THE TIMES OF HALCOTT

AUTUMN 2007

Editors: Innes Kasanof; Peg DiBenedetto; Judy DiBenedetto; Karen Ranter. Art: Nina Kasanof.

Hunting

Hal Brand

Occasionally it doesn't pay to tout some of the plus factors of Halcott Center. In 1951 the nation was involved in the Korean War. Recalled from the Air Force Reserve I was stationed on the outskirts of Newburgh at Stewart Field and my unit was within a few weeks of being fully manned and relocated to a base then under construction on the outskirts of Syracuse. With that the 32nd Air Division would come into existence and be responsible for air defense of the vulnerable portion of the East coast of Canada and U.S. Command for the base fell to a General Officer. While I do remember his name I will refer to him as General Mac. His aides were Lt Col Prod and Captain Simmons .

At the time, during the course of routine duties, I traveled with a Captain who I will call Self. He was a career officer with a self-promoting tongue. He came from Pennsylvania. One of our conversations turned to deer hunting. By his own admission he was a super woodsman and ace deer hunter with no shortage of game in his area of Pennsylvania. I readily admitted I was city born and raised but I had marital relatives in Halcott Center that could be considered as professional guides. Actually I had in mind Roy Johnson. Roy was married to my wife's oldest sister, Neva. Suffice to say that if deer were to be spooked from Halcott's forest you wanted Roy as your guide. To my chagrin and discomfort Captain Self so informed the General's aides upon learning the General was trying to fulfill a promise to take his nine year old son on some sort of deer hunt excursion.

The sun was hardly up when I was visited by Colonel Prod who, citing information from Captain Self, believed I could do a personal favor for General Mac by arranging a hunting excursion. I let it be known that Roy Johnson was a pretty independent person and if he was agreeable to be the guide we could work it out. A few hours later both Col Prod and Captain Simmons contacted me for "Any Word" from Mr. Johnson . "Yes, but he will not commit

himself without first checking with higher authority" To Wit: his wife Neva, and area Game Warden Burgin. I told them that by tomorrow we would know details.

The details : If one person carried a firearm then all would need licenses . Immediately they agreed to no firearms. Be at Roy's house in Halcott between 6:30 and 7:AM for breakfast and 40 minutes later out the door. And one last thing—no guarantee of a deer sighting. Insofar as reimbursement, he wants none.

The State Thruway between Newburgh and Kingston did not exist in 1951. Route US 9W or NYS 32 were the connectors. Route 28 was a two-lane road running adjacent to the Esopus with no shoulders but plenty of twists and turns. The plan was for me in my 1947 red Chevrolet to park at the Fleischmanns portion of Route 28. I no longer recall the landmark I selected.. To make sure they turned off Rte 32 onto Washington Ave. I had Captain Simmons perform a trial run in his car from Newburgh via Rte 32 to the turn onto Washington Avenue and follow it to the start of Rte 28.

Sunday morning we made contact at 6:10. By 6:20, introductions were over. Neva made sure she would overfeed her guests but even so by 7:15 we were out the door, with the General's son in tow. Captain Simmons had to remain by the phone in case the General was contacted. To his credit he dried the dishes. But I knew it had put Neva on edge. Once again I did a mental damnation of Captain Self.

The weather was unkind. Too warm for November and too dry to wet down fallen leaves. Between the sound of the leaves underfoot and an intermittent breeze to signal the odor of humans the deer had no difficulty in avoiding detection. About 2:30 in the afternoon the hunt was terminated.

The thank you and goodbye period was quickly accomplished and as the group pulled out of the driveway, shots rang out from Judd hill and almost immediately more from what is now Paul Steinfeld's lands. Most likely Roy and his party had routed some deer. The General's son didn't even get the thrill of hearing the rifle fire — he was asleep.

Epilogue

Very early the following day (Monday) the General came to me and before I could even arise he saluted me and expressed his thanks. He was duly appreciative of the natural beauty of Halcott. So ended that episode.

Captain Self kept his distance. His real name was Stankowski. He came from a coal mining town in Pennsylvania. In 1973, while I was having dinner at the club at Stewart Field, he walked in. At this point he was a civilian as was I. Fortunately I was finished dining and made a prompt exit. That ended any further personal contact with Stankowski. However at a military reunion in 1985 one of my compatriots from Pennsylvania told me Stankowski had died following a long and painful cancer. Since then, the personality I so disliked seems ordinary ....Stankowski: R.I.P.

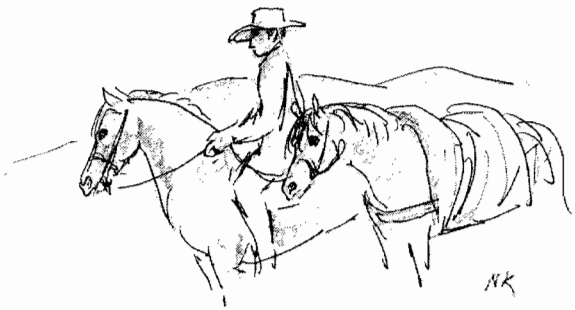
A Man and His Horse

This article is contributed by Claire Cella. She was invited to meet Mr. Cooley when Michael & Chis & Adina Johnson provided a picnic lunch for him on his way over the mountain into Lexington. Thanks!

Many would agree that spotting a horse in Halcott Center is not an unusual discovery. Yet in early May when a man in a neon yellow vest was riding up the center of County Route 3 followed by a pack horse, Michael

DiBenedetto suspected that this was a rare occurrence.

It turns out, an unbelievably rare occurrence. The man, when questioned, revealed himself to be Ezra Cooley and he began his journey a little over a year ago in Chico, California. Since then, he has traveled thousands of miles across the country, solely on horseback. This somewhat bold idea began as simple talk with his father on their ranch in California. They wondered if it was possible to ride across the U.S., or even around the world, on horseback. The question continued to plague Ezra until he realized that this could be his mission in life. His current employment in construction left Ezra uninspired. He had always thought there was more for him in life.



So this wild idea, which started out as small-talk, grew into a serious endeavor for Ezra. He soon sold his construction business along with his truck and trailer. With only general arrangements planned out, Ezra saddled up on his horse, Big Red and began to take it "one day at a time" (or 30 or 40 miles at a time) across the United States.

And out of all the cities, towns and roads Ezra could have traveled through or by, he coincidently was seen in Halcott Center, which is known for little else but farming and beautiful country-side. Ezra commented that people always ask him "Why did you come through here?" and he always responds, "Well, I have to go someway."

Ezra was on his way to New York City when he stopped in Halcott. In New York City, he explained that he will need to have his horse quarantined for sixty days before he and Big Red could continue across to Spain by plane, where he would resume riding. From Spain, he planned to travel around the Mediterranean, down through Africa, across Australia and then back to South America, up through Mexico before arriving back home in Chico, California. He estimates that the entire journey will take eight years.

It has not been an easy journey either so far, he confesses, even as he stands in front of a quaint field alive with yellow dandelions and cattle grazing in the background. He has realized that "the world isn't perfect and I haven't ridden across a Garden of Eden, like many would expect." He has braved Sierra Mountains, the Rockies and the deserts of the mid-west. He shared a couple stories of near-death experiences. "I have had my share of bad nights, but tomorrow always comes," he commented.

Not only is Ezra's attitude tremendously positive, but he has also chosen to ride for a positive cause. He receives donations from many people who hear about his incredible mission. While he does use half of the donations to pay for his minute living expenses, the rest of the money is given to the National Children's Cancer Society. He plans to continue giving aid to different local children's charities as he crosses the rest of the world. Ezra has created a website that tracks his expedition across the world, at www.ezrasexpedition.com. From the site you can read his journal, read about other sightings, look at pictures and donate to his cause. Although he is a little behind in updating his journal and media, you have to

give him credit for trying. I doubt there are many computers available to him, riding his horse across the world.

Through a Farmer's Eyes

One of the most enjoyable aspects of farm life in general and rotational grazing in particular is the opportunity to go walking among the splendor of our little place in the Halcott Valley. Whether it's on a fragrant, rainy spring day, a warm, sunny summer day, or a blustery, snow squall-filled afternoon, I treasure these times of solitude. Every walk is an adventure waiting to unfold and no two walks are the same. Truly, I feel privileged to be able to partake of the sights, sounds, and smells of God's Creation on a year 'round basis.

During the summer, the walks are as much a necessity as a pleasure. In order to accomplish the cattle grazing objectives on our farm, the temporary polywire fence we use to divide the fields must be moved after every milking so that our cows will have a fresh paddock of grass in front of them to eat at all times. In addition, pasture conditions must be monitored closely during the grazing season. Usually, there is time to move the fence and check pastures rather leisurely on foot but sometimes the job must be done quickly so the 4-wheeler is the more efficient method of travel. Of course, even the times that started out "leisurely on foot" can quickly become an all-out sprint when a thunderstorm moves into the area!

The summertime jaunts to the different fields display a lovely bouquet of flora and fauna that inhabit our area. As I write this, some of our fields are ringed in vibrant yellow goldenrod while the forest canopy above is slowly beginning to change from greens to reddish-oranges. This produces a brilliant backdrop to the abundant green grass -- a backdrop that will only become more glorious as fall approaches. Another of our hill fields contains a fair bit of milkweed. Now, milkweed isn't exactly desirable pasture forage for cattle but it is a haven for Monarch butterflies. This year in particular there seems to be a bumper crop of these graceful insects; a walk through the field produces a flurry of orange, black and white wings as they take flight in front of my footsteps.

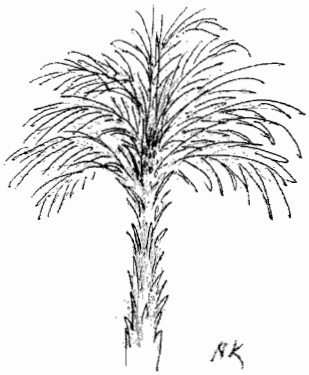
This summer has brought its share of interesting wildlife. Earlier in the season I regularly came across a doe and her two little spotted fawns as they munched away in the upper fields. Sharing the hill fields with these deer was a large family of turkeys. Bob, one of my trusty canine companions, would often find them first, causing him to jump in surprise and the turkeys to fly to the nearby tree line. Meanwhile, thistles that escaped the brush clippers offered up their purple and white fuzzy plumes to groups of happy yellow finches that would dart here and there for a quick meal. Thistles, like milkweed, don't offer much to the cattle, but the seeds provide tasty treats for some kinds of wild birds so we don't mind having a few of the prickly weeds around. Overhead, far above life at the pasture level, the soaring presence of a red-tailed hawk would often intrigue both my dogs and myself with its high-pitched call and effortless grace in the air.

Evening or nighttime strolls offer treasures all their own. The bats that appear to skip around the sky in dusk's fading light fascinate me. Sometimes these bats will even pay a visit to the barn to feed on the bugs that congregate around the lights. Recently, in the deep of a night, a nearby owl treated me to its perfect hoot hooting, something I hadn't heard for

quite a while. And, of course, who can miss the chorus of the coyote, that lonesome and somewhat eerie serenade that reminds me of my western roots.

As summer's last heat fades and fall and winter's arrival brings an end to the grazing season, happily, the sojourns into the fields continue. Autumn colors and the snowy landscapes of winter offer a beauty that is almost indescribable. Cold, snowy weather doesn't end outdoor enjoyment; it just invites a new kind of awe and wonder. Indeed, some of the prettiest things I've ever seen around our farm have been in the wintertime. I am astounded by the exquisiteness of a new fallen snow, the way it blankets the ground and glitters in the sunlight, its pure, unspoiled whiteness outlined by neat lines in contrast to the deep blue winter sky and how, though it can be snowing heavily, everything seems so quiet and hushed.

Late last winter I came across a scene so stunning that I will never forget it. One day, the dogs and I were walking along Vly Creek, listening to its churning and gurgling. It was still cold enough that many of the rocks and shallower water areas were covered with snow and ice. As I looked over to the opposite stream bank I noticed something I had never seen before -- the entire length of the stream bank just above the water's edge was draped in ice. It wasn't a heavy, thick ice but delicate and thin. The stream appeared to be adorned by a lovely veil, similar to a bridal veil. It was one of those picture-perfect scenes that belong on a calendar or poster. Not being one given to photographic pursuits, all I could do was stand there and feast on the sight before me. It was one of those moments in which I couldn't help but giggle with delight at the Lord's handiwork and at His goodness for sharing it with me. Truly, Halcott and its people are blessed year around! ***JD***

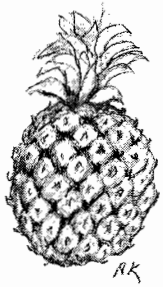


The Making of a Small Bio-diesel Processor in Ghana, West Africa

Perhaps the best thing to come out of our trip to Ghana last year was our almost happenstance introduction to a farmer named Frank Aidoo. Frank's farm is nestled in a green valley among hills not unlike ours. He grows pineapples instead of cows, and processes and sells water to thirsty people. He and Michael had much in common, and much to talk about. Talk turned to fuel costs, and Frank's diesel generator, and Michael said, "You know, you could make bio-diesel with palm oil (which is abundant in the tropics, and is used for cooking) to run the generator that pumps your water…" And then we left Ghana, but seeds had been sown. When we landed in the states, Michael spoke with his friend Jerry from the Mid-Hudson Bio-diesel Co-Op – "You know, there's this farmer in Ghana who could really benefit from making his own bio-diesel…" And the wheels were set in motion. Jerry wrote up a project proposal for funding; Michael communicated with Frank, and by early this spring it looked as if everything was in place for a trip back to Ghana. Everything, that is, except the funding. "Good idea!" "Fantastic!" "Very worthwhile!" – lots of praise; no backers. So Jerry & Michael decided they couldn't make Frank wait forever, and bit the bullet.

Thus, in July, the U.S. team of Jerry

Robock and his son, Max, and Michael & Peggy DiBenedetto headed for Africa to see if it was possible to make bio-diesel in Ghana.



Before we left, there were 2 significant events in Ghana:
1. Oil had been "discovered" off the coast (actually, they knew it was there, it just hadn't been a profitable proposition until crude reached $75 a barrel). Good for big oil, not necessarily good for Ghana.
2. Star beer (a **really** good beer) was found to be made with contaminated water. Bummer.

In Ghana, we were met by Frank and our friends, Pat and Allotey, who whisked us off to the farm, where for nearly 2 weeks, we spent our time assembling equipment, shopping for parts & supplies in impossible marketplaces, fixing and tweaking, producing and perfecting, drinking the occasional Guinness, shopping for more parts and supplies, working in the dark, eating very good bread, mixing and heating and tightening and fine-tuning. By the end of 12 days, we were able to leave Frank with a processor that works, and the knowledge of how to use it.

Our effort was reported in several Ghanaian, then pan-African, and finally in various energy newspapers and websites. We formed a group called Dumpong Biofuels (check out the website at www.dumpongbiofuels.org), named for Dumpong, the village where Frank has his farm. We have been contacted by groups and people who would like to replicate, or would like us to replicate, the project in multiple African countries; perhaps this odyssey has just begun. The successful conclusion of this project, though, will be to help fulfill Frank's goals. He would like the farmers of his co-op to take part in the production and use of biofuel for their tractors and generators. He sees a possibility for the village of Dumpong to produce their own palm oil as an industry, so that people won't have to travel over a half-hour to buy it. Frank would like to put a water tank in the village and pump water into it from his well so that the villagers won't have to get their water from the stream. Before we arrived, he had begun construction of a public latrine for the village, because no one's mud house has a toilet, and he would like to finish it.

Frank is the kind of guy who sees a problem and addresses it; who cares and takes action. Kind of like the people who live in Halcott. ***PD***

OH, THAT PRECIOUS SUNSHINE!

Bob Axelrod & Karen Rauter

Readers of The Times of Halcott may remember a power outage earlier this summer just after dark. At least two homes in the valley, however, were unaffected. This story is about those two houses, one a weekend cottage and the other a traditional farmhouse. Each one has installed a photovoltaic system suited to the needs of its owners. Below is a review of how these homes are being served by alternative energies.

A small cottage (two people, eight months a year):

Part of the appeal in 1988 of building a cottage in Halcott was the opportunity to try to recapture the ways of a simpler time. I thought that my appreciation of life in the country would be enhanced if my everyday activities required the attention that life of an earlier age demanded. So, initially, my place was lit with kerosene Aladdin lamps, my shower water heated by the sun in a plastic bag with a showerhead, and wood burning stoves for the winter using fuel from my wood lot. The cookstove uses propane, which also heats and hot water

"on demand." The nearest utility pole to my place is not so terribly far away; I was doing this as an alternative to conventional late twentieth century building practice. Generally, this was gratifying, though not always fun. So about ten years ago I installed a simple photovoltaic system (solar power).

These days everyone is aware that 1) petrochemical resources are limited, and 2) the planet will undergo climate change with unforeseen consequences – mostly negative – because of human activities (burning oil and coal) that release greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. Since solar energy neither burns fuels or releases harmful gasses and is renewable as long as there will be sunshine, it seemed to me the ideal alternative to using kerosene lights after dark, going through D cell batteries in order to listen to the radio, and not being able to do anything else without starting up a gas-driven electric generator.

A west coast supplier of alternative energy hardware offered a setup called "the Weekender," which, with two additional solar panels, got me started. The price was modest. A subsequent upgrade about two years later gave my system further capacity. The system provided what I need. I am sorry to write that except for some electric cables and a powerful, reliable battery, all the components in the system were made in China or Germany.

Here's what it can do: Lighting using compact florescent bulbs, use of small hand tools, small kitchen devices, television, computer, DVD player, etc. The system allows for low amp conventional 110-volt appliances as well as 12-volt applications. If this cabin was tied to "the grid" I'd be able to sell my unused green electricity to the power company during the winter months when I'm not around so much.

Here's what it can't do: Refrigeration, high amp power tools, deep well water pump (my water is gravity fed, so this is not a problem), anything that has a heating coil or runs a big motor. In over seven years, rain and especially shine, I've never run out of power for my modest needs. This year I hope to install an additional system dedicated to running a small 12-volt refrigerator.

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Now let's visit the year-round Halcott farmhouse with three residents and all the major appliances. It's heated with wood (oil provides the back-up). For the price of a modest four door sedan, a photovoltaic system was installed that is able to run the household with two significant changes: getting rid of the electric range/oven in favor of a propane stove - not a hardship - and buying a clothesline to replace the dryer, since these two appliances take too much juice for the system. The solar panels in the garden charge batteries in all daylight hours (even when it's cloudy), and the system can store about three days' power while charging. In our case, it was a choice we could make within economic reach to begin reducing our carbon footprint. A tax credit for the expenses paid the cost of more energy efficient appliances. And equally important, we have a half-way decent answer to your child who hears about human impacts on the environment and wants to know why we aren't doing something about it.

Now, for the question everyone asks, "Is it worth it?" That question will be answered in time when 1) we run out of oil and coal or it becomes extravagantly expensive, and 2) the unit costs of photovoltaic hardware come down as more and more applications for this source of power enter our daily lives. Alternative and unconventional power sources will certainly be "worth it" if we learn to conserve energy and do with a bit less. Households that live with a solar energy must tend to their energy needs like a garden, understanding that every little bit

we do has an impact and every savings does, too.

Is this the house of the future? Solar voltaic systems have been installed at relatively low cost in remote locations where they transformed the lives of the people using them.... think of rural India. In so far as solar power allows users to skip the technologies of the last century, it is the future, allowing more people the benefits of electricity we take for granted in the "developed" world.

BULLETIN BOARD

Did you know that Halcott Center actually has a beauty salon, and it is closer than you think! Amanda Petry is a licensed cosmetologist, and can give you (men, as well as women) a hair cut, manicure, pedicure, and more. You can have your hair done at her residence on Elk Creek Road, or she will come to your house. Her telephone number is 254-6273.

A Question for the Master Gardener:

I have been "dead-heading" my orange day lilies in the hopes that I am encouraging more flowers to form. Am I just wasting my time??

Yes and no... In daylilies, deadheading will not encourage re-bloom, exactly, but it will make the plant look and feel a lot nicer. Blossoms tend to drop on their own after a few days, but the drying process can be pretty icky and sometimes they cling to their un-opened brothers, and bring them down with them in their demise. Also, deadheading makes a nice airier plant to hold proudly the next open blossoms. Now, if the spent bloom has been pollinated, it will leave a little nut that will grow into a big green (and finally black) pod, which will contain the seeds for another daylily. Take those off as soon as you see them, unless you're a daylily hybridizer, because they will draw upon the strength of the flower to produce themselves and you don't want that. Finally, after all the blossoms on a scape have opened and gone, you may want to cut it off at ground level, another tidying chore that is not necessary but makes the plant look better. ***IK***

Highway Helps:

Please remember that snow season is coming up and the Highway crew's life is made much easier when there is **NO PARKING** on the roads so that the plow can swing with ease through the town. Also keep in mind that Halcott's recycling center is extremely limited and people do us no favors when they leave off garbage. Garbage is anything that is not newspaper properly bundled, magazines tied up, plastics, glass or tin cans. Please respect our tiny facility.

HALCOTT FAIR NUMBER NINE

Dear Friends:

Thank you, thank you all for making this the absolute best fair we've ever had. Our large intake of money was certainly a measure of how much folks seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Special thanks must be given to the wonderful women, starting with Kari Pagnano and Nina Kasanof, illustrator, who put together the new Halcott Cookbook. Carrie Bradley, Judy Patrusky and Susan Benedetto were faithful editors and typists. Kari's idea turned into a beautiful labor of love, but as these ladies can tell you, it was quite some labor! And thanks also to Sybil Margaritis, who prepared a few of the recipes to tantalize prospective cookbook buyers at the fair. I have extra copies of the cookbook at home if anyone wishes to pur-

chase them, and we will try to schedule a sale morning at the Grange closer to the holidays. They and the sweatshirts make good gifts!

When I think of how many touches we had this year: the wonderful designs decorating the walls, thanks again to the tireless efforts of Kari Pagnano, the amazingly lovely flowers on the tables (thanks to Susan Benedetto's and Judy Patrusky's gardens), the food that disappeared with lightning speed (oh, Bertha, how do you do it??) the couples dancing to the tunes of the Country Express… How about David Grossman's kazoo band? And how about Carrie Bradley and her bunch?? How about the Attic Treasures breaking their own astonishing record of over $300?? Lee Austin's Crew made the set up and the break down so much fun that preparations and clean up were no burden at all. What a relief! ...Next year the third Saturday of July falls on **July 19th**. And it's going to be Fair #10. Hard to imagine topping Fair #9. Thank you, all. ***IK***

PASSAGES

Stanley Kelly

***TTOH** missed the passing of Stanley Kelly earlier this year. Thank you to **Stan Siegel** who remembers him here.*

We first met Stanley Kelly forty-seven years ago when we had to put a road up to Judd Hill along the right-of-way that Stanley had given. The road was going to cut through Stanley's sugar bush. Morris and Sam Slavin were the contractors and had Odell Reynolds running the D4 for them. Morris assured Stanley that he would cut as few trees as possible. Stanley said, "Don't worry about that. Just put in the best road that you can for Siegel ." That was an act of generosity that impresses us to this day.

Stanley had been keeping heifers up on Judd Hill for a while after we came. One day they all came down to Elk Creek Road. Since there was plenty of water and grass up there, there was no reason for them to come down. Stanley drove the heifers up the hill again and in a short time down they came. The only explanation that Stanley could think of for them to come off the hill was that a bear was around and that drove them down. After a few more tries, the heifers stayed up. Apparently, the bear had finally moved on.

Our children played with the Kelly children quite often, and our daughters recall the lamb that Stanley bought for his children. The lamb was free to go in and out of the farmhouse and became quite a good pet. They named it Lamb Chop. We remember many visits with Stanley and Anna in their barn or in their kitchen. We remember Stanley's sense of humor and though it was a long time ago, his smile and laugh remain quite vivid.

At the foot of our road was a huge old American elm that was dying. In those days the species was disappearing. Stanley met me and said in his wry way," If you don't watch out, you're going to have quite a few cords of wood on the road one of these days." Since I was equipped only with an axe and a hunting knife at that time, I called Tim Johnson, who had the reputation for "being able to do anything". He took that giant tree down neatly and efficiently. Stanley was right. There were a lot of cords of wood down, but they didn't come down of their own accord.

We were on Judd Hill when Stanley's barn burned. In those days the insurance companies were not putting cash out to the farmers unless they rebuilt the barn. Emerson and Stanley rebuilt the barn that stands today. We remember Emerson up on the roof when he was no longer young. Incidentally, if you want to see Emerson's work in addition to that barn, look for an old foundation at the turn of Elk

Creek approaching Halcott Road and you will find a superb piece of laid-up stonework.

The burning of the barn meant the end of dairy farming for Stanley and Anna. Having learned to be an electrician in service during the Korean War, Stanley decided to make that his new career and the family moved to Colonie. We lost a good neighbor to the big city, which gained a good craftsman.

As all who served our country, Stanley Kelly was proud of his service. His military funeral at the Halcott cemetery, with Marine Corps honor guard, ceremonial flag-folding and the bugler playing taps, left no dry eye among those of us who came to honor his memory.

Wedding Bells

A Halcott summer wedding begins with a day only God can make with blue skies and puffy clouds, excited kids in party clothes, and ladies in alluring straw bonnets. Such was the setting of the celebration of **Carrie & Marc Bradley Neves'** marriage this past August, under the warm gaze of many loved ones and the hot sun.

The ceremony was moving: deliciously funny when the bride stepped forward to read her vows and two pixies scampered up with her reading glasses on a silken pillow. And so poignant that tears, hankies and sniffles prevailed, as beautiful poetry mingled with clear-eyed declarations to honor and obey. It stood as a blessing in itself, reminding us all of the supremacy of love; it was the kernel, the center of the day. But around that center, the bride and groom had planned with great care a truly lavish event that paid loving homage to their guests.

Changing like the Catskill seasons, bottles of icy water for the hot afternoon turned to fizzy things to toast the couple at twilight, right on to hot coffee as the day cooled into evening. The food was romantic and imaginative, running the gamut from shucked oysters to filet mignon. The "wedding cake" was 22 fruit pies! Guests were a-buzz as to which was their favorite – I voted for the peach – but just to imagine 22 pies being baked by Carrie's dear California-imported friends, left us speechless. And at heart, deeply touched. How typical of love to arc through the air like a heavenly boomerang, catching all in its path, teaching us that what we do for love, comes back to us as love. Everyone from a tiny Melissa in a pink organdy self-proclaimed "hand-me-down," to revered elder statesman Paul Steinfeld felt enveloped by the love. It was a true Halcott wedding and the memories will bring smiles for years to come. ***IK***

Welcome, Baby Norwick!

Michael & Peggy DiBenedetto are the proud grandparents of Simone Ruth Norwick, born on July 13th to Claire DiBenedetto and Eddie Norwick. Simone was born with lots of dark hair, and looked just like Claire when she was born. Great-gramps Ward is very pleased. Simone's other grandparents are Ed & Carol Norwick of Red Kill, and they are very pleased, as well.

And Welcome, Baby Enck!

Did you hear that Adina had her baby? Her name is Aubrey Foster Enck She weighed 8 lbs. 4 ounces and she came into the world at 7:57 AM on Aug. 23, at Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown.. Proud parents are Adina Johnson and Brian Enck.

The Times of the Halcott Methodist Church Autumn 2007

CORRESPONDENT: PATTIE KELDER

Many Helping Hands

It's exciting to see our small community helping others in meaningful ways. Both the church and the community recently donated funds to build two PETs (personal energy transportation) for individuals whose mobility was destroyed by disease or land mine explosions. Hal Brand and Donna Kraus assisted PET's own Bob Thompson in "licensing" young Halcott fairgoers to drive these conveyances in July. It was great fun to go for a spin in Chris and Judy Dibenedetto's barnyard, and the donations to the work of this Greene County based relief agency were deeply appreciated. Director, Don Muth, put it this way, "One hundred percent of the donations received go toward the purchase of materials used in the construction and shipping of the PETs. There are no administrative costs! All labor is by volunteers and many of the tools and machines used in their construction are donated.

Mr. Muth reiterated that they welcome visits to the workshop. Please call if you would like a tour of the facilities. Volunteers are needed to build PETs. This can be done at either your workshop or theirs. They would be glad to help anyone in making parts or complete assemblies. For more information on this mission, please visit their website at www.petnyej.org. This also has a link to the PET International website.

School Bags

Since the fair, several youngsters and some of the young at heart decorated and filled school bags for distribution in the

coming school year. The youngest helper happily thought she was making a school bag for herself. When delicately told it was to be a present (for some total stranger halfway around the globe) she became even more cheerful. Small hands, big heart!

Bake Sale

Many thanks to bake sale participants who made the food table at the Halcott Fair one of the most successful ever. The next bake sale is on election day. Let us know if you have a special request and we'll try to fill it.

God's Rubies

In a recent Bible study, there was a discussion about what heaven would be like. In terms of appearance, the closest our imaginations could come to the beauty described by John in the book of Revelation was the stunning contents of the gem rooms found in the Smithsonian Institution and New York's Museum of Natural History. Collected in these locations are huge chunks of dazzling minerals and semi precious gemstones in every conceivable color, causing the first time viewer to gasp not only at their size and brilliance, but at this sudden realization: such magnificence can be but a mere hint of heaven's beauty.

Funny, isn't it, that the same riches which adorn heaven are part of this earth that God created. They are tucked away in the very foundation of the planet we mortals inhabit. Down here, they go unseen. They are hidden deep in the darkness underground, made visible only with great effort and for the wealth they can provide. When first extracted from the depths -- often at considerable risk or expense -- they look much like ordinary stones. They must then be polished, a time consuming and abrasive process, not unlike what people experience during the trials of life. Once polished, however, they still pale without proper illumination.

Ah, illumination! The difference between earthly rubies and heavenly rubies is not to be found in their origins or workmanship. It is found in the Lightsource! It is God's radiance, as reflected on Moses' face after Sinai, that *really* beautifies heaven. Gemstones and golden streets serve to enhance the light of God's presence. But they are not the substance of heaven. What makes heaven's house a home is the presence of the One whose greeting is,"Welcome home!"