

# THE TIMES OF HALCOTT

Summer 2011 VOL 55

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

## The Formal Deer

*Judy Diaz*

On an early Friday morning, as I was making a pot of coffee, I glanced out the kitchen window and to my surprise, four beautiful deer were munching on the new green Spring sprouts from the garden. I was particularly fascinated by the largest one (a buck) because he had four perfectly matched white feet. It looked like he was wearing gloves. They stayed there for quite some time, eating from my garden. But who cared? I had a deer that thought enough of my garden to dress up for the occasion. But what about the other deer? I would have at least expected the does to wear appropriate clothing, too. Perhaps a hat or even a long dress. As I watched them saunter off into the high grass, the buck turned around and stopped. I wonder if he was thinking why I wasn't dressed for the occasion, too. That's what I love about the mountains; you

never know when guests arrive unexpectedly.

## *Post Script!*

It was hot and I was tired from weeding the garden all morning long. I was cleaning up the front lawn and was about to dump the five gallon bucket filled with twigs I was dragging around. As I walked toward the tree line, I noticed something unusual under the Birch tree. I approached slowly and couldn't believe my eyes. There, curled up in a little circle, was the most adorable fawn. At first I thought she was sick, or even abandoned, but as I got a little closer, I saw her breathing.

I dropped my bucket and ran to the house. I quickly grabbed my camera and went back to the Birch tree. There she was – in the same spot as before. I took pictures of this precious animal and went back to the deck where I had a good view of her. I thought I would see her mother but after



about twenty minutes, she was still alone. By now, my husband got home and took more pictures of the little fawn. Several photos later, the flash must have spooked her because she jumped up and ran off into the brush.

I have always prayed to see a fawn close up and now I did. My prayer was answered two-fold because she was right on my lawn and later that night, driving to a friend's house, we saw the fawn, with her mom. They both looked content and as for me, this was one of the most memorable moments of my life.

All I can say is that God really does answer prayer!

### **Farming is Farming, Wherever You Go Musings on a Visit Down Under**

A cow was outside the fence, grazing alongside the road. Of course, Michael had to find the owner to report the errant bovine, and voila!, the next driveway was a long, dirt road up to the milking shed at the top of the

hill. The buzz of the vacuum pump, heard on farms worldwide, and the press of cows waiting their turn told us we were in the right spot. Michael disappeared into the bliss –it's never left his blood – while I snapped photos. I had no idea how long before I would see him again. If there was a need for help, he'd be in it up to his elbows.

Within moments, a burly, handsome Aussie in shorts (they all wear shorts) strode forth, vigorously hopped on his motorcycle, and disappeared down the driveway. Still no sign of Michael – I assumed he had taken over milking duties – and then a few moments later, the farmer, Mr. Shane Paulgren, arrived back triumphantly and heartily thanked the emerging Michael for his role in the cow retrieval.

Mrs. Paulgren was still milking, but her husband was happy to stay outside and chat for a few minutes with a fellow farmer from half the world away. It turned out that the Paulgrens farm about 600 acres on 3 farms – the dairy, a crop operation, and a sheep farm to boot. They milk 300 cows in about 4 hours in a playful sounding set-up called a “swing parlor”. This is very similar to Chris and Judy’s milking parlor, except it holds about 40 cows at a time. The 20 milking machines milk all of the cows on one side, then swing over to be attached to the 20 on the other side.

Shane tells us of farming which mirrors that of the Catskills: expensive feed & fuel costs, low milk prices, and the prospect of passing the farms onto the next generation as being quite unlikely. Also, the state legislature does not give their farmers a fair shake. One difference in Australia is that milk is not subsidized, and it costs the Paulgrens 52 cents to produce one liter for a return of 47 cents.



He tells us that the government of his state of Queensland, as most of the other Australian states, seems unconcerned that their dairy farmers are going out of business. The state of Victoria is picking up the slack for the time being, but Shane wonders what will happen when Victoria goes out – will Australia's milk come from China?

Quite impressively, Shane is the head of the Queensland Agricultural Council and is fighting the losing battle of convincing the state to pay better attention to its farmers. He is highly energetic for the cause, but seems resigned to the probable outcome.

We asked if his farm had been affected by the disastrous flooding a few months ago. He looks out over his fields and points to a low, wide pasture along a stream bank. "It was 6-7 meters deep over there" he says. (That's about 22 feet!) "Didn't lose any livestock, but it was pretty bad. ...Better get back to milking; it's been nice chatting with you. Next time you come this way though, you stay with us – we have a big house, and you can base your trips from here" – a generous invitation from someone we've just met. We shake hands goodbye, and he adds, "We farmers have to stick together." **PD**

### Got Cows?

We enjoy having visitors to our farm. Over the years we have had the pleasure of sharing our love of the land, animals, dairy industry and agriculture with folks from many walks of life. School children, families, college grad students and other farmers



have graced our barns and fields from time to time. In mid-May we were blessed by a visit from our hard working Town Supervisor and Times of Halcott Editor, Innes Kasanof. Her lovely remembrance of that visit humbles us and serves as a gentle reminder of how fortunate we are to be able to operate our business in such a beautiful place among such wonderful friends. **JD**

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I had a few minutes before the town board meeting the other night and thought I'd drop by the operation of Crystal Valley Farm across from the Grange, otherwise known as Chris and Judy DiBenedetto's dairy farm. I'm embarrassed to say that I'd never seen a dairy farm in actual operation. I asked their son Greg if it would be alright to watch the cows being milked and he ushered me into the inner sanctum. There I found Chris and Judy methodically moving between several cows' rear ends, all of them with

teats hooked securely into machinery and tubing. The only noise was a gentle rhythmic mechanical whooshing. A closer look showed me that the tubing was conducting milk away from the cows and presumably into the tank that I had passed on my way in. The space was not large, a thin passage between two rows of cows, sunk low enough so that the humans could look eye-level at the animals' udders. I felt as though I had interrupted a ballet. The atmosphere was quiet, almost reverent, as the two-legged mammals oversaw the four-legged ones, checking the connections, doing small tasks to help things along. We spoke softly because Chris explained that should the ladies get nervous, I

might get sprayed. I eyed them warily, realizing that they had the advantage of aim, as it were and kept my voice conversational.

While we were chatting, I heard the unmistakable sound of kibble filling a dish, only magnified a hundred times. Nice exchange! As the cows were giving milk, they were being fed, with some sort of automatic release of pellets into their troughs. And then, a few minutes later, I noticed first one and then another 4-suction-cup gadget come loose from its teats, almost as though the cow had declared, "Enough is enough!" I was a little awed by this autonomy, but actually, Chris and Judy showed me that there were sensors in the tubing that could tell when the flow of milk slowed. Almost without thinking, as the tubing released itself from a cow, Chris or Judy, depending on who was closer, would daintily dab something on

the cow's teats. What was this? I had to leave at that minute, but I was struck by the intricate balance in the relationship between the caregiver and the cared for. The cows had been relieved of their uncomfortably full udders and fed, I'm guessing, a meal exactly crafted for their needs. As they were being thus cared for, they were giving the gift of milk, filled with health and nutrients that sustain the caregiver.

Later, as I sat in the meeting, I saw through the window the cows leaving the barn in a slow and stately line towards the pasture, heads bobbing slightly as they moved up the hill. It gave me a good feeling. I had just been up close and personal with

some of those wide-hipped ladies. **IK**

***Out of the Diary of Nina Kittle Haynes:  
From Pam Kelly***

5/4/1959 took 70 gallons (Maple) syrup to Arkville train station. Got graded 'fancy' for all. 30 cents per pound. Got check for \$235.00. (When I was a child I rode to the Arkville train station with them a few different years taking farm goods to the train to go to NYC. When they took the Maple syrup in the spring my grandmother would always say "they take our good syrup to Vermont and water it down and sell it as Vermont Maple syrup". She didn't like Vermont getting credit for her hard work in sapping season.)

Walton Reporter cost \$4 to subscribe.

10/24/1959 Went to farm auction at Frank Kelly's in Red Kill, bought 2 cows \$175

each. Harold Garrison trucked them (back to their farm in Dry Brook) for \$6.

Fuel oil 15.7 cents gallon  
gas for car 28 cents gallon

**Halcott Community Garden News  
Camille Vickers**

We are beginning our second year with great expectations! The mission of the Garden is to provide plots for residents of Halcott and neighboring hamlets to produce food and flowers, foster support for locally grown, fresh food, learn good garden practices for long term environmental sustainability and create a beautiful town center for pub-

**History is the ship carrying  
living memories  
to the future.  
Sir Stephen Spender  
(1901 - 1995)**  
**Maybe TTOH is like a little  
ship carrying Halcott  
memories!  
Pam Kelly**

lic gatherings. There is great value in community members sharing experiences and veggies, especially for people with plenty of land but little sun or suitable place for a garden plot. Our site, along the stream by the Halcott garage and recycle center, is ideal. Our eventual goal is to give extra produce to local food banks.

On May 21 we began work on the model native plant garden, thanks to Karen Rauter and Catherine Skalda from Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District, whose combined efforts won us a Catskills Streams Buffer Initiative Grant. Thanks also to Russell Bouton, Eric Rosen, Chris DiBenedetto, Alex Brock, and many others for help in the site preparation. Last year the Halcott Community Fund contributed \$448.00 for critter fencing. Garden member dues, friends' contributions and fundraising paid back \$325.00, with a net cost to the Fund of \$123.00. A grant from the "Delaware-Greene Eat Well Play Hard Community Project" administered by Greene County Cornell Extension Agent Claire Parde allowed us to purchase the garden gates, a permanent sign and two new rain barrels.

Once again the Community Fund has graciously offered to front the Garden \$455.00 for the premium organic compost/topsoil blend used in our native plant garden and raised beds. So far member dues and contributions total \$250 this year. We hope to make the Garden self sufficient and repay the Community Fund with new members' fees over the summer and a fund raiser at the Hal-

cott Fair (all suggestions welcomed).

The Garden would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time, work and materials from Chris & Judy DiBenedetto, Tim & Christl Johnson, Kari Paganano, Stan & Adele Siegel, Jim Rauter and lumber donated by Wadler Brothers. Many thanks also to our founder and tireless leader, Alex Brock-Baer, husband Willy Baer and daughter Lucy.

Join us in the garden! Applications are available in the Grange, the Fleischmanns Post Office, on line at the garden blog, [halcott-gardeners.blogspot.com](http://halcott-gardeners.blogspot.com) or email me,

[Camille.Vickers@gmail.com](mailto:Camille.Vickers@gmail.com).

### **Cherries**

***Eric Rosen***

Many kinds of cherries grow on my Halcott homestead. More accurately, a lot of different trees and shrubs, a ground cover, a perennial and an annual, all with "cherry" in their names grow here. Most of them at least sometimes, producing cherry-like fruit. Warmer, wetter weather over the last few decades has gifted us with an extra month or more of growing season, but many plants, including my sour cherry trees, bloom a couple of weeks earlier making their blossoms even more susceptible to the deep freezes we still get in mid-May. So Halcott might not be known for cherry orchards, but I have heard of fruiting sweet cherries in the past, and unreliably in the present. "Stella" sweet cherries have fruited in the neighborhood recently, but they are irresistible to both deer and tent caterpillars.



Tanagers, orioles (I counted a dozen males at once) and catbirds made short work of my last few scant crops of sour cherries but heavy crops a few years ago produced not only some memorable pies, but also a volunteer mini-orchard around the original tree. A New Hampshire bred bush cherry named “Joel” is a shrub that fruited well in its second year, flowering too late for the frosts and fruiting in the fall, too late for marauding songbirds. Its flavor was almost as good as the complex tang of a tree grown sour cherry. “Ground cherry” is a name given to several kinds of plants and fruits. My ground sand cherry is one of my favorite plants, a rambling many-tentacled ground cover that looks like a bonsai hedge snaking over and around the rocks. Its flowers are white and almond scented, like many cherries, but the fruit is just edible and relatively sparse: the plant itself is the thing. From above, it looks like a labyrinth. Its cultivar name “Catskill” is part of what attracted me to the plant in the Fedco catalog where it hasn’t been listed for a few years, probably because it seems difficult to propagate.

*Prunus Fruiticosa* is a sand cherry, an attractive shrub with an open habit and slightly contorted branches. It grows to six feet and there is a dwarf version. Sand cherries are tastier than ground sand cherries and more plentiful especially with cross-pollination. I’ve only eaten these fresh, but the Saint Lawrence nursery catalog says it makes wonderful jams.

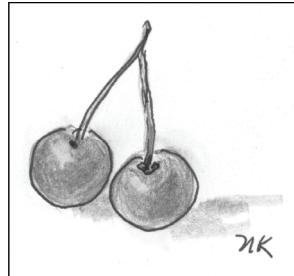
A very different ground cherry grows much closer to the ground on a sprawling plant in the nightshade family, that is also a *physalis*, bearing fruit in husks, like a to-

matillo and Chinese lantern. This is a native plant but I first encountered it, so I thought, in catalogs in its non-native form, where it’s called Cape Gooseberry husk cherry and pineapple tomatillo among other names. The fruits of both wild and cultivated plants are marble sized and orange colored inside their husks, which turn from green to yellow and fall off the plant as they ripen. To me, their flavor is intensely tomato-y, but sweeter with pineapple or tropical overtones. Most people like them and they are child friendly.

But when I first saw the nightshade-like flowers of the cultivated ground cherry, I got a strong sensation that has repeated itself over my gardening life: a feeling that I had

seen this plant before. Many months later, I found colonies of wild ground cherries on the edges of an old farm road. Over time, I took cuttings and dug pieces of rooted plant. I germinated seeds from ripe fruit indoors and out. As colonies were establishing themselves, I found the first plants I had seen years before, growing fifty feet away. ALL THIS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE! Deja vu all over again.

Ground cherries have reacted to the changing climate differently from sour cherries (and many other plants): they ripen later, rather than earlier, and last year none seemed to have ripened at all. Both types re-seed themselves but the native ground cherry appears to be a perennial sending up new shoots from root clusters in May. Both plants are a little hardier than tomatoes, down to 30 degrees or so, but the concentrated sugars of ripe fruits keep them from freezing at even lower temperatures. Indoors, either type of



fruit can last a long time with no special storage as the husks dry and become lace-like and translucent. These fruits may be becoming more popular; last fall I saw baskets of them by the cash register at an upscale market.

There are also Cornelian cherries, small trees or large shrubs that are botanically dogwoods and bear cherry-like fruit. I'm looking at clusters of bright yellow flowers in late April, but I've yet to taste a fruit. Nanking cherries, *prunus tomentosa* are shrubs and natives of Asia. They need cross-pollination so I planted two this spring. Trees are leafing out as I write in early May, but all the results of a very long, but not especially cold winter are not yet in. There are many flower buds on both sweet and sour cherries, as well as plums that are very close to opening. I've seen honeybees. Will 2011 be a repeat of 2010 or will the frosts hold off so the bees can do their work?

*EARLY JUNE P.S.:* Rain, not frost seems to have foiled the bees. I see tiny apples, plums and peaches, but not enough cherries for a pie. But native ground cherries have spread rampantly. I hope they ripen.

### We Got the Blues

*Carrie Bradley-Neves*

There was a woods behind the house I grew up in outside Albany, New York, small woods on a small lot, but as a child it seemed filled with endless adventure: mysterious paths, shortcuts to after-school assignations, sacred stones for tables and touching, fairy houses, expanses of moss that contained an entire universe if you flopped down to nose level with them (dotted with miniature red soldiers—what *were* they?), and (I believed) legions of talking squirrels, deer, and

bunnies, not Disney but *real*, but all of whom could sense my kindred spirit and wanted to play with and confide in me. And at one far edge, where my sister and I emerged from both fantasy and the cool rustle of shadows and the aroma of pine and clay, was a glorious blueberry patch, a hot and dense and sun-dappled field of shrubs as tall as we and as heavy with opulent fruits as queens at the opera. In summer we filled our mouths and fists and pockets with the gumball-sized berries; the neighbors had said we could.

Confounding, but perhaps even more wonderful, we found that tiny pea-sized versions of otherwise almost the same berries grew on ground-hugging, scrappy shrubs with tiny, dark green glossy leaves, which we found in patches of sand or rocky shoreline from the pine barrens on the perimeter of our neighborhood to Cape Cod to Maine.

No berry seemed more amenable to munching—abundant, bite-sized, sweet-tart, accessibly displayed, and painted a striking midnight purple blue, with sturdy skins suited for bucket, baggie, or overalls. Not to mention pies and jam.

Blueberries were not yet famous for curing near-sightedness and old age when Marc and I discovered we were both sentimental and passionate about them and planted seven toddler-to-juvenile bushes in our front yard. Those bushes are now four years old and our little patch is, well . . . getting there. Slowly. It has become clear it takes patience to achieve that fantasy field of my youth.

In the wake of the Halcott Community Garden receiving twenty-five blueberry bushes as part of our grant from the Catskill Stream



Buffer Initiative, Innes and I were comparing our blueberry bush bafflement. She, like us, has had little wood growth and not much fruit in her young patch in the last few years. I did some research this spring and came to a few conclusions.

The pruning part—always both logical and a bit staggering to me, when I go from conversation or reading to facing the actual creature and its life and limb—is of course key, especially with young plants. They say blueberries really only need one pruning for the year, in late winter/early spring, during dormancy—and not to worry about anything but dead and damaged stuff for the first five years. But it is also important to control the fruit to focus younger bushes on getting strong and in general to yield big, early-ripening berries; for that, do a light pruning to remove some flower buds (but not actual flowers, it's not good for the plant to prune when the buds have bloomed). My friend in Rider Hollow, who has a fabulous patch even bigger than the one in my childhood memories, agrees; he says all he ever gives his mature bushes is a “little haircut, just a trim” when the buds come in in spring. In Halcott that's about the first week of May, at least on our bushes. The flower and leaf buds are easy to tell apart then—the leaves are tight vertical cylinders and the flower buds are little clusters that are quite, um, flower-buddy. To strike the right balance between root growth, leaf, and berry, the experts advise to remove “thin weak branches with many flower clusters and few leaves.” On my small bushes, I prune anything dead, damaged, or really crowded/rubbing/crossing over, and pinch off the flower buds on any cluster that outnumbers the leaves until they are about equal, or no more than two-to-one

flower to leaf.

Blueberries also love mulch, ideally 4 to 6 inches of sawdust, wood chips, or peat around the crown. But I have suspected since the day they went in that our basic issue in this valley is the acid level in the soil. Blueberries like sun and can tolerate shade; but they love acid (also called sour) soil. So I tested the soil around the crowns of my bushes and the pH came in at almost seven. The word is, 5 is ideal for blues, 4 to 6 okay. Finally, as recommended, I bought a 30 percent sulfur organic soil acidifier and scattered 1/4 cup around each plant. In the space of three weeks, the difference is truly dramatic. I am so pleased to see those little bushes looking vigorous and reaching for the sky for the first time, with lots of blossoms as well. I think it's not so much that they prefer acid soil but that they *need* it!

There are many lessons ahead with the blues, I am certain, and look forward to studying the new patch at the community garden in parallel with my own. Ample water is another big piece, and cross-pollination between breeds. Keeping a variety of early and late fruit is a nice nuance. Meanwhile, I am excited to tell Innes about my acid success.

### **Memories**

#### ***Pam Kelly***

Recently I was reading an Amish cook book and saw a recipe for Home-made Vinegar. It was submitted by Mrs. Henry (Lydia) Swarey of the Amish Community in Juniata County, Mifflintown, PA.

As I read the recipe, I began reminiscing about being in my Grandma Neva Streeter Johnson's basement. On the inside of the basement door was a "bouquet" of fox tails from my Grandpa Roy Johnson's fox

hunting days. He was an avid fox hunter, back in the '40's and early '50's, when there was a bounty. Foxes carried rabies. Since any mammal can get rabies, the dairy farms, with their variety of animals from kittens on up to cows and work horses, were at risk to this deadly disease. So, Grandpa was known to declare any nice sunny afternoon a perfect time for him and his hound to go fox hunting. (The number of tails told the 'tale' of how good they were at it!)

Anyway, back to Grandma Neva. At the other end of the basement was where she had her pickling area. The smell of vinegar, dill and garlic still takes me back there! She had gallon size glass jugs, garlic and dill. Of course she grew her own garlic and dill on the bank outside their "new" home Grandpa Roy had built in the 1930's (which still stands sturdily on Halcott Road, second house on the left past the Grange Hall, going up the valley). One summer day, around 1957, I was with Grandma in her basement, when I heard her exclaim that her jug of vinegar had "mother". I ran to look, expecting to see something remarkable, but instead saw a layer of grayish, slimy, rubbery-looking stuff floating atop of the half gallon of vinegar. Its greatness was a mystery to me, but Grandma seemed to consider it an accomplishment, so that was good enough for me.

I regret that the art of vinegar making was lost to my generation, along with so many other customs. Along with vinegar making, I'd love the opportunity to tap into my grandparent's wisdom on other topics, i.e., their ability to survive the Catskill Mt. elements..... What did you do if the crops and gardens had a poor production...how did you manage when there was a drought...or too

much rain... floods.....what did you do if a family member was ill? And, Grandma Neva, how did you make that wonderful Maple Syrup cake, and those Ginger Molasses cookies???

My Great Grandparent's lifestyle is very much alive today in the Amish communities. Probably one reason I am intrigued and respectful of the local Amish communities here in Northeast Pennsylvania is the fact that their way of life, being self-sufficient farmers, is so similar to the way my grandparent's generation grew up. At our local Amish farm, we buy 'free-range' large brown eggs for \$1.25. Grandma Neva would love that, and she'd be proud of me for taking advantage of the opportunity!!!

The Amish cookbook has this recipe for "Homemade Vinegar":

Fill a 15-gallon barrel (or larger) with cider. Add 1 gallon homemade vinegar and a piece of "mother", which has been gently washed. Cover with a cheesecloth. Do not cover tightly, so vinegar can breathe. Let stand in the sun and/or warmth for a few weeks. Then, it may be put in a basement, or some "out of the way" spot to ripen. In 6 months to 1 year, when it smells like good vinegar, it may be covered with a lid, and then be used.

NOTE: If you can't get raw vinegar and mother, you will probably still get vinegar, but it may take longer. There will be a layer of mother, etc., on top of the finished vinegar. This is natural and may be removed, but don't throw away the new "mother". Rinse and keep in the vinegar until you need it for your next starter. If the vinegar is not clear, it may be strained through a cheesecloth. If your vinegar

is too strong, you may add some rainwater.

I can't say I've tried this recipe, but do find it interesting!!!

According to Google, "Mother of Vinegar" is mycoderma aceti,- a live bacteria culture. It can be shared with friends who want to kick start their own batch of home made vinegar. It describes the smell of vinegar that's not yet vinegar, as an "unpleasant acetate aroma, later into a vinegar ambrosia."

***From Linda Kelly Armour:***

I lived in Bedell, just "over the hill" to the west of Halcott. There were (and are) several ways to get to Bedell from Halcott. From the old Halcott Store and post office you could go west then north over the mountain into the head of Bedell, and Big Red Kill Road, or go a little farther south and come out by Joe Todd's house, which led to Little Red Kill Road. You could also go over the Old Halcott Road to Moseman Road and also end up by Joe Todd's house.

My brother Lynn, cousins Karen and Carson Finch, and I would often play on the hill behind our house. It was Uncle Gilbert's property and his pastures would give way to woods. We played up there in the tree house that we built, our "fort" in the woods, or would just go walking, or get into any of the many interesting things that Mother Nature left for us. (Mom refused to let me keep the "things" I brought home. One time I came walking off the hill with my hands cupped together. She saw me from our yard, and called up to me, "You can't keep it." I don't recall what happened to the injured bird I was

carrying.)

It was easy to know you were in Bedell. Coming up Little Red Kill Road, past the cemetery, before it intersected with Big Red Kill Road, you could see the white letters in my great uncle's (Gilbert Streeter's) pasture, way up on the hill behind his house that spelled out "Bedell NY." The letters could also be seen from Big Red Kill Road as you passed by my parents' house and continued up the valley. My great-grandfather Ward Kelly, Uncle Gilbert's father-in-law, laid out the large flat rocks, and painted them white. They were placed in the ground on a slant so they could be seen more easily from the road. The rocks were evenly spaced so the letters appeared from a distance to dot the hillside. Anyone seeing the rocks from the road might imagine the letters to be at least 5 feet high. My cousin Karen (Finch) Hull and I knew from experience (since we walked the hills on his farm regularly as we "played outdoors")

that each letter was at least 20 feet high. As they weathered we thought they should be repainted. One of our hill treks took us up there with paint cans and paint brushes to repaint them. It took us longer than expected. There were a heck of a lot of stones to paint! They were a mix of chipped paint, weathered stone, and dried moss. The historic marking is gone today, replaced by a road, which leads to a housing development on the hill.



# The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church

## Summer, 2011

*Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*

*[Editor's Note: APOLOGIES FOR THE SQUEEZE: MUCH NEWS, LITTLE SPACE!!]*

### Welcome, New Pastor!

District Superintendent, James Moore, has recommended that Bishop Jeremiah Park appoint the Reverend Adrian K. Todd to be the pastor of the Halcott and Fleischmanns United Methodist Churches effective July 1st. Rev. Todd, a native of Red Kill, has been preaching at the Halcott United Methodist Church since Pastor Peg VanSiclen's departure in December. He is well experienced as a pastor, having served Advent Christian Churches in Vermont and Maine for several years. We look forward to his ministry here. Welcome to the church in the valley!

### Congratulations, Graduates

It was a pleasure to provide Janet Kelder Riss Memorial Graduation Awards to three Margarretville Central School seniors, Rachael Kelder, Melissa Wheeler and salutatorian, Caitlin Kohn. Congratulations are also extended to college graduates Lucas Bouton, Nichole Kelder and Kirstie Sanford. May God bless each and every one!

### MOM'S NIGHT(S!) OUT

Moms, let us do the cooking for your family! Come and enjoy a **Spaghetti Supper** at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 20th at the Grange Hall. Then come again for a **Crock Pot Dinner** at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 24th at the Grange Hall.

### Return to Morning Worship

Worship time for the summer and fall is 10:30 a.m. All are welcome any time. Holy communion is served the first Sunday of the month when a missional love loaf offering is received. Offerings for the food pantry are received any Sunday.

### Response to Natural Disasters in the U.S.

A special offering is still being received for victims of 2011 Spring Storms across the U.S. The need is great. One hundred percent of monies received for those suffering the devastation of tornadoes, Mississippi River flooding and the like, will go directly to them. So far, \$415 has been sent from Halcott. Earlier this year, a special offering was sent to help victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

### All Spruced Up!

For Faith in Action Weekend this year, members of the Halcott United Methodist Church did some spring housecleaning and planted some annuals at the church and Grange Hall. We extend a hearty "thank you" to Dot at Todd's Greenhouse for the cheery red geraniums at the church.

### Pray!

There is much need for prayer right now. I have been reflecting more on the Apostle Paul's instruction to "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17) To many of us, this seems commendable, but unrealistic in today's rat race. This concept did not originate with Paul. As far back as the Exodus, God instructed the Israelites to love and obey the Lord; to wear prayer bands (phylacteries) and teach their children continuously in the ways of the Lord. This is still central in the lives of observant Jews today. Emphasis on sustained prayer may have declined among the people of the world, including Christians, but this didn't happen with God's permission!

So what does "Pray without ceasing" mean? Why should we take it seriously and how can anyone possibly achieve it? Here are a few thoughts.

1) To me, praying constantly is being mindful of and responsive to God at all times. It is a tall order, but this awareness permits two-way communication. Listening is as important as talking.

2) Prayer is not just for those with time on their hands. True, Paul was frequently imprisoned, where activity was limited and prayer helped him get by. But he also was a tent maker by trade and a traveling missionary. He didn't put prayer aside just because he had to earn a living. He prayed constantly regardless of his schedule. He had us present day mind wanderers beat!

3) Prayer keeps us aware of God's presence and intervention. When we meditate on God as we go through the day, we have less cause for worry. If we worry less, we are healthier. "And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?" (Mt. 6:27)

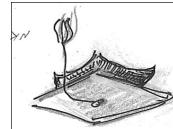
4) God, the Creator, is the artist. He signed each human work of art with his likeness. We belong to him. So he wants us to put him first. Our allegiance is his artist's commission.

5) We can't stay out of trouble when we distance ourselves from God. How can we sense or hear his warnings if we hang up the phone? Keeping God foremost in our minds makes it easier for him to get our attention. A few months ago, Mom uncharacteristically decided to stop at a diner between meals. While we were eating our second lunch of the day, all manner of emergency vehicles flew by. We later passed the scene of a fatal acci-

dent. The timing would surely have put us in that path of destruction had we not stopped. Often humans are blissfully unaware of these near misses. God wants us to say thank you for regularly running interference with such mayhem.

6) And then there's that trouble of our own making, AKA sin. That's right, all mortals, including "good people" are sinful. God wants to protect us from the consequences of sin. So he did some things to help us. In terms of praying constantly, he fashioned each of us as a "temple of the living God . . . (to) live in (us) and move among (us)". (II Cor. 6:16) This living God, our Father, has spent a lot of generations living in the filth people accumulate in their beings. Is it any surprise, then, that when Jesus, the Son, was sent "out of the ivory palaces into a world of woe" his first stop was a stable? God was already familiar with the stench, yet he didn't shrink from it. He made his home in us anyway. Now that's a pretty humbling thought.

**This is the promise.** "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (II Chron. 7:14)



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