



The Times of Halcott

Winter 2005 Volume 33

The Christmas Blizzard

Nina Kasanof

The Christmas blizzard of 1947-48 brought record-breaking snowfalls and temperatures to New York State. In less than 24 hours, on December 26th and 27th, more than 26 inches of snow fell on New York City, and 32 inches in the suburbs. In Halcott, the snowfall was heavier, of course, and temperatures plummeted far below zero.

Although we were summer boarders at Griffins' farm in Halcott, we also came up off-season, whenever a school holiday permitted. My father and uncle bought a farm on what is now Silas Lake Road, and we shared the house for a few years. This particular Christmas we were spending on our own farm, along with our guests, a fortunately good-humored couple.

Silas Lake Road was at that time unpaved and rough, a difficult climb at best for under-powered cars and pedestrians. After a heavy snow, it was impassable. My brother Tony remembers that of the two cars we arrived in, my uncle's Packard was able to make it up the hill, while our guests' car, a Hudson, had to be left at the foot of the road. Af-

ter the storm was over, and the road plowed, we went down to retrieve the Hudson, but it was invisible, buried under the snow!

Up at our house, it was terribly cold. The only heating was provided by a wood stove, and a little electric heater aimed at the toilet so that we wouldn't freeze to it. Our male guest upstairs used an empty pineapple juice can for a chamber pot. In the morning its contents were frozen solid! We all slept in layers and layers of clothing, with as many blankets as we had, and the lucky ones slept as close to the wood stove as possible.

Next morning we found the heavy snows had sealed over the side entrance to the house. I was excited to find five-foot drifts that I could climb into, and that would almost hide me.

Pa Griffin called the road crew to plow out the road for us with their half-track tractor. After that we called the grocer in Fleischmanns who agreed to deliver an order to us in his truck. When he arrived he sat down to play pinochle and have a few



drinks with the men in our household. A couple of hours later his worried wife called to find out what had happened to him. He explained that his truck had broken down, and that he had just arrived. He probably lost most of the grocery bill at cards, but I believe he enjoyed himself.

Because of the storm, we had been unable to cut a Christmas tree until a couple of days after Christmas. I remember trudging with my uncle to our pine woods to cut one. I'm sure it was heavy-going, but what I especially remember was how beautiful the trees were with their burden of snow, and how quiet and peaceful it was. We had to make ornaments for it, and I remember making red



and green linked chains of construction paper.

Our guests were funny, and taught us jokes and songs I still recall. It was definitely the most memorable snowstorm of my life, and I imagine it may have been for the others, too.

Another Halcott Bear Story

Gloria German

Although this is not a story about Sandy the Mule and her escapades, she is probably the cause of this one. She was hanging out on her side of the wall, snorting. And I do know that she keeps the bear off her territory, and he hangs out in my area more these days.

I was alone, Art being off on one of his famous fishing trips, and was shutting off the lights around 11:00pm. The dog was sniffing the door and looking very serious, so I decided she needed to go out. I also noticed the motion detector light was on and wondering if it was a deer that set it off up by the barn, I went out on the porch. The dog stayed in the house peering nervously out at me – my first clue that there were some tough critters out there! I could hear the mule blowing over in her corner, but she hates deer as well as bear, so that wasn't new.

Suddenly, my scalp prickled as the whole back side of my pine tree by the driveway to the barn began to move! It was a humungous bear. He didn't give me a glance and went directly to the barn. He stood under the light and I watched him sniff the air and then start off for my chicken coop. My daughter had given Art a few hens last month, and I hadn't gotten him to put the electric fence back on the coop yet. My daughter has had enough problems with the bear, even with the mule on guard, so she has hot wired everything she owns!

My first thought was, "Holy c---! I won't have a coop, or a chicken left from the looks of that bear!!!" I ran for my trusty 410 shotgun and figured a couple warning shots would slow the action down. A bear that big

THE TIMES OF HALCOTT

813 ROUTE 3

HALCOTT CENTER, NY 12430

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KNOWS what bear season and guns are. I hurried back to the porch and gave a load of bird shot to the brush pile by the stone wall.

Sure enough, he turned and beat it into the field behind the barn and up into the woods. Ecstatic with myself for handling the crisis, I lowered the gun and then realized that there was an awful lot of crashing noise

going on below the house in the brush. A second, smaller bear was tearing off, going south through the thick brush on Wachtel's property. WOW! I retreated at that point. Too much wildlife!!!

The next day I went out to survey the driveway and see if there were tracks. Sure was! And the woodpile of blocks waiting to be split was strewn everywhere. A demolished bee's nest was in the center of what was left of the pile. The tracks were of a small bear (not a cub, though) who evidently ate the nest. The bigger tracks were from the big male bear who decided to see what his small relative was eating, and take it away from him. (Large bears are very territorial and will kill smaller males.) So. That was what the whole deal was about! And I must have scared the small one about to death! Don't worry He had me nervous enough that I didn't sleep much either! Please do the area a favor next hunting season and kill some bear – I am sick to death of them!

Echoes from the Past

Nina Kasanof

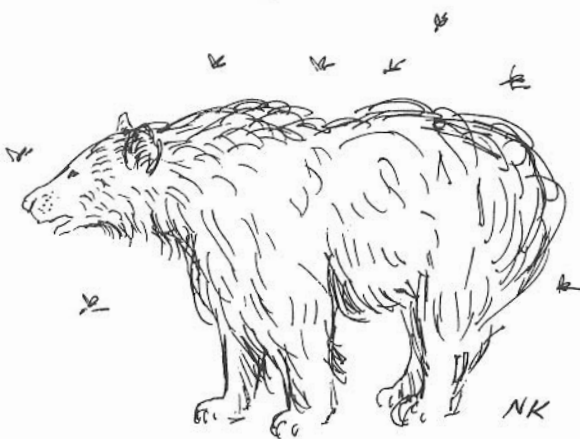
In September, the Skene Library in Fleisch-

manns received a letter from Joan Sunshine Davison of Santa Cruz, California. She is the daughter of the late Joseph Sunshine, whom a few Halcott Center people still remember. Joseph, orphaned as a child, was raised by the Griffins. He educated himself at the Skene Library, making the long walk to town to get the two or three books he read every week -- a practice that became a life-time habit. Rather than novels, he read non-fiction. The Library provided him with intellectual stimulation that was not necessarily part of the day-to-day activity of the farm.

Joseph Sunshine passed on his love of reading to his daughter and grandchildren. In gratitude to the Library, he asked his daughter to make a donation to it in his name. For this purpose, she and her son made a visit to Fleischmanns on October 1st to present a check to Skene Library, as well as a small plaque to commemorate her father.

I learned from her that Joseph gained more than books when he walked to Fleischmanns. It was there he met his wife-to-be, Tillie (Toby) Arnold (Aronowitz), the butcher's daughter, whom he encountered in front of the drugstore. Joseph was to work for a time in Fleischmanns, then in New York City, and eventually in California.

Over the years, the Griffins also took in other orphans, sent to them from the City for the nurturing care, good clean air, and fresh milk the Griffins could provide. Grandma Griffin is still re-



membered by some of us for her wonderful cooking and baking - especially her fabulous pies and cinnamon buns, but not everyone remembers that she had been a teacher. I wonder if she and Joseph talked about the books that meant so much to him.



A PERFECT GREENE COUNTY AFTERNOON

The girls and I were headed out of town to explore a unique, first-of-its kind Catskills phenomenon – the Windham Vineyard and Winery. We were off for a wine tasting, with no expectations, and were prepared to lower our standards, if necessary.

Our route was roundabout. We met for brunch at Brio's in Phoenicia, then headed up Rt. 214 to Hunter. Took 23A West, then 296 North to Hensonville. Took a left, then at Windham, left again on 23. Just past the Christman's Golf Course, we turned right on North Settlement Road, then left onto Rt. 10. Finally, along the left side of the road we saw the beautiful sight of rows and rows of grape vines against the truly majestic backdrop of our Greene County Catskills. Turned left down the small road, driving past a tiny, new, horse-shed type of structure with a sign that said, "Welcome to Windham Vineyard and Winery". "OK", I thought, "we are in the vicinity", and continued down the road to what I was sure would be a grand mansion complete with tasting deck and fireplace and sommelier. "OK", I thought, as we came to the end of the road, "we're going back to

the horse shed". As we parked the car back at the little building, we noticed a sign that read something like "We really are open. If no one is here, please call 518-965-1798; we live just down the road and will be here in one minute." We were charmed, and could not resist taking a photo or two.

Inside this tiny building we found Valerie, wife of James, the vintner. She expertly set us up for the tasting, asked what kind of music we wanted. We unanimously decided against country, and within seconds, Vivaldi filled our senses as the first sample filled our glasses. "Do we need to spit, or can we swallow?" we asked. Valerie assured us that in her opinion, spitting is wasteful, and we were off and running. For 20 minutes we compared the nuances of each offering, carefully imagining what dish would go best with which taste, judging sweetness and fullness as though we were experts and had been doing this our whole lives. THEN came the best part – chocolate truffles made with some of the wines, to be eaten in conjunction

WITH the wines, and so we learned "truffle etiquette,"

which, in short, is sip-bite-sip. I could not believe that two of my favorite activities – tasting wine and eating chocolate – were about to be combined! That in itself would have constituted a perfect afternoon.

I cannot tell you how satisfying the winery experience was. From the rustic tasting shed to the cheerful banter of our hostess, the entire adventure was delightful. But the best part - beside the chocolate – was that the wines are actually very good. My assumption that the wines



would be of an inferior quality was completely off base. As a comparison, I had been at one of the fancy wineries of the Finger Lakes the previous weekend and had left their gift shop disappointed, with just a jar of wine mustard and salad dressing because I cared for none of the wines they had offered. However, the three of us exited the Windham Vineyard and Winery in high spirits and with promises to return, after purchasing several bottles of our favorite wines.

The opening of the Windham Vineyard and Winery provides yet another opportunity for Catskills residents and visitors to spend a perfectly and surprisingly enjoyable afternoon. All you need is a good map, three hours to spare, and a sense of adventure. *PD*

Farm News

Winter's impending arrival has many of us scurrying around to finish tasks that would be more difficult in snow and sub-freezing temperatures. On our farm this fall, hauling in winter feed has been mixed with various building projects. No doubt many of you have noticed the variety of construction equipment at our farm over the last couple of months. This recent flurry of activity is aimed at completing the final phase of Watershed work slated for our farm. The project includes a milk house waste system, stream crossing, laneway construction/repair and load-out chute covering. Upon completion, these improvements, in addition to those already finished here, will help to further address water quality issues around the barn and streamside areas.

Each phase of watershed projects has provided us with the opportunity to work with wonderful, talented individuals. The technical nature of the projects requires that teams of professionals in the areas of construction, engineering, environmental protection, and animal husbandry work with us, the farm owners, to come up with mutu-

ally agreeable solutions that will enhance both environmental stewardship as well as ease of implementation of the new practice (how it fits into and improves a farm's operations). In this latest project, we have been particularly blessed to have a terrific contracting outfit. Enck Construction of Otego, operated by Mr. Fred Enck and his son Brian, along with Adina Johnson, has been doing the majority of the project work while Tim Johnson and Bruce Rowe have been constructing the roof over the chute at the front of the barn. We are so thankful for everyone's guidance, expertise and patience during the project. It's rather amazing to see something go from ideas to blueprints to finished work

The main part of this final project is the milk house waste system. Designing a workable solution for milk house waste on our farm was a

challenge given the proximity of the milk house to the stream. Several options were explored and it was decided to create a grass filter area on the hill behind the barn to allow the waste to leach onto a controlled field away from Vly Creek. How



it works, in a nutshell, is the waste from our milk house and milking parlor goes to a settling tank buried alongside the barn. Each day, the pump is run to send the liquids up the hill to the filter area while the solids collect in the tank and will be removed periodically. This winter will be the first test for the system. We are anxious to see how it works over the seasons.

Another part of this last project phase is the improvement and construction of a cattle laneway and stream crossing. The laneway that runs from the metal gates at the side of the Cover

All has been rebuilt and smoothed over. We discovered that rainwater running directly off the roof had undermined the lane around the gates. A rebuilt road and gutters on the roof will help the ladies enjoy better footing next spring! Similarly, the beautiful laneway built going up the hill behind the barn will make the journey to the night pastures easier on cows and humans alike. Fencing along the lane will allow us to better divide the field into more manageable grazing units.

The improvements to the stream crossing by the Grange Hall are much welcomed. Before, the crossing was very steep and so full of rocks and ruts that made it quite difficult for the cows to climb comfortably. Hoof injuries were inevitable. Now, after expert smoothing and grading, the trip from the day pasture across the road back to the barn will be considerably more pleasant.

Lastly, the roof over the load-out chute will be an important aid for keeping rainwater and snow out of the spreader as well as off the concrete spreader pad. This will keep the spreader and pad from overflowing during heavy precipitation. An added benefit is that ice can't build up under the spreader tires so traction won't be such a problem. We are also happy with the clear panels used to replace the old solid wall under the roof; they let precious sunlight (especially in the winter) into the holding alley to brighten things up.

We are pleased with the watershed projects that have been done here. We're confident that water quality has been much improved by the work done. Our farm operation has been improved, too, by the watering system, barnyard work, and laneways, just to name a few. Indeed, all farms in the New York City Watershed are fortunate to be able to have access to the programs offered. Perhaps other watersheds will follow suit.

Hopefully, years down the road, when many projects have been completed and in use for some time, all the work will be revealed to be a win-win situation for local farmers and residents as well as the folks down state who rely on upstate resources. *JD*

CHEESE

You may have read (in the other newspaper) about the "Curds" taking over the Halcott Town Grange. On November 12, fifteen people interested in learning how to make cheese attended a day-long Saturday workshop in Halcott on creating "low temperature" cheeses - ricotta, feta and mozzarella - from fresh goat and cow's milk. The workshop was sponsored by the Watershed Agricultural Council, whose mission is to keep farmers farming by assisting them in finding ways to add value to their product as a strategy to keep farmers farming.

Six local farmers, plus a number of others from Delaware and Columbia counties joined

Linda Smith, who taught the class. She has been making goat cheeses for twenty years and today works Sherman Hill Farmstead Cheese in Franklin with her daughter, Morgan, an art historian. The day was marked by lots of good fun. One farmer commented that the class was just what he imagined the new Grange kitchen would be good for - getting people together and making something delicious to eat. As a teacher, Linda was given high marks for her casual, humorous and informative style, including a willingness to share her practical knowledge.

While most attendees said they do not plan on going into the cheese business, they did feel better knowing how to make something delicious with locally produced milk. Another favorite part of the day was exchanging information,





learning about how others care for their animals and just plain visiting!

By now, you may be asking yourself "Why wasn't I invited to this great event?" The answer is that the Watershed Agricultural Council advertised it first to the working dairy herders in the area, who over-booked the class before we could put the word out to anyone else. Many of these farmers produce milk with grazing techniques that produce a tasteful milk that makes good cheese. Others have returned to their family's farms to keep the tradition going. One thing is for sure: people today are very interested in where their food is coming from.

If you have ideas for other farm-based workshops you'd like to see in Halcott, or would like more information on how you can support our town's farms, contact me at: krauter@nycwatershed.org for some ideas. *KR*

GRANGE HALL HAPPENINGS

A buzz of conversation greeted us as we descended the steps to the lower floor of the Grange one Sunday morning this fall. When we opened the door, our noses were assaulted by the seductive flavor of sausages and gravy, pancakes and syrup, and fresh hot coffee. Welcome to the Halcott Cemetery Association's Pancake Breakfast, a fundraiser to support the Town's cemetery. The room was filled with people enjoying food and one another's company. Volunteers were hard at work in the kitchen, serving customers, some of

whom returned an unconscionable number of times for heaps of steaming pancakes. Kids were underfoot and outside on the lawn. The atmosphere was just plain old-fashioned — families having fun together.

In case you had missed it, our refurbished Grange Hall is "up and running," a handy community space for all sorts of events. A modest fee is charged for private functions to help defray maintenance costs; fund-raisers and community-wide events are free. Karl VonHassel, the building administrator, handles the scheduling and can be reached at 254-4340.

There are still kinks to be worked out in our attempt to make the building user-friendly. We have not yet found a periodic cleaning service, though it is a real challenge to keep ahead of the cluster flies in Halcott! Suggestions for improvement are welcome and we hope that you will think of the Town of Halcott Grange Hall for your next event. *IK*



Helping Out

On September 3, 2005 – day 5 after Hurricane Katrina slammed into New Orleans and the rest of the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi - my husband Michael & I flew to Houston where we rented a car and drove to Baton

Rouge, Louisiana. We were part of the Disaster Response Team for CitiHope International, a faith-based aid organization that procures medicines and supplies for projects and hospitals worldwide. This would be CitiHope's first relief project within the United States.

This disaster will be a disaster for a very long time. The ramifications will be numerous and diverse. What concerns me the most are the children and their reactions to this catastrophic event in their lives. So many of the effects will evolve over time, and may be hard to see. It is difficult enough for us as adults to grasp what has happened; how do the children begin to process the devastation, the separation from or loss of one or both parents, the anguish of all of the adults around them?

One little girl I met was 3 or 4 years old. We had stopped in Slidell, La., one of the hardest hit communities outside of New Orleans, to distribute nutritionals (Ensure, Isomil formula, protein bars) to shelters, hospitals, nursing homes, and individuals. We met this little girl on a street with her mother and small brother. I knelt down to take her picture. She came very close to me and whispered, "Do you have a house?" I did not know the best way to answer her poignant question. I said, "Yes, Sweetie, I have a house." And I almost cried.

At a shelter in Hammond, La., I met a single mother named Myra who had a radiant smile and a magnetic personality. As we began to unload our boxes, Myra came up to us and asked if she could have some Ensure for her 3-year-old daughter, Rae Jean. Rae Jean had stopped eating solid food after the storm, 8 days before, and if Myra could get her to drink Ensure, at least she would be getting nutrition. Myra broke down and started to cry. She went on to explain that her home had survived, but had wind and water damage. With-

out electricity and air-conditioning, the carpets were mildewed and their clothes were getting moldy. Without water, there was no way to wash them. Myra was concerned that their home was becoming unhealthy for the kids. She was supposed to start college classes that day, but needed to deal with all that was going on, and did not want to leave the kids. For some reason she wouldn't be getting a paycheck for 3 weeks, she was running low on cash, and was afraid her truck would run out of gas on the way home. She sobbed that she was trying to stay strong for her children, but it was so hard. All I could do was

hug her, and as we said good-bye I pressed a 20-dollar bill into her hand and told her I'd pray for her. Our 3-person CitiHope team, based in Andes, NY made a difference. With the help of Project Hope, based in Winchester, Virginia, we procured and delivered almost 2 million dollars worth of immediately needed pharmaceuticals and supplies to hospitals in Louisiana, and 7000 vials of tetanus vaccine to Memorial Hospital in Gulfport,

Mississippi. The strength and determination of the people we met was inspiring, but the despair of the Gulf Coast is overwhelming.

All of these efforts are so appreciated by the affected population, but there is still a discouragement that is palpable and real: these people deserved better, and more, than what they got. Unfortunately, it took the lessons of Katrina to improve the responses to Rita and subsequent storms.

Now that the immediate impact has passed, attention of the nation has shifted away from the Gulf Coast states. However, for the residents who have been displaced, who have been moved from shelter to shelter to motel to apartment, and now have lost federal assistance



for living expenses; for the ones who are living in their front yards in tents as they try to clean out their toxic homes, and are unable to collect from the insurance companies; for those whose businesses were wiped out along with their homes, who will not be able to declare bankruptcy due to the new regulations; this disaster is an on-going tragedy that will require acts of kindness and caring on the part of strangers just to get through each day. Churches are still serving many thousands of hot meals every day. Schools are struggling to equip students with basic materials.

As we enjoy our holiday season, it is important not to forget the victims of Katrina, who will be victims for a very long time. The Margaretville and Andes Central Schools have "adopted" a school in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and would be thrilled to accept donations towards this project. Feel free to contact Michael DiBenedetto - 254-4494 - for further details. *PD*

WELCOME TO

Noah Eliberto Sanford, born on November 9, 2005, to Gaudys and Dalton Sanford. His big sister Genesis states that he is a good brother, although he cries a lot. *PD*





Community Christmas Program 2005



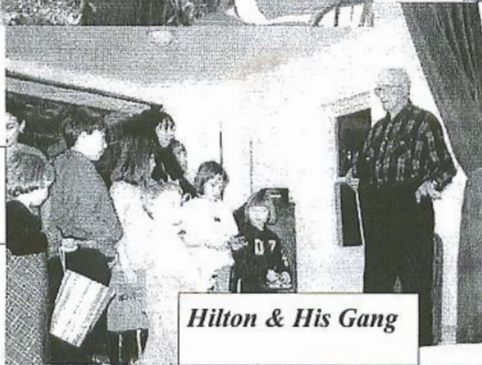
*Here Comes
Santa Claus!*



*Jenna & Sofia Konstantine
steppin' out*



*Jim, Julian Rauter
& Lucy Brock-Baer*



Hilton & His Gang

*Glory to
God in the
heavenly
heights,
Peace to all
men and
women on
earth who
please him.
Lk 2:14*



The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church Winter, 2005



Pattie Kelder, Correspondent

News and Announcements

Several youngsters gathered three different times this fall to assemble mission projects. Health kits were sent to UMCOR for victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita here in the U. S. and shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child were packed for needy children worldwide. Young people in Halcott felt really good to be able to make a difference in the lives of others. This is something they plan to do again.

Many people enjoyed the **Election Day Bake sale** and Community Christmas Program. These are always at the same time each year, so please put them on your 2006 calendar now. The **Christmas Program** will take place at 7:30 p.m. in the Grange Hall on the first Saturday in December. It's not just for children, you know.

This year, the **Christmas Candlelight Service**

will be held at the church on Friday, December 23rd at 7:30 p.m. We hope many can gather (regardless of denominational preference) for this special event of the year.

Church services are being held in the evenings again this winter, on Sunday evenings at 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Past and Christmas Present

Thanksgiving weekend has its rituals. One of mine is to take to the woods in a red coat and hat with my trusty pruning shears in hand. Yes, gathering greens for the advent wreath coincides with hunting season. Generally, pickings are rather slim. I'm just grateful to find anything green within reach. This year, a storm conveniently felled a branch of long needle pine along the road and a neighbor's evergreen needed trimming. Last year, our rhododendrons had just been pruned and a lady from another church

mice, which then quickly discovered the candles.

As a child, I remember swags of delicate princess pine draped along the altar railing. It had to be harvested sparingly as it takes 12 to 13 years to mature. Alas, the tradition ended when the species became threatened in New York State.

Christmas trees, usually in place from Thanksgiving to Epiphany, remain fresh in the unheated building. A table tree has replaced the eight or ten foot tree that once stood on the floor. Occasionally a tree has been moved to the church from the Grange Hall following the Community Christmas Program. In my childhood it was sometimes decorated as a "Jesus Tree" with bread dough ornaments signifying the Bread of Life or with colored lights, each color conveying a meaning connected to Christmas. During the Vietnam War years, it held doves as a "Peace Tree". Later it was filled with glittered Chrismons, symbols of Christ cut painstakingly from styrofoam by a minister's wife. More recently, it has been covered

with ceramic doves made by a former parish secretary. As children, we couldn't wait to fill red stockings with quarters to place on the tree for the Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn. This is still popular today.

Near the tree was the handmade creche, central to the meaning of Christmas. One of the Sunday School classes from the baby boom era cast and painted a plaster set of nativity figures. The initials of some of the boys are still on the bottoms where their own children found them a generation later. Despite an occasional tumble over the years while being placed in the manger by small hands, they still remind us of an extraordinary event that happened in the midst of simple surroundings two millennia ago.

Wreaths on the doors, candles on the windowsills and candles in each hand complete the warm circle which marks our Savior's birth. Come one and all to celebrate -- together -- the birthday of the King.