

THE TIMES OF

(& THE ANIMALS OF) HALCOTT

SPRING 2005
VOLUME 30!



EDITORS: INNES KASANOF; PEG DiBENEDETTO; JUDY DiBENEDETTO;
KAREN RAUTER. ART: NINA KASANOF

CORRIE, THE BORDER COLLIE

“Being in the right place at the right time.” How often have we all heard or said that phrase? And, aren’t we all so thankful for all the times in our lives when it was as if everything was perfectly orchestrated for us? Oh, the wonderful blessings that followed! Of course, some of these events were “biggies” such as meeting our future spouse in a seemingly unlikely time or place or landing that long hoped-for job or promotion that allows us to fully use our unique set of gifts. Other events may pale in comparison yet they still enhance our lives nonetheless: finding just the sweater we wanted, in our color and size (and on sale, to boot!) or the weather turning sunny and warm after a week of downpours, just in time for our children’s graduation party.

One of the smaller examples of perfect timing for our farm happened about two years ago. It was one of those hot, humid July days so we decided to spend the afternoon at Pine Hill Lake. When we got there, we bumped into a friend we hadn’t seen for some time. A turning point for our farm came when she mentioned that her mother, who trains and trials Border Collies, had a pup that she hoped to place in a working (farm) home. She was wondering whether we would be interested. We had never used dogs to work cattle but we were intrigued.

A few days later we went to see the pup. We were sold immediately, and we became the proud owners of a 6-month old Border Collie named “Corrie”. Little did we know then how enjoyable and useful this pup would become.

For those readers unfamiliar with the Border Collie breed, I’ll give a quick primer. The Border Collie is a moderate-sized dog possessing outstanding herding instincts, stamina and intellect. The breed was developed in the “border” regions of the U.K. where these dogs served their shepherd masters by gathering sheep in very rugged, hilly terrain in sometimes harsh weather conditions. On large, sprawling expanses of land, the dogs had to be able to work at great distances from their masters necessitating that they be able to think on their own in a focused manner. As a result, today’s Border Collies are highly intelligent, versatile, trustworthy helpers on many farms and ranches. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear shepherds and ranchers comment that they could never continue raising livestock without the help of good dogs.

Here on our farm, working with Corrie has been a wonderful experience. She has blossomed from a timid, unsure pup to a courageous, confident helper. Happily, Elizabeth, the woman we got Corrie from, has been extremely helpful in teaching me how to work with the

dog's natural herding instincts. I have had the privilege of taking Corrie to Elizabeth's farm in Treadwell in order to work the dog on sheep. What a blast seeing the dog's abilities unfold! Elizabeth is an incredibly talented, patient trainer who's excellent at "reading" both dogs and stock. She knows just what to do to help both dog and owner learn how to handle different situations that may arise in training or work settings. It is an incredible honor to work with a trainer of her stature.

The whole training process is most definitely a delight to both dog and master as the working partnership is developed. While Corrie learns to work with us, we learn to work with her. The fact is that well-bred Border Collies live to work; their reward is in simply doing what they were created to do. Treats and lavish praise are not needed to get these dogs to do what they do. Work, work and more work is reward enough.

In addition to an intense desire to work, I'm seeing that Border Collies in general, and Corrie in particular, manifest obedience as well as faithfulness to a high level. These dogs' overriding desire is to please their master, to do what's required regardless of the cost. It might be gathering cattle in the dark or stopping a stubborn 1700- pound bull from going the wrong direction. It might mean working in the heat of summer or cold of winter, during the day or in the middle of the night. None of that matters at all. Corrie is always ready and willing. And, when we complete a task, she comes back and looks up

to us as if to say, "I eagerly await your instructions. What would you have me do next?" Who couldn't enjoy and use help like that?!

Truly, I delight in working with Corrie. Through her, I've come to appreciate the Border Collie breed tremendously. Consequently, we purchased (Chris would say in a moment of weakness) another pup. "Bob", the new pup, is a full brother (different litter) to Corrie. As you might guess, he shares many of Corrie's characteristics but he is much bolder and often harder-headed than she was at the same age. Bob certainly brings different training challenges and opportunities to the table, but I expect him to be a valuable working partner for both Corrie and us one day. For now, though, I just enjoy each day with these dogs. Whether we're out for a stroll among the hills and fields of our farm or working in the barn, I count myself blessed to be able to care for and spend time with another wondrous part of our Father's handiwork. *JD*



Looking Back

Nina Kasanof

I've been thinking of the Halcott of my childhood. Some of the people I knew then are gone, and the rest of us are, of course, older. But I'm thinking now of the impressions the valley itself made on me.

I used to walk with my mother, and our destination was usually the post office and general store (Streeters'), where we would pick up the mail. Special treats could be purchased there, such as bottled sodas and

penny candy. I particularly remember with fondness the chewy little wax bottles containing sweet syrups.

Some of the road is unchanged, but the stone walls that border it have, in many cases, tumbled down. Then the walls provided places to sit and rest. Some of the big trees that shaded us are gone, especially the elms. Whatever our principles were regarding private property, they did not extend to the apple trees whose fruit hung within reach of the road. How tart and delicious were even the green apples, but we did have to watch for worms in the unsprayed fruit.



Once, on our way back to Griffins' farm (now, in part, Kasanofs'), we passed a farm house and the people called to us that they were going to drown some puppies, and would we take some. We took

two, giving one to my aunt and uncle, and one to the Griffins. That puppy grew up to be Teddy, a less-than-efficient cow dog, but an enthusiastic chaser and biter of moving car tires, as well as walking feet shod in rubber boots. Teddy avidly ate the food I didn't like, and sneaked to her. (I remember she grew obese in later life, and I may have been partly at fault.) I loved Teddy, but then I loved almost every animal on the farm.

Sometimes I would walk with my mother in the woods. In the spring we'd look for May flowers and violets. There was a boulder where we'd sit that was covered with a velvety growth of mosses and lichens, and tiny plants that seemed magical and precious. I have looked for that rock in recent years, but cannot be sure that I know which one it was. My child's height brought me

closer to what seemed a fairy forest.

On the other side of the road, in the fields that slope down to the brook, there was a stand of fern which I recall as a solitary pleasure. I could sit within the ferny bush, and it would completely screen me from the outside world, creating a green universe. Down in the brook was a flat stone where I could sit and listen to the sounds of the water, and look at the pines along the bank.

When I walked with other children, I became aware of the scary possibilities of Halcott: rustling noises which might be bears, and a "haunted" house where shots had been fired one night.

The mountains have not changed, though farms are fewer, and woods have grown up over what used to be open fields. My viewing is colored by memory and the realization that the past is past. But Halcott is always beautiful.

MEASURING OUR WEATHER

Bob VanValkenburgh has established a weather station at his house on top of Turkey Ridge, 2300 feet high in Halcott. This wireless device measures wind, humidity, temperature, barometric pressure and precipitation. A software program, "Virtual Weather" first provided Bobby with his exact longitude and latitude to pinpoint his location. (For the curious: Bob and Jacki's house sits at 42 degrees, 12 minutes, 53.06 seconds north longitude and 74 degrees, 28 minutes, 48.18 seconds west latitude.) Data is then sent to two websites, Weather Underground as well as Weather for You. Both sites collect information from personal weather stations and send it to NOAA, (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) which uses it to help develop local forecasts.

The weather station is automatically set to transmit data every fifteen minutes. Weather buffs may see the data from the weather station on the Town's website. Go to www.townofhalcott.com and click on the link that says "Halcott Weather" and then on "On Top of the Ridge, Halcott Center." *IK*

Halcott Hands Help Tsunami Disaster Relief

Looking for an opportunity to help with the disaster consumed hours on the computer, included calls to friends with connections to governmental relief agencies, calls to friends of friends and children of friends in non-governmental relief organizations, and was an exercise in strategizing the best way to get as many as 4 DiBenedettos, plus a few non-DiBenedettos, over to Indonesia to lend their hands. In the end, the answer was found in the warehouse of CitiHope International, based in Andes, New York.

CitiHope is a Christian-based relief agency that ships medical and other supplies to organizations around the world. In addition to fulfilling contracts with USAID and other agencies, CitiHope has also established its own projects around the world to provide life-saving products to people in need. Until the mid-nineties, CitiHope had a major relief effort in Belarus to help victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The effort was ended due to a new and hostile regime in that country.

CitiHope is administered by Paul Moore Sr. and is run by his son, Paul Jr. One of the hard workers at the warehouse is Gleb Tem-

kin, of Belarus, now living in Andes. Gleb taught us how to tally and load products on pallets, how to strap and wrap them so they could stay intact during transport, and how to address them so they would get where they needed to go. Almost all of the pallets we loaded were bound for Sri Lanka.

Michael DiBenedetto arranged for students from Andes and Margaretville Central Schools to be a part of the effort. A school from Massachusetts heard about the project, and sent a dozen students one day to help out. In nearly two weeks, sixty-two pallets were completed. At the end of a hectic 12-hour

Saturday in the warehouse, a tractor-trailer left with the first shipment, bound for a plane at JFK, then on to Sri Lanka where Paul Jr. would oversee the distribution. It was truly a multi-cultural effort, necessitating the cooperation of varied cultural and religious groups to enable the delivery. This was an immediate and important response to the great need. Although Kane, Suzanna, Michael, and Peg found it gratifying to be a part of the effort, none of them have ruled out the option of traveling across the world to lend more of a helping hand, should the opportunity arise. *PD*

Soulemere Farm

I recently had the great opportunity to meet Fuzzy and Wilma Soule who live pretty much directly over the mountains as the crow flies north of Halcott in West Jewett. They showed me a typewritten booklet from the 1970s that included profiles of Greene County farms, including the Johnson Farm in Halcott. Plus they had many photos and articles of their farm's 200 year history.

Most of the time was spent playing with



their retriever puppy, Duke. One of the most interesting things I learned from Fuzzy is that he's always kept Labrador retrievers for his cow dogs, believing they are the best for the job. As you can imagine, he's taken a lot of ribbing from his fellow farmers and the vet over the years, but I think Duke is just as sweet as the Soules.

At the 100-acre Soulemere Farm, Harrison "Fuzzy" and Wilma Soule are thinking about their retirement. Married for 52 years, the couple recently sold a conservation easement to the Watershed Agricultural Council on their family's dairy farm – a farm with the National Bicentennial distinction. Though they stopped milking cows last spring, their devotion to the herd has not waned: this summer, they took a rare vacation trip to Pennsylvania with their son and daughter-in-law to visit the Amish family who purchased their herd. After a lifetime of running the dairy, this is Harrison's idea of relaxing. "As soon as I walked in the barn, I could hear those girls bellowing because they knew me."

He'd like to sell the place to a farmer and talks about the neighbors who've bought his milk to make cheese. He can see himself passing on his lifetime of knowledge to help the next generation get on its feet and has talked with a few families who might want to get into dairy commenting, "They want my brains, not my body." In the meantime, the barn does not sit empty, as they are raising about 43 dairy replacements, so this gives them more freedom and a well-deserved rest.

Soulemere Farm sits in ski country, with nearby Hunter and Windham Mountains providing a steady stream of developers and skiers looking for small parcels on which to build vacation homes. Harrison is the area's most convincing spokesman for land conservation, answering questions from the few neighboring farmers who remain in the area. He

continues to get calls from realtors and others looking for land but he's also heard that neighbors feel the easement is "not a bad idea." As he says, "Money isn't everything, and I'm not going to live forever, but I don't want this place developed." They've kept 2 acres out of the easement so they can build a retirement home in the future, if you can ever really get them away from the barns, but I'll have to see it to believe it... KR

Cats I Have Known

The cats of Halcott are a very special breed. Readers have already been introduced in a former issue to Pumpkin Pagnano, but there are others all with their own story... There was Smoky DiBenedetto, a grey kitten that her parents Peg and Mike "loaned" to Lena Johnson when they went to Korea for a year in the early nineties. Smoky slept on Lena's shoulders as she quilted in the evenings, providing great companionship and warmth. Rosy Ballard, a gorgeous shiny black cat was given to Pete and



Nancy by Dick and Ellie Kratochvil when they went to Arizona. Rosy was a wild, outdoors cat, hard to catch when Nancy first let her out accidentally. But she has evolved into a gentle, loving indoor cat with a very loud purr.

Natasha Kasanof came from the bank in Fleischmanns, in 1990. The tellers found a tiny kitten in the air shaft one morning. She lived at

the bank until she grew large enough to set off the motion detector alarm at night. Jean George, the manager at the time, shared soccer-mom duties with me and persuaded us that we needed a cat. Natasha has lived fifteen years, growing wider and wider on Fancy Feast and shrimp, a delicacy that she cannot resist.

Anabar Reynolds, Ward and Ruth's former cat, was black with white markings. She was named for a particularly cantankerous journalist who always wore black and white. The night I finally met the original Anabar I couldn't believe the similarity. She was dressed in black, quite roly-poly and I suspect there were whiskers on her determined jaw. Anabar (the cat) was replaced by Spunky, also known as Blackie, who grew very large mostly on a diet of human toes and hands. This cat is rough, but when Gaudys and four year-old Genesis came to take care of Ruth and Ward, everyone was amazed to see Spunky meekly submit to being lugged around like a potato sack. Parts of paws and tail dragged willingly along the floor as Genesis transported him. I think he may have been Genesis' first friend.

They are still quite close. The other day when I visited, Spunky's usually white nose had been carefully painted black by his friend.

Suzanna DiBenedetto found two kittens as big as teacups on Hubbard Road a few years back. When Nan and Lee Austin fell in love with them, they began life as Maurice and Marguerite or, easier to handle, Mo and Maggie. They have proved quite a mischievous handful, leaping onto tables and eating flowers. Maggie has been known to grab the loose end of

a toilet paper roll and run around the house until there is no more on the roll. She made an awful mess one day. My cats tend to hiss and bat at one another, but Mo and Maggie, brother and sister who have known each other their whole lives, sleep cuddled up together in a ball. Interestingly, Mo, like Spunky, attacks feet. Is this a Reynolds' trait?

There are several dangers to cats in Halcott. Of course the first is Greene County Route 3 which has proved disastrous. Dennis and Jennifer Bouton have lost at least two over the years. Natasha's sister, Jenny came from downstate when Bonnie Moroff brought her up to Sybil Kasanof as a replacement for Becky who met an intemely end on County Route 3. Jenny has genuine fame in her family: she and her brother, Frankie were rescued from a fire and brought to the animal shelter. Frankie was subsequently adopted by Whoopi Goldberg after she read about them in the newspaper. Every time I see Whoopi on TV, I feel a warm sense of cousinship.

Chris Johnson told me about their cat



*Maurice and Marguerite
Austin-Reynolds*



Jenny Kasanof

Nutmeg, a dark tiger who lived to be eighteen.

Nutmeg had helped Chris raise the kids, running to them when they cried,

entertaining them, and generally watching over them. The day that Chris drove both kids to college -- Ben to Rochester and Adina to Cobleskill -- Nutmeg disappeared. A few days later, another of the Johnson cats, Nigel, stronger, younger and heavier than Nutmeg, came home with claw marks on his shoulders. That same day, a great horned owl flew out of their open cellar. Chris and Tim felt sure that Nutmeg had been eaten by the owl.

But my favorite cat tale is of Perry, the part Siamese who was found by Dot Reynolds Bush about fourteen years ago and

given to the Benedetto twins, Katy and Emily.

Judy and Ben Patrusky

cared for Perry one

weekend, and when

they let him out, he

ran away. The family

was heart-

broken. They looked everywhere for him. Finally,

as Katie Benedetto tells it, exactly forty

days and forty nights later, Perry showed up on

the Patrusky deck, ten pounds skinnier and

happy to be home. *IK*

Our Weasel In Winter

Have you ever seen a weasel in winter?

They do not hibernate, so it's possible that you've seen the short-tailed weasel, or ermine, in its white winter coat. This clever animal goes beyond clever in its camouflage, since it retains

its black-tipped tail to confuse predators as to its exact whereabouts. In summer, the ermine is chocolate brown, with white front feet and belly.

Unlike other weasels (the Long Tail and the Least Weasel), the ermine is out and about during the day. It has to be, since its grocery bills are so huge. The ermine eats half its weight in food a day. For my son, that would mean 40 pounds of mac and cheese, or 160 hamburgers! We discovered this voracious appetite firsthand this winter, when the weasel moved into our house.

This critter has been killing our chickens on occasion for the past two summers, but it wasn't until he (or she) started a nightly hunt for mice in our house that we got to see it up close. We usually begin trapping mice in the fall for about 2-3 weeks when the cold weather sets in, then once in a while when "evidence" appears.

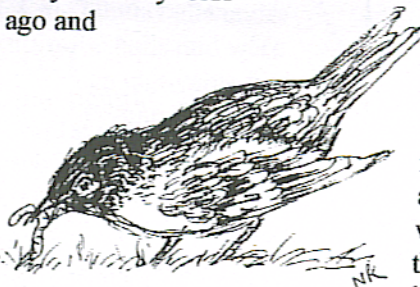
This year, we thought that our renovations had eliminated enough nests so we weren't really hosting the usual population. That is, until one day a furry hot-dog ran across the living room floor!

This tube shape gives the ermine its ability to get into any hole that a mouse can -- as little as one inch (and, we discovered, even smaller), using their whiskers to help navigate through the narrow tunnels. These incredible

hunters have no difficulty preying on larger animals as well. Our ermine was discovered due to its misconception that its white coat was giving it cover. I don't think so -- not when it's scampering across a red oriental rug!

Our friend is also quite bold, sometimes running right across the foot of the bed in the night.

That's when we bought the trap. And though we caught him once, he weaseled out of it before we could drive him to the next valley. So, we've given up on the relocation scheme for now. Instead, a towel or two stuffed strategi-





missing is keeping the ermine on a slightly different hunting track – and out of the bedroom. We have to admit, he’s certainly still paying the rent with his mousing skills. The weasel’s family name, Mustelidae, means “those who carry

Mustela erminea

This bold little carnivore, scarcely 30 cm long, is found throughout all of Canada, the western United States, Europe, and Asia. In summer, its coat is a rich chocolate brown except for the undersides of the body and legs. In winter, the colour changes to a clear white, broken only by a black tip on the tail. Muscular, agile, and curious, they have been known to clamber up a human’s clothing to reach food, or to attack someone who releases them from a trap. They are seen occasionally during daylight hours but are primarily nocturnal in activity.

Some emine appropriate the burrows of mice or ground squirrels and adapt them for their own use. Others build dens in hollow logs, under tree roots, or in abandoned buildings.

The ermine’s diet consists primarily of mice, but they also prey upon cottontails, small hares, porcupines, squirrels, pikas, and rats. They are hunted by coyotes, badgers, foxes, owls, and wolverines. [From the wonderful internet]

off mice.” While I wouldn’t recommend inviting one in, for now at least we are enjoying the fruits of his hard work.

My son found the best source for positive information in a book at the school library, called **Nature’s Children**, which tells the following about Weasel Lore: “North America’s Native People have always had great respect for the weasel’s fiery spirit. The Indians believed that the capturing of a weasel promised good fortune. In Inuit culture, some consider it good luck to have a weasel cross their path, and a young hunter sometimes carries a weasel pelt on his belt in the hope that he will inherit some of this animal’s hunting skills.”

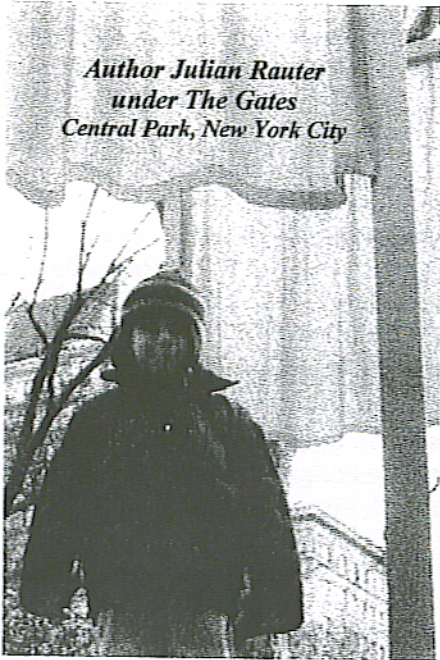
Should a weasel ever race by you, try this trick. Stay perfectly still and make a squeaking sound by kissing the back of your hand. Chances are its curiosity will win out and it will reappear. You might just get a better look at one of nature’s most graceful but secretive mammals. –
KR

THE GATES

Julian and Karen Rauter

The Gates is an art project that was installed in New York City’s Central Park for 16 days this February. It’s a 23-mile long, temporary work of art which will be recycled once it’s finished. The artists who created The Gates, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, are famous for their art which has taken place all over the world. They use their own money to make their creations which they say gives them total freedom over their art. How do they make this money? Christo creates drawings and collages showing what the project will look like and these are sold to museums and collectors. The Gates was started in 1979. We saw it on February 22 after a snow storm, and there were many visitors from all over the country and world taking photos and enjoying the beauty of the saffron-colored curtains reflecting the light and waving in the breeze. The

*Author Julian Rauter
under The Gates
Central Park, New York City*



flecting the light and waving in the breeze. The attendants in the Park gave out small swatches of the fabric to us, and had long poles with tennis balls on them in case the fabric got tangled in

the gates. One of these helpers rescued two golden retrievers who fell through the frozen pond in the Park: he stuck the tennis balls under the ice and the dogs went for the balls and were pulled out of the drink! It was an enjoyable way to spend a vacation day and everyone there was smiling.

TOWN TOPICS

New Ambulance for MMH

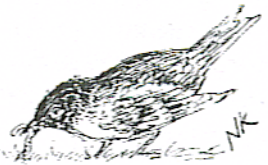
As a result of several meetings last year, interviews with professional ambulance companies, and a public hearing, our town board has resolved to participate in the support of the Margaretville Memorial Hospital's ambulance service. The Town of Halcott will contribute, along with the Towns of Margaretville and Hardenburgh to an ambulance fund to assist the hospital in providing advanced and basic life support to our area. I had the pleasure this winter to witness the new ambulance purchased for this purpose. She's a real honey, gleaming with polished surfaces, computers, shelves of neces-

sary equipment, and enough room for a staff of EMTs to perform life-saving magic.

Incidentally, we learned over the course of these meetings that one of the most serious problems confronting ambulance service today is the high number of "nonbillable runs." An ambulance has costs right out of the starting gate, so to speak, involving personnel, fuel, etc. The dedicated professionals who are in charge do not stop to evaluate the nature of the emergency. They never turn down a patient. Never. They just go. But sometimes the ambulance has

*Reminder: Town members
who have access to the
internet may sign up to
receive agendas for
Halcott Town Board
meetings by emailing:
supervisor@townofhalcott.
com.*

been called by someone other than the patient, and the patient does not feel the need of an ambulance. Or the patient himself, once the ambulance has arrived, opts not to use it. Sometimes an ambulance from Roxbury intercepts the call. When these types of situations occur, the ambulance is stuck with the associated costs. MMH showed us their accounts in November 2004, and out of the 374 runs that had been made so far that year, 108 of them were nonbillable. It's sobering to think that industry-wide, ambulance services have about 30% non-





billable calls, and it certainly helps to explain the crazy cost of healthcare today. *IK*

Snowmobiling in Halcott

For the past few months, a Snowmobile Committee appointed by the Town Board has been researching

our options for snowmobiles. Snowmobile clubs are becoming popular in New York State, and can apply for funds from the State to help them keep their trails maintained. At their last meeting, the Town Board passed a resolution opening three roads to snowmobiles, provided that a club be established in Halcott. The board felt that it would be beneficial to work together with a club that could help oversee the usage of these roads. If you are interested in finding out more about snowmobiling in Halcott, please call Dennis Bouton, Chairman of the Snowmobiling Committee at 845-254-4144. *IK*

What's Happening at the Grange...

Basic Yoga Classes! Six Saturdays, starting April 2nd. From 10 a.m. till about 11:30. Call 254-4492 for more information. Come and relieve your winter weariness! PD

And What's Happening WITH the Grange...

Participants in various activities at the Grange lately will notice that we are getting a facelift in the upper hall. Downstairs is almost finished, having received carpeting for the floor in December. This summer, volunteers Mike DiBenedetto and Sybil Margaritis performed the messy job of removing the homosote ceiling that covered the original beaded board. The

back half of the Grange roof was then repaired, thanks in part to a gift from the Halcott Community Fund of \$2500, the result of our 2004 fundraising campaign. After we had a new roof, the volunteers returned and painstakingly pulled out all the nails in the ceiling so that the room could be painted. The Town thanks Mike & Peg DiBenedetto, Karen & Jim Rauter and Willie & Alex Baer for the tedious removal of nails in the ceiling; and Karl VonHassel for setting up the scaffolding to allow them to work. As we go to press, Chris VonHassel is painting the upstairs. Stop by for a look! We need more money to realize our goal of a fully-functional hall, but slowly improvements are being made. *IK*

Remember the Fair

Our annual Halcott Fair is July 23rd this year. Gloria German hopes everyone is spending these wintry days making craft items to sell. And don't forget the Attic Treasures table when you do your spring housecleaning. This year our auction will be a silent one, so that more people can participate and more can be offered. If you have an item that you think would be suitable for the auction, please call Innes Kasanof, 254-9920, and we'll arrange to pick it up. *IK*



PASSAGES

As this edition of *The Times of Halcott* goes to print, our community is cheering the successful installation of Paul Steinfeld's new hip. How amazing to contemplate the wonders of modern medicine! Don't ever believe that because we live in a rural area, we are deprived. Paul and Lillian can testify to the skill and dedication of the medical profession found first and foremost in Broadstreet Hollow and stretching all the way to Kingston. How blessed we are! *IK*

The Times

of the
Halcott Methodist Church

Pattie Kelder, Correspondent

LOVE – It's Something If You Give It Away

My brother-in-law, Pastor Tim Riss, recently wrote about being "associated with a religion that makes generosity a virtue" in his church newsletter. "I'm grateful for a faith that experiences God as Self-Giving Love," he wrote. This is particularly relevant at Easter time. But it is also true in our day to day lives. Great is God's faithfulness! (Lam3:22-23)

Tim also wrote of the "extraordinary blessing of being connected" to a church where he can "witness and participate in persistent and loving acts of self-giving generosity." Since this newsletter last was printed, the Halcott United Methodist Church has been very busy being generous. There has been continued giving to the children of Ghana, whom Peg DiBenedetto visited, as well as to children and students in this country, both near and far. But the largest mission checks this church treasurer ever recalls writing were recently sent to the southeast Asian tsunami victims. "I have come into the deep water and the flood sweeps over me ... yet God's steadfast love is good." (Ps 69:2b, 16) How wonderful that United Methodism has a structure which rapidly delivers 100 cents on a dollar in emergency situations worldwide. As a member of a consortium which helps avoid duplicating efforts and providing ineffective aid, UMCOR really is love in action.

Since misery takes no holidays, wouldn't it be nice if we continued being generous after the press coverage stops? The world stage is always in need (Mark 14:7), sometimes in places which don't accept aid from the outside and sometimes in places where aid doesn't come for lack of publicity or because the world believes the crisis has passed. I was stunned, recently, to read about a sizable African refugee camp still being funded by UMCOR more than 20 years after the people were displaced. It's



almost reminiscent of the Israelites wandering around Sinai for 40 years. Even the tsunami victims are likely to need help for several years, for crises of this magnitude rarely resolve quickly. But UMCOR is, after all, mainly a mid- and long-term recovery organization, committed to investing in the leadership of the local people and their economy. (Source: UM publications)

Closer to home, we can all participate in stocking local food pantries and funding the Darmstadt Shelter in Kingston, to name but a few. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver! (2Cor 9:7).

Memories – Sweet Memories

Donald Bouton:

My Grandmother Bouton loved the church and attended it faithfully, and I would accompany her. The coarse gravel road leading from her house to the Church was not kind to her feet and our progress slow, very slow for a four-year old! But I would walk with her. She always carried her green hymnbook. I can't remember her singing but she loved to read the hymns. If in inclement weather, she had to stay home, she would always dress in her Sunday best and clean apron and the old hymnbook was read. She never did any unnecessary work. Saturday was baking day – bread, cake, pie, cookies, plus a fresh killed chicken was made ready for Sunday dinner, 12:00 noon sharp. Sabbath was a day of rest!

Since the majority of the congregation were dairy farmers, the Church services were held at 2:00PM which gave them plenty of time to complete the morning chores, enjoy their

"Sunday dinner," attend Church, socialize a bit maybe even catch up on the latest gossip and still be home to do the evening chores.

Once every year we had what was called a "Revival Meeting." Guest ministers would come and spend a week. At that time the Town of Halcott was divided into four separate school districts each with their own one room school. Afternoons of that week were set aside for juvenile Bible study taught by one of the guests at each school. Evenings were "family night" with a full house at the Church.

Rally Day, another important milestone was usually held in late summer or early fall sometime between haying and corn cutting. Everyone came. I do mean everyone! A morning Church service was held followed by a real scrumptious dinner put on by the Church ladies. The afternoon was spent with the grown-ups visiting and us kids running races, flying kites and doing anything and everything. It was the one Sunday when we could play games and we really took advantage of it. A special exciting day to remember always.

Eventually, my brother Carson and I took on the job of Church janitors. During the colder months it included building a fire in each of the old fashioned cast iron school-house type stoves, sweeping out the Church (wood burning stoves are

messy) and keeping the paths shoveled when necessary. We furnished the kindling wood but had to split and carry the coarse wood from the old Church sheds. Often the wood provided to the Church was not seasoned and sometimes had green leaves still on it. Depending on weather conditions and the type of wood provided we would sometimes have a "cool" service.

Each spring, treasurer Eleanor Jenkins would pay us for our work, twenty-five cents per Sunday. That seven or eight dollars back in the late twenties seemed like a lot of money, but what made us feel even better was the remark she always made. "I don't know how we could ever manage without you boys."

During the pastorate of Reverend Fox, I was one of the Sunday School teachers, and had a fairly large class – eight or ten kids most of the time. The kids were just a bit younger than I so it was a learning process for all of us and I really enjoyed it.

Down through my memory years, we have had wonderful pastors and parishioners and if our old Church could talk, what tales it could tell. How blessed we are!

