

The Times of Halcott

A Quarterly
Newsletter
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Ruth Reynolds alighting from "Patience," 1946

ABOUT GRAMMIE

Well, my grandmother, Ruth Franckling Reynolds, was born in 1918, and grew up in Woodstock, New York. She was always an independent girl, very smart and motivated. She graduated from Kingston High School at 16, with straight A's throughout, and a score of 100% on her geometry Regents Exam (a feat repeated nearly 70 years later by my sister Suzanna). Ruth decided she would like to learn how to fly airplanes, and within a year became the first woman in Ulster County to hold a commercial pilot's license. She also earned her instructor's rating, and spent the next year or so ferrying aircraft between, and instructing students at, the airports in Kingston, New York, and Sanford, Florida.

World War II came along and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program began. Between 1942 and 1944, 1,074 women pilots were selected from over 25,000 applicants. Ruth was accepted, was trained in Houston, Texas and graduated at Sweetwater, Texas with the class of 43-W-2. For the next year and a half, her job was to ferry brand new aircraft from factories to disembarkation ports where they would be picked up and flown overseas by male pilots. Another task was to fly post-action,

damaged aircraft from ports to the junkyards. Both duties were potentially perilous. While flying new planes, the WASP would encounter faulty fuel lines, engine failure, and sabotaged planes. Flying damaged planes was even more dangerous. These planes going to the junkyards often had no brakes, no wing control, and malfunctioning engines.

Emergency landings and occasional crash landings occurred. There were few fatalities; the women were excellent pilots. Once, at the end of a routine trip delivering new BT-13's, Ruth and several of her colleagues witnessed the fiery crash of one of their friends. Ruth landed her plane, as did others, until suddenly, one of the BT-13's on final approach plunged downward into a field and crashed. No one knew who it was until they all gathered on the flight line. Virginia Moffatt was missing. An oil leak onto the windshield had blocked her visibility, and she spun into the ground.

The WASP had not been granted military status, and there was no government money available for transportation costs. The women sometimes would pool their money to assist a poor family with a train ticket for the body, and sometimes a WASP would accompany her friend's body home. (In 1977 President Jimmy Carter signed a bill finally granting

veterans' status to the WASP. Too late to do much practical good, but a move of support and encouragement to these brave women.)

Throughout her service, Ruth checked out in and flew over 20 different fighters and bombers. Her favorite plane was the P-51 Mustang – the fastest aircraft at the time. She and her good friend, Martha, lived and breathed flying, loving every minute of it. Then, in December of 1944, the WASP was disbanded. Martha moved to California, and Ruth returned to Woodstock and the Kingston airport, where she resumed her life as a flight instructor.

PART II

One of Ruth's flight students was Ward Reynolds. He and his brother Odell had decided to take lessons, and Ward told Odell "I'll take the pretty one". Well, Ward and Ruth eventually married, and after flying to Martha's Vineyard for their honeymoon, settled down on their dairy farm in Halcott. There on the farm they had an airstrip (the field between the Kasanofs and the Rauters) and two Piper Cubs. The planes were sometimes called "paper cups" because there wasn't much to them – they only weighed 700 pound each; basically just canvas stretched over a frame. But they were good planes, and were christened "Betsy" and "Patience" ("One was slower than the other"). When Ruth was flying Patience (pictured above) home to Halcott from Pennsylvania, she had to land in Binghamton because of a snowstorm. After she landed, someone yelled "Hi Ruth!". It turned out to be a former flight student from Kingston.

Ruth gave rides, flew lost cow reconnaissance, and taught flying lessons. Most of Halcott went up in the air, with many of the valley's dairy farmers as students. One of Ruth's worst memories is when one passenger did not wait for the plane to stop before she jumped out. She went forward right through the revolving propeller. Ruth was sure the woman would be

seriously injured, but the propeller never touched her, and the woman had no idea how lucky she'd been.

It was a good and exciting time. Eventually though, my Uncle Alan came along, and Ruth and Ward decided to sell the planes in order to farm and raise children full-time. After the planes were gone, neither Ruth nor Ward ever flew again.

In addition to helping Ward with the farm and raising 3 more children, Ruth ventured into real estate sales, diamond sales, and accounting. She became the first treasurer for the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development when it formed in 1969, and worked there for many years. Throughout this part of her life, Ruth often attended the reunion of the WASP – held every other year in various locations around the country. It was a time for her to re-connect with the members of that unique group and to re-ignite her close friendship with Martha. The reunions still continue, although each year there are fewer attendees.

Gram is now 85 years old, which is pretty young, considering that her mother lived to be 103. I miss my Gram all the time. She used to bake cookies and pies and apple turnovers. She would be in her garden all summer, or in the blackberry patch picking berries for pie. She taught me how to swim, how to sew, and how to be modest. When I was thirteen I had an accident at her house, and she drove me to the emergency room just as calm and focused as ever. She has always had a positive outlook on everything, and always tells it like it is; very honest and practical. My Gram is the most headstrong, independent woman I know – she's a survivor. But I miss her because she's at Mountainside Nursing Home now, in a wheelchair because of the stroke she had in 1998.

I have more admiration for this woman than any other. My grandmother, my mother and I all come from the same tough fibers. I



feel their strength running through me everyday.
Claire DiBenedetto

The Goshawk

There's nothing like early spring days when stepping on the squishy thawed earth is like getting your sea legs. Especially in a year like this, with the snow pack so high and the trees looking like midgets! It's the same time of year, while walking along the border of a white pine forest near Turkey Ridge, that we first heard the piercing cries of a bird that was obviously trying to get rid of us. She turned out to be a female goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). Though usually known as a quiet, secretive raptor, she wasn't acting very gentle.

A few days later, we went back - this time wearing bicycle helmets - to get a better look at our interesting new neighbor. Her short wings help her maneuver quickly around trees while a long tail helps steer her through the forest. Her favorite place to live is in deep growth with an open canopy, which is why she's come to Halcott and, in particular to a plantation of red pines

about sixty years old, on the former John McDonough property. We found this description of the bird in a book by T.H. White called, *The Goshawk*. "The yellowish breast feathers were streaked downward with long, arrow-shaped hackles of Burnt Umber: his talons like scimitars." He also describes the goshawk's eye as a "marigold or dandelion" color. Quite a neighbor indeed.

We mentioned our goshawk experience to a friend, Jimi Scheffel of Mt. Tremper, who spends most of his free time locating nests and banding birds. He explained that a cultivated stand of conifers makes an ideal goshawk habitat - it is one of the few hawks that hunts in the forest, and the neat rows provide perfect flying corridors. Jimi's idea of a good time is setting up a blind in an open field and waiting until his "bait," (usually a pigeon in harness) attracts a raptor. He told us that other hawks related to the goshawk are the Cooper's hawk, which also prefers dense forested areas, and the sharp shin hawk, which likes the super-density of conifers one would find at a Christmas tree farm.

Jimi first got involved with raptors as a hawk watcher and migration counter for the National Park Service at Golden Gate Bridge Park in San Francisco and has since helped out on projects in the Florida Keys and the Shawangunks. He's banded hundreds of raptors and



Immature Accipiter gentilis.
courtesy of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center
website - www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov

Photo by J. A. Spendelov

especially enjoys the challenge and thrill of finding new nests. There's a certain amount of competition involved here, as in the "secret fishing hole."

When working our patch of ground, Jimi usually shows up very early in the morning. We give him a small radio so he can call us if he catches any raptors; then we walk out and photograph him measuring, weighing and banding them. Later in the summer of our first sighting, he banded a juvenile – one of the babies our mother was protecting when she shooed us away.

Jimi shares the information he collects on Halcott's goshawks with a breeding bird census for New York State, run by volunteers through the Federation of New York State Wild Bird Clubs. Information on banded birds is also useful to a Breeding Site Fidelity Study that seeks information on birds banded at their nest areas and tracks them from there to other places. With today's technology, scientists are able to study a "signature" of stable isotopes found in the birds' feathers that shows where they were born. So, information on our Halcott goshawks is now also included in the North American Bird Banding Lab, headquartered in Laurel, Maryland.

It's been interesting and enjoyable to learn about raptor banders. Now that I've met a few, I know how to look for the stealth goshawk while riding my bicycle on Turkey Ridge Road. And besides knowing more about why Halcott's forest is special to the goshawk, we've been able to take part in the best part of Jimi's work. When the bird is released and takes flight, you understand exactly why it is that humans have spent so much time and energy figuring out how to fly. KR

Johnson Farm Doings

A comfortable, sunny February afternoon found me in Tim and Christl Johnson's cozy kitchen enjoying good conversation with dear friends. Before we got down to business, "Homeboy" the cat entertained us as he chased and fetched a small rubber ball just like a well-trained dog. I should have had the video camera!

Whereas farming anywhere today is a challenging proposition, agricultural production in the Catskills presents some unique circumstances. Our beautiful mountain landscape with its steep slopes, shallow soils, and rocky terrain (where do all of those rocks come from anyway?!) obviously requires different management strategies than other landscapes found elsewhere. Indeed, having grown up in California's fertile Central Valley where the land is mostly tabletop flat as well as silky smooth, I was amazed the first time I saw corn growing here: "Wow, stuff really grows between all those rocks?"

Fortunately, the Catskills possess many advantages to balance the trials of farming here. The abundant water, clean air, resilient grasses & legumes and proximity to large population centers we enjoy here can be real boons to small, family farms. Another helpful ingredient is access to the Watershed Whole Farm Program. All around the NYC watershed area, farmers as well as homeowners and other people have benefited from projects designed to help keep local interests economically viable while protecting and enhancing the quality of water entering nearby reservoirs. The program provides not only the funds and expertise to carry out needed projects but also allows for technical assistance and continuing education after the projects are completed. The scope of some of this good work can be seen easily on Halcott's two active



Johnson Farm, 2003

dairy farms. Here we look at Tim and Christl's recent watershed improvements.

Since last fall, the Johnson farm has been a flurry of activity. Their barnyard project, like all watershed barnyard work, is designed to allow only clean water to run off into nearby streams. The Johnson's new barnyard consists of a grooved concrete pad covered by a Cover-All structure built next to their existing barn. Metal feeder panels run the length of the 50' x 70' building so round bale hay can be fed along the 5' wide mangers on each side. Tim figures about one week's worth of hay can be put out at once, saving time and labor. Unfortunately, the Cover-All wasn't up until January-after snow and ice had accumulated on the concrete pad- so no cows have been in it yet. Tim and Christl are anxious for enough warm days to thaw the ice off the concrete so the cows can safely use their new dining area.

Another important part of the Johnson's project is a Slurrystore manure handling system. This enormous blue tank located just beyond the new Cover-All provides storage for all of the manure pumped to it from the main barn. Although the Slurrystore's capacity is 8 months worth, the Johnsons will empty it each spring and fall, spreading the manure on crop fields according to their nutrient management plan. Having manure storage will lighten winter and summer work loads because daily spreading won't be necessary during those times.

Over all, Tim and Christl are pleased with the work done at their place. Once the projects are completed this spring, they believe that they will realize further labor savings and water quality improvements. Actually, everyone who lives in or visits watershed areas in the Catskills benefits from all of the work being done on local farms because the Whole Farm Program tackles projects on a scale that, frankly, is beyond the means of most small producers. This valuable program allows small farms to remain economically viable while being assets to our environment by helping to maintain water quality and the rural, open spaces we all enjoy. *JD*



MCS Follows a Soccer Ball Across the Atlantic

This April, soccer-playing siblings Kane and Suzanna DiBenedetto will be traveling to Europe with the All Star teams representing NYS Section IV, which encompasses much of central New York. The All Star teams will travel to Holland and Germany to play in a soccer tournament and in games with local soccer clubs. They will have opportunities to meet and get to know team members from many European countries, and will also tour historic and cultural sites. As part of a fundraiser, Kane and Suzanna are selling raffle tickets for a vacation for two to Holland. To purchase tickets, please send a check for \$5 to Suzanna DiBenedetto, 85 Hubbard Road, Halcott NY 12430. Make sure you clearly write your name, address, and phone number. Suzanna will transfer that information to three tickets and submit them for you, and then mail you the ticket stubs. The drawing will be held on July 13th, and the winner will be notified directly by the Eurosport Network.

Kane and Suzanna are looking forward to expanding their horizons across the "big pond", and are excited to soon be out on the soccer field again. *PD*

Annual Community Fund Meeting

May 24th, the Saturday of the Memorial Day weekend will be the annual meeting of the Halcott Community Fund at 10:00am. Traditionally, we discuss purchases, projects, and most important, the Halcott Fair. Please come, if you can. The Community Fund is growing; last year we purchased a microwave for the Grange. This year, we purchased



a sign for the Grange. Who knows what next year will bring? As always, we will serve doughnuts and coffee.

JK

AND PLAN TO COME TO THE...

Seedling Exchange

We have the perfect solution to the gardening problem that persists from year to year: too many plants, too little space! Every winter, we pore over the seed catalogues and do our best to get what we absolutely can't live without, stay within our budget and try a few new things that we can't resist.

This year, we will have a seedling exchange on Saturday, May 24th, at 9:30am before the annual meeting. The idea here is for everyone to start a few extra plants of everything or, in other words, to know that you have a place to get rid of your extras without expanding the garden!

Perhaps later in the summer, we can have a surplus vegetable swap/pot luck dinner, which is maybe a more polite method of finding homes for your extra zucchini than the way my uncles used to do it (they left them on the doorstep in the middle of the night when no one could say no). With seven uncles, that's a lot of zucchini bread! So please bring your extras to our event. I will promise leeks, calendulas and sungold tomatoes. What do you have? *KR*

Vly Mountain Spring Water—An Outstanding Halcott Family Business

The first thing you notice when you enter the building that houses Michael and Peggy DiBenedetto's spring-water company is the waterfall—a constant hum

of cascading H₂O fills the building. Gravity-fed spring water gushes endlessly into their holding tank (a cleverly reengineered stainless steel milk tank), and the white-noise flow is a constant reminder of the work that goes on here.

Speaking of which, *work* is the second thing you notice about Vly Mountain Spring Water's world headquarters. The robin's-egg-blue building next to the Johnson's farm on Hubbard Road is a nexus of a huge amount of labor: The effort it takes to harness the earth's natural gift, bottle it according to strict DEP and governmental regulations, and deliver it to their some 300 thirsty customers (some as far away as Harriman) is monumental. Michael works up to 60 hours a week, and feels vaguely guilty for standing around talking for an hour. "Wanna buy a spring-water business?" Peggy asks, only half-joking, while busily stacking empty five-gallon bottles.

The business is a labor of love and conscience for Michael and Peggy. "We wanted to do something that was environmentally friendly, that we could do as a family, that we could do that would help people," Michael says, explaining their impetus for starting the business, which began operation in 1999. Peggy points out that business began as a partnership between families, as Tim and Chris Johnson provided invaluable assistance—including both financial and sweat equity—in Vly Mountain's early days. Now the DiBenedettos purchase water from the Johnsons.

The history of water is, essentially, the history of the Catskill Mountains. Michael and Peggy



point out that houses would only be built where a good source of pure water was found, and Vly Mountain Spring is a legendarily prolific Halcott source. In 1886, the spring was purchased by the Johnson family as part of the original homestead. Michael tells the story of "old timers" tapping the spring that they now use to fill their bottles. "Back in the old days, they didn't have PVC pipe, so they'd fashion 'pipe logs' by hollowing out the center of stripped trees, would lash them together, and the spring water would flow down to the barns and homes. In 1957, James and Bob Johnson selected the seven coldest and best tasting veins of the spring. These runs were later fortified and a new spring house was built." Michael points out that the spring still serves as the source for the Johnson farm, and notes that he still has one of the old pipe logs.

To legally be considered "spring" water, it must flow freely to the surface from an underground source—the DiBenedettos point out that much of the bottled water sold today is nothing more than filtered tap, and many of the brands are owned by large conglomerates like Coca-Cola. "Our product is a wonderful product," Peggy says, and it is true. Vly Mountain's crystal-clear spring water is exceptional, refreshing and pure as any you'll ever taste; in fact, its most recent test came back with "undetectable" levels of nearly all organic and inorganic materials.

The DiBenedettos have a few residential customers in Halcott Center, and are always ready to add more to their roster, however, the labor-intensive nature of the delivery business makes businesses a better prospect, but seeing clients as different in value is alien to Michael's generous nature. "Nothing I've ever done in my life has been for money, and it's hard for me to get used to it," he says. "Whether it was growing up working on the farm, or teaching—you don't ever write a kid off, for example, and it's hard for me to write off an account!"

Some of the upcoming projects the DiBenedettos are considering include using "bio-fuel"—a rendered-fat energy source that is much less polluting than fossil fuels—for their delivery truck, as well as boxing their water (like the fine wine) for

donation to emergency sites. The DiBenedettos are passionate, hardworking small businesspeople, making a difference in the world every day while selling a truly superior product. Do your body and an environmentally sound Halcott small business a favor: If your tap water is anywhere near as untasty as mine, get on their delivery list today! To contact Vly Mountain Spring Water, call 800-416-0541. *Laura Vogel*

HALCOTT'S OWN

Sincerest congratulations to **Dan Siegel** who has been promoted to lieutenant on the Tenafly, N. J. Police Department. He is commander of the Emergency Response Team (SWAT) and firearms instructor. Danny loves Halcott, but as he must make a living, we allow him his time in Tenafly. Our loss is Tenafly's gain! *IK*



"We had a fantastic time. The shuttle went off right on schedule and it was a beautiful sight to see and feel." That was the postcard message we received from **Susan and Fred Herzog** from the Kennedy Space Center. They and ten students in Susan's eighth grade science class were invited to be guests of NASA, because their experiment had been chosen to be performed and tested on the Columbia mission. Despite the tragic end of the flight and our heavy hearts at the loss of the seven irreplaceable and remarkable crew members, the story of an enthusiastic and creative teacher deserves to be told. Susan inspired her students to participate in the NASA competition. They developed an experiment to measure the radiation protection of various materials. They solicited and received a contribution from Hanford Radiation Laboratories of dosimeters to measure radiation, contributions from the Cotton Council, the Wool Council and other groups of various natural,

synthetic, and metallic materials including cotton, wool, Kevlar, copper and aluminum. They then wrapped each of the dosimeters in a different material. Representatives of NASA came to the school and the students placed their experiment into a SEM, space experimental module. At the end of the space flight, the module was to be sent back to the laboratory and measurements recorded.

The students spent five exciting days at Cape Canaveral, meeting astronauts and scientists, students from other parts of the United States and from China and Australia.

Although the results of the experiments will never be known, we do know that Susan gave her students an unforgettable experience and, as she has in so much of her teaching, makes the study of science, rich, personal and vital. *Adele Siegel*



Mary Bouton Konstantine writes from Oneonta about a program she's begun: "Basically the mission of the 'Gift of Music Program' is to provide instruments to children who would not be able to rent or purchase them. We ask for donation of instruments that people have in their closets and are not using. (All donations are tax deductible). We repair the instruments and make sure they are in playable condition. Then we donate the instruments to the school so they can be loaned to children. The trumpet (cornet, actually) that my father mentioned was mine. That instrument was loaned to a little boy who was having a lot of problems in school. He still has problems, but not when he's playing in the band. He's really a great musician. This year he made All-County Band. (Yes - I cried at the concert) and will hopefully be in this year's talent show. The 'slogan' of the program is - Children already have the 'gift of music', we just supply the instruments."



And Mary writes about recent doings in the life of **Donald Bouton**, Halcott's very own

author: "When my father was writing his book, he was trying to find a picture of a steam engine. He wrote to Rusty, a writer connected with *Farm and Ranch Magazine* to see if he had run across one. Rusty found a fairly good one and then asked my father if he would send him a copy of his book when it was written. Of course Daddy sent him a copy. A couple of months ago, he received a call from the magazine's editor asking if he could run one of the stories from the book. They did and my father has been showered with requests for the book (around 65 requests so far). He has heard from 27 states and Canada. Many people send letters telling about themselves and their stories. It has been wonderful. I keep telling Daddy that he should write another book. I even have the title- "Cow Tales". He just laughs. He thinks he's busy enough with just one! *Mary Bouton Konstantine*



Vanya Kasanof is stationed with the US Marine Corps in the Persian Gulf. Anyone who would like to drop him a line to keep him in touch with Halcott may write to him at:

Capt I. D. Kasanof
H&S BN/G-3 FOPs
2d FSSG Det A
UNIT 75015
FPO AE 09509-5015

Spreading Good Folks Around

Letter from Arlene Griffin Needleman:

"Enclosed please find a front page article from our local paper. Herb read it and called my attention to the hi-lighted portion. [*In the January 8, 2003 issue of the Times Journal of Schoharie County, Cobleskill, NY: "Richard Ball Shines as T-J Star - Farmer-businessman is a true leader for county" - "...His mother's homestead is in Halcott Center, Greene County, where his great-great-great-grandfather founded and built the church and served as pastor for 56 years."*] Arlene continues: "I called Mr. Ball and left a message

In Memoriam

that I grew up in Halcott and was curious as to his mother's name. That very evening Mr. Ball returned my call and said his grandma and grandpa were Gene & Jessie DeMott. Mr. Ball and his mother, now living in Rhodeto raise good people. This fall Herb and I were up to Alexandria Bay for the New York State Magistrates' Convention where Herb was elected as a Director. While he was having photos taken, I noticed a gentleman whose nametag said he was from Greene County. I casually asked if he knew where Halcott Center was. "Sure do," he responded. He tested milk up that valley years ago. He mentioned Ward Reynolds and Willie Griffin! Need I say more? We also ran into Smith and Ethel Streeter's grandson here. Spread those 'good folks' around. Regards to all, Sis and Herb".

And From Virginia Morse –

"My daughter Barbara Hill wishes to receive a **Times of Halcott** each time. She and family have a maple sugar business in Harpersfield with a gift shop also selling Donald Bouton's book. I believe she has been at your Grange before now. As a young girl she spent time at Dorothy Bouton's with Marilyn and Kathleen so she has fond memories of Halcott as I do.... Really enjoyed Mary's story about her mother. Thank you, Virginia.

And From Betty Baker --

"I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks with deep appreciation for receiving the copy of your newsletter. It is wonderful! So full of homespun country charm. Packed with community pride. A-political without politics. What an achievement! I hope each person involved is as proud of your "product" as I was to receive it. Now, is there anyway I can purchase any of your back issues? Send a contribution? I would like to add these issues to my history collection of local areas. Do you have a copy of the church history for sale? Enclosed is a SASE for reply when someone has the time. Thanks, Betty Baker.

*Editor's reply: Dear Betty: We thank you very much for your compliments. We have no complete set of back issues of the **Times of Halcott**, but we dream of reprinting the complete set when we celebrate our tenth anniversary in 2007. Thank you again! IK*

I doubt I'll ever meet a more pleasant man than Walt Parker. His bright eyes beamed with the wonderment he brought to life. He loved people, saw only the best in them, and by doing so, reaped a rich harvest of love and kindness from them. When he wasn't laughing, he was grinning—even to his last days.

Walt was a country boy, having been raised among the tobacco fields of North Carolina, but he transplanted perfectly to the hills and hollows of Halcott, where he was at his happiest. That's where I met him about a decade ago. He seemed to know everyone in town: those whose families have been here for many generations, and those others of us who've come much more recently and found, to our great satisfaction, what a remarkably receptive and kind community this is.

I can almost hear Walt's rippling laughter still, though to this town's deep sorrow he died just before Christmas. This April 25th would have been his 77th birthday.

Melanoma took Walt from our midst. He'd first experienced a tumor several decades ago. About a year ago he detected a small lump in almost the same place on his leg where the original tumor had grown, but his beloved brother Vann was dying at the time, and true to his utterly unselfish personality, Walt didn't bother about his own problem until it was too late.

Inspired by Donald Bouton's wonderful memoir, and by his friend Mimi Weare's fascinating writings about her childhood in France, Walt set into preparing his own story during the last year of his life. He was still adding finishing details to the beautifully written little book a week before he died. In it he tells the story of how he and his astonishingly energetic and bright-spirited wife Helen came to Halcott. They each had children from a previous marriage, and were striving to combine their families while holding down important executive jobs: Walt in New York City as a manager in a pharmaceutical and cosmetic company, Helen as the assistant to James

D. Watson, the renowned scientist and founder of the Cold Springs Laboratory on Long Island where they lived. "We soon learned that weekend camping was a sport we all enjoyed," he wrote. "We rather quickly decided that a small cabin in the woods a couple of hours north of New York City would be just the thing to pull this crowd of boys together." (Helen's daughter Jane was already in college.)

They started looking for land along the Taconic Parkway, but the real estate was too expensive. Then someone recommended they look in the Catskills. Walt recalls walking into a local realtor's office and having him point out the details of a property on a peaceful knoll up on what is now Travis/Faulkner Road in Halcott Center. "We hadn't even seen it yet but I knew it was the place for us." The Thyme Hill farm had been split into three properties. They bought it for \$42,000, sold off three lots to pay the mortgage, and kept 120 acres and the farmhouse. "A net outlay of \$26,000," Walt boasts in his memoir. Among the many things he loved was getting a bargain.

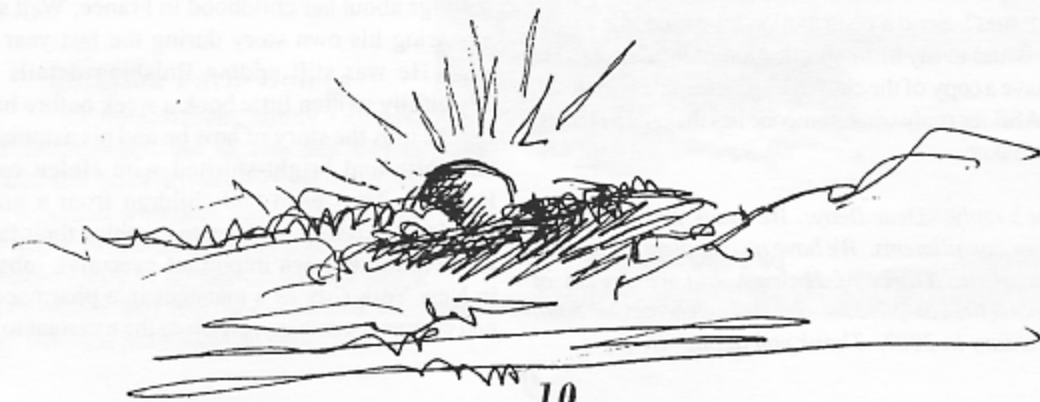
"Once we found Thyme Hill, things fell into place for us," Walt recalled. "What a team we were! We built roads and renovated the six-bedroom ramshackle farmhouse, all the while working hard and the kids going to school five days a week. We loved it and it brought us all closer together. We became a family. That is surely one of Helen's and my proudest accomplishments."

Like the early pioneers, Helen and Walt had a craving for complete solitude where they could enjoy the

expansive beauty of nature. Their land opens onto a plateau with a fabulous vista, high on Bearpen Mountain, where they began camping out with the boys. Walt used to lead me on breath-taking marches through the woods up there, pointing out where an old tent they had left in the woods was consumed by ants, where the spring they drew water from originated, where so many of his memories were rooted. A few years ago they built a rustic cabin up there so they and their children and grandchildren could sleep, play and just be, gazing out across the valleys of Halcott.

My last memories of Walt are set there. I went up with him late this fall to help him drain the water and take in the folding chairs. "I'm going to spend a lot more time up here next year," Walt told me. He was dying then, and almost certainly knew it. He was hesitant about spiritual things, but I think he meant that his spirit would enjoy dwelling there when his body no longer could. Or perhaps he was just expressing to me his determination to beat that disease. Goodness knows he wanted to keep enjoying life.

Plans aren't finalized yet, but Helen says she'd like to have a gathering at the Grange Hall around Memorial Day weekend, when the many people who knew and loved Walt can gather and make music, dance if they feel like it, tell stories and laugh. Oh, how that would please that dear, joyful friend who now resides in our memories. *Alan Adelson*





THE TIMES OF THE HALCOTT METHODIST CHURCH

PATTIE KELDER, CORRESPONDENT

The Killions

"So who are the Killions?" a reader asked recently. As I mused, twenty-five years melted into yesterday. I was once again in Dot Bouton's kitchen admiring her friendship quilt as she reminisced about friends and family who had contributed blocks.

One block, an embroidered border of pomegranates encircling a Bible verse, was signed Howard, Daphne and Gideon Killion. Her niece, Daphne (daughter of her brother, Vincent Earl and his wife Doodles) would be accompanying her husband to the mission field with their infant son, Gideon. Dot had just received a letter describing how they must raise adequate financial support before they could be deployed. She decided to make contributions. At the time of her death a few years later, the Killions were teaching English in China where any overt Christian evangelism was strictly forbidden. (And still is, I might add.) Around the time of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, they relocated to Hong Kong where they found living and working conditions to be extremely crowded and stressful. With the end of British rule in sight, the Killions departed Hong Kong for Eugene, Oregon where a more direct ministry to international students on college campuses awaited them. At about this time they adopted a four-year-old set of twins from the Philippines, Elena and Maria. Today they live and

work in Westminster, Colorado. Howard is working on a simplified English training manual for international students. Daphne works part time as a librarian and works with Internationals as a Friendship Partner. The girls are enrolled in community colleges and Gideon was recently married. They visited Halcott this past July for the first time in many years where they enjoyed visiting the church, seeing the cousins and roaming the farm again. They remain enthusiastic about serving in a ministry which touches the world leaders of tomorrow, and we are privileged to be a small part of that effort.

Connectional Notes

You may be aware of the severe plight of the people of Africa. Bishop Lyght is asking every congregation to present an offering of HOPE FOR THE CHILDREN OF AFRICA on Friday, June 6th, during Annual Conference. One hundred percent of receipts will provide nurture and educational opportunity for children in deep crisis. Some have been orphaned by war or the AIDS epidemic. Others have been forced to serve as child soldiers or child prostitutes. Please make checks payable to the Halcott United Methodist Church. (It is not necessary to be United Methodist to participate.) Contribution suggestions include: 1) Every time you eat out, match the tip and set it aside for the children of Africa; 2) Develop a Lenten calendar (Ash Wednesday - Easter) of 40 luxury items or modern conveniences (such as TVs or cars) and donate a quarter per family member for each item owned.

Two basic lay speaking courses will be offered

**The Times of Halcott makes this space available for items of community interest from the*

Halcott United Methodist Church.

this spring. Each meets for three consecutive Saturdays in May. Details are available.

Summer camp brochures have arrived. Please inquire. Volunteers are needed to help staff Camp Epworth on a weekly basis. Scholarships are available for children, including children of counselors. Can you help?

The **Sunday School** sent out homemade valentines again this year. A note in response thanked the children for brightening her life. An Easter visit to Mountainside is planned for after school again this year on Holy Thursday. If you provide us with magazines featuring large print or nature photography, we will be happy to distribute them.

The church continues to pray and send cards when people are homebound, confined to nursing homes, ill and griefstricken. Please let us know of anyone standing in the need of prayer.

Calendar – All are Welcome!

Sunday Worship Services have been held at 7:30pm this winter. Anyone returning to Halcott for the summer or planning to visit is advised to call us at 254-5589 to confirm the time of worship. Sunday School still meets at 10:30am.

Wednesday, April 2 from noon to 1pm: **Lenten Lunch**



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hosted by Halcott UMC at Fleischmanns UMC (5th in a series) Free will offering to be donated to missions.

Good Friday and Easter Sunrise: services sponsored by our local Interfaith Council will be publicized in the Catskill Mountain News.

The **Sunday School** will participate in the regular Halcott worship services on Easter Sunday and Father's Day.

Saturday, April 5, from 9:30am to 2:30pm United Methodist Women's **Day Apart** at Delhi United Ministries. \$5.00 with lunch served.

Sunday, May 4 from 3 to 5pm: **District Conference** at Camp Epworth featuring The Covenant Players and the Greenville-Norton Hill Youth Choir.

Sunday, June 1: **LYRA, a vocal ensemble** from St. Petersburg, Russia (here by special arrangement) will introduce the musical heritage of the Russian Orthodox Church and traditions of Russian Folk Music at 2pm at Saugerties UMC and in the evening at Catskill UMC. Free will offering.

Wednesday-Saturday, June 4-7: **Annual Conference** at Hofstra University. Members this year include Pastor Charlie (Gockel) and Ruth Kelder.