy wound. Dairy cows tend to be nosy creatures and, true to form and much to the Vet Technician, Sue's, delight, several cows came to observe the procedure. Thankfully, the “observers” were on the other side of the gate so they couldn't get in the way of what needed doing. Those cows would have been way too much “help”!

After the ordeal, Maggie, who was surprisingly chipper considering all she had been through, was put in a stall by herself to rest, keep still and take in a little nourishment. We thought she would appreciate a little R and R but she wanted out of the pen when the other cows began leaving the barn to go bask in the sunshine on the hillside. Luckily, a few cows decided to hang back in the barn allowing Maggie to relax enough to rest in the pen for a few hours. That night, this tough bovine patient came in the milking parlor on her own, and despite being a bit sore, she ate a little grain and allowed us to milk her.

As of this writing, Maggie seems to be doing well. Indeed, we are often astounded by the resiliency of animals. So many have a “try” that is both heartwarming as well as inspiring. Perhaps the next time you happen upon

our herd crossing Route 3 to go to pasture or you see them out grazing, you'll get a glimpse of the rust colored First Lady of this story. **JD**

## TWO STONES FOR EVERY DIRT

If you head west up the hill on Bruce Scudder Road in Halcott and turn right at the alpacas, you will be entering Two Stones Farm, the thirty-five-acre homestead of Alan and Robin White, who live there with one pet dog, two livestock guard dogs, five chickens, a few roosters, a gaggle of strong-lunged guinea hens, a pig called Betsy, and a herd of fifteen unique goats as well as a number of kicky kids, which, right around the time of this writing in March, can be considerable. And of course those alpacas, who study their domain from comical periscope heads and supply Robin with beautiful fiber that she spins into yarn.

Here is where you get your goat—if you like, that is. For the last fifteen years, Alan has been raising dairy goats, while also pursuing a meticulous program of selective breeding within his herd; at least nine breeds are now represented in the gene pool that cavorts in the cozy, hay-scented goat barn. Goat keepers have traveled from other towns to buy offspring or culled adult animals from the Whites; closer to home, Alan has collaborated with fellow herder and neighbor Christl Johnson, loaning her a buck

and sometimes buying back one of the resulting kids.

But such goat-trading is only a by-product and small part of Alan's efforts to create, essentially, the perfect Catskills dairy goat. Many common breeds in the United States have characteristics geared to the climates and ecosystems of their origins—for example, the popular Nubian goat's heritage lies in part in the Middle East and North Africa—which can pose challenges and problems when raising them in what is often a very different climate in North America, as the goats don't have the needed genetic



*Alan White with one of Adina's kids*

resistance to indigenous parasites and disease. When maladies from parasites started to plague Alan's herd, he introduced a breed from New Zealand, whose DNA was printed in a similar climate and does therefore carry resistance to our local bugs. After

several generations of crossbreeding, the problems were reduced significantly.

Over fifteen generations, actually, and a corresponding decade and a half, Alan has

continued to refine the characteristics he seeks in his goats. Ridiculously adorable as every specimen is, the process of culling must be circumspect and dispassionate. After the spring's kidding, he mixes and matches to keep the herd at a steady fifteen, choosing animals for qualities like good body size, udder size, elongated teats (easier for milking), color (black goats absorb much more heat from the sun, making them winter-hardy), and strong maternal instincts. With the parasite issue stabilized, Alan has begun other experiments, including combining meat- and dairy-goat characteristics in one animal and breeding for smaller (or no) lop ears, to avoid painful and potentially infectious frostbite damage on the tips.

The number fifteen for the herd size is no accident.

When the Whites began raising goats in 2001, they lived in Jeffersonville, NY, without the amount of space they needed to fit their vision for a farm. After an extensive search, in 2003 they moved to Halcott, where they realized they had discovered not only a place that afforded ample space, but also a community where people live how they choose to live, without being judged and with no fear of judgment. With no less profound a force than evolution itself transpiring in the central engine of the goat barn, Robin and Alan set to establishing all the other workings

of the farm, guided by similar principles of cause and effect, sustainability, what Alan calls "environmental dynamics," and the unexplainable wonders of nature. On those terms, fifteen goats is the number they can support with their time and energy; what the amount of land they have can provide for in roaming and grazing; and that will produce enough milk to satisfy all of the family's needs.

For pasturing the goats, Alan assessed the meadows on their parcel and made, and is making, some changes. Fences went up (the intensely sensitive guard dogs keep even far-flung borders safe from deer, coyotes, and other marauders, mainly by way of persuasive barking), but meadows also had to be cleared. Goats, like deer, are browsers, and prefer trees,



bushes, and woody weeds, eating on the move rather than standing still and eating grass down to the roots. Alan is systematically felling trees in what is planned for as the woody grazing meadow, but leaving them where they lay. The goats eat the leaves and some twigs and bark; the trunks become firewood; and the rest will slowly break down while brambles and other things goats love will grow up in the new sunlight. In the neighboring grass pasture, the goats will steer the agriculture by eating the plants they prefer, thus making those

varieties more robust for returning as well as spreading the seeds, and at the same time getting rich nutrients that their beloved woody stuff doesn't provide (even though they need those for the health of their four-stomach ruminant guts). But because the grassland is also where the parasites live, being able to control the goats' access to each area is key.

In other examples of both sustainability and environmental dynamics at Two Stones Farm, for the heat inside the residence, a pellet stove warms the lower level and a wood-burning stove heats the upper floor. All of the wood comes from the property—cut, dragged, cut again, and split by Alan. A modest solar-panel array provides almost all of the electricity the farm needs year-round. The guinea hens are supreme agents of tick control, and the goats provide all of the compost needed for the gardens. Alan explains, “In a commercial dairy-cow operation, the manure is about 90 percent water. I run all our barns as a ‘bedded pack’ [layering hay on top of manure and letting the animals work the two together as part of their natural movements], which means the manure is mostly solid. And it has a carbon-nitrogen ratio that’s almost perfect for compost. I just put it in a pile and turn it once a week. That way, I can produce a pretty much finished compost in five or six weeks.” (The bedded pack in the stalls also contributes some heat to the barn as it begins its lively decay.)

Those gardens—four large plots at far remove from each other (one is right next to the house, another is a quarter of a mile away, a “real pain in the neck,” said Alan, “but it’s worth it”) to facilitate crop rotation for nutrient renewal and control of blight and bugs—are built into the comparatively flat areas of their property on the natural “benching,” or terracing, particular to the Catskill mountains, and account for about 80 percent of what the Whites eat. Large beds of herbs, greens, fruits, vegetables, and potatoes and other roots thrive in soil enriched entirely by carefully collected goat compost. “Robin’s gardens are as good as any I see around,” said Alan. “When it’s dry, the compost helps water retention a lot; when it’s wet, the compost breaks up that Catskills clay and helps a lot. The idea that we can take a by-product from the goats and produce all of our vegetables without fertilizers or any other input appeals to me.”

Oh, and the pig? She’s there to happily and gracefully make use of whey—the main by-product of making cheese. Because on top of everything else, an exciting new project at Two Stones Farm is exploring the making of handmade goat’s-milk cheeses. With a steady rhythm in the barn and likewise a steady flow of goat’s milk, the Whites have found time to embark upon a bit of culinary creation. A new compact building houses both the processing/pasteurizing room and the adjoining cave (with two sides built into a hill for geothermal regulation); the operation is projected for completion this summer. A full

range of goat's-milk cheeses made possible by aging will ensue. In this era of a new and renewed passion for artisan cheeses, local farmers' market, grocers, and cheese lovers in any locale will undoubtedly celebrate a new product from the hills of Halcott.

Our last stop during a recent tour of Two Stones Farm was the farm's springhouse, where we stooped just above ground level and peeked through the small square window in the large round concrete top at the endless flow of fresh, delicious spring water within. I paused for a moment, thinking of my friends in drought-ridden California and, by extension, any place on Earth that isn't as lucky as we, to have so much pristine water running around us all the time. Alan must have been reading my thoughts when he said, "I think that how we treat our water will be the legacy of our time as stewards on this planet." As with all awareness of the most basic and yet utterly magical elements we enjoy in our town, the truth could not be drunk more purely or deeply.

**CBN**

### **Living History Cemetery Tour**

*By Diane Galusha*

You think you know a place. The shape of the land, scent of the air, feel of the roads beneath car or bike or feet. Buildings so familiar; voices of the neighbors, their kids, their dogs, part of everyday consciousness.

But what of the history of this place? Who sniffed the spring winds and walked these trails before you appeared? Who listened to voices stilled long before you claimed this patch of ground as your own?

Those are the essential questions behind the annual Living History Cemetery Tour sponsored by the Historical Society of the Town of Middletown. It is a way to make the people who rest in local burial grounds become more than names etched in stone above their graves. A way to bring them back for a short while, to learn a bit about what they knew, what moved them, what their lives were like.



*Through the mists of time come Marshall Bouton in doorway of sap house with granddaughters Kathleen Marie Bouton Mech and Marilyn Darlene Bouton Gallant.*

The Fifth Annual Living History Cemetery Tour will be held at the Halcott Cemetery on Saturday, June 18 (rain date June 19). Eight former Halcott residents will be portrayed by local players. Groups of tour goers will be led through the cemetery to meet these folks, who will talk about their lives, and deaths, in presentations that are at once moving,

funny, inspiring.

Characters will include Marshall Bouton, much loved farmer with an inventive streak; Sarah and Will Johnson, salt of the earth types, progenitors of many Johnsons still farming in Halcott today; J. P.

VanValkenburg, first pastor of the Halcott Methodist Church; Warren Scudder, Anti-Rent War “Indian Chief” who overcame a death sentence to live out his life in Halcott; Mary Griffin, who lost a son and a husband to the Civil War; Marion Moseman, 22-year-old World War I soldier and casualty of the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918; and Ellen Bellows, witness to family tragedy, lost to history.

Tickets to the tour are \$15. Tours depart every 20 minutes starting at 4 p.m. Last tour is at 6. Reserve tour times by calling 586-4736.

You think you know this place? Come to the cemetery tour. And think again.

### ***History Rules in Halcott!***

In addition to the Living History Tour at the Halcott Cemetery on June 18, our town will open the third annual Headwaters History Days with a free concert at the Grange Hall Friday, June 3, at 7 p.m.

The John Burroughs Memorial Locust and Wild Honey Orchestra will play original songs inspired by John Burroughs, the environmental conscience of the Catskills. Performers will include Halcott resident

Carrie Bradley Neves on violin, Steve Koester of Arkville on guitar, Josh Roy Brown of Pine Hill on lap steel and guitar, and other guests from banjo to bass fiddle.

Headwaters History Days is a full weekend of lectures, workshops, exhibits, tours, and other activities at fifteen venues from Andes to Olive. Although programs are spread over several municipalities, Headwaters History Days was designated by the Town of Middletown as its Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway Signature Event.

Venues range from Skene Memorial Library, where you can learn about the Fleischmann family; to the Roxbury Methodist Church where you can tour the clock tower and watch a film about Jay Gould; to the Middletown Historical Society, where a slide show will recount episodes from Margaretville Telephone Company’s first century in business.



New participants this year are the Olive Free Library, with readings from the diaries of Elwyn Davis, and Morton Memorial Library in Pine Hill, which plans a genealogy workshop.

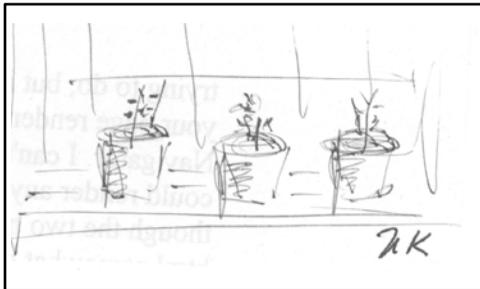
The weekend will close on a musical note Sunday afternoon, with a concert by singer songwriter Rob Laing -- “Lookin’ for the Past” -- at the restored Andes D&N Railroad Depot.

There's so much more! And it's all free!  
Details can be found at  
[headwatershistorydays.org](http://headwatershistorydays.org). *CBN*

### Seeds of Spring

In every gardener there is hunger. Hunger for the season of planting, hunger for the first signs of green poking through the brown, hunger for the taste of a perfect sungold cherry tomato in August. There is hunger for adequate time to “put by” all this produce, and finally, admittedly, hunger for a hard frost that signals bedtime for the garden.

Oh, the hunger! For us northerners especially, with such a short growing season, the hungers all jumble together in one rushing blur of hot weather, dirty fingernails, and critter-killer-rage. And because our last frost is traditionally Memorial Day, the only way to persuade tomatoes to fruit in August is to start them indoors on Good Friday. At least that was Shirley Bouton's wisdom. But it's a nice arrangement, actually. For a starving gardener, starting seeds indoors is like getting to taste the brownie batter before it's cooked. It tides us over until June comes.



Seed-starting is usually preceded by seed purchasing, which *should* be preceded by an honest assessment, a realistic list of specific successes from former years as well as some daring dreams of what might be a success this year. I admit that many gardeners are too hungry to follow this process. After all, spontaneity is an integral part of our charm. But if one does take the time to prepare such a list, it will help when the actual seed order arrives and is eagerly opened to reveal puzzles and downright denials. (“They’ve made a mistake: I would never order rutabaga seeds!!”) You will have your paperwork to prove it.

The process of seed-starting varies as much as the number of varieties of seeds. I have used home-made newspaper cups to hold the soil; I have used peat pots to hold the soil; I have used plastic banks of containers. These usually come with clear plastic tops that steam up with condensation so that I have to tap them gently to get a clear view of any green shoots. I start tapping soon after I’ve planted, naturally, being not only spontaneous, but impatient. I have read of those who use egg shells. It’s not rocket science as long as you adhere to the

important aspects of seed starting: adequate soil, adequate moisture, adequate drainage, adequate light, and finally, adequate space. A root-bound broccoli plant in an egg shell needs to be liberated and upgraded to perhaps a yogurt cup with holes punched in the bottom. If you can provide these basics for them, the seeds just jump up amidst huge hurrahs of excitement – and then, what? The older I get, the more I realize that this part of gardening is not very exact. You sense that you're overwatering, especially when you see the green mold appear on top of the soil. You sense that your little babes are not getting enough light when they are pale and spindly. On the whole, seedlings are pretty forgiving and if you catch the mistake in time, they'll straighten up and fly right. If worst comes to worst, you throw the whole thing out and start again. (For this reason, it's not a good idea to plant the entire seed packet on the first go-round.)

And so the seeds develop. The miracle of those little brown dots sending roots down and leaves up is fresh every year and goes a long way towards satiating that hunger. But only for a time. Soon, there's hardening off to be done: getting your tender littles used to the great big outdoors. Then there's setting out to be done, often, in my case, too soon, thus courting frosty disaster. And then, and then, well, then

they are off and running. But, you say, these tomato plants are so tiny!! Ah, now you're getting hungry! *IK*

## PASSAGES



### **Chance Made Us Neighbors Hearts Made Us Friends**

*By Judy Diaz*

Betty Webster. Not only was she my neighbor, she was my very dear friend. Her passing on January 11 leaves a void in my heart. We were 'armchair connoisseurs' on many subjects, coffee being just one of them. We loved flavored coffee, especially chocolate. Betty would experiment and blend different flavors and we would sit and

sip our coffee and discuss which flavor we liked best. Then there was candy. Her favorite being Lindt Truffles. We would spend hours talking about TV shows, politics, friends, family and recipes. By the time we finished the second, or third cup of coffee, we solved the world's problems. We never ran out of things to talk about.

I loved her Maine accent, especially when she asked me what I was having for suppa. I teased her about that many times over the years. I will miss her smile and her sense of humor. We ended every visit with "I love you, see you later". Drinking flavored coffee will never be the same. Rest in Peace, dear friend.

### **Once Again**

Dear Friends:

As you know, the Halcott Community Fund is the sponsor and payer of bills for *The Times of Halcott*. But HCF does so much more! We give annual contributions to the Halcott United Methodist Church to support their scholarship fund for local graduating seniors. We give to the Fleischmanns Fire Department and the Margaretville Hospital Auxiliary. Money is always available for needy families in the area or those who are hit by sudden disasters.

One of our proudest endeavors is our close friendship to the Town, expressed in HCF's sharing of Grange Hall maintenance expenses. This relationship quietly expresses a very sensible equation: when community members contribute to HCF, the Town tax burden is lessened for the same community

members.

As Halcott begins an era under Alan White's leadership, there are exciting plans afoot. Our Grange Administrator, Bob VanValkenburgh has recommended, among other repairs, an air conditioning system for the Grange that will make everyone smile. Town Board prudence dictates that this improvement would not be considered essential, and thus is not included in our bare bones budget. But HCF has agreed to bear the cost (approximately \$1700), if we can raise the funds.

Even bolder than the idea of air conditioning, the Town Board has been exploring the possibility of using solar energy to provide our electricity. An array of solar panels would be placed on the highway garage roof, supplying enough electricity to both the highway building and the Grange. This would be an enormous savings which could be recouped in as little as seven years, but the original outlay is steep. The Town Board has stipulated that payment must come largely from outside sources. HCF hopes to be one of the partners providing funding for this project.

But all these dreams require money. And that's where you come in. We hope that you will continue to support our efforts with a donation using the enclosed envelope and a visit to the annual Halcott Fair, another of our projects. As always, we thank you and look forward to another year working together.

*HCF Directors, Kari Pagnano, Jennifer Bouton,  
Jamie Vogler, Robin White, Innes Kasanof.*

# The Times of the Halcott United Methodist Church

Spring 2016

*Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*



## Easter Sunday Service

Come experience the joy of Easter at the Halcott United Methodist Church. Rev. Ralph Darmstadt will bring us the Easter message when we gather that morning to worship our risen Lord. We invite you to join in the celebration at 10:30 a.m. on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

## Supper Time

Super Salad Supper plans are now under way. The Grange Hall has been booked for Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup>. Dinner starts at 5:00. Take outs are at 4:30. Tickets are still the low price of \$7.00. Children under 5 eat for free.

## Highlight on Missions: The Children's Home

In a modest way, the Halcott United Methodist Church helps support the Children's Home in Binghamton. In a recent newsletter, the Director of Spiritual Life reported that he had asked some of the young men what they would do if they received a lot of money. None of them wanted anything excessive. Some would use it to go home and create a stable family setting. Others would get simple things we take for granted, like a new pair of shoes. Especially poignant was one teen's desire to buy a headstone for his sibling.

The chaplain was touched by the discussion.

Seeing how hardship had shaped the desires of these young people opened his eyes. His prayer became that each child-of-want be blessed with abundant love, forgiveness, grace, independence and success. To that we say, "Amen."

## Spring Is In the Air

After an impressive February thunderstorm followed by a few days of brilliant sunshine, the first wave of red winged blackbirds arrived with their joyous ok-a-lee and congenial chatter. Before the month was out, my thoughts had become firmly fixed on spring. With an early Easter right around the corner, I wondered if spring had arrived in Israel yet. I have never been to the Holy Land but have enjoyed pictures and first-hand accounts. Paul Steinfeld has told us many times how the lovely almond blossoms are the first flower of spring there, much like the blooms of the precocious shad bush that appear here in the Catskills.

I called Lillian to inquire. It might be the rainy season, she thought. The family hadn't mentioned the weather, but their tenth great grandchild had been born recently and spring would bring her own 97<sup>th</sup> birthday, God willing. She and Paul

have been resting a lot this winter but were able to carefully go see the bubbling stream with their walkers a couple of seasons ago (under supervision, she hastened to add). Amazing!

On to Adele Siegel who was enjoying the approach of sunset on the hill before dinner with their family. Yes, she was sure that flowers in Israel start blooming in February. In fact, this year it rained in the desert around Valentine's Day. One of their grandsons was there to see the whole desert burst into bloom. Adele remembered witnessing the same splendor herself some years ago, saying it looked like all of Israel had turned out to see the phenomenon. It reminds me that, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1:31) It wouldn't surprise me if creation had taken place in the spring!

Spring, that glorious season of new birth and renewal, strengthens our God-connection. The Book of Psalms, composed by man and addressed to God, begins with spring-like vigor.

"Blessed is the man . . . (whose) delight is in the law of the Lord . . . He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither." (Ps. 1:1-3a).

The perennial reawakening of God's earth reminds us that he generously offers to renew our souls, as well. He knows our need! The days when we accept God's refreshment become spring days for the spirit. It is the one way we need never grow old. "O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things . . . Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre . . . With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord! Let the sea roar, and all that fills the world and all those who dwell in it! Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord." (Ps. 98:1, 4-9a)

Spring is in the air. Have a wonder-filled day!

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