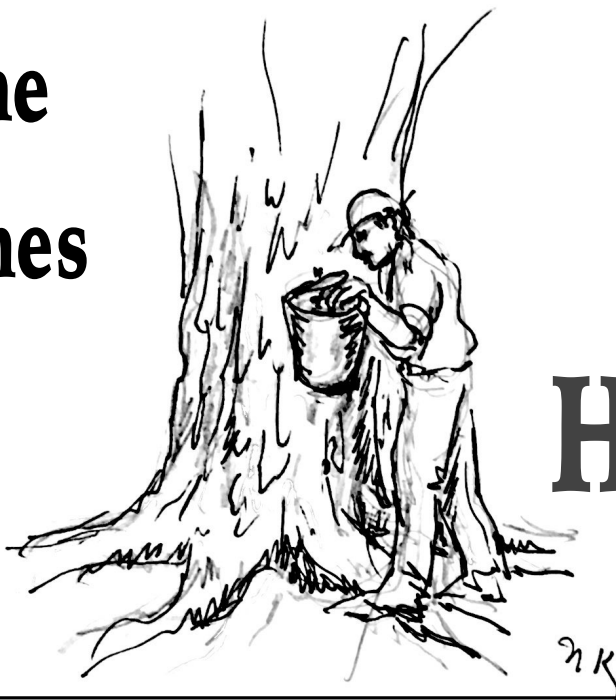


# The Times

# of Halcott

Spring  
2020

Vol 90!



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

## MILK TESTERS

Dairy farming, like most other walks of life, is full of hard-working, behind the scenes people who labor in valuable programs that are vital to the industry. Thank goodness for these sterling individuals who quietly and tirelessly go about the business of doing the seemingly myriad small details that keep all sorts of important endeavors humming on all cylinders. Indeed, it would be difficult if not impossible to

run a successful business or organization of any kind and many services we take for granted would be left up to us to wrestle with without these folks' humble contributions to society. Helen Keller put it well when she said, "The world is moved not only by the mighty shoves of the heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker." Through our family's involvement in agriculture we have been blessed to work with many such people. Therefore, it is with much gratitude that this small

article celebrates the contributions of the milk testing system in general and the milk testers in particular, those “honest workers” of the dairy industry who, because of their faithful efforts, help make managing a dairy farm a little bit easier and certainly a lot more enjoyable.

Milk testing has long been a staple of dairy farming in the U.S. In the late 1940’s, testing began in earnest in New York when dairy farmers came together to provide dairy herd improvement services to farms within the state through the New York Dairy Herd Improvement Cooperative (NYDHIC). In the beginning, NYDHIC focused on “measuring milk and butterfat production from dairy cattle so farmers could better manage feeding and breeding strategies to improve farm profitability.” Over the next several decades, NYDHIC grew and began working closely with Cornell University and the Cooperative Extension system to offer continually improving and widening milk testing and record services to farmers. During the 1970’s, other organizations geared toward dairy improvement in neighboring states joined forces with NYDHIC to become the Northeast Dairy Herd Improvement Association (NEDHIA).

As new technologies became available, milk analysis went from labor intensive work done on the farm premises to centralized labs utilizing high speed milk analyzers. Similarly, data entry went

from being laboriously handwritten to becoming streamlined by making use of computers to speed up data transfer thus enabling farmers to receive information more quickly. More advances in testing came about in the early 80’s when the farmers involved in leading NEDHIA recognized a need for having lab services dedicated to analyzing feeds fed to dairy cattle. This resulted in the birth of the NEDHIA forage lab. Dairy producers could now send samples of their hay, silage or other crops to this specialized lab then use the results to help them formulate the best rations for their herds.

In 1997, NEDHIA and Dairylea Cooperative of Syracuse formed a farmer-owned cooperative called Dairy One. The vision of the partnership was, and still is, to help farmers succeed by providing useful information for farm management. Currently, Dairy One has about 3,000 dairy farmer members throughout the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions and is governed by a 16-member board of directors, all of whom are dairy farmers.

So, what do milk testers do and what does milk testing entail? Milk testers are employed by the previously mentioned cooperative called Dairy One. Each tester has a group of dairy herds that he or she usually visits one day each month to test. On test day, the tester brings along equipment to measure, record and sample milk from each cow

being milked in that herd on that day. In addition, the tester electronically records all of the information provided by the herd owner for changes that have occurred within the herd since the last test day such as the dates individual cows calved (thus began milking for this lactation), particulars of any calves born, dates cows were bred and identification of the bulls used, when cows were dried off (stopped milking for this lactation in preparation for the next calving), or

animals that entered or left the herd, to name a few. The tester stays for the

entire milking, or milkings, depending on which Dairy One program the herd is

enrolled in. Milk weights are measured by a calibrated tube attached to each milking machine unit and recorded for each cow. A sample of each cow's milk is taken from the calibrated tube and put in a sample bottle that will go to the lab for analysis for milkfat, milk protein, somatic cells (a measure of udder health) and milk urea nitrogen (a measure of nitrogen efficiency). As technologies improve, milk samples are also being increasingly used for determining pregnancy as well as detecting some diseases. Almost a

In this our spring issue of *The Times of Halcott* we always include a small envelope with a request that you consider a donation to the Halcott Community Fund (HCF) which foots the bills for printing and publishing this newsletter. HCF is responsible for many small but helpful works in our town, from keeping the paper plates, knives, forks and such stocked in the Grange Hall for community events, to sending annual donations to valued community friends like the Margaretville Hospital Auxiliary, and our Fire Department. Their largest effort is funding the Halcott Fair every year, paying the musicians who perform, and our dear Richard Benninghoff, the magician who drives five hours (each way) to get here from Pennsylvania. The mission of the Halcott Fair, held every year on the third Saturday of July, is to provide a venue where community members can come together and have fun. Vendors are never charged a fee for a spot at the Fair and the dinner tickets prices are kept as low as possible. We hope that you will join us for the Fair of 2020. The planners are getting so old, it may be our finale!

one stop shopping!

After the entire herd is milked,

the tester checks to be sure that all of the information is entered into the computer and sends it to Dairy One. Some information is calculated and sent right back; the farmer will have several pages of data that can be used immediately to manage the herd based on the information gleaned during that test day such as which cows that will need to be bred or dried off fairly soon. Other results will have to wait until the milk analysis is done at the lab. Those results and other detailed data about the herd as a whole and each individual cow and recently born calf will come in the mail within a week. A tremendous amount of information that can be very helpful in managing a herd is generated each test day. As you might imagine, the tester has a big responsibility to get all of the information and samples gathered correctly so that what comes back to the farmer is both accurate and useful. While the results from each test day are extremely valuable, the monthly visits with the tester are the icing on the cake. Truly, the social aspect of having someone visit each and every month for years upon years cannot be underestimated. Because he or she is with us for several hours each month, there is a fair amount of time to visit between taking samples and after the work is done. Being somewhat isolated over here in our valley, the milk tester is often a personal link to farm families at the other

end of the county to hear how folks are doing. The tester is also a good source to learn about how different crops, daughters of certain bulls or brand name farm equipment might be working elsewhere. Furthermore, the testers often become treasured friends as we learn more about one another's lives during these monthly visits. Invariably, we have found that the people who work as milk testers are special, hardy souls. Indeed, who else would regularly drive on our mountain roads in the wee hours of the morning or late at night, in the middle of winter, often on little sleep and sometimes under the weather with an ailment that would stop many other people in their tracks, because they can't bear to let down the farmers knowing that they rely on the services provided by milk testing to help manage their livelihood? So, a big, well-deserved thanks to all of you milk testers, past and present, for being among the "honest workers" of the dairy industry!

*Editor's Note: Tim and Christl Johnson as well as Warren and Donna Bender served as milk testers for a time in our area! JD*

### Two Stones Farm - A Catskills Story

Published in **518 Profiles Magazine's**  
February 2020 issue

*Editor's Note: We are hugely proud of this couple and print herewith the latest*

*news story on them.*

What started out as a “maybe one day” dream for Robin and Alan White after they met 41 years ago is now a thriving, bustling business. Located in Halcott Center, on the western edge of the Catskill Mountains in New York State, Robin and Alan’s 35 acre farm is home to Jersey and Brown Swiss cows, dairy goats, East Fresian dairy sheep, alpacas, chickens, and two loyal livestock guardian dogs. This is where they started making cheese just 3 ½ years ago, and now they can barely keep up with the demand for their award-winning product. Although

Alan is able to farm full time, Robin is still teaching elementary school at a nearby district, and with all of their children grown and moved out, their days are pretty busy. A lifestyle that is based on a homestead model of natural self-sufficiency is what these two enjoy, and when you taste their cheeses, you can see how that love of what they do filters down into what they create.

Two Stones Farm produces nine

different varieties of cheese, using cow milk, goat milk, and goat/cow/sheep blends. Two of their cheeses, Betta Feta and Mountain Medley, have won awards at the New York State Fair in Syracuse, including the Gold Medal in 2018. Their cheese is classified as “farmstead artisanal”, meaning the cheese is made

right at the farm where the milk is produced. Robin and Alan sell their delicious cheeses at the Pakatakan Round Barn Farmers’ Market in Halcottsville between May and October, as well as at their farm store at 1060 Main Street in Fleischmanns, NY all year round. In addition, they are vendors at The Little Falls Cheese Festival in Little Falls, NY every year, which will be held on July 11<sup>th</sup> in 2020. Several farmstands and grocery stores in the



area also sell their cheeses, and many Catskill restaurants are proud to serve their cheeses as part of their menu offerings. Visit [www.2stonesfarm.com](http://www.2stonesfarm.com) to find where you can enjoy Two Stone Farm’s variety of cheeses in the Catskills.

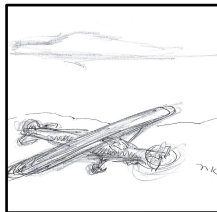
For Robin and Alan, owning and operating a farm isn’t just a job, it’s a lifestyle. It’s a way of living a clean and productive life, with a very small carbon footprint. Eating vegetables and fruits

that are grown without the use of chemicals or pesticides, cooking eggs and meat that come from happy and healthy animals, being active every day, producing electricity with their solar grid, and using products that they have made and harvested themselves is something very dear to their hearts. In Alan's mind is the wish that what he and Robin are doing can be a model for agriculture to survive in the Catskills, long known as a difficult region to farm in. He believes we have to know and understand what does best in our area, and then strive to work on growing and producing what is most adapted to the area. For both Robin and Alan, watching their cheese start out as a field of grass, then that grass gets eaten by a goat, the goat gets milked, that milk is made into cheese, it is then aged and packaged and finally purchased and enjoyed by a customer is what it's all about. It gives them both a great deal of pleasure to see customers enjoy what they have worked so hard to create.

Although Robin and Alan are pretty busy people, they always have time to talk about their cheese and how it is made. Come visit their store, Two Stones Farm Store and Creamery, which is open during the winter on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM. In the summer, they are also open on Fridays, and as the sign on the door says, "Whenever the lights are on". Located at

1060 Main Street in Fleischmanns, NY, they have all of their farm products for sale including cheese, eggs, meat, naturally grown vegetables, goat milk soap, and alpaca and sheep fiber products (hats, scarves, yarn). In addition, they sell a large selection of local agricultural products, including ice cream, honey, maple syrup, jams, organic teas, comfrey balms, homemade pies, pickles, and sunflower oil. If you would like to know other places that you can find Two Stones Farm award-winning cheeses, check out their website at [www.2stonesfarm.com](http://www.2stonesfarm.com), and don't forget to "like" their Facebook page as well!

***"You know you're in the Catskills when there's two stones for every dirt."***  
~Anonymous



**"Halcott Planes Come in Handy to Find Lost Cows; Will Build Hangar"**

Going through some of my mom's old newspaper clippings, I came across this headline. Unfortunately, the date and name of the paper had been clipped off. Does anyone remember?

**"Excellent New Field, Now Under Survey, Will Soon Be Graded",**  
And

**"Flights and Instruction Take Place Daily, Many Enjoy Flying"**  
were the accompanying sub-headlines.

“Halcott Center is to have a new airport.

Lawrence Weber, Arkville, is making a survey and will set stakes for grading. The site is a plateau recently purchased by Reynolds & Johnson, a half mile west of the present Halcott airfield, which has done so well that more adequate quarters have been secured.

A strip of 3,600 feet long by 300 wide will be graded and rolled as soon as the survey is completed. Its location on a plateau gives clear approach from all sides. A state official recently visited it and said it was ideal and would be granted a state license.

Meantime, both students and passengers are enjoying the scenery and the flying from the present field. Recent solos are Garold Johnson and Bob Johnson of Halcott Center and James Low of Margaretville. Several Army pilots have visited the field and been checked out to give their families rides. One of these is Capt. Dick Fleisig, who spent part of a terminal leave at the Peet homestead.

Monday Earl Johnson made a cross-country flight, coming down at both Montgomery and Troy airports en route. A flight demonstration was made Aug. 14 over Camp Tarigo in Fleischmanns. It was part of the camp’s V-J Day commemoration.

The planes have developed something new in the air and are a help in dairying.

Several flights have been made on the request of cattle owners to seek stay cows. In each case the cows have been located.

The field is to have a new hangar before winter. Construction will start after the grading is done.

Veteran pilots at the field are Mrs. Ward Reynolds and Larry Facciola.”



Until I read the article, I had no idea that their airstrip on the field between the Rauter and Kasanof homesteads was to be moved, upgraded, and expanded. Sounds

like the new location would have been on Turkey Ridge. Was the survey ever completed? The state license granted? The hangar built? If not, why not? I have no answers except the only explanation my mother gave when I asked why she and Dad stopped flying. “It came down to the question of whether we wanted to have planes, or kids. When you kids started coming along, we decided we couldn’t do both. We chose kids.” So perhaps the article was written around 1946/47/48, sometime before (or just after?) the first of us was born. I guess I’m glad they chose us over the planes, but I’d give anything to have

gone flying with Mom and Dad. PD

**Nina Kasanof adds:** This article brought back a flood of memories. The two planes were parked in the field next to my place, pretty close to where I now park my car. When I was a child, I took my first flight in one of them, with Ruth Reynolds piloting it. Either she or Ward gave my whole family their first rides. Ruth did a few tricks to heighten the experience. There used to be a hay barn nearby, and as we climbed above the ground, I could look down and see the hay mow from above...a view that amazed me. When we got to our cruising altitude, Ruth tossed out a toilet paper roll, and as it spiraled down, unrolling, Ruth made the Piper Cub dive at it and cut the paper with the propeller. My first and certainly my most memorable flight!

### Assessments

If you have any questions about how your property is assessed, you may call our



assessor Marc Neves: 917-520-1282. He also can point you in the direction of learning about the STAR exemption.

### Poem

**(With grateful acknowledgment to  
Irwin Kasanof)**

*Spring has sprung,  
The grass is riz  
I wonder where the boidies is.  
They say the boid  
Is on the wing,  
But that's absoid –  
The wing is on the boid!!*

And actually, the grass ain't riz in Halcott yet. In fact, as I write this little piece of fluff to fill out the issue, I see that it's snowing outside. Still. But that doesn't stop me from dreaming gardening dreams. It's an antidote to winter. So, what shall it be this summer? Lanore delivers all these glossy, bright catalogs with enticing tomatoes the size of a large man's fist. How they tempt a zone 4 gardener! I feel like a starving man facing a Halcott Fair dinner.

Our ambitious garden eagerly began in 1988 when we returned from overseas. It crept across the yard every year thereafter, taking advantage of the septic field and responding gratefully to our little roto tiller. Fencing was electric, but not totally effective. We grew enough to feed both us and the various animals that came to visit.

But recently the garden has been seriously curtailed, due to a shortage of gardeners. A few years ago, Robin



## DiBenedetto of Four Seasons

Landscaping built me a tall fence around a modest space, covered the ground with black fabric mulch, added six raised beds and one half-barrel in the middle of it all. It has been enough. It resembles an outdoor room and at the height of summer is decorated in huge zucchini leaves, escaping cucumber vines, and rich bunches of pole beans. It's a great place to stroll out to with a basket and some dinner guests in the cool of the evening: a garden space that has held my fancy now for five years, without awakening old aggrandizing visions. And I love it.

Last year, I started Red Sails leaf lettuce indoors around the middle of March. One of my failings as a gardener is that I do not keep notes. April 15<sup>th</sup> is the only date I honor. Planting that day in still chilly soil, rich and black after a winter of rest, is a joyous triumph after spending so much time inside doing year end reports. "Now let the summer begin!"

Last April 15<sup>th</sup> out came the now 3-4 inch lettuce seedlings together with a row cover. After that, I waited until late May to peek at my brave children. And there they were, bushy, juicy, luscious heads ready to pinch leaves off of. And there they sat, providing salad after salad through July when they went sort of bitter. Is there anything more satisfying to remember as I watch the snow falling?

How about the zucchini? As I

mature (like the lettuce?) I embrace discipline more enthusiastically. In the past, every year **each** of the five to eight zucchini seeds planted in the recommended hill jumped up and each year, a bit of laissez-faire occurred, a no-pinch philosophy that produced every August baseball bat zucchinis hidden until too late amongst the tangle. Last year, I pinched out all but two zuch babies and reaped the benefits of reasonable, tasty dark green squash. Discipline.

My tomatoes didn't do well at all; the promised succulent red fists became blackened, cracked little wizened things. Cukes grew sedately on a trellis. There was a race against the slugs for my broccoli, cabbage and brussels sprouts leaves. I finally won by cutting out the bottoms of some plant pots and driving them down into the soil around the plants. Ugh to slugs.

It was a good year for the garden, but the gardener needs more work. I grew acorn squash, got five, set them in the garage to store them and forgot them. A few days ago, I threw them out. Same with the butternut squash. I left the brussels sprouts in the garden to sweeten after the first snow and forgot them as well. The plants will be impossible to pull out of the soil this spring. I know this because I forgot to harvest them last year, too... I didn't pick my broccoli in time... These are true confessions of a

gardener who lives alone. This year, a new start: discipline will rule.

Dreaming of what vegetables to plant is not the only sign of spring here in Halcott. Later there will be the little salt daisies by the side of the road, encouraged by winter's sanding, and hearty snowdrops, (galanthus) popping up beside the kitchen steps. But now, in March, it's too early for these faithful friends. What I can see these days is much more subtle, even hidden, a reward for the seeker. Have you noticed that the willows are changing? They're turning a tentative yellowish hopeful color that is very quiet. Like a secret that they don't want winter to

know. Then on the odd warm days the mountainsides are deep red with the burgeoning maple buds. My favorite is the pesky thorn apple, good for nothing in a farmer's book, with menacing thorns that pierce tractor tires. However, spring finds the thorn apple turning a bold silver. Honest. It is gray and insignificant all winter and then in March, it gathers itself together and begins to **glow** silver. I googled the thorn apple; it's a member of the rose family of

all things, and dearly loved by birds, deer and other wild life, who manage to stay clear of impaling themselves to feast on its fruits.

Every year I watch a smallish and sort of insignificant maple grow, from its winter dormancy through its summer greening, to its glorious autumn red back to sleep again. I send pictures of this tree with boring regularity to my kids. I guess I want them to see constancy in a world out there that doesn't have it.

Living here in a quiet fold of the earth, visited by four distinct seasons is



such a privilege. To witness the changes, the dependable changes, to be "in the know" recognizing the language of those changes is empowering. It somehow draws me closer to the Hand that handles the whole thing and gives me a sense of awe at the perfection of knowledge in the design. **IK**

# The Times of the Halcott United Methodist Church

Spring 2020 *Pattie Kelder, Correspondent*



This Lenten season, as you reflect upon Jesus' great sacrifice for you, it is our hope that you "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3:18).

## **Parish Lenten Schedule**

Events last an hour or so. All are welcome. Lunches include soup, sandwich, desert and a brief message. Offering baskets will help fund mission projects like the Darmstadt Shelter in Kingston.

- Lunch, Andes UMC, Noon  
Wednesday, March 11
- Lunch, Halcott Grange Hall, Noon  
Wednesday, March 18
- Lunch, Roxbury UMC, Noon  
Wednesday, March 25

In addition, the Interfaith Council plans to sponsor:

- Community Seder, Margaretville UMC from 6:00-8:00 p.m., Thursday, March 26 (For seating, call Kent Brown.)
- Good Friday Service, Margaretville UMC, Noon Friday, April 10 (Meditations on Jesus' seven last words from the cross)

Halcott UMC invites you to attend worship on Palm Sunday (April 5) and Easter (April 12) at 9:00 a.m.

## **God's Grace is Sufficient**

The Bible passage about the transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:1-13) makes me think about those who were on the mountain that day. Jesus had taken Peter and the brothers James and John apart to a high place.

There, His appearance changed. As He shone with light and became glorified, He was joined by the long departed Moses and Elijah. Wow! This defining moment fulfilled prophecy, but what else was going on? What other purpose could have been served?

Bookends, for one thing! The glory of God attended Jesus' birth, was present when He was baptized at the beginning of His ministry, and appeared again on the mountain near the end of His earthly life and ministry. These were pivotal times when Jesus was most susceptible to attack, points where God's plan of salvation could most easily have been derailed. They coincided with the murder of the infants by King Herod (Matthew 2:13-18), the three temptations of Jesus by the devil (Matthew 4: 1-11), and His agony in Gethsemane prior to arrest (Matthew 26: 36-46). Imagine, when under assault, what it must have meant to the human side of Jesus to have seen the glory of God and heard Him affirm, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." In each case, God was pleased with Him before He even did anything!

Like Jesus, the mountaintop witnesses from the past (Moses and Elijah) had also received strength and encouragement from seeing the glory of God. (A similar watershed event would later be experienced by the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus.) God needed them to act, and provided extraordinary reassurance to help them. Moses experienced the glory of the Lord on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:12-18) and went on to lead the Israelites in a daunting faith journey to the Promised Land. Elijah, taken to heaven in a

whirlwind while still living, was sent back by God to accomplish restoration (Malachi 4:5) through the work of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10-13). When John baptized Jesus, he too, witnessed the glory of God descending on Jesus like a dove. Soon after that, John was imprisoned and beheaded. Thus, each of these men, especially Jesus, needed to experience the glory of God to keep from losing heart in the midst of overwhelming obstacles.

What about the disciples who were there? Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus on other special assignments, but this one was a shocker. Like the shepherds at Jesus' birth, the glory of God petrified them! Yet unlike the shepherds who were free to go tell the news, these three disciples were told not to mention it for a time. Knowing they were not alone in this experience may have helped them keep quiet. Still, why did they witness God's glory? Consider this: these men, like most of the disciples, were ultimately martyred for their faith. It was an uphill struggle

to establish the early church. Having witnessed the transfiguration of Christ was crucial, particularly to the ministry of Peter. When the time was right, Peter even told his own eyewitness account of the transfiguration in order to establish credibility for Christ (2 Peter 1:16-21). God depended on Peter to be the cornerstone of the church, so He made provision for Peter's needs.

The glory of God may not be an everyday experience for believers, yet God still provides His children with what is needed for the work at hand. Spring is the time when we travel through Lent with Jesus. Will we stay focused all the way to the cross, or will we become distracted? If we get to the cross, will we stop there, assuming all is accomplished, or will we journey on with the task of Kingdom building? If we continue, will we stand firm when the devil lets loose his arrows? We can't answer these questions with certainty, but we can be sure that God is ready to equip us if we are willing to do His work.

*Spring 2020*

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