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# THE TIMES OF HALCOTT

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## Goats, Alpacas, and Sheep, Oh My!

*Robin White*

Imagine lush, green fields, misty mountains in the distance, the sound of bird calls all around you. See alpacas grazing peacefully, their jaunty ears jumping up at any small sound to make sure an enemy isn't afoot. Are we in Peru? Then, see 25 or so Boer goats come up over the nearest hill, startled by some kind of animal noise, racing to safety around the corner. South Africa, perhaps? Now, around the stand of apple trees, their branches bending down to the ground in a vain attempt to hold up this year's crop of juicy apples, come a trio of small but alert Soay sheep, galloping toward the sound of the goats, thinking something good to eat is available. Scotland? Not quite. This is our front field, outside our homestead in the valley of Halcott Center, our dream come true. These are our companions, providing fiber, meat, milk, and fun throughout the year. This is Two Stones Farm.

Alan and I got started raising Boer goats about 8 years ago, and have been hooked ever since. These handsome, friendly animals are originally from South Africa. Their name comes from the Dutch word for "farmer", and they were originally bred for meat production. The classic Boer goat has a white body and a brown head, although there are

also animals with a black head, totally brown or black, and spotted ones. We like the look of a multicolored herd, so we have selected animals with all color characteristics except the spots. The color of the hair has no influence on meat quality, so we are free to enjoy whatever palette nature gives us. Each of our does usually gives birth to twins once a year, so every winter our barn gets pretty full for a few months! Then, after three months or so, most of the kids get sold as breeding stock, with a few going to the meat market. We keep some as replacement animals as well, so we can keep our herd down to about 25 animals.

This past summer, I decided to start spinning wool once again, and I turned to the Internet in my quest for a source of fleece. While investigating different sheep breeds, I came upon the website of a customer of ours



*Boer Doe*

who raises Soay sheep, a miniature breed originally from the island of Soay off the coast of Scotland. The name "Soay" means "island of sheep" in Old Norse, and that is the exact description of this location. Many wild Soays roam the island today, and are the subjects of scientific study all year long.

The breed dates back to Neolithic times, and is very hardy and agile. Most are some shade of brown, from light tan to blackish brown, and they don't get larger than 85 pounds or so. They sport handsome, curved black horns, and a short tail. The final deciding factor for me was the fact that these animals shed their wool each spring, so I wouldn't have to shear them. Next April, I will have to pluck, or "roo", each animal in order to collect the fiber, which is softer and finer than most other sheep's wool. It has even been said that Scottish wives of old spun underwear out of this wool, it was so soft, but I think I will stick to hats, gloves, and scarves! Three weeks after my idea was hatched, I had three Soay wethers in my yard, happily munching on the thick, green pasture, slowly growing their brown and tan fleeces for my loom.

Our latest adventure started this fall, during the National Alpaca Open House event across the area. I had always wanted to try to spin alpaca wool, but didn't know where to find any, so Alan and I headed out to one of the local alpaca farms to see what they might have for me. My intention



*Jose & Raul*

was to come home with some fleeces to work with this winter, but soon after Alan saw these fascinating animals, he was bargaining with the owner on two handsome youngsters. The next thing I knew, we were the proud owners of José and Raúl, and

two weeks later, the delivery was complete.

These relatives of llamas and camels sport a long, luxurious coat, which is naturally water repellent and lacks the lanolin found in sheep wool. In fact, the wool is a lot like human hair: very long and glossy, and also quite soft and silky. And oh, how it spins! These animals are naturally found at very high elevations in South America, so we are not worried at all about how they will fare during our cold Greene County winters. They have been bred over the years for their fiber (wool), and are very friendly and gentle. They can live up to 20 years, and have padded toes instead of hooves. What was probably the most interesting thing to Alan and myself was the way our "fiber boys" communicate with each other---they hum! It is a calm sound, and they are always making some variation of it with each other. When mad or upset, they can also make a sort of barking/screaming sound.

As a city girl growing up in the suburbs of Westchester County, my parents certainly didn't imagine their little girl one day living in rural Halcott Center. Well, life doesn't always follow the exact path we plan out for ourselves, does it? Spending the past 6 years in our valley has been an adventure, and Alan and I look forward to many, many more springs, summers, falls, and winters right here. Who knows what tomorrow may bring? I can't wait to find out.

**Visit our website at:**

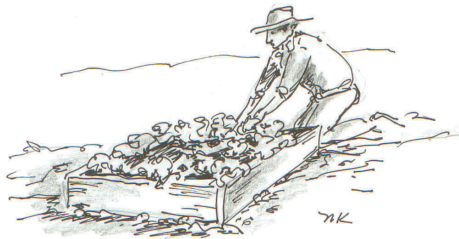
**<http://www.twostonesfarm.com>**

## **HALCOTT COMMUNITY GARDEN DREAMS**

*Alex Brock*

A cookie & milk klatch, an event to explore the possibility of a community garden in Halcott, was held on October 31<sup>st</sup> at the Grange. A small group gathered amidst some delicious home baked cookies while Claire Parde, the Greene County Cooperative agent for Community Food Systems spoke about 3 community gardens she had recently helped organize in Greene County in Catskill, Cairo & Coxsackie and gave an overview of steps for starting a community

garden here in Halcott. She described a range of possibilities from use of town land to privately donated land; start up grants which she procured to cover initial construction costs and donations offered by local businesses. She described gardens that had a combination of both in-ground and raised beds along with some communal planting areas (sunflowers..a pumpkin patch). She also provided a sample planning document with explicit steps and prototypical guidelines for an application and membership rules.



An initial group of eight expanding to twelve interested parties showed up to discuss the idea of a garden. The discussion ranged from questioning the need for a garden, who would actually use the plots, to location for the garden, to a broader idea from Karen Rauter of revitalizing Halcott as a “food shed” for the town of Fleischmanns much in the tradition of a European town model where food is provided from farms in the outlying areas. Claire added that the community garden has proven to be a great way to organize people around a whole variety of community food interests and that once started can act as a catalyst for lots of other projects.

At the end of the day, there are volunteers on a variety of fronts (referred hereto as committees in keeping with Claire’s suggested practices, though I’m not sure if 1 person can constitute a committee??) including a steering committee, a membership committee, a site committee, resource committee and special program committee.

While we are still in the nascent stages of planning and there is more input needed, I think it fair to say, all left the event with a sense that this

is something that our town could truly benefit from and agreed to reconvene mid winter to start the planning in earnest. In the interim, please share your thoughts, feelings, and interest in participating in the community garden with me at [whalen-brock@yahoo.com](mailto:whalen-brock@yahoo.com) and stay tuned for the creation of a web page dedicated to community food in Halcott.....Any good web designers out there interested in helping with this ? The Brock Baer Family, Elk Creek Rd.

### Speed Limits in Halcott

At their May meeting, in response to a petition signed by several of the homeowners along the Main Road, the Town Board passed Resolution 4-2009 requesting a speed limit be posted on County Routes 1 and 3. The Department of Transportation, after surveying the situation during the summer, has written a “Notice of Order for a 40 MPH speed limit on County Route 1 between County Route 3 and South Lake Road; a 40 MPH speed limit on County Route 3 between the Delaware/Greene County line and Johnson Hollow Road; and a 35 MPH speed limit between Johnson Road and its dead end.” The County is instructed to post these roads. Thanks to the concerned families who started this ball rolling.. **IK**

*I am attempting an informal study of the bats in Halcott. If you have bats in your barn, your house, your belfry, or anyplace else, please give me a call.*

*Thanks!*

*Peg DiBenedetto  
254-6508.*

### Reflections following the Town Board’s Adoption of a Land Use Code

**Bill Bernhardt**

The historical marker on Route 3 informs us that the first house in Halcott was built in 1808 and that permanent residents (not counting Native Americans, for whom documentary evidence is lacking) arrived in 1813. If this information is reasonably accurate, the settlement of our valley has occurred within the past 200 years. 200 years seemed like a long time to me, until I realized that it corresponds to the period from the birth of my own great-grandparents until today, roughly four

lifetimes.

It is astonishing to me how much has happened in Halcott during these four lifetimes. Within the first two lifetimes, forests were cut down and fields cleared of stones; thousands of walls and hundreds of buildings were built; herds were expanded and crops successfully planted and harvested. During the first half of the second century, so graphically evoked by Donald W. Bouton in his recent book, *By the Light of the Kerosene Lantern*

(2001), agriculture continued to flourish in our valley, but there were also signs of retrenchment, as many meadows and crop lands returned to forest; some barns, sheds and sap houses fell into disrepair and abandonment. The traditional trades that supported rural life—blacksmithing, cooperage, tanning, etc. vanished.

I have been told that as recently as 50 years ago, when I was a student in college, there were more than 25 working dairy farms in Halcott; now only a couple remain. However, the area still retains its rural character to the extent that calling Halcott a “town” confuses first-time visitors expecting to find a post office, a general store, or a country inn within a cluster of neighboring houses. Instead, many of the old dairy farms have been divided into smaller parcels where residents—whether full-time or weekenders—live and garden surrounded by expansive meadows and woods. They see forested mountains from their windows, and creeks wind around or cross their property lines.

The Comprehensive Plan, approved by a majority of the town’s inhabitants a few years ago (December 2003), affirmed support for Halcott’s preservation as a rural area. The Town Board’s recent vote for a Land Use Code confirms and implements that consensus. This is not to say that everyone is happy with the Code, or that anyone is

completely happy with all of its terms, only that the democratic process has produced a working formula for preservation and controlled development during the present and moving forward into our third century.

Visiting parts of New England, old England, and what is now called The Czech Republic (it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire when my grandmother left it for America towards the end of the Nineteenth Century), I have seen many once exclusively agricultural areas that are now a mix of weekend and vacation properties with a small number of active farms. And in

China and Israel, I have seen much more ancient pastoral and agricultural areas that are now at least partly residential and struggling to retain some of their traditional rural character in the face of powerful forces for urbanization and suburbanization. In other words, what is happening here in Halcott reflects a world-wide process.

In many places throughout the world, local residents have no voice in decisions concerning development. Wealthy and powerful commercial interests, often working in concert with even more powerful governmental authorities, produce rapid changes in the rural landscape that are intrusive and even destructive. Fortunately, the situation in our state and county is more favorable to residents and their elected local representatives. Various non-governmental organizations are also strong sources of support. Whatever its limitations, the Land Use Code will help Halcott to survive as a rural community and provide a democratic and open process for decisions about future development.

### Flobalop Acres

*We almost caught up with the new owners of the “pumpkin house,” the former Mestyaneck house that sits on the left coming into Halcott,*



*right before Virgil Streeter's house on the right. Instead of an old-fashioned face-to-face interview, we electronically asked Leah Kreger, Miles Bellamy and Delilah a few questions about how they got to Halcott:*

**TTOH: How did you come to buy property here in Halcott?**

After a number of dreams not coming to fruition ("co-housing" in the city, a second home in New Mexico) we finally realized we didn't really know what we wanted. That seems like as good a place as any from which to start.

In clarifying whether to invest our lives in the city or country, Miles was adamant – after 40+ years of learning to live in the city he wanted to learn how to live in the country. I was adamant, too – not full time, at least not today. We had friends in Spruceton Valley, Pine Hill, Phoenicia and Walton. I had been curious about the valleys north of Fleischmanns and east of Rt. 30 for years. A friend in Walton opened up her house to us when she was out of the country for 6 months in 2008. During a few weekend visits, we learned that we could indeed drive 3 hours from NYC and still relax for the weekend. When in Walton, we found ourselves gravitating towards Andes as a center. We found a nearby road where I could picture Delilah walking on her own 1/2 mile or so to a future friend's house. It felt like we were getting warm and more towards our comfort zone.

We drove down County Route 3 for the first time in the spring of 2008 from the West Settlement Road direction. We saw the pumpkin house FOR SALE. The front door was open so we went

inside. (We have since learned that many others went in too.) There was a dollhouse in one room – which delighted Delilah. We immediately felt comfortable. Last spring & summer back in Brooklyn we put a good deal of effort into working with a co-housing group. In so doing we got our priorities in order. We wanted, as Miles so aptly stated, to learn to live in the country. We were astounded to find that the pumpkin-colored house was still on the market & got serious about it. No regrets.

**TTOH: What do you both do in the City?**

In the City I am an Architect with my own practice doing primarily residential renovations for people who really appreciate my design ([www.IndamineOchre.com](http://www.IndamineOchre.com)). I'm open to practicing here. Miles is a book dealer with many people's favorite bookshop: Spoonbill & Sugartown, Booksellers in Williamsburg Brooklyn. It celebrated ten years of business this November. The Bibliobarn in S. Kortright is part of our story too, (and may yet be part of our future!) Delilah has great friends and goes to school in Ft. Greene, Brooklyn. We hope to keep introducing her friends and ours to

Halcott Center's charms and inhabitants.

**TTOH: How does Delilah like Halcott?**

Delilah (aka "Flobalop") likes climbing trees. She likes bringing her friends here and meet-

**DISCOUNTS INCREASED FOR PROPANE TO CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS; RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES**

An increased discount has been negotiated for members of the Halcott Center Propane Buying Group with Suburban Propane. Under the present agreement, participants will be billed at the rate of \$2.29 per gallon until June 30, 2010, compared with rates often running \$1 to \$2 or more per gallon for non-participants. But to be eligible, *both new and past participants* must contact me via email to be placed on the list now being formally compiled. Please spread the word about this. My email address is [alanadelson@verizon.net](mailto:alanadelson@verizon.net) In an effort to improve its position in Halcott, Suburban Propane has also offered a "bonus" of 50 free gallons of gas to anyone who recruits a new "primary heat" participant, and 35 gallons for other gas consumers. Such contacts should be made through me as well since the company has shown a rather consistent tendency to fail to extend the discounts when not formally put in place.

No entry or membership fee, or other costs or signatures are involved in participating in the buying group. And while participation is limited to Halcott Center residents, we may be able to help friends and family in the area improve their propane deals as well. Alan Adelson

ing new ones; she likes swimming and our little swimming hole, and swinging in our front yard; making things, like pasta and crafts and a log cabin out back (8 logs so far); the salamanders in Virgil Streeter's pond, Kansas and her trampoline, roasting marshmallows with Lucy, playing with Ruby & little Auggie. She likes getting to spend so much time with Mommy & Daddy & having Grammas and Grampa come visit. The toy store in Margaretville & oatmeal on the front porch & phlox & snakes & deer & roses and learning tennis with Mark. She likes honey at Kurt & Sheila's & visiting Genell. She likes watching her Mom square-dance, walking over logs on the streams & following the paths the deer make in the woods.

*We look forward with pleasure getting to know this family better! IK*

## HALCOTT'S RECYCLABLE CENTER

Since the first issue of *The Times of Halcott*, in the winter of 1997, we have written about recycling in town. Over the years, the tiny recycling center at the Highway Garage has been a godsend to most householders, who usually use it carefully and respectfully. Recyclables including glass (only jars and bottles), newspapers (tied or in paper bags), magazines (tied), cardboard (flattened and bound, max size 3' x 3'), plastics with the chased arrow numbers of 1,2,3 or 5 on them; and tin cans are accepted. Greene County has come to pick up these items at no charge to the Town. The system has benefited everyone. However, there have been significant abuses from time to time (take a look at the photo taken this



Thanksgiving) that threaten to stop this service. Once one wrong bag is deposited, somehow, others

quickly follow and the Highway Department must spend time cleaning the resulting mess up, when they should be maintaining the roads. This is not a good use of our tax dollars.

If you have a doubt about what is accepted, please call the Highway Department, 254-5736 instead of guessing. And please help us pass the word that this small facility is only for the above-mentioned articles. Admittedly, because we live far from the rest of Greene County, it is difficult to get to the closest transfer station. (Located in Hunter, open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 7:30AM to 3:30PM; Sunday, 8:00AM to 3:30PM; closed Wednesdays) However, you can arrange to have your trash picked up by at least two haulers that we know of: Billy Haynes, 845-254-5105 and Homeowner Services, 607-326-3355. Using this service saves trouble for ourselves while supporting the jobs of others and keeps the trash stream in its proper place. *IK*.

## CELEBRATING THE SEASON

I had another good visit with Paul and Lillian Steinfeld the other day. I wanted to check up on how the pond (Lake Lillian) is preparing for the onslaught of winter, but I also wanted information from Paul and Lil. Since we have a beautiful story celebrating the Christian holiday of the winter season (see Judy DiBenedetto's **A Christmas Story** below), I wanted to find out more about the Jewish celebration of roughly the same time period. Hanukkah., the Festival of Lights occurs during the lunar month of Kislev, lasts for 8 nights and marks the victory of the Maccabees in reclaiming their temple in Jerusalem in 165 BCE. The temple candelabrum, supposed to have been kept lit at all times, had been pilfered and vandalized by the Greek-Syrians. Only pure oil, certified by a priest was to be used, and when the Jews began to cleanse and rededicate their temple, they could find just one little cruz of the sacred oil, which they lit. Mi-



raculously, the oil burned for 8 days. In memory of this, every night another candle is lit in the menorah until all 8 are burning. Lil pointed out that the light begins with one candle and the illumination grows steadily with each additional lighting. She showed me two beautiful menorahs, one that her father had brought from Europe and one that was an antique oil-burning one. Nothing utilitarian may be done in the light shed by the Hanukkah candles, thus giving rise to the tradition of joyful playing of games during these evenings, such as twirling the dreidel. (Lillian also had quite a few of these toys to show me!) It is definitely a holiday for kids. Paul observed that it is moving that this festival comes at the darkest time of the calendar, almost to better remind us of the importance of light.

As we spoke, the light on the pond outside their window was already beginning to fade in the wintry afternoon. Lil reported that there had been less of the cursed “pond tulips” this summer, perhaps because it was such a wet one. That was the good news. She also said there had been a beaver in the summer who had killed the crabapple tree that hung over the bank by chewing into the tree’s cambium layer. I had once climbed that tree to pick crabapples for jelly...

Today the pond had a skim of ice on parts of the surface and the dark wet patches looked very cold. All was calm. Or was it? I looked curiously at the little rhythmic disturbances and suddenly saw two sleek little muskrats cavorting at the edge, diving to reappear again, almost like otters. I pointed them out with delight, but Lil wasn’t too sure what their presence would bring. When I got home and did a bit of research on her new neighbors, I discovered that she may feel more hospitable when she learns as I did, that muskrats eat aquatic plant roots. Goodbye, pond tulips? *IK*

### Winter Beekeeping?

**Kurt Reynertson**

“What do honeybees do in the winter?”  
There’s a certain quizzical look that accompanies

a question conceived and verbalized at the same time. I hear this question often at this time of year. Most people have never wondered about bees in the winter until they’re handed a new jar of honey on an early winter day. Then the realization strikes them, and they wonder out loud.

It’s a good question. The cold is obviously too much for their tender little bodies. Imagine a typical blustery Catskill winter day. Or night. How quickly a little bee would freeze. At least individually. But the hive, often described as a sort of super-organism, works together to guarantee survival until the flowers bloom again. The collective survival of the hive becomes the only way for a single bee to make it.

Bees are natural hoarders. They collect nectar and make as much honey as they can, given the available bloom and storage space. Beekeepers try to stay ahead of this tendency by staying ahead of a honey flow, giving them extra storage space. In the fall, the surplus honey is harvested, and the bees are confined to the brood boxes, filled with honey and pollen. Bees collect pollen throughout the year, and pack it in cells to store for later. Apparently, it has to cure or ferment a little to become digestible. Pollen is a necessary source of protein, especially important in the Spring, because they need it when rearing new young.



Honey is the bees’ main food source, though, it’s what gives them energy. And the winter supply is what keeps them alive during the cold months. Once temperatures drop below about 50 °F, the workers form a cluster – a tight ball somewhere in the center of the hive. Eating honey gives them energy to move, vibrate, and generate heat. As a cluster, the bees maintain a core temperature around 90°F even on the coldest days. They move for warmth, but also to take turns being warm or cold. The bees on the outside of the cluster move slowly into the warm center and the bees on the warm center move towards the outside. Only the queen gets to stay warm all the time. And as for the drones... well, winter isn’t a great time to be a male bee. Once the temperature begins to drop, the workers drag the drones out of the hive. They’re only useful when

there's a chance that a virgin queen will need to mate – not likely in the winter.

For the beekeeper, wintertime is the time to reflect on the past season. We think about the things that worked, and the things that didn't work. We read books and bee journals, pose questions to more experienced beekeepers, and dream about the next year's harvest. We take stock of the equipment, clean up and fix the old equipment, and nail together new frames and boxes for the coming year. We render the wax cappings, making a fragrant, pale yellow lump of beeswax for lip balms, salves, soaps, and candles.

Last Fall, I left each hive with two full brood boxes of honey and pollen – over 100 pounds of honey per hive, and they ate through most of that by the time I peeked in on them in the Spring. If all goes well this Winter, the same strategy will bring them through until the first Spring blooms again. Cross your fingers. If they don't make it, then I have to start the hive again with a new package of bees or a split from another hive, and then there will be less surplus honey, if any.

No, bees don't migrate, although some beekeepers migrate with their bees on flatbed trucks. And no, bees don't really hibernate – they stay very active while confined to their hive. They hunker down, and together they ride out the cold months eating and dancing to a complicated rhythm. They rely on their community, their stored-up food, their instincts, and a certain amount of luck that the winter won't outlast their supplies. A lone bee can't make it alone. They need each other.

## TELEPHONES

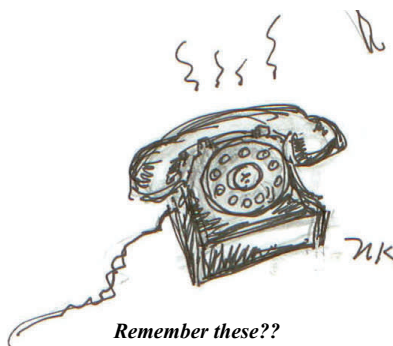
*Pam Kelly*

I look at my own grandchildren and realize that the world is so different, in many ways, than the little world I grew up in. So, I am writing down some of my memories to pass on to my kids

and their kids, like I wish my parents and grandparents had done! I hope others share some of their phone memories.

The generations pass by and so much of the little things are lost forever. This may preserve a few things and be entertaining and maybe enlightening. And, I am having a lot of fun doing it!! It stretches one's psyche to compare telecommunications of the 1950's to that of today. We can dialog with people on the other side of the planet, but do we really hear them?? Nowadays I think maybe I need to learn how to 'text' if I ever hope to communicate with my grandson.

In the 50's there was a little telephone company on Main Street, Fleischmanns. Several local women were employed there, among them, Halcott resident, Evelyn Crosby, wife of Louie (also sister of Alena Griffin - who was Willie's wife). If you picked up your phone, a red light would signal the telephone operator someone wanted to make a call. She would then say something like "This is the operator, may I help you?" You would tell her what number you wanted (for example ours - the Garold and Lena Johnson residence - was 172W1) and she would connect you to that household.



*Remember these??*

One day Evelyn took a call. When she heard the unusual request "Gimme Grandma," she recognized the voice of my cousin, Randy Johnson, then about 5 or so years old. Evelyn knew Randy's family well and knew who "Grandma" was. She put the call through to "Grandma", who was her good friend and neighbor, Neva Johnson.

They all lived within a couple miles of each other, close to the old Halcott Post Office. Randy's mom, my Aunt Nina Johnson, had left Randy and his older brother, Keith, and my older brother, Paul, alone for a very brief time, thinking the two older boys could hold down the fort. Were Keith and Paul ever surprised when their

Grandma Neva came driving in!! Randy wasn't going to put up with any more of their teasing, and Grandma Neva came to his rescue --thanks to Evelyn Crosby's skills as a telephone operator!!.

I was way too shy to talk on the phone until I was a teenager, then made up for lost time. We got the 'modern' dial telephones installed around 1965, when I would have been 15 years old. The telephone was my life line and I was a little apprehensive about anyone messing with it. The morning designated as the beginning of the new era, I made a bee line for the phone before I did anything else. I picked up the receiver (all phones were black back then and weighed what seemed like several pounds). It's been 45 years, but I still remember the first time I heard the eerie sound of the dial tone. It was a little like being in the Twilight Zone, (being a teen, that was my favorite place anyway).

What a relief when I later called my friend, Linda Kelly, Hilton and Stella Kelly's daughter. Linda lived in Red Kill. Hey, this dialing thing really works! The 'operators' were no longer on Main Street, Fleischmanns, but were out there somewhere in the Twilight Zone, still reaching out and connecting people!

#### TELEPHONES, CONTINUED

*From Pat Bellows Moran (solicited by Pam Kelly, with TTOH thanks!)*

I worked in the Fleischmanns telephone office beginning when I was 16yrs old. And all summers after that. I had ten years in, all part time. We worked summers, the busiest time of year, deer season and hunting season. There were my mother, Aunt Evelyn, Martha Somerville, Violet Herman, Pearl Archibald, Pat Maxim- (Charlie's wife) , and Lillian Kelly. Jackie Grocholl was the chief operator. Orrie Moseman and Florence Currey were the night operators. I may have missed a few. These wonderful ladies were all full time operators; the rest of us were part time. They were all devoted to the job. Yes, it

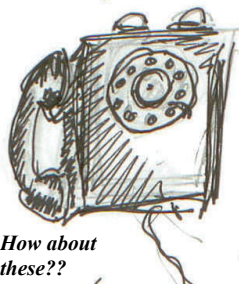
was upstairs over Charlie Muller's store. Before that it was over Dr. Rottkov's office next to the post office. Charlie Muller had a store there also before he moved across the street. That must have been in the 1940's or earlier. They moved the office in the 1950's, I believe. I went to work there in the summer of 1955. My mother worked there until she retired and the office went dial and was moved out of Fleischmanns.

One of our jobs was to take the fire calls. When there was a fire they called it in to the office. "WE" rang the fire alarm, and then the board lit up like a Christmas tree. We answered each call with "the fire is at so & so's, the alarm has been sounded." The firemen would call in to see where the fire was as well. It got pretty hectic for the first 15 minutes or so. Summers were a riot.

Answering phone booths especially where the recently arrived Jewish/German people spoke broken English and we had to write up a ticket and dial the number for them, then time it, figuring up the over-time etc. We had a good time in that office; it was a sad day to see it go out. Anyone could call the operator and get help. I could tell you stories that would really make you laugh.....

**Alex Brock adds:** We had a party line telephone service still in place when we bought our house from Odell Kelly in '92...I believe it was with the Finches up on Elk Creek, but the phone company wouldn't let us keep it. Instead we had to pay three times more for our private line, a nicety but certainly not a necessity.

**Pam Kelly:** I was talking to my mom's cousin, Joanie Asher, this summer. Joanie just passed in early Sept. at age 83. She was telling me about 'rubbering' on the telephone. When I asked her what that was, she remarked, quite indignantly, "Oh, you damn kids don't know anything"!!! (I'm 59 years old; it seemed nice to be called a 'kid', even if it was in anger!) She told me back when she was a young teen, the phones were the crank kind. You would hear the phone ringing and rush over to pick it up and "rubber" - or eavesdrop - on



*How about these??*

the conversation. Well, some things never really change!!

Finally, Pam Kelly tells us that the Fleischmanns Museum has a good display on the former phone company. They have a phone retrieved from one of the old hotels, phone books starting many decades ago, as well as pictures of some of our local women who worked there. Unfortunately, - you'll have to wait until warm weather for the museum to open. But it's worth it!

### **THE MOTHER EWE – A CHRISTMAS STORY**

As we enter the Christmas season and the closing of another year, many of us find ourselves reflecting on the wonder and blessings of this beautiful holiday as well as the highs and lows of 2009. Perhaps one of the greatest joys of this time of year is that no matter what we've been through during the preceding months, the hope of Christmas can rekindle and reorient our hearts to what is lovely, what is pure, what is lasting and what is truly important. The focus of our time and energy naturally shifts to family and friends near and far as we write out cards, carefully select gifts, cook family favorites and attend special gatherings. Indeed, we do the things that sometimes get overlooked in the hustle and bustle of the rest of the year. For some of us who have lost family members, we get to remember the good times, happy memories, and warmth and love of Christmases past and bring the joy of those memories into Christmas present.

In this issue, I wish to share the story of a miraculous, beautiful event that occurred on our farm during one lambing season. It is an event that warms my heart every time I consider it and I hope it will be a blessing to our dear readers as well, especially those who are missing loved ones this Christmas season. This is a story of a mother's selfless, enduring love.

Lambing season 2008 progressed like the others before it with the flurry of new baby lambs



coming into the world and all the attendant activities of keeping watchful eyes and ears on expectant mothers and newborn lambs. While most of the ewes had lambed in a short period of time, a few waited a bit longer before delivering their young. One was a younger ewe, a first timer that

needed some extra attention but ended up raising a dandy lamb. The other was one of our oldest ewes, a beautiful, horned Scottish Blackface that had lambed several times in years past.

One morning when I went out to care for the sheep, I noticed the Scottish Blackface was lying in the barn alone. She was unable to

get up even with help so we administered the usual remedies of propylene glycol and special vitamin/digestive enzyme pills and made sure she was comfortable and able to eat without "help" from the rest of the flock. By evening there was still no change but her eyes were bright and her appetite good so we fed her and let her be until morning.

The next morning, hoping to see the ewe standing among the others, I went down to the sheep field. Not seeing her outside, I went to the barn and found her, in a different place, but still recumbent. Again, the remedies were given. This process continued for a few days during which time the ewe's condition began to fail and we had to help her to eat and drink. As we repositioned her one morning, I noticed that, amazingly, the ewe's udder was filled with milk and she looked to be close to lambing. Even as she was struggling with her own health, she valiantly continued to prepare herself to give birth to her lambs! I wondered what sort of shape the lambs were in, given the mother's condition, but fight on in hope we did for maybe, just maybe, a miracle was in the making right before our eyes.

On one of my next visits to the sheep area, the time had arrived; dear old Blackface was beginning to lamb. Chris came down to help and we prayed. The ewe had little natural strength left but where she was unable, God was more than

able and she successfully delivered two beautiful, healthy lambs (one of which is still in our flock today). The images of what happened next remain firmly etched in my mind and remain for me a testimony of my own mother's selfless love and devotion toward her family and friends. That wonderful Scottish Blackface, God's tough, magnificent creature that had been unable to raise herself for her own sake, despite her pain and utter exhaustion, lifted her head and began licking off her lambs, quietly, lovingly nickering to them as if to say, "I'm so glad to see you and all is well. All will be well."

A few days later, the old ewe died; she could finally rest now that she had done what she was here to do. She was part of a miracle that touched hearts and we are privileged to have witnessed it and to share it now. How awesome that God can and does use every day events and things

to touch our lives and demonstrate his enduring, perfect love toward us. Truly, may the miracle of Christmas and God's love for you through His son Jesus warm your heart as you enjoy this holiday season.

"That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!" Luke 2:8-11 NLT

*To our wonderful neighbors, we would like to express our gratitude for all of the thoughts, prayers, and delicious food.  
Thank you! Eddie and Claire Norwick*



## The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church Winter, 2009

*Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*

### Recent Events

Thank you to all who made the Election Day bake sale another success. A short time later the Community Christmas Program was enjoyed by many. We were especially delighted that Hilton and Stella Kelly were well enough to perform this year. If you weren't able to attend, please mark your 2010 calendar for the first Saturday in December. You'll be glad you did. While you are at it, make a note that the Christmas Candlelight Service will be held a couple of days before Christmas next year (exact date TBA).

### Calendar

Winter evening worship services have begun. The time is **7:00PM**, which is a little different from the past. Call in April for the date when morning services will resume.

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month – Holy Communion; Love Loaf and food pantry offerings

February 17<sup>th</sup>: Ash Wednesday service.

Call ahead for times and locations of the Lenten Wednesday luncheons and the following special services during Lent:

March 28<sup>th</sup>: Palm Sunday service

April 1<sup>st</sup>: Maundy Thursday service

April 2<sup>nd</sup>: Good Friday service

April 4<sup>th</sup>: Easter Sunday service

### **Discoveries Along the Road**

A few folks from area United Methodist Churches have come together to learn more about spiritual formation. Recently we each took a turn sharing our faith journeys. There were some interesting common threads to our stories.

1) Everyone **has** a faith journey – that which explains why we haven't run off the road yet. It may not be obvious at first. It may not be dramatic. Nevertheless, God is at work, even when we make it difficult for Him or fail to acknowledge His presence.

2) Every story has high points and low points. Life itself is a journey, so we are pretty much on the move. The terrain keeps changing. Some of the mile markers bring us joy and satisfaction. Others bring pain and loss. Mountain vistas fortify us for shadowy valleys. When the fog clears, the sun illuminates the next view – all the more breathtaking for the contrast.

3) The low points are easier to bear when we manage to look beyond ourselves. Somewhere out there, someone else is having a tough time. A homeowner

recently told me the woeful tale of burst pipes in a newly renovated basement. After detailing the devastation and clean-up work, she commented that this really was nothing compared to the agony of someone she knew who was suffering with a debilitating terminal disease. It's all a matter of perspective.

4) These same low points can be easier to bear if we turn to the community of faith for support. The faith community may respond better at one time than another, but support is usually forthcoming if we persist. Oftentimes, even a neighbor's kind gesture is under girded by the larger community of faith. Allowing others to help us can hasten our healing process.

5) Low points prepare us to later help others when they experience similar challenges. In due time, we come across a fellow traveler stalled at a familiar bump in the road. His or her "bump" may be the death of a loved one, difficulty on the job, bad news at the doctor's office or any number of unpleasant things. In pausing to help, we use what was added to our own emergency kits following a break down, and the cycle of blessing renews.



*THE TIMES OF HALCOTT*  
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