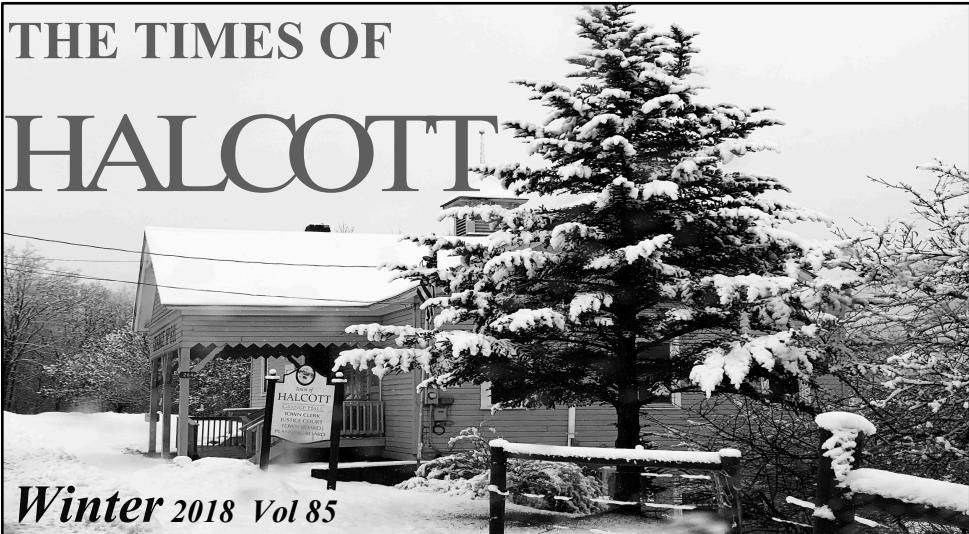


THE TIMES OF HALCOTT



Winter 2018 Vol 85

Editors: Innes Kasanof; Peg DiBenedetto; Judy DiBenedetto; Carrie Bradley Neves; Art: Nina Kasanof

Winter

Mary Ball

“The snow had begun in the gloaming, and busily all the night, had been heaping field and highway with a silence deep and white.”

The First Snowfall, by James Russell Lowell.

As I look out my window today that bit of the poem comes to mind. Truly the pine and hemlock are “ridged inch deep in peace.” My grandma would have said, “That’s more truth than poetry!”

Mother Nature gives us seasons to enrich our lives and perhaps remind us of the power and the capricious nature of the natural world. In those days gone by on the other side of beauty was the ever present responsibility of caring for the stock, shoveling out, and the 24 hour tasks of the dairy farmer. There were times when my

dad would have been taking the milk to the creamery with his beautiful team of horses pulling a wagon. Coal for the stoves was carried from the coal bin across the road (in the “shop”), and that plus the wood pile behind the house would carry us through the cold days.

The Currier and Ives version of winter doesn’t reflect all that winter really was. I tend to remember best the happy and memory-framing moments: images of building snowmen, trying out new skis, and sliding down hill on my new sled. School days were rarely cancelled. This was a generation of strong and resilient people. We walked to our one-room school where the teacher would be there, keeping the fire going in the pot-bellied stove, and we went on with our lesson plans. The school bus would follow the plow to the high school in

Fleischmanns.

The black and white winterscape was not dull or drab. The mountains reflected the bright blue of winter skies in shades of blue and purple. Cardinals and blue jays were ornaments of the season, plus the occasional red fox



running by.

My mother would be feeding bunnies on a low windowsill in the kitchen and throwing out bread crumbs for squirrels. The radio provided the daily farm and weather reports and a host of soap operas. In the evening, it was Gabriel Heater, Lin and Abner, The Shadow and The Hit Parade. I loved walking at night. The stars so close and such bright windows into heaven. The winter holidays were so special. The centerpiece of the season, and so full of joy and color. Between the holidays there were the quiet times. The coastal fishermen call it the "mending of the nets time." The work of farm families, as difficult as it may have been, was also a time of recharging emotional and mental batteries.

The earth was now resting. Sleeping under a white blanket. Does the earth dream? A nice fantasy! It dreams of new life waiting to come alive at the first warmth of spring.

Halcott Chocolate Candy Caper or Life Really Is Like A Box Of Chocolates

Pam Kelly

A large old house used to sit at the corner of what are presently Bouton Road and Turk Hollow Road. The couple who lived there was John and Libbie (Fuller) Kelder. Their final resting place is across the road in the Halcott cemetery. Libbie's sister Pearl Fuller Myers passed away in her 30's, about 1935. She and her three children had resided in Fleischmanns. Pearl's kids were now without a home. Edward, Ralph (aka Lonnie) and little sister, Betty came to live with their maternal aunt and uncle, John and Libbie. Lonnie was about 14 years old, Edward was a little older and Betty, the youngest.

An uncle was staying with the Kelders for a while. I do not know his name. There was and still is a small triangle of land where Bouton and Turk hollow roads intersect. When this uncle was staying there he kept a flower bed growing in that little triangle of land. This uncle bought a box of chocolates for his girlfriend. Imagine what an extravagance that was back in the mid 1930's. He made the mistake of asking the boys, Edward and Lonnie to walk to the Halcott post office and mail the package to his special girl.

As their two and a half mile trek wore on the thought of all those chocolates must have gnawed at the young boys' minds. They agreed she'd probably not miss just a few out of the whole assortment. They

opened the box, choosing the morsels carefully, replacing them with little pebbles (of which there was and is abundance along the Halcott roadway.) The package was carefully rewapped and dutifully mailed out. Their uncle could not understand why he never heard from his girlfriend again! Decades later Lonnie retold this caper with a chuckle.

Fast forward several years: Lonnie attended Fleischmanns High School. He was one of the many young men who forfeited a high school diploma to join the U.S. Army in WWII. Summer of 1943 he was stationed in Fort Rucker, Alabama. His wife Helen Moran Myers gave birth to their baby girl, Carole Ann at Margaretville Hospital. Lonnie asked his sergeant for leave and was denied! He then went to someone in higher command. He was told he had 24 hours leave! In his "hurry" to get to home to see them he received a speeding ticket. The speed limit was 35 miles per hour, an attempt to conserve gas for the war effort.



Helen & Lonnie Myers with baby Carole

He served in Central Europe, Northern France, Rhineland, the Invasion of Normandy and D-Day at Omaha Beach. Much of his

service was under combat conditions. Lonnie served two years in Europe, a long time to be away from Halcott and his family. Can you imagine the tranquility of the Catskills upon his return?

Helen and baby Carole lived with John and Libbie during Lonnie's time away. One of the memories Helen recalled during the time was that she and some friends would occasionally walk to Fleischmanns to the movies. If there were no neighbors traveling the Halcott road up from town, they would walk the whole distance back to John and Libbie's house. The summer nights could be very dark. One night Helen walked into the broad side of a wayward cow standing in the middle of the road!

When I think back of Lonnie and Helen telling anecdotes of their early years spent in Halcott, how I wish I had listened more and better.

Please Mow Your Fields Later

It used to be that farmers would spend the summer haying their fields, then later in the fall would get around to brush hogging side areas and neighbors' fields not needed for hay. It worked well, because by then there'd have been a hard frost or two, and the vegetation in those extra areas had finished production. By then, insects and birds had spent the summer and part of the fall collecting, eating, and spreading pollen. They had consumed much needed calories from the seeds and berries of many kinds of shrubs, flowers, and grasses before migrating south or completing their life cycles. Instead of being "fallow" or unproductive, these areas had provided

important sources of food energy and pollen for several months. The cutting of the vegetation after its production ensured that the this process would continue year after year.

Fast forward to these days of few hayfields and farms, more “fallow” fields and “gentlemen” farmers, and more brush hogs. Fields and side areas are now being mowed earlier and more often through the summer and fall, essentially removing significant food sources of milkweed and other flowers, fruits, and seeds from pollinator habitats. Just a couple of principles govern the old model of mowing:

1. It takes about 3 years for woody growth to start to establish.
2. It takes 1, 2, or sometimes 3 frosts to kill plants and stop plant production.

So, the most effective way to promote pollination while controlling your vegetation is to brush hog once every 1 to 3 years, but wait until late fall or winter, until after at least 2 frosts. The more land you manage in this way will support more birds and pollinators. At the very least, mowing around patches of milkweed will help. Pollinators in New York State and world wide are facing steep declines, affecting natural food cycles and farm and garden crops as well. Later mowing can make a big difference. **PD**

Please Drive with Care!

We just received this distress call from our Halcott farmers: We are having problems with people trying to pass the milk truck when he is backing in to our place and Greg just had a close call

with someone up near Jennifer Bouton’s when he went to turn in with the tractor and spreader. This is occurring with increasing frequency and it’s quite a dangerous situation. Also, the milk truck now backs up from the Town Highway Dept to our farm, since he no longer has to go to Tim and Christl’s. As you can imagine if someone comes too fast over the little hill by our barn it could be a bad deal for both parties. **JD**

And Please License Your Dog!

Halcott Town Clerk, Pattie Warfield reminds us that New York State law requires that all dog owners license their dogs. Dog licenses may be purchased or renewed for one to five years. All dog license fees are non-refundable.

Pattie’s contact information is as follows: Office: 845-254-6441 Home: 518-610-1214 email: clerk@townofhalcott.org

Her office hours are hours are 3–5pm on Wednesdays and 10–12noon on the third Saturday of the month. Other times by appointment. The Office of the Town Clerk is located downstairs in the Grange at: 264 Route Halcott Center, NY 12430

CORRESPONDENCE:

To all who contribute to the Halcott newsletter: I am the oldest daughter of Harold and Mable West, Harold being the son of Bertha Kelly West and Charles West; Bertha being the sister of Emerson Kelly of what used to be the large Kelly homestead in Halcott. Her oldest brother Chauncy Kelly and his wife ran a boarding house up the road from the Kelly farm. He also was a bee keeper. I grew up on honey and maple syrup

from the Halcott valley. My brief annual visits include a trip to Halcott to buy maple syrup from Ronnie Morse. Also, my best friend since age 4 is Kathleen Bouton Mech. Her brother still has the family farm (Russell Bouton). I have many Halcott connections and read your newsletter looking for bits of history. I also remember the DiBenedetto farm in Townsend Hollow where they raised sheep. I believe Anthony was a grade or two after me at Fleischmanns High School. He may have had a brother who was in my sister, Laurilyn West Fraiser's class at FHS. Thank you for doing what you do! Sincerely, **Marilyn Morock**

Homemade Herbicide- Instead of RoundUp:

Works the same, doesn't kill bees!
1 gallon vinegar, 2 cups of Epsom Salts, 1/4 cup of Dawn*

Skunk-Away

1 qt. hydrogen peroxide
1/4 cup baking soda
2 tsp. Dawn*
Rinse dog. Sponge on mix. Rinse after 20 minutes. Repeat as needed.
(*Must be Dawn, my source declares. Dawn is used by oil-spill bird response teams the world over. Cuts grease like nothing else.)



**Kathleen
and
Karol
Mech,
June
23,
2018**



Love Carries On!

A 50th Anniversary Party was given in honor by their children to Kathleen and Karol Mech at the Rainbow Lodge in Walton, NY on June 23, 2018. Their family includes Michael and Amy Mech and children, Daniel and Macy; Michelle and Jon Wolbert and children, Joshua and Jacob; Karen Mech and son, Ethan Hunt, and Kevin Costello; Sarah and Kevin Zablocky and son, Carson; David and Jen Mech and children, Olivia and Evan. Kathleen and Karol Mech were married on June 22, 1968 at the Sacred Heart Church in Margaretville, NY.

Good for Christmas

The Times of Halcott has now published three collections of former volumes. The current issue that you hold in your hands is Volume 85; our collections include the first 75 volumes. These are available from the Halcott Community Fund and make good Christmas presents (or Valentine's Day presents, or birthday presents or...). The books cost \$10.00 each, or the set of three for \$25.00 plus \$5.00

shipping. Send a check made out to HCF together with your address to Jamie Vogler, Bouton Rd., Halcott Center, NY 12430. Jamie will forward your request to Peg Dibenedetto who will fill your order. Your purchase helps support our efforts. Thank you!

Passages

It has been an extraordinarily dark year in which Halcott has lost many of our treasured elders. In the time between the autumn issue and this, our winter issue alone, six beloveds have left us. We celebrate their memories, as best we can here, in the context of a community that cherished them and that is made poorer by their departure.

Carol Sanford: Carol's attachment to Halcott was sealed when she allowed her precious daughter, Jen to marry Dennis Bouton. Since the time that Jen and Den took up housekeeping on the Bouton flat, Carol was also here, an honorary citizen of the town who loved the *Times of Halcott* and looked forward to every issue.

Bob Johnson: (from Pattie Kelder) Bob died in Pennsylvania one day short of his 94th birthday, after celebrating most of the others in Johnson Hollow on the family dairy farm. Over cake at a Town Board meeting on one of those birthdays, I asked him what had been the best time of life. He paused, then replied that it had been his 50's, before all the aches and pains set in!

Bob and Audrey raised a daughter, Gloria, along with sons Kip, Dan and Tim just up the road from the barn. Their home had been one of four district school houses in

town. Audrey, an amputee, didn't get out in the fields much, so Bob got the idea of showing her what was going on around the farm by taking home movies. Like many farmers of his generation, Bob was very involved in community life. Whatever needed doing, he was there, whether in an official capacity or as a neighbor. He had a patient, thoughtful and practical approach to whatever work was at hand. Bob was an active Granger, serving as Master for many years. He could still name most of the service projects that earned Green Valley Grange the National Sears Award after World War II. When my college friend visited some years later to give a slide show at the Grange, it was Bob who thought to hand her some gas money for the return trip home.

In town government, Bob was Supervisor for several terms until Audrey saw that his plate was too full. He later returned to the table as a Town Board member. His experience driving loaded hay wagons out of many hillside fields in town gave him a useful perspective when working on the Comprehensive Plan.

As President of the Halcott Cemetery Board of Directors, Bob was involved with mapping the graves. When a group of nearby trees threatened the back corner, he figured out the logistics of removal . . . and the diplomacy. It seems that one of them, a commemorative tree, was planted on his mother-in-law's lawn! Another time, he stopped to explain the "no planting" rules to a shrub-toting monument owner, only to end up helping the man plant it! His rationale must have satisfied the listener in Bob, for the bush remains a compact one to this day.

As a member of the Halcott United Methodist Church (where his mother had been Sunday School Superintendent), Bob took a turn as Chairman of the Administrative Council. When the floor was refinished, he assisted by moving the pews into storage at the Grange Hall. Later, after he and Walt Miller loaded them back on the truck, they enjoyed an open air ride up the valley, seated on a couple of pews amid the swirling snow flurries.

Years went by. Audrey died, and Bob married Norma Kelly, who was also widowed. They resided in Pennsylvania until a massive stroke sent Norma to a nursing home. Bob was invited to live with his grandson, Rob German and wife, Lynne. They were wonderful caregivers.

Decades ago, Bob's first heart attack developed during evening chores in the midst of a blizzard. It was Tim, I believe, who convinced him to take a life-saving ride to the hospital before conditions could deteriorate further. Bob's last heart attack had a different outcome. He got up in the night and died before he could hit the floor. He had a good life and we had a good neighbor.

Note: Bob generously made Deborah Morse Johnson's photograph album available for reprinting as a Halcott Fair fundraiser. He has previously been mentioned in No Cats in the Catskills, Passages: Stella Kelly, The Power of Prayer and other TTOH articles. Perhaps there are more stories out there about him and other Halcott folks of the "greatest generation."

Alex Anagnos: Alex's daughter Maria Pierce has written a beautiful eulogy for him that

includes a loving history of the Greek people who came to Halcott. We are saving her article for the spring issue. **IK**

Adele Siegel: (from Elizabeth Bernhardt)

Marcus Aurelius wrote, "When you want to gladden your heart, think of the good qualities of those around you; the energy of one, the modesty of another, the generosity of a third. For there is nothing more heartening than the images of the virtues shining forth in the characters of those around us. Be sure to keep them ever at hand." Adele Siegel embodied the qualities that Marcus identified – energy, modesty, and generosity. Though she passed away last summer, for me and my family, she is ever at hand.

Adele was talented, warm, and funny. But her predominant characteristic was generosity. Just as she made a warm, loving home for her children and grandchildren, she extended herself to her friends, neighbors, and community. She and Stan hosted innumerable brunches, lunches, and dinners for new friends and old, always with delicious food and a warm welcome. When my family first moved to Halcott, in 2007, the Siegels – our closest neighbors, just a short walk up the hill -- soon enveloped us with help and hospitality. You like to swim? Swim in our swim pond! You have a pond? We happen to have some rainbow trout to stock it! You will be in Halcott this weekend? We are having some people for brunch – please come!

We soon came to love Adele and Stan, and to appreciate their erudition and profound kindness. It was Adele who tutored children studying to become Bnei Mitzvah.

Adele who tirelessly raised money for Margaretville Hospital. Adele who faithfully, every day, followed the religious principle of tikkun olam (to repair the world). She never stopped contributing her wisdom, energy and love to Congregation Bnai Israel, to the Interfaith Council, to the hospital, and to many other good causes in the Catskills, the U.S., and Israel.

Adele was constant and true in her generosity and touched many if not most of our lives. I knew that if ever I needed to talk something over, Adele would be there for me with frank good sense and perspective. Being such a near neighbor, she and Stan were also there for us in more concrete ways — sheltering us when we were without heat, water or electricity. When an old friend of hers from New Jersey — out of touch for decades — felt a bit lost, Adele was ready with an invitation to Judd Hill.

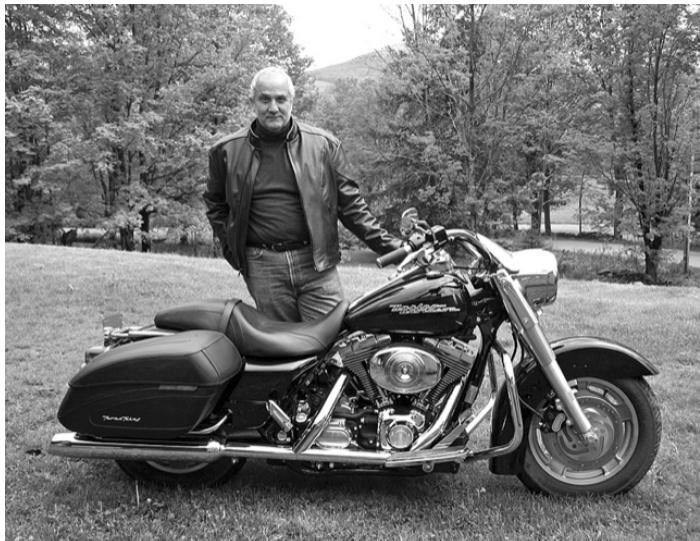
During her last year of life, Adele found new joy -- the antics of her great-granddaughter Maisie, “the world’s cutest toddler.” I will never forget her laughter and delight in watching the Maisie videos. Adele was a very good person, who made goodness look easy and fun. Farewell, dear friend. I will try to keep you ever at hand, where I need you.

Patrick Pagnano (A memory of his life from Scott Moroff)

A few short years ago in 2004, on a spring day in Halcott full of promise that warmer days were ahead, my friend Pat arrived at our house with a 1000W smile.

Beneath the smile was a brand-new Harley Sportster. Somehow, Pat had parlayed an agreement with Kari for a Vespa into iconic American Iron.

Fast forwarding to later that summer when, I too crossed one of the list and acquired a motorcycle, our weekly rides together began. The rides would begin with Pat calling out “Scaaah” in Chicagoese as I pulled up to their house and Kari’s encouraging us to have fun and be careful; sometimes accompanied by a small shopping list. Our first ride together was over hilly, curvy back roads from Halcott to Roxbury on freshly spread gravel. Absolutely terrifying but Pat just laughed and reminded me that “motorcycling can be an adventure”. Same for the time we were caught in a thunderstorm and were lucky enough to be herded into a dairy barn by a sympathetic farmer or the time, early on, when we attempted to follow Mark Neves on roads not



familiar to Pat or I.

Pat brought his artistic sensibility to riding, from executing smooth, graceful turns and perfect lane position, to looking the part of a Harley dude. (He gently teased me about my “green hornet” not cool riding jacket)

Neither of us cared where we rode so we’d take turns leading the ride not knowing where we’d end up. The only criteria for the route was how much time we had that day to explore the Catskills. There were quick spins around the Pepacton or all-day rides to the Erie Canal or parts South, West or North.

Pat introduced me to Schoharie County and Barber’s farm, still one of my favorite rides and farm stands. We’d almost never ride without stopping for lunch. Standards were the Black Cat Café in Sharon Springs, Mrs K’s, in Middleburgh and the Andes Hotel for burgers and pool. There is something about riding together that fosters great conversation that otherwise might not occur. We talked about damn near everything, from politics and work to our personal lives and plans. At some point, on most rides, Pat would effuse about his pride and love for Kari.

We’d both had visited many parts of the US and beyond but agreed that there was no place we thought more beautiful than the

Catskills; and within the Catskills our valley. We spoke of distant trips to “The Dragon” in NC and elsewhere. Although

those plans escaped us there are very few curvy roads in the Catskills we have not carved together.

In the past few years, we rode less frequently but our last ride together was the best and most memorable. Pat, Kari, Ida and I rode together to Barber’s Farm in Schoharie, had lunch at the Sap Bush Hollow Farm Café and even enjoyed the adventure of a little rain on the way home during an otherwise perfect sunny day.

Lillian Steinfeld: (from Innes Kasanof)

How difficult it is to imagine Halcott without my friend Lil. She was one of the first to welcome me into the community. Over the years, Tony and I loved to watch the Steinfelds loving Halcott. (One didn’t speak of one without the other. They met in high school, fell in love, and that was it.) Paul displayed an enormous love and knowledge of trees; Lil displayed her enormous love and support of her husband. Their pride in their Israeli connections was legendary and we were invited to watch the maturation of first beautiful grandchildren and then, my goodness! Great-grands. Lil dove into learning to quilt at the tender age of 71; true to form, she was precise and dainty in all her stitches. We had some rollicking meetings of the Lena Haynes Johnson Quilt Club, of which, I believe she was secretary. Her artistry embued all that she did. She was a valued editor for a major publisher, a meticulous gardener, treasuring any pop-up volunteer that happened into her patch under the willow behind their house.

I loved to sit at Lillian’s table: it was richly laden with delicious dishes all prepared by her. Her soup was unparalleled.



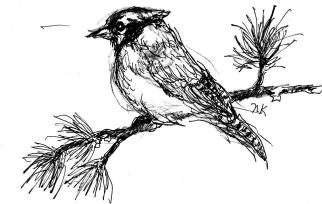
In her last years, I had a life that kept me away from her, but every time we spoke on the phone or on a visit, it was as though we had been together the day before. Her love glowed like the larch in autumn that she adored.

SEASONS

There was a loud commotion among the blue jays above my head today. I was sitting beside the Vly Creek because it was also in commotion, a great rushing commotion swollen by the huge rainfall of the past few weeks. The hemlocks bent down over the dark, tumbling waters, silent, impassive, but of particular interest to the raucous jays who darted among them. It was a few minutes of sunshine eagerly enjoyed by all of us. The low boughs of the hemlocks made mysterious pockets of deep shadow along the banks. Watery caves where a child's fancy could linger. But the jays! What were they about? I had seen a few branches of brilliant scarlet and yellow leaves on a maple as I walked down to the creek. I cried out to them, "what are you thinking? It's only mid-August!" But like the undeterred travel of the chuckling, dancing, joyful stream, the seasons of the Catskills cannot be stopped. Their very sounds, like that of the creek, sing of constant, rolling change. And the jays? I think they were shouting in their raspy voices, "Cold! Cold! Cold coming!" And on such a hot and humid morning! How dare they? I don't mind the stately, steady steps of spring with its silvering thorn apples and brilliant green and white snowdrops. But how to brace oneself for the relentless approach of callous autumn with cruel winter

nipping at its heels?

Somehow, it would be disloyal to these noble hills and valleys to revel in one season and to run from



another. So how shall I love thee, oh difficult winter? Let me count the ways. Getting up in the darkness? – er, not exactly. Putting on my Michelin Man down coat? Again? – nope, not even close. Hot soup for lunch? Well, yes. Knitting wool socks in front of cozy fires? Nice. Watching snow falling with no place to go? Very nice! Snuggling into bed under a fluffy comforter? Blissful. Counting the days until spring? Always.

The rhythm of the Catskills seasons is a sweet and gentle teacher. We've had a terrible time of loss this year, but there can be quiet comfort in trusting this rhythm. Under the frozen ground of sadness, without words or thought, there comes healing. It is like the daffodils that are growing in icy darkness. We discover their green spears at first. We revisit them on chilly wintry days, disbelieving their bravery. In late April or early May, when they finally burst forth in their golden glory, there is spring all around us, without our having done a thing to assist its coming. It is good to trust in the seasons.

IK

The Times of the Halcott United Methodist Church

Winter 2018 *Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*



Updates: Thank You!

The fall Crock Pot Supper has been postponed indefinitely. Stay tuned.

The Election Day Bake Sale was very successful. Thank you all!

Several children gathered to pack 34 School Kits for UMCOR and 16 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. What caring young people!

Pastor Debb is on vacation at press time. We hope to hear from her in the next issue.

Looking Ahead: Invitations

The church piano has been freshly tuned in time for the **Christmas Candlelight Service** at 7:00 p.m. on December 23rd. It replaces the usual 9:00 a.m. Sunday service. We hope many readers can attend this traditional service of scripture and carols.

The next **5th Sunday** is December 30th. Parish wide worship will be at the Margaretville United Methodist Church at 10:30 a.m., followed by a dish to share lunch. All are welcome. There will be no 9:00 morning service in Halcott.

Ash Wednesday is March 6th this year. Readers are invited to attend **Lenten Lunches** on Wednesdays in Lent at no cost. A free will offering basket will be available for missions. Lunches consist of soup and sandwiches at noon, followed by a brief Lenten meditation. These meals rotate among the churches of the Parish. A schedule should be available in February.

Help Needed: Fill a Container

High school groups across the country have a friendly competition going to see who can collect the most pull tabs from aluminum cans. Removing the tabs does not interfere with recycling the cans. All proceeds go to Shriners Hospitals for Children. So save up some tabs and call for a pick-up.

Reflections: Grange Hall Christmas Program

Preparing for the Christmas Program has become easier as the next generation of young women gels into a cohesive team of organizers. I even got to sit in the audience for the rehearsal and part of the program this year . . . for the first time since high school!

Yes, the baby boom Sunday School teachers (Clarettia Reynolds, Ruth Reynolds, Shirley Bouton and Ruth Kelder) often looked in my direction for a reader. Well, "reader" isn't quite the right word. I was coached in a whole host of verbal performance skills. "Slow down." "Take a deep breath." "Read louder." "Hold your script flat so your voice can project." "Read so Mr. Hard-of-Hearing understands from the back row!" They were a great team, but boy, did they put me through my paces!

Some things haven't changed. I still do clean-up detail backstage while Santa distributes his gifts. This year, something different caught my attention. After the first couple of names were called, I heard a sweet, sincere, tiny little voice say, "Thank you, Santa!" His heartfelt sentiment was echoed a few seconds later by his

brother. I listened for more echoes, but alas, excitement or shyness prevailed. Hopefully, Santa knew from the smiles how much he was appreciated.

I mused. If this happens with children, what about us desensitized adults? Remember the ten lepers who got the clear skin surprise of a lifetime? Only one said, "Thank you, Jesus." Our stories don't have to end like that. God is so infinitely good to us that we get a fresh new supply of opportunities daily to say, "Thank you, Lord."

Who Is Your Daddy?

Years ago in the Fleischmanns (HS) cafeteria, a little boy told Mom he had three daddies. After he left the counter, she turned to Doris Reynolds for an explanation. It went something like this: The biological father was deceased, the step father was estranged, and a boyfriend was acting as head of household. So he really did have three daddies!

In truth, all of us have at least two fathers, a biological one and a heavenly one. As

surely as God breathed life into Adam, he breathed life into Adam's descendants. Yet despite being made in God's likeness, our heavenly parentage isn't always recognized.

Nowhere was this better illustrated than on the road to Emmaus, where two bereaved men encountered a sympathetic fellow traveler. With the crucifixion fresh on their minds, they poured out their sorrow to this stranger. Unknown to them, this traveler actually *was* Jesus . . . in his very own skin! They weren't expecting him because they had seen him crucified, dead and buried. Therefore, they didn't recognize him until he broke bread at the evening meal.

We were reminded of this story recently by Rev. Ralph Darmstadt. When he broke bread for communion, I suddenly recognized God in Ralph and thought, "How many times do we overlook God in others because we aren't looking for Him?" As we enter this new year, may we consciously seek the divine spark in others, and treat what we find with love.

Winter 2018