

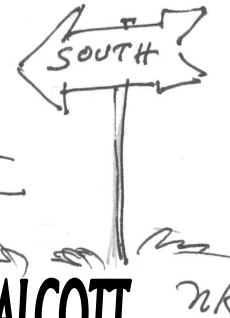
**THE  
TIMES**

*of*

**AUTUMN  
2010**

**VOL 52**

**HALCOTT**



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

**TEDDY THE TERRIBLE**  
**JUDY DIAZ**

Last summer I had the sheer pleasure of befriending a Hummingbird I named Hummer. He never destroyed anything – he just wanted me to put his feeder out so he could drink his sweet water. But this year is different.

One morning in June I awoke to find a huge bear eating the bird seed I had in my two feeders. He knocked down the wooden pole that held the feeders and began his eating frenzy. I grabbed my camera and photographed him from the deck. He heard me and instead of running away into the woods, he lumbered to the driveway where he laid down on his back and kicked his paws in the air like he wanted his stomach scratched. I couldn't believe my eyes. This bear was big but virtually not afraid of me. Apparently, that is not a good sign. My husband told me not to put the feeders back



because the bear would return and he was right. One week later, at dusk, I heard the crunching of wood and when I looked outside, there he was again but this time he destroyed a bluebird nesting box I had for over 20 years. When he was through with it, it looked like a million toothpicks. He allowed me to take more pictures and after I blew my emergency whistle, he sauntered off into the woods, constantly looking back at me over his shoulder as if to say "hey, I'm hungry and I'm just looking for some goodies".

Having built our home over twenty years ago, I had always wished I would see a bear and now that I have, I regret it. Every time I leave the safety of my home and go out to do some gardening, I have to be constantly looking for Teddy. True, he's a big, beautiful bear but as they say, "be careful what you wish for".

I wonder which of God's creatures I'll be seeing next year?

## PRICKLY PROBLEM

**BILL BERNHARDT**

Aside from the occasional campaigns against mice and roaches in our city apartment, I can truthfully say that wild animals were not a part of my life prior to buying property in Halcott. However, I now see myself and my family as active participants in a Darwinian struggle against a wide range of competitors from near-microscopic bird mites to bears weighing hundreds of pounds.

In most cases, the animals are losing. Insecticides vanquished the bird mites who had invaded our master bedroom as well as wasps who once built nests that threatened our use of deck and porch. Wire mesh discouraged birds from nesting inside various nooks and crannies under our roof. Bats either died from the onslaught of a mysterious virus or decided to move on when the supply of insects declined. A bear makes only an occasional visit. Deer find our neighbors' gardens more tempting.

In the case of porcupines, the score is more even.

Shortly after the snow receded, I noticed a band of exposed raw wood along the back of our recently painted house, about two feet up from the ground. Some mysterious animal was obviously making a meal of our siding! Everyone I asked had the same answer: "Porcupines." Further, everyone had a different suggestion about how to prevent their attacks, followed by the same remark: "The only way to really get rid of them is to shoot them."

One suggestion, from the staff at Wadler Borthers, was to put out a salt lick about 200 feet from the house. This seemed

like a wonderful solution for \$8.50, so I staggered into the woods carrying a block of salt weighing 75 lbs. It is still sitting there several months later. Even the deer ignore it.

Porcupines are totally brazen and not easily surprised. One afternoon about a week after I first suspected their presence on our property, I found one calmly munching away on a piece of the house. He (or she) did not seem particularly bothered by my appearance and shouts of anger, but eventually shuffled away into a nearby shed in response to my commotion. I called a neighbor who came with a gun suitable for hunting big game. Meanwhile, the porcupine had tightly wedged itself into a corner where a shot would produce not only a mess but possibly serious damage to the structure as well!

The next day I called Michael Dibenedetto, who characteristically volunteered to help. "Just call me, if he shows up again," he said. That night, just as I was falling asleep, I heard a distinctive munching sound coming from the back of the house. Sure enough, there was a porcupine feeding on the back of the house. I called Michael, who immediately came over with a gun and a smallish garbage can. We agreed about not shooting the porcupine and Michael showed great adeptness (and, I thought, an equal amount of courage) in coaxing the animal into the garbage can with nothing more than the aid of a short stick! In fact, I couldn't get over the fact that there was Michael in a short

- sleeve shirt, fearlessly trapped-



ping a wild animal and escorting it off the premises.

After an interim of a week or so, during which I congratulated myself for solving the problem, I found two more porcupines feeding on the back of the house.

Michael and his wife Peggy advised me about the kind of trap I could use to catch porcupines. Back I went to Wadlers and bought the \$80 solution. After a week during which the band of raw wood seemed to be widening, it was clear that the bait was not working, so I “Googled” the problem and found a website that recommended using a sweat-stained article of clothing. I doused one of my socks with an additional dose of salt which enticed a porcupine into the trap!

After Michael escorted the trapped porcupine off our property there have been only a few hints that others might still be lurking in the vicinity. I have painted over the damaged panels at the back of the house. Listening in the night, we don’t hear any munching sounds.

According to sites on the internet, experts disagree about how far a porcupine has to be moved in order not to return. Even as I write this, one of our porcupines may be slowly creeping back towards Halcott to rejoin its family and renew the assault on our house. In any case, there is no clear win on either side.

### **The Wild Digable & Pickable Seasons of Halcott**

*Carrie Bradley Neves*

The end of August in the valley. It is one of those swooning moments in a season of a year—as when your car on the Ferris wheel reaches the very peak, freezes for a moment, and then slides into its forward dive. Times like these are both exhilarating and solemn, like the sight of a lightning storm or the mist mulling at the foot of the mountains

at dawn  
or a  
snake  
fasten-  
ing onto  
its prey.



This morning I picked a handful of fat blackberries for breakfast, still warm from the sun; lunch was a cold cucumber-and-tomato salad from our garden; my mind drifted to the jams and pickles to be made, and from there to the thrill of opening the jars in January, full of vivid memories recaptured easily with a spoon. Today it is cloudless and 80 degrees by the swimming hole; tonight we’ll wrap up in sweaters to watch Mars put some distance sideways between itself and the moon from the front porch. The end of August: an acceleration of the sense of cycles and the cycles of the senses.

Moments like these are why I was so homesick in California, and so happy to come back to New York, even though so sad to leave the things I loved—things like growing vegetables and herbs and even lemons year round. In California, ripe pears were annoyance when they thudded heart-stoppingly on the tin roof of my friend’s office; in California, another friend’s avocado trees produced constantly and thus too many to eat, and the green globes dropped and rolled to become chew toys for roaming dogs.

Here, the lushness of late summer seems more miraculous, knowing that in a few months the whole landscape will be a scene of frozen blacks and whites. We will reach for our freezers and jam jars. And then, miraculously again, spring will come—again. Then there is the Ferris wheel ride from winter to

spring, when the miracles shift from hidden to visible . . . from the unseen magic of the maple trees to the sweet, steaming syrup in the arches at the Johnson and Morse sugar shacks.

After the sap comes the full face of April, with May a glimmer in its eye. That's when Marc and I go dig wild leeks with Ward Reynolds. This is the first time each year that I think about the difference between those berries for breakfast and the cucumber later; the difference, actually, between the berries and the game that run in the woods, the rainbow and murky monochrome of fish that fill the streams here, the vegetable garden I can never seem to keep up with; the difference between the berries and the apple trees, the busy arts of the bees in the hives at Reynertsons and Streeters, the awe-inspiring dairy farms at Johnsons and Dibenedettos, and the beautiful dance of the green-amber waves of hay across the road at Boutons and on yonder hills in every direction from here.

The difference is—oh, maybe you could call it the one between what you find and what you make. In the creases of the hunt and the husbandry, the industrious aquaculture and agriculture, the valley is full of food that emerges unprodded with the cycle of the seasons and just sits there, blowing in the wind, puffing up from between cracks in bark, photosynthesizing, nodding to pollinators, monitoring sunrise and sunset, and generally offering its hand to anyone who knows the shape of a certain leaf, a telltale smell, whether the jewel dripping jauntily from the stem is edible, where to dig.

Ward knows. Ward drives us and his daughter Peg Dibenedetto, both of them good old friends. They show us where to go—well, they take us there.



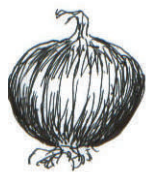
Wild leeks like to be in moist, open hardwood forests or in and around small wooded streams harboring many shading areas. They show Marc and me what the leeks look like—large, slender-oval green leaves very much like lily-of-the-valley from the ground up, but underground, pure white bulbs, like spring onions. With their soft burgundy necks in between, they are like royalty dressed for dinner. Break off a piece of the leaf and you will smell a strong scent of onions and garlic that's nonetheless not quite like anything else. Ward and Peg teach us to use a spade or shovel to push the leeks up gently from below the roots, and to only take a few from each of the characteristic patches, so there will be plenty to propagate for next year. As soon as we get home, we clean the leeks and make soup (add broth, potatoes, butter, and salt), and go share it with Ward. It is the most glorious meal of spring.

And then comes May—this is the time of year when you know the world is spinning like a top. You *can* actually watch the grass grow and the paint dry. Weeds are already tall and seeding while the trees are still in their fluorescent green new clothes, as if dressed for prom, glowing with innocence and riffling with show-time energy. It rains and the small streams roar, terrier like, like the ocean; the sun comes out and they re-shrink to babbling. New smells parade tail to nose past our noses. A clod of earth breaks and changes in my fingertips. It is metamorphosis madness and magic. At precisely the same moment the last tulip petal falls, I see the year's first firefly.

So many things begin percolating now. The Catskills, our valley, is a veritable immovable feast. Young dandelion greens are a delicious

bitter salad chicory (and the heads make a decent moonshine wine), as is the succulent-family purslane—crunchy with a bit of citrus tang—I jettison from my garden rows.

Lamb's quarters, another chicory, grows wild, along with mustard, wood sorrel, and watercress. The fiddlehead ferns tune up and peek out (pick the tops while still tiny and tightly curled, and no more than three tops per plant, as overpicking can kill it): bright and crunchy raw, sweeter and tenderer sautéed, and oddly, a darn good pickle.



By June I am picking pearl-size wild blueberries at Big Pond and pea-size wild strawberries in the scrub meadows of my yard. Thyme grows everywhere, and marjoram, or wild oregano, is rampant on the hiking paths. Towards July 4th, the native orange day lilies come up in a festive riot. I have not eaten them, but I hear all their parts are edible—the flowers are pretty on the plate but a bit bitter, the stems passable but bland, while the tubers—harvest sparingly!—sautéed in butter with salt and pepper got a review of “the best potato-like thingies ever.”

There are many more reportedly delicious things reportedly growing perennially and voluntarily in the Catskills, and perhaps even at our altitude here in Halcott, that I'm sure Euell Gibbons (actually an eater of neglected nutritious wild plants more than his famous pine tree) would have found by now, as did Jean Craighead George's character Sam Gribble (care to join me in rereading *My Side of the Mountain*, 1959, set in Delhi?), but I haven't yet: sweet chestnuts (but all long presumed lost in the catastrophic blight that began in the first years of the twentieth

century), shagbark hickory nuts, black walnuts (eat only two or three a day or their skin becomes toxic), beechnuts. In the revenge department, I hear you can cook up stinging nettles with butter and garlic for delectableness, also the leaf stalks of burdocks (ooh, I hate those burs in my socks and hair); boiled or baked burdock roots are another apparently palatable dish. Elusive but very specially endowed native roots include ginger and ginseng.

For my once-remove from some of our botanical treasures: I have seen Innes Kasanof picking currants in her front yard, and my friend Bernie has seen many elderberry flowers that he knows how to make into wine, which then become berries perfect for jam; and I have spoken to local mushroom foragers who talk of oyster, chanterelle, and morel mushrooms here—but I am so afraid of a wrongly diagnosed 'shroom, I can barely acknowledge the existence of any in the wild. I await the expert who can lead me through those gates, because I would like to know.

I would also like to know how to define “native,” when there are so many wonderful things that seem so at home here and absolutely iconic, but are technical imports—the pumpkins and tomatoes and (hard to believe) apples and (even harder to believe) hay. As well as the things that feel wild because they were planted so long ago that legend and mystery and fond speculation surround their annual appearance: the trio of high-bush blueberries in our shady back woods (planted by birds or bears? by Claretta Reynolds or Dr. Leibson in 1936, when the woods were a meadow?), the wild horseradish Claire Norwick found behind the Maples, native since it ar-



rived from the Mediterranean during Colonial times, but perhaps planted by Vic Peet.

I would invite readers of this paper who know more about the things to eat growing unannounced in our environs to correct me and/or write more—ginseng and mushrooms, for example, are subjects for an entire piece each. And: Has anyone eaten a beechnut from these parts? Sharing recipes would be exciting, too.

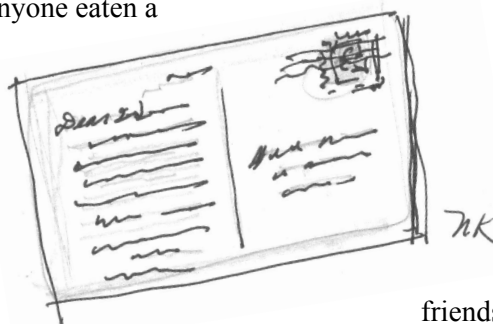
For now, I will go back to my berries, get ready to say good-bye to summer, and anticipate the calm and colorful wonders of fall. I have learned to look but not touch the purple flowering raspberry (with big, beautiful, rather maple-shaped five-point leaves and a flat-domed version of a raspberry that is bland and acidic), but I can't for the life of me find out why some blackberries are round and some conical, or if perhaps one of these shapes signals a black raspberry. And why, in this hot year of perfect-seeming berry weather, our crop, duly pruned for fruitwood, was small. If you can answer this, please write to the editors of the *Times*, because I believe it would be the explanation of Life itself. Meanwhile, I shall be here, listening to the soothing music of the hay rake downfield and watching the carnival colors of the autumn evening sky.

### **WHEN BLACKBERRIES WERE FOR EATING & POST CARDS SAID IT ALL**

***Pam Johnson Kelly***

How can my grandchildren, ages 15

and 10, know how life used to be before “instant messaging”, email, texting, cell phones, Blackberries, and all the technologies common today, most of which I don't begin to understand? Folks used to have to sit down and with pen or pencil, and actually write a message.



Before telephone service was commonly available and before our mountain country roads were paved and maintained, families living back in the “hills and hollers” relied largely upon the postal service for connection to kin folk and

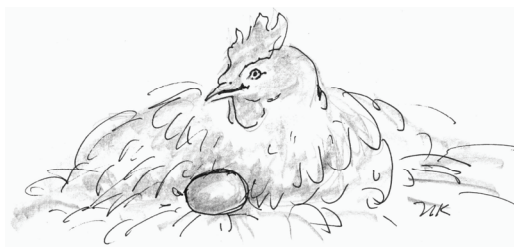
friends. Many farm families were self sufficient and quite secluded. Travel was limited. Trips to town or “vistin” others' homes were not necessarily a daily, weekly or even monthly event. So, many little valleys used to have their own post office. Old post cards serve as little time capsules. The hand stamped post mark shows the date, time of day, and local post office address, many of which no longer exist. Our own Halcott Center post office is one example.

I love the post cards that contain a glimpse into folks' daily life - a.k.a. - “the good old days.” One of my favorite post cards was written to my dad's uncle, Will Huff while he was working on the Johnson farmstead. Will's mother-in-law was my paternal great grandmother, Sarah Ann Faulkner Johnson, who lived out her life on the Johnson farmstead in Johnson Hollow. The postcard is addressed to him at “Halcott Center, New York,” post marked Apr 3 at 3 p.m. 1936, from Jefferson, N.Y. It is written in pencil and in beautiful penmanship.

Great Grandma Sarah's daughter

Edith, wrote to her husband:

"Dear Will: Calf has broken her leg, better bring Cecil or Roland over with you so if you need to butcher her you'll have help. The girls have bound it up with splints. Sucker freshened yesterday. Her bag caked quite bad. Better come up to Donald's and get the bag of beet pulp. Hay is all gone. Goose is laying and eating her eggs. Turkey's just commenced laying. Getting from 40 to 50



eggs -- 19 cents a doz. How much are they over there? Lillian sold half their beef. She peddled it out. Would like to set incubator. Edith M."

I'd say Aunt Edith got her money's worth out of that ONE CENT post card!!

### **COMMUNITY DOINGS**

**Halcott Fair:** What a wonderful day we had! Too hot, but that made the Good Humor truck so much more delectable. Good visiting, good eating, good listening... and at the end of it all, a small profit to put aside for our community fund. What could be better?

**Halcott Community Garden:** We are winding down what has been a great first growing season at our home by the Town Garage. The fence posts and cable are in place after a couple of very productive work days with the help of the Diben - edetto, Johnson, Reynertson, Brock-Baer, Rauter & Burnhardt families and the ever present helping hands of Camille Vickers and Eric Rosen. Special thanks to Wadler Brothers for their generous do-

nation of fence posts and to Barbara Dury for helping organize the donation. Eight raised beds and three in ground plots proved bountiful in production of yes, ripe red tomatoes in Halcott, zucchini, cukes, beans, pumpkins, winter squash, cabbage, brussel sprouts, basil, lettuce, cilantro, flowers & more. Please save the date **Saturday October 9th, 4PM** for the first annual HCG Feast at the Grange. All are welcome and encouraged to attend this potluck meal with dishes featuring produce from the garden, musical entertainment, and if weather and time permits, an evening bonfire in the garden. A suggested donation of \$5.00 or more at the door will help cover expenses for next year's start up including additional raised beds, a tool shed & more. 2011 application for membership will also be available, so make sure to secure your raised bed now! See you in the Garden.

**Alexandra Brock, membership committee HCG**

### **GETTING BY BACK THEN**

**PAM JOHNSON KELLY**

For my kids and grandkids, I'm writing these memories for you to perhaps lend a small feel for some of my childhood memories, or stories I've heard my elders tell. It might be entertaining as well as helpful to compare them with your world today, believing as I do that perspective is therapeutic.

My parents, Garold and Lena Haynes Johnson, may God rest their souls, purchased the 150 acre 'Pleasant View' farm shortly after their marriage in 1943, from Charlie and Libby Ploutz. The homestead is now owned and enjoyed by the Jim and Karen Rauter family. I wish I remembered what my parents paid for the place and if the cattle were included in the purchase. My mom did say Charlie and Libbie didn't leave anything extra, even taking the rubber treads off the stairs when they left.

Like those of most young people starting out in the early '40's, my parents' household furnishings were very sparse. My mom's parents sold them a cow and a cupboard. The huge old

cupboard was a main stay in the kitchen until my dad redid the kitchen in the '60's. Last I knew, it was still in the house and full of my dad's tools and sundry items -- he never threw anything out.

Mom said they received free 'government issue' potatoes to use as cow feed, but she prepared them for the family to eat as well. The quality was pretty poor, the potatoes were small and often spongy from having been frozen.

One area they regretted cutting corners over was in not obtaining a Pertussis, or whooping cough, immunization for my brother, Paul who was born in '44. He caught whooping cough, and developed pneumonia. He likely would have died if not for the newly available miracle drug - penicillin. His baby bed was an old orange crate! There were no footed jammies back in those days.

My parents struggled to eke out a living operating the dairy farm until about 1951, when they sold the dairy herd. My dad went to work on construction projects as a heavy equipment operator. They always said that is how they paid off the farm. They made the last payment on my 16th birthday, March of 1966. I remember it, but didn't think it was any big deal at the time! (Live and learn!).

After my parents' passing, while trying to empty the house of its nearly 50 years accumulation, I came upon some receipts from Dan Franklin Dairies, Inc. The creamery was located just below the Halcott Grange, where all the Halcott farmers took their milk. For the month of Nov., 1945, the "milk check" was in the amount of \$110.37. How did farmers support a whole farm--animals, machinery, buildings, not to mention their family and household - on a little over \$100 ? Now I understand why kids went barefoot summers to save on shoe leather—but, that's a different story!

To supplement the lean, if any, profits

from the Pleasant View Farm, my mom worked summers at the various Halcott boarding houses as laundress and waitress. She made more money doing that than at her profession as an R.N. I doubt if the R.N.'s made much above minimum wage at Margaretville Hospital, or any hospital in the late '40's. (Nurses out there - do you remember your wage in the '40's?)

According to Ask.com, minimum wage in 1945 was 40 cents per hour, shooting up to a whopping 75 cents per hour in 1950.

In the late '40's "city people" filled the boarding houses during the short summer season - July 4 through Labor Day. My parents were happy to take in some of the overflow from places like Jim and Blanche Peet's, on the Halcott main road, above the Kelly homestead, and Wadler's in Elk Creek, to name only a couple.

The Pleasant View Farm offered a big two family farmhouse with 2 kitchens, 2 livingrooms, and 6 roomy bedrooms upstairs, along with the one and only bathroom! Summer was the only time the bedrooms were warm enough to rent out. The farmhouse, built around 1876, was not insulated. Jack Frost was the only upstairs winter guest!

In the big boarding houses it was common practice to boil up several dozen eggs at a time for breakfast. The wire basket was removed from the boiling pot and the eggs magically became "soft, medium, or hard" boiled, depending upon which area of the wire basket the humble waitress picked from as she served the dining room guests.

The depression era created survivors like my parents and their friends and neighbors. I so wish I'd asked them more questions, to tap into their wisdom. Hard times were just everyday living. I believe farm life also created survivors. It was a hard and tedious life, but a purposeful life. These people were connected to Mother Nature, whom they were dependent upon, the spirit, soul of our Earth. The essence of this connection, I'm afraid, my grandchildren cannot even imagine.

## COLLECTING MILK, BACK THEN...

*Halcott used to have its own creamery, located in the present day Highway Garage. In the 2008 Autumn issue of **The Times of Halcott**, Marilyn Bouton Gallant wrote an article about the creamery and included a picture. Pam Johnson Kelly adds some information here that she learned in a conversation with Bob Johnson.*

... Bob told me that a full milk can held 85 lbs. of milk. Since my dad's milk production was 1700 lbs for the month of Nov, 1945, that's approx. 20 milk cans. However, each milk can was not necessarily full. The evening's milk production would be put into one milk can, then set into the vat, to be cooled and kept at a temperature no higher than 40 degrees, preventing bacterial growth from happening.

The next morning's milk was poured into another can, which was also set into the vat to cool. So, each can was probably about half full. At the end of the month, that would equal approx. 40 milk cans handled. That, at 10 cents per can, would equal \$4. Not a whole lot of money for handling all those heavy milk cans, from the vat to the truck, unloaded at the creamery and set on the rollers to be carried along into the creamery. Once inside the creamery, the milk was dumped into the 'weigh table'. The can and lid were steam cleaned, sent back out to the truck, loaded on, and then unloaded once back to the barn. Each farm had its own number painted on the can. Bob's was #7.

From a very young child, before I was 7 for sure, I have the memory of hearing the rattling of the milk cans in the distance as the farmer drove down the road and then past our house on the way to the Halcott creamery in the morning. My Dad would guess whose truck was coming down the road by the sound of the rattling. I would go to the window to identify them, and he

was almost always right!! Hearing the clanging and rattling from a distance, growing louder, then on down the road and out of earshot: what a wonderful and unique memory. One of those things you don't appreciate until it's gone forever. The farmers driving by that I remember off the top of my head were: my Dad, "Uncle Jim" Johnson, and son Bob, Marshall Bouton, Allen Roberts, Ward Reynolds, Willie Griffin.

## AND NOW:

*Picture a typical beautiful Halcott night: the expanse of the deep, dark sky punctuated by merrily twinkling stars, deer venturing out to feed on tender green grass in a recently hayed field, the rapid tick, tick, tick of bats as they fly about gobbling insects, and...what's that sound coming up the main road, a familiar sound that has been coming to the valley every other night for decades?*

*Why, it's none other than the milk truck, on its way to stop at Halcott's two remaining dairy farms to ferry the nutritious, tasty food produced right here in our amazing valley, to the creamery for processing.*

While methods of transportation have changed over the years, the basic goal of milk hauling has remained the same: get the milk from producer to consumer as quickly and hygienically as possible. Milk, of course, is a perishable product that requires swift, diligent handling every step of the way to ensure its quality and safety

for those who will drink it or enjoy it in other forms such as cheese, butter or ice cream. Milk handlers—including truck drivers, creamery personnel and grocers— as well as farmers, all play an important role in milk's journey to your table. Over the years, we have gone from a mostly rural population in which people often had their own cow to provide milk and milk products for the family, to milk being transported from dairy farms to creameries in milk cans, to the present day method of milk moving from farm to processor via tanker truck. In this article, I hope to



familiarize the reader with what currently occurs on our local farms.

As mentioned earlier, milk pick up here in Halcott is done every other day, usually very early in the morning between about 2:00 and 5:00 am. The early morning hours do afford the driver easier travel, however, pick up times may vary according to weather conditions -- heavy snow, for example -- though generally the milk truck runs right on schedule regardless of holidays, inclement conditions, break downs, etc. At present, a trucking outfit owned by Ed Walley of Delhi takes all the milk from Halcott to the Mountain-side creamery outside of Roxbury. Ralph Sprague still hauls for Ed from time to time and Greg Finch hauled milk for us in years past. Truly, these drivers are the unsung heroes of the dairy industry as they navigate varying road conditions, drive increasing distances between farms as more farmers quit dairying, and work with ever changing laws and fuel prices, all to benefit all of us.

So, what happens when the truck arrives at the farm? Upon entering the milk house, the hauler will check the temperature of the milk (milk that is too warm will have to be dumped on the farm -- it can't go to the creamery) and switch on the agitator on the bulk tank where the milk has been kept under constant refrigeration at the farm. The agitator is a long stainless steel paddle in the middle of the tank that stirs the milk to ensure even distribution of the fat (cream) throughout the tank before the hauler takes a sample. (You can think of a bulk tank as a big, old-fashioned milk jug in which the cream will rise to the top if it isn't periodically stirred!) Next, the milk is measured to determine how many pounds are in the tank. A special "stick", also made of stainless steel, sits in the top of every tank (think BIG dipstick). There are calibrations along the length of the stick that correspond to certain weights. The hauler can determine how much milk is in the tank by pulling the stick up, reading the numbers, and converting the reading to pounds by using the specially calibrated chart that is unique for every bulk tank. The weight is recorded on an official receipt that is used to help calculate how much the farmer gets paid.

After determining the weight, the driver will take a sample of the milk. This sample is very important for many reasons because it will be used to determine quality characteristics of the milk such as bacteria counts, fat percentage, protein percentage, and as a double check to rule out the presence of antibiotics. Every bulk tank on every farm is sampled at every pick up. Samples from each tank are put into separate, labeled containers that will be tested back at the creamery's lab each pick up and also through the state lab twice a month. The importance of these samples cannot be overstated for not only is a farmer's paycheck and reputation at stake (we are paid for pounds of milk produced and also for quality factors), but also consumer health and confidence as well.

Once everything is stirred, measured and sampled, the hauler pumps the milk to the truck through a large hose. After the tank is emptied, the hose is uncoupled, the tank is rinsed down, agitator shut off, and the automatic tank washer started to clean and sanitize the tank for the next milking. Our drivers have always been gracious about starting the washer; it's a real blessing to come out to a clean tank in the morning!

From here, the trucker is on his way to the next farm, or, if it's the last pick up of the day, to the creamery.

In closing, I wouldn't be telling the whole story if I wrote only about the nuts and bolts of taking the product to the processor. As with so much in the agricultural community (hmm...and within our Halcott community) it's really about a lot more. Even though most mornings we aren't at the barn when the truck comes, and most communication is done with notes left on the bulk tank, there are those times when we do get to catch up with the driver for a few minutes. With the drivers we have shared successes and failures, milk market and weather reports, holiday gifts, chocolate milk for the kids and Girl Scout cookies. These are good moments to swap stories, catch up with one another's families and to hear the goings on of dairy friends in other parts of the county. It's a way to connect again with people we may not see too often. It's another reason to enjoy doing what we're doing here in Halcott! **JD**



# The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church Autumn, 2010

*Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*

## Supper's Ready

We are pleased to report that the Super Salad Supper and the Spaghetti Supper were enjoyed in good company by upwards of 75 satisfied diners. Get your taste buds ready for our fall Crock Pot Supper, which promises to be just as good. It will be on Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Grange Hall starting at 5PM with take outs available at 4:30PM.

## On the Air

Liven up the middle of your week. Pastor Peg VanSiclen has been invited to do a new radio show! Tune in to "Life Is . . ." at 91.3 FM (WIOX) every Wednesday night at 7PM.

## Thinking of Our Folks in Uniform

When troops were deployed to Iraq in the aftermath of 9-11, the Sunday School wrote post-cards of appreciation and encouragement which were sent to an army chaplain to dispense as needed. Our chaplain returned home, and we now have new contacts so adults can continue this ministry. Anyone desiring to write cards for our armed forces should contact us for supplies before the anticipated ship date of October 4<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully, they will arrive by Veterans Day. It is there for each one of us.

## CALENDAR

**Saturday, October 2:** \* Crock Pot Supper at Grange Hall starting at 5PM.

\* Post cards for armed forces due.

**Tuesday, November 2:** \*Election Day Bake Sale at Grange Hall starting at 10AM.

**Sunday, November 21:** \* Interfaith Thanksgiving Service – time and place TBA.

**Saturday, December 4:** \* Community Christmas Program at the Grange Hall at 7:30PM.

**Thursday, December 23:** \*Candlelight Service at the Halcott U.M. Church at 7:30PM.

Sunday morning services are at 10:45AM until evening services resume for the winter soon after Thanksgiving. Call for information. Holy Communion and the Love Loaf mission offering are on the first Sunday of the month. Food pantry donations are accepted any Sunday. Prayer requests and card ministry occur every Sunday. Interfaith Bible Study on the book of Joshua meets every other week. Call for details.

## Our National Holiday

Did you know that the Bald Eagle was not a unanimous choice for our national bird? It's true – Ben Franklin was downright disgusted at the choice. He much preferred the turkey, a nobler bird in his estimation. Since Thanksgiving comes in the midst of preparations for the winter issue of ***The Times of Halcott***, the holiday gets little press. This year, however, we have permission to reprint the following perspective by District Superintendent, Jim Moore.

## Thankful to Possess, But Not to Own

A few years ago I heard a fascinating lecture by a rabbi named Saul Berman on the values of Judaism, a radio rebroadcast of a speech that had been given the previous summer at the Chautauqua Institute. At one point Rabbi Berman asked his listeners, some of whom were Jewish, how to say "I own this pen," in Hebrew. Various answers were called out, none of them exactly correct, and at last the speaker said something like this: "Never mind – It can't be done because Hebrew doesn't have any way of saying 'I own,' in the sense of permanent, exclusive, irrevocable ownership. You can make use of things, and you can possess them for a time, but ownership is God's and God's alone. The language of the Bible doesn't even have a way of ex-

pressing what so many of us think of as a basic human right ...”

He went on to use the example of a person in a library who is privileged to make use of any book there, and possess it for limited periods of time. It’s a blessing, and a rich opportunity, but anyone who takes and keeps the library books is breaking a basic covenant with all the other people, and corrupting his relationship with the library itself.

How interesting to hear that our Biblical ancestors couldn’t even say “I own.” They might possess a house, a field, an animal for a time; they might make use of it for awhile; but ultimately they knew that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” as Psalm 24 reminds us. God is the only owner. Humans are caretakers, stewards, temporary possessors.

As we look ahead ... to our Thanksgiving celebration, and as ... (we) ponder our yearly financial commitments to God’s church, I am so grateful to be reminded of this basic Biblical perspective. We’ve all been allowed to possess vast wealth, at least by the standards of this world, a reality that generates pride in some people and profound feelings of guilt in others – but neither emotion is completely appropriate, since the largest factor in our prosperity is simply the coincidence of having been

born in a land of plenty. We didn’t earn our privileged place, and we shouldn’t feel guilty merely about being where we are, but we do need to remember the Biblical mindset with regard to all these riches. For some inexplicable reason we’ve been allowed to possess them – but we don’t own, which means that the use of all these riches should be governed by the owner’s values, not ours.

The ownership mindset leads to many negatives – competition, fear, insecurity, division among people. But realizing that this is all for “temporary use” can be so freeing. If we believe that God has provided, we can be bold in our sharing and in our relinquishing of all this stuff, since we have faith that God will continue to provide. If we believe that God has given us these things for temporary use, we have genuine cause for a real thanksgiving (as opposed to a self-congratulatory celebration about all that we have accumulated.) If we see ourselves as temporary recipients, we have no reason for pride and every reason to ask, “What would the owner have me do with all that I have received?” As we move toward Thanksgiving this year I am thankful to remember that I don’t own anything, and profoundly thankful to the God who has allowed me the use and temporary possession of such bounty.



**THE TIMES OF HALCOTT**  
**813 ROUTE 3**  
**HALCOTT CENTER, NY 12430**