Notes from the President

This will be my last note to you all as president of NAPgA. Congratulations to Rachel Suomela for being voted in as a new board member, and also to Larry Robinson who was elected to serve a second term. Both will start three-year terms this January. They will join the four other existing board members -- Jim Bennett, Mike Smith, Charlie Goggin and Jan Privratsky -- and I am confident the new board will do a great job. I hope to continue as an active member of NAPgA; this is an organization that I really care about and have devoted a lot of time and energy to the last seven years. Our recent bylaw change also passed. This change allows the position of treasurer to be either an elected board member or an appointed member.

Membership Renewal -- Now is the time to renew your membership to NAPgA, and to talk to all your friends into becoming new members! Your membership is vital to our organization. It only costs $15 per year for single, $20 for family, $10 for associate or $500 for a lifetime membership. Please show your support for NAPgA by renewing now; we've even made it easier by letting you pay via PayPal, napga@hisurfer.net. To join or renew, go to the website at www.napga.org, click on 'About NAPgA' and follow the links to the membership form. For those of you without access to a computer, please mail your dues to NAPgA Treasurer, PO Box 170166, Boise, ID 83717-0166. Our membership numbers are increasing, and we need to continue to grow in order to have a voice in things that affect goatpacking nationwide. Please renew now!

Calendars -- this year's calendar project was a success, and we sold out of our first-ever 2008 Packgoat Calendar. Sabine is already starting to think about the next calendar, so start going through those pictures and pick out a few to send in. The pictures need to look good when blown up to 8.5 x 11 inches, so they need to be high-resolution.

Cascade PG Club Outing!
The Cascade Packgoat Club in Oregon held its Annual Meeting and Hike on November 17th, 2007. 8 brave souls and 8 even braver packgoats endured the weather to enjoy a beautiful hike at House Rock Campground on the Santiam Pass. Attending were: Carolyn Eddy, Jean Kelsey, Alice Beberness and Troy, Janet Lamberson, Jim and Sandy Amos, and Jan Privratsky.

The temperature was mild but the rain alternated from a drizzle to a downpour. Normal Oregon weather, right? Part of our hike was on the well-maintained Santiam Wagon Road, part was a side trip to the waterfall, and part was on the loop down to House Rock Campground. House Rock Campground is located at the confluence of Sheep Creek and the South Santiam River and has interesting rock formations and a cave.

After the hike we had lunch and our annual meeting at The Point restaurant across from Foster Reservoir. We were joined there by Michael and Stephanie Powell. Stephanie recently had knee surgery so wasn’t able to hike with us. After lunch and a brief meeting we were treated to Goat Cheese Cheesecake prepared by Sandy Amos, Yum!

To everyone on this list who has ever helped anyone or their goat.
To the folks who create trail magic for others to enjoy.
For the goats who make our lives on the trail and at home easier, more humorous, more serene and just better in all the ways that count.
To good friends both near and far, even those we have never met,
you are a blessing in our lives and you make it richer, fuller, better.
To the companions, living and dead who have enriched our lives,
taught us, loved us when we were unlovable, and appreciated us for who we are.
For all our blessings, large and small, we are so very lucky.

Happy Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Years!

Charlie Goggin and the gang at Lightfoot Packgoats

And from Tony Nastansky, a commonly overlooked benefit of goats!

A lady in the office this morning commented that she had a new perfume on. She stated if it bothered me, to let her know. I said, “it’s OK, I have goats.”

Tony

From the Goat Pen
photos, around 2000 x 3000 pixels. Digital photos work best. We will contact you later about details of where to send your photos. When sending in photos, please also send some details of who took the photo, and where it was taken. Sabine would also like to add some pearls of “Goat Wisdom” to the calendars, so be thinking about that as well.

**Pedigree Project** -- At the December board meeting there was discussion on starting a pedigree project for breeders who are breeding specifically for packgoats. Carolyn Eddy and Charlie Goggin will be working on this. This would serve to keep track of bloodlines, hereditary traits, and so forth and could be useful to those who are breeders and purchasers of packgoats. It would be especially useful for breeders (like me!) who cross dairy with meat goats, which makes for goats that are ineligible for registration in ADGA or meat goat registries. Right now this is in the discussion phase; we will keep you posted on further developments.

**Rendezvous** -- Clay Zimmerman of Utah ([uintapackgoats@qwest.net](mailto:uintapackgoats@qwest.net)) will be hosting the 2008 National rendezvous in NE Utah, probably near Sheep Creek Lake, which was the location of the 2004 rendezvous. He would like to continue the trail work project started in 2004. The date isn’t finalized, but he would like to have it the third or fourth weekend in June. So start making plans to attend Goatstock 2008! I know Clay will do a great job, and he makes great pancakes! Last time Vernal, Utah welcomed us with open arms, and this is a gorgeous, remote area perfect for goatpacking. Contact Clay if you would like to help.

We are also tentatively planning an outing in the Valle Vidal in north-central New Mexico. John Kollerman is interested in meeting with some area land managers and doing something to promote packgoats. There are a few areas in New Mexico closed to packgoats due to concerns about endangered desert bighorn, but this area is open. So you members near the Four Corners area, or anyone who cares to come, please consider coming! No date is set yet, but we will make sure it doesn’t conflict with the Utah rendy. If you are interested in attending, contact me at [jhuffaker@rmi.net](mailto:jhuffaker@rmi.net).

Dianne Carlton recently posted an e-mail to the packgoat list, regarding some upcoming research on goats. As quoted on the website, “Your input is needed to help identify the most important issues facing the U.S. goat industry. In 2009, the USDA’s National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) will launch the Goat 2009 study, the first national look at the U.S. goat industry. However, before the study begins, NAHMS is conducting a needs assessment that seeks information from goat producers and industry stakeholders. This information will be used to develop the study’s objectives. Participation in the needs assessment phase is quick and easy. Either complete the short questionnaire directly on the web or download it and mail it in.

[http://www.cvmbs.colostate.edu/aphi](http://www.cvmbs.colostate.edu/aphi)

I would encourage everyone to take a few minutes to fill out this needs assessment survey. For those of you receiving this newsletter via snail mail, I’ve attached a paper copy of the survey for you to fill out and mail in. The survey didn’t take long to do, and it’s a chance for goatpackers to submit their two-cents worth about health issues that impact our wethers that could possibly be researched. There has been very little goat-specific research done; we have very few drugs with labeling and dosage for goats, few (if any) wormers labeled for goats, and very little research into urinary calculi, CAE, CL, and other diseases that impact us. It’s encouraging to see that someone is finally recognizing that goats are a separate species that deserve some consideration. Although packgoats are a small sector of the goat industry, I would still encourage everyone to provide some input. Otherwise nothing will ever be done to address our concerns.

Finally, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a blessed 2008, from cold and snowy NE Colorado.

Carpe Diem!

Jan Huffaker

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**Beware the Evil Baling Twine!**

I have some opinions on baling twine. It is *NOT* an inanimate object, as some people believe.

It is a living, breathing organism.

How do I know this?

First of all, it moves. I find twine all over the yard, in the goat pens, miles away from where it was supposed to be! The only explanation is it got up and moved in the night.

Second of all, it reproduces. And it’s like worms, it only takes one. You can pick up all your baling twine and burn it, but if you leave one little piece behind, the next day there are a dozen pieces laying around that had to have reproduced in the night. And moved to various locations, even though you had religiously picked up every piece the day before.

Also, it is malevolent. When I walk across the yard, the stuff leaps up and wraps around my feet to trip me up. It also does a kamikaze thing and crawls under the lawn mower so it can get wrapped around the blade. Even though you picked up every piece the day before. So beware the evil baling twine :))

Carpe Diem!

Jan Huffaker

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Hi All,

This is going to be kind of a long post but I wanted to share my recent scary experience with a heated stock tank.

It started snowing Saturday night around 5pm. It didn’t stop until Sunday night around 9pm when it warmed up and turned to rain. Before it turned to rain we had waist-deep snow. My husbands 4x4 ranger died in the middle of the driveway while trying to get out and I had to ride my 13h pony to the neighbors to ask if they could plow us out and tow the truck out of the way so we could try to get the car out to go to town for truck parts.

The snow was so deep that I was dragging my toes in the snow while riding. At that time it was still only 19 degrees and the snow was real light and fluffy so Magic was not having to much trouble and seemed to enjoy the outing.

We spent all day getting plowed out, shoveling to get the plow truck unstuck and shoveling our roof and the bunny shed roof and the neighbors trailer house roof. Plus washing through waist deep snow to take water and feed to the goats, ponies and rabbits. Needless to say, school has been canceled for today.

So, here is where I get to the part about my stock tank. I have a 75-gallon Rubbermaid stock tank with a submersible heater that installs in the drain plug. This tank is situated outside in between the “Chuckwagon” tarp/cattle panel shelters that I have for the ponies. This way the snow sliding off goes into the tank and melts, thus helping me make fewer trips with a bucket or running a hose. I run an extension cord from the tank and across the front yard to an outside plug-in near my front porch.

It snowed so much the tank was literally buried. The ponies could not get through the snow to get to the tank. It was about 7pm and really dark and still snowing heavily. I was standing by the tank just on the outside of the fence pushing more snow into the tank and in the process I must have put pressure on the power cord right where it goes into the tank.

That’s when it happened. A huge blinding flash of light came up from under the snow and the power in our house went off momentarily. I jumped back and ran to unplug the tank. I guess I must have shorted it out.

Now here is the really scary part. Apparently, we did not blow any breakers in the house. My husband was a half-mile away shoveling the neighbors roof and saw the flash of light and the power flickered at the house he was at. He thought a transformer had sparked somewhere. I later was talking to a neighbor 2 miles down the road who said her power had flickered around the same time. Apparently, I caused a momentary black out in my entire neighborhood.

They tell me I should be dead. All 4 of my dogs and both of my ponies were standing in the belly deep snow right there with me when it happened.

I didn’t feel a thing... I was wearing sorrel boots and a snow suit which I had just finished drying out before going outside so there is some explanation for me but my dogs and the ponies should have felt something you would think.

Anyway, the moral of the story is: Be sure those stock tank heaters are in good working order and plugs are secure and out of the way of any damage or tension. If I had actually had my hand in the water when it shorted out I would likely be dead. I won’t be using the tank again. I’ll have to replace it before I feel safe. I know extension cords are a no-no for stock tanks but I don’t have any outside plug-ins that are close enough to the tank and I don’t have a barn yet so I have to make do with what I have. I’ll be upgrading to a heavier extension cord for sure and I plan to secure the tank and zip-tie the cord to the fence to prevent this from happening again. I will also be putting some kind of protection over the cord where it goes into the tank to keep snow from actually contacting that area and I will seal the extension cord connection with plumbers tape to prevent moisture from getting into the plug.

I would love any other suggestions to make my set-up safer.

Be safe this winter.

Glenna
On October 24, 2007 we organized our first paid packgoat trip. A group of IT-people from Frankfurt had learned about goatpacking and wanted to try it, they said, as an alternative to “bungee-jumping.”

It all started with the idea of a one-day trip through the Vogelsberg but already the definition of a one-day trip that I had was different from their ideas and so it went with almost all aspects of the trip (length, starting time, chosen trails, etc.).

However, despite all changes made to accommodate the group, we started cheerfully on a partly sunny, partly cloudy Saturday morning after introducing the goats and how to behave around them.

I had chosen Nero, Nox and Brownie to carry the miscellaneous loads – ranging from water bottles and snacks to emergency blankets – and took Oliver and Nellie with us for training purposes. Oliver was also supposed to act as a backup because he had already started his pack training with lighter loads.

We met outside of Dirlammen to have enough parking space for all the vehicles and made out towards the forest. The trip would follow easy and well-established trails to make it easier on the participants that weren’t used to outdoor trips. Most of the group came well prepared with sturdy shoes or boots and weather-proof clothing but two – a couple – wore street shoes and city clothing (nobody understood why). I also offered walking sticks to the group which where gladly accepted.

The start didn’t go as well as expected because the goats where unsure who to follow, as the previous packing trips we had done had been for groups up to 4 or 5 people, not 25 (20 adults, 5 kids). I told to group to move on and stayed for a while in the back of the group to give the goats time to adjust to the new situation. They did fine after a few hundred meters and we started to pick up the pace of the group.

We had offered to cook for the group and so I had already spent the evening before preparing a stew which my husband Thomas would bring with the car to the meeting point. We had wanted to cook on the trail but the group didn’t want to meet that early and with the days already so short and the uncertain weather we choose this solution.

The meeting point for the break was an old graveyard, called “Totenköppel”. It’s also a good lookout point over the whole region on clear days. As the photos show we didn’t have one. But the location is nice itself. The graveyard is no longer in active use but there’s an old chapel on it (rebuilt in 1729 on older ruins) and the graves are so-called clan graves – meaning that every clan/family had their own space for burials and people who died more recently were buried in the graves of their ancestors. The Totenköppel has been in use since Roman times as place of worship for one of the German tribes called Chatten and in Christian time as graveyard and for reading masses. The legend states that bishop Bonifatius preached there on his journey to Fulda, and that the rain water collected in the chapel has healing properties.

As the speed of the group was faster than expected we arrived early and I had to call Thomas to check his progress on the stew. He was supposed to drive home after we started and re-warm the meal, pack it into the car and meet us at the lunch rendezvous point. He was on the way but needed a few more minutes so I unpacked the snacks for the group. I also had to repack the loads of the goats because Brownie had gone lame about a half mile ago and he would return home in the car with Thomas.

Fortunately we cooked enough for all the people and after reloading the goats – Oliver had to take over now – we started for the second part of the trip.

A few people of the group had stated their wish to shorten the trip a bit. We had anticipated that and chosen two alternative routes for the way back already.

We skirted a village and had to walk for a few minutes along a road but then got back on the trail, now no longer through the forest but over open land. The goats were doing fine and had found their places in the group and their special people to walk with. Especially the kids had grown fond of them and deeply regretted that Brownie had to be taken home (it turned out later that he had managed to lodge a wooden splinter between the wall of one claw and the soft part, and sadly I didn’t see that on my first inspection).

I mostly navigated by map now because I had never been to this part of the Vogelsberg before, all our previous trips had led in the other directions. So it wasn’t very surprising that the trail shown in the map ended suddenly on a fenced feedlot. This is a familiar thing to happen in the Vogelsberg as many trails are no longer maintained by the local trekking organisations and ploughed under or left to fall back to nature.

Luckily we could turn left for a few hundred meters and take another trail which led us only a small distance away from our original direction. By now the group had found its own pace – the trained hikers in the front, the normal walkers in the middle and a few stragglers in the back with me somewhere in-between, checking that the goats kept up and calling directions to the group in the front. Same with the goats: Nero, Nox and Nellie...
as always with the front group, Oliver, the all-time straggler with the group in the back. We had to cross the road that we had followed before a second time and then moved along the forest line passing pastures with sheep and cattle back to the meeting point. As we came close to home, Oliver began to fall behind – he grew tired. It also didn't help that the kids had taken pity on him and started to stop for him, pet him, get him treats and making a big mess over “the poor, poor goat”. He revelled in it and grew slower with every minute.

So I turned back to fetch him and was again, as so often, surprised by the competence of Nero. He's a difficult goat with strong personality and we've had our clashes in the past and still have, but he's a heck of a packgoat and a definite herd leader. So there he was, with the group, Nox was already galloping away because he had spotted the cars and Thomas as I was turning back to get Oliver. I could see him turning his head to and fro, moving a few steps in the direction of the cars, looking back, thinking about the best thing to do, moving towards me, stopping again because Nellie now also ran towards the cars and then finally deciding that “mummy” needed help more and ran towards me! I took the remaining load from Oliver (a few water bottles and some chocolates), loaded them onto Nero and then strunged Oliver to Nero to get him home.

After unloading the goats at the meeting point, dispersing the remaining blankets, etc., and going back to the group to say goodbye to everybody, I took the goats in a packstring and walked them back about a mile back to the pasture. Needless to say, that we all were tired but satisfied that evening. We had finished our first paid-for trip and every member of the group left with a happy feeling about this remarkable experience. We learned a lot and will spend the winter to working out the few kinks.

Freebie The Goat Becomes A Bird Dog
By Rich Davis

We love to be on the trail at daybreak. Among the many reasons causing us to abandon our warm beds and get out early is avoidance of the "horse people" and their loose dogs. Being the first on the trail lets us see the deer, bear and our favorite, the blue grouse before they are bedded down or frightened away for the day. Maybe the most important reason for an early start, at least in the warm summer months, is to beat the heat and insects and rattlesnakes of mid-day.

In north-central Washington State, our little farm is in a beautiful, remote valley called the “Methow”. This valley is the drainage for several rivers and streams whose origins are in the snow and glacier covered mountains enclosing the valley. These mountains cover hundreds of square miles of remote back country stretching to the Canadian border and beyond. Several large wilderness areas including the Pasayten and the Chelan-Sawtooth are included in this big country, as well as the North Cascades National Park. The rest is made up mostly of the Okanogan National Forest. We live along the Methow River for which the valley is named, and our farm, the Red Roof Ranch, is surrounded by the shrub-steppe foothills below these mountains. Most of our daily hikes take place in these foothills, where we follow the wildflowers to the high country as the snow line recedes each spring. Wildlife abounds, especially mule deer, as this valley is a major wintering area for thousands of these animals escaping the harsh winters in the high country. Sage and Bitterbrush, Ponderosa pines and Bunchgrass make up a canvas where nature paints a glorious picture of wildflowers, multicolored rock formations and tumbling streams, with a backdrop of the mysterious mountains, all beggig to be explored.

This trip I have decided to take our three eager goat-boys Herc, Sal and Freebie on a combined grouse hunting, fishing expedition into the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness. The trail to our destination lake is long and steep, but with most trailheads leading out from the valley, is only an hours drive or less from home. However on a typical September morning temperatures are in the mid-thirties, a bit chilly for critters with short summer coats to ride for an hour in the back of an open, windy truck. Thus we have pulled one of our favorite tricks, leaving home the evening before the hike and camping at the trailhead.. There are several advantages to this beyond an early start and avoiding the cool morning drive. I can pack the boys panniers the day before, sleep in a bit longer and avoid whacking a deer leaving the alfalfa fields on the valley floor. By bringing an extra cot, a prepared dinner and breakfast, plus a thermos of coffee, all to be tossed in the truck before hitting the trail, it is possible to saddle up and take off early without repacking panniers and packsack.

The trail we take follows a tributary of the Twisp river, climbing over three thousand feet in around six miles to our destination lake. As we climb we stop frequently to eat the many huckleberries, wild raspberries and thimbleberries along the trail. Once the goats see what I am doing they become tough competition. One advantage to hiking this area is the abundance of water, as we don't have to add gallons to packs. In our
winter home in Arizona, water becomes the major and most important part of our packs. Here in the mountains, even though rain is extremely rare in late summer, the lakes and streams still are carrying the last of the snow runoff. Our pace is steady, but we are always ready to take a scenery break, take a photo, or in many cases to catch my wind. Approaching 70 years of age is a sobering reminder that a person needs to find a few valid excuses to reduce the need to break records getting to the top of some peak or make x-number of miles or elevation gains in a day. Thus we find ourselves struggling up the last couple miles of switchbacks to our destination lake, fingers and lips stained by berries and ready to find a campsite before the heat is upon us. Even though mornings are cool, especially at high elevations here, the daytime temperatures generally reach into the 80’s. Because of this and because we have already been on the trail for four to six hours, lunch at a campsite has always been our goal.

This trip I am chasing a rumor heard from my younger peak-bagging brother, about hundreds of blue grouse feeding on the berries around the lake a couple of weeks before the season opened. I have chased his rumors before and find that the grouse are well tuned into the opening of hunting season and always seem to be off to other parts. This trip will prove to be no different and although we took home our birds, we really worked for them. As is the case with so many of these high mountain lakes accessible by trail, the horse packers have let their animals destroy the vegetation surrounding the lake. We were required to camp almost a quarter of a mile away in order to allow for re-vegetation.

My goats are always happy to get rid of their packs, however, as weary as they appear to be, they always have energy to reassert their hierarchy and race around the campsite, butting heads as I do all the work of setting up our base camp. They do expect their treat, but the old lemon water in the eye trick has taught them to stay away while I am busy – sometimes. We are blessedly alone and we all feel a little grazing and a short nap is in order. I retreat to my tent to escape the late summer bugs and made a big deal out of the bird, probably frightening them a bit with my curious behavior.

As we awake I can look down on the gorgeous lake from camp and see the tell-tale rings of rising trout. That is always a magnet and I just happen to have my fishing gear in the goat packs. Carrying a cushion to sit on, and a bit of gear, we head for the glistening water and locate a nice boulder near a dropoff. This lake is surrounded, except at it’s outlet end, by steep sloping light granite cliffs with large boulders of the same material along the shoreline. Within minutes a very nice fish struck and we had our first dinner fish. The boys are very curious about this strange activity and the sight of a fish flopping about always brings them running to investigate. A few sniffs, however and they turn their heads in disgust. On the next cast another larger fish. Whoops, now I have too much to eat. These fish run up to and beyond eighteen inches and are intensely colored mountain cutthroat trout. This fishing is just too good to not try for an even bigger fish that I can hopefully throw back. Again it only took a few minutes and my line screamed off the reel. This was a huge fish, well over twenty inches in length. It made several runs then headed towards me faster than I could reel. Just as it came into view in the crystal clear water it saw the shoreline with three goats and a half naked old man and turned back into the depths in fear or disgust. Leader snapped and freedom was attained. Time to quit and doze in the sun before any more of these beauties are damaged or killed.

Rumors aside, up to this point all the storied grouse had not shown themselves and we only heard a few flying in the thick forest on the trail up. As we returned to camp I heard the familiar whirring of grouse flight in the cliffs above us. After putting the trout in our collapsible cooler, I loaded the shotgun and we ascended the very steep slopes to the cliff top. Several birds flew, startling the goat boys. All behind trees, I had little chance of a shot, but when the chance came I fired and a bird dropped, of course tumbling to the bottom where we had begun. The boys are used to shooting around the ranch as we are plagued by marmots digging under buildings and eating our garden plants. This was different and they were quite startled and concerned as to which way they should scatter. We saw no more birds and descended to retrieve our only trophy. As usual the bird was so well camouflaged that we searched for a long time in the blueberry brush before finding some feathers. The boys were so curious about my searching and had not associated the shot with the grouse. They sniffed the feathers then watched as I clawed through the brush to the bird. I let out a whoop and made a big deal out of the bird, probably frightening them a bit with my curious behavior.

Back to camp and a long evening scratching the boys in turn and reading by headlamp. These nights can be long and I always try to stay awake as long as possible. Difficult sometimes when the body is weary and a wee nip and full tummy work together to sedate a person into sleep. We always rise early, prepare breakfast and get on the trail. I love mornings in the mountains and want to get where I can see the sunrise and always hope to catch animals grazing on the high slopes. This morning we climbed towards the tree line following a game trail to
a pass between the higher peaks. The trail led through meadows, colored in oranges, rich browns and golds by the dry vegetation remaining after the high country summer. The berry bushes had turned red at this elevation and the last remaining larch trees before tree line were already changing to their yellow-gold fall colors before needle drop. We had seen quite a few blue grouse fly out of these trees way ahead of us and I was getting a bit discouraged. With the last grove of trees before of us before the ascent to the summit, I saw the dark shapes of still roosting birds. Goats are not much for stalking, but we slowed our pace and slowly worked up to the tree. A bird flew, a shot fired, a bird fell, then an explosion of birds left the trees around us. The goatboys now had figured out what the game was. A couple of birds flew into a neighboring tree. Freebie, my most curious and intelligent–by–far–goat looked at me, looked at the birds and almost seemed to say come on Dad shoot. As the birds fell to the steep slope flopping their wings, we raced down the hill so we would not lose them over the side. Approaching another patch of stunted junipers where the birds seemed to end up, I found bird number one and let the boys sniff it. Freebie just would not leave it alone as he seemed fascinated by the smell and curious about the procedure. I put it in his daypack and began the search for the last bird. He followed me into the brush wondering what his role was. The other two goats, less interested, grazed on the dry grasses and tasted a bit of everything. I looked back to Freebie and he had a feather stuck to his nose. I praised him and took the few steps to where he was standing and there in the thick junipers was our last bird. A coincidence? I did not think so as this goat is a Mensa candidate. And as many trips since have proved, Freebie will always look at me when a grouse is seen and question whether I am going to do something about that bird. He will stare into the trees then look at me. If it is grouse season and I shoot, he knows exactly where to help me look. I have no hope of his ever retrieving, but it gives me much pleasure to know at least one of my boys is enjoying the hunt as I do.

The rest of the day was spent climbing and descending into other lovely lakes and tarns, napping in the warm sun in a meadow by a small stream and watching my companions graze and explore. Whenever we approached another summit the boys raced ahead to see the view and frighten me with their daring approaches to edges above the steep cliffs below.

I raised my packers because I love to hike, have few people to hike with and find that the body does not handle heavy overnight packs on steep mountain trails the way it used to. Additionally, I love to paint the landscape in oils. Way too much weight to make a trip pleasurable. This day the clouds from a brewing weather system made the perfect background for a painting, so our day ended with a small painting and happy tired hunters.

Grouse in foil for dinner and a wary eye on the changing weather. It can snow in this high country in early September and I did not want to be risking our comfort or the chance of hypothermic goats from a wind and rainstorm in the low temperatures we were now experiencing. Thus hours before daylight, with all signs of stars obscured by heavy clouds and a stiff wind blowing in the alpine trees above us, I packed up the reluctant boys and headed for the safety of the valley floor and our trusty diesel truck. We were home and unpacked by noon, all signs of the storm behind us and the eastern Washington sun beating down on our tired bodies, but happy to know that three beautiful packgoats have maintained my ability to do the things I love.

Helpful Teachers
I just came in from raking up waste hay and manure but a storm is coming so it might have to stay piled until I can get out and pick it up this weekend. This may not happen, however, as company is coming for Christmas and the storms are supposed to continue. They tend to rain, then snow, then freeze so hard that my nice, neat piles are literally hard as rocks.

I just wanted to let everyone know that I never do anything in the goat pen without help. For one thing, my gang of goats seems determined to teach me the virtues of patience; I imagine how shallow and quick to anger I would be if my full wheel barrow of heavy, wet, manure and waste hay were to just stay upright, every single time! I would never have the joy of picking it all up, AGAIN, loading it just right, again and then dumping it. A job well done is worth doing twice, right? How much patience can anyone learn when their wheel barrow never has a goat in it, on it, under it, knocking it over or pushing it aside so they can be petted? NONE.

Patience is a virtue.
Also, think how terrible it would be if life were all work and no scratches? That is no way to live! One must stop and scratch their goats if they are to understand the true joy of those hideous faces of ecstasy! There is no life without love and therefore the goats are teaching me the value to stop and enjoy the truly important things in life. Then there is Zulie, right when I was nearly done raking the pen she and the other ladies are in, she went to her favorite “cuddle” spot and invited me to lay with her. How can I refuse that eager, innocent face, wagging tail and cute little hum of hers? It is very difficult. So, I put my rake aside and sat down. Soon Zulie was laying beside me, chewing her cud and looking profoundly happy. The rest of the herd wandered in and we were one big happy, goatie, family, all hanging out together because that is what herds do.

Make time for your friends, be a loyal friend and don’t be afraid to show your feelings to those you love.

Aint goats grand?
Charlie Goggin Lightfoot Packgoats
When we moved to our place three years ago, there was a large old rhododendron bush in the backyard where the goats were supposed to spend the winter. Knowing its poisonous qualities we fenced it out right on the spot but didn’t get permission from the landlord to dig it out and re-plant someplace else on the property. At that time I still foolishly believed the story that goats won’t eat what’s poisonous or not good for them and most of the winter passed without any problems. When Spring came nearer and I started to get the goats used to fresh grass again, I also let them browse in the area of the yard that we had fenced off during winter although under supervision. For the first few days that went well, but near the weekend one of the goats, Saeta, – Icelandic for “Sweetie” – grabbed a mouth full of rhododendron leaves when passing the bush. I kept her under supervision but didn’t do anything, still believing that she would not – in clear mind – eat a large enough quantity of a poisonous plant to make her sick – silly me! Next day I found her frothing from the mouth and vomiting, clearly sick and with the rumen shut down. We called a vet. Well, he couldn’t do much. He administered a rumen starter, antibiotics and some vitamins and told us to wait and see. When he was gone I hit the books about treating goats with homoeopathic remedies to come up with a plan B. It’s in McLeod – Homoeopathic Remedies for Goats – that a found suggestions on how to treat rhododendron poisoning. For someone who knows the principle of homoeopathic treatment it would be obvious that the most fitting remedy in that case would have been Rhododendron – the homoeopathic remedy itself. But I didn’t have that in my kit so I went with two of the alternative remedies McLeod recommended: Rhus toxicodendron (poison ivy), Nux vomica and Belladonna. All three are quite poisonous plants itself, therefore the homoeopathic remedy extracted from the plants has good healing powers. I had learned that for a remedy to work in a case of poisoning it should at least have the same, better more poisonous properties than the original poison – speaking in homoeopathic terms! Rhus toxicodendron and Nux vomica were used to battle the toxic effects of the rhododendron per se and Belladonna to counteract the most dangerous toxic result in rhododendron poisoning – bradycardia, the slowing of the heartbeat down to a dangerous level. Rus toxicodendron was given in a 200M potency, Nux vomica in a 30M and Belladonna in a D12 (that’s a potency solely used in Germany, it translates approx. to 12M). Saeta was in bad shape. She continued to vomit, which was good in one way because she got rid of the poison still in her rumen but bad in another because it depleted her fluid and mineral reserves. By this time she remained standing right next to the water bucket and emptied it that day (80 litres) almost completely by herself. A few hours later the vomiting stopped and she lay down, her rumen still was not working and she started to slip into hypothermia. I put a blanket on her and wrapped a hot-water bottle into a towel and put that next to her under the blanket. It didn’t have much effect when I checked in on her about an hour later and she seemed to slip. I mentioned then that her left ear was slightly colder than her right ear (both ears weren’t at the temperature they’re supposed to be) so I started to massage her ears, concentrating on the left. She acted unwillingly when I started working the left ear, I assume the reflex zones in her ear that correspond to the rumen where quite sensitive to touch and stimulation. Also mentioned that it was much harder to keep the left ear warm after the massage. Once I had stimulated the right ear this kept warm while the left one kept getting cold. And here’s the “funny” thing. After the left ear finally warmed up for good, she started eating, pooping and passed a large quantity of urine. I had to repeat the ear massage an hour later, after that she started ruminating and improving so that by evening she was almost back to her former self. We thought that this would be our only experience with rhododendron poisoning but this autumn we had another bout with this plant – again the bush in our backyard. We had learned from the experience with Saeta and restricted the goats’ access to that area in the yard completely but as we weren’t allowed to re-plant it, the fence of the winter pasture would still run near that bush. During the summer a few of our goats had developed the nasty habit of fence jumping and one afternoon when I returned from visiting a friend I found a group of them in the restricted part of the yard – they had jumped the fence there. I put them all back and checked the plants for evidence of eating. As the grass there was still high enough and also some edible plants and trees (plum, elder, pine) to eat from and I couldn’t find any evidence that they had eaten from the rhododendron I left the matter alone. But we weren’t going to be spared this time. The fence jumping happened on Wednesday so when I found one of our wethers – Nox – with a shut down rumen on Sunday morning I didn’t make the connection to rhododendron poisoning. He had had problems with urinary calculi just a year ago so that was the first thing that came to mind. My husband was the one who noted him vomiting and then everything else fell in place – rhododendron again! But...
I had learned from the previous episode and since then always kept Rhododendron as homoeopathic remedy in my emergency kit and I gave him a dose of Rhododendron 200M but unfortunately without much effect. I assume that I would have had to treat him much more aggressive – more doses in shorter intervals – because of the long time the poison had to get into his system (4 days).

As he started to get worse we loaded him into the car and drove him to the clinic of a veterinary university near us for treatment. First they disregarded my indication that he had access to rhododendron earlier in the week and concentrated on possible urinary calculi. The surgery was already a “done deal” for later in the night but apparently they decided to wait until he improved and became more stable for the surgery because when I called the next morning they told me that his blood work no longer supported the theory of urinary calculi but that of poisoning of some kind.

He wasn’t in good shape. They had been able to restore the fluids and minerals he lost but he wasn’t able to digest food and there was also the suspicion that he may have inhaled some of the vomit into his lungs and could develop pneumonia from that.

Well, he pulled through, without any long-term damage – so far.

And to make that story complete, two other goats jumped the fence again just the day after we had driven Nox to the clinic. I was watching them in disbelief while I was filling the water buckets and saw them start without hesitation towards the rhododendron bush. Luckily I could deter them with a shock of cold water out of the hose but not before both had the chance to gobble down some rhododendron leaves.

“Well, great! Here go the next goats to the clinic!” I thought but then decided to give the homoeopathic way another chance and to observe if they would get sick. I started both on one dose of Rhododendron 200M per day, this time diluted in water for repeated doses and repeated the dose once a day for four days. They didn’t show any symptoms of poisoning.

This story is no scientific paper on the successful treating of poisonings with homoeopathic remedies but, in my opinion, shows that the homoeopathic treatment did have and can have a positive effect.

In the first case with Saeta, the vet didn’t give us much hope that she would recover any time soon but she did within a day. With Nox we learned that once the poison is in the system the treatment must be much more aggressive but the one dose Rhododendron may have had some effect after all because the vets in the clinic also didn’t have much hope that he would pull through. And with the other two goats one can of course say that they didn’t get enough of the rhododendron bush to become sick – and may be right. But on the other hand the homoeopathic remedy may as well have worked.

I’m not inclined to have another episode with rhododendron poisoning but I will keep all these experiences in mind in case it happens again.

I also recommend strongly getting accustomed to the principles of homoeopathy before attempting to cure something that serious as a poisoning with homoeopathic remedies alone and in case of doubt always to contact a vet.

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**Treasurer’s Report**

**Recent Transactions**

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**Addendum to Treasurer’s Report**

One of the things I forgot to include in the Treasurer’s Report that I presented to the board at our last meeting was the PayPal balance. It currently stands at: **$683.73**
The NAPgaA Website Philosophy

The NAPgaA website was designed with a few definite features, such as the Photo Gallery and Calendar, but much of the site was done with the philosophy that the webmaster would give us the basic framework and we would fill in the blanks.

Accordingly I have filled in a lot of the site — basically. However I look on this as just a start. In several sections, specifically Packgoat Destinations, General Information and Goat Health Issues, we now need the membership to flesh out what I have started.

Packgoat Destinations especially, is an area that will not have much other than the few places I have included for Idaho, if folks don’t send me input for their area. I need write-ups and pictures similar to what I have already included for Idaho. If you look at what I have done you can get an idea of what is needed for your state. Please help with this project and lets get a lot of destinations listed where folks that are not-so-familiar with packgoating can get ideas of where to take their new animals.

About the website -- And Instructions

The new NAPgaA website has been up for some time now, but it has taken quite a time to get it fully "socialized." I think we have that pretty much accomplished now so much of this newsletter will be devoted to at least some of the "ins" and "outs" of the new website. There are a few areas that will continue to be a "work in progress" so will continue to improve with time.

Home Page:
The first thing that comes up at http://www.napga.org naturally is the Home page. It is fairly straightforward, with the main menu on the left and the logo in the center. Special notices will be on top of the logo and in red color. The Log-In tab is at the bottom left-hand corner of the Home page.

Logging-In the First Time: If you have never logged into the web site, you will need to obtain a password. At this point obtaining your password is done this way:

1) Type your last name in the Username block with the first letter of your last name capitalized. It needs to be this way so it agrees with the member list.
2) Leave the Password block blank and click on “Lost Password” link which is just under the Login button. Your password will be mailed to the e-mail address that NAPgaA has on record for you.

Subsequent Log-Ins: After you obtain your password your Username will be the same, the last name entered with the first letter capitalized, and the password you were given in the Password block. This should give you access to the “Members Only” section of the website as well as those sections that are reserved for only members such as the By-Laws and Packgoat Destinations.

MainMenu: This will be on the left and will have all the normal website selections except those that are reserved for Members Only.

About NAPgaA:

Passwords -- passwords -- Passwords
Another even better way to get your password is to eMail: napga@hisurfer.net and ask Larry for it!

Membership Application: A downloadable PDF application, as well as information on how to join or renew with PayPal.

By-Laws: Only available if you are a “logged-In NAPgaA Member

Officers & Directors: Names, E-Mails and phones for the NAPgaA Board of Directors.

Board Meetings: Will not display unless you are a logged-In NAPgaA Member

National Brochure: A picture of, and link for, a downloadable PDF for each side of the National Brochure.

Calendar: Anyone can look at the posted events, but only NAPgaA members can post a new event.

Photo Gallery: Anyone can look at the pictures posted here, but you can only generate an album and post pictures if you are a logged-in NAPgaA member.

Classified Ads: Ads can be posted in “For Sale” or “Wanted” Categories. You must forward copy to napga@hisurfer.net and I will post them to the site.

Issues: This section will include items of a current nature that are a concern to Packgoaters.

Links & Special Stuff: If you are a logged-in NAPgaA member, you can post links here in three categories; Packgoats/Supplies, Packgoat Tours, & Packgoat Misc. Any links posted that are not specifically related to Packgoats/Packgoating will not be approved to be posted.

Newsletter: All NAPgaA newsletters will be posted here, but this link will only appear if you are logged-in member.

Members Only: This link will only appear if you are a logged-in Member (Duh!) It will contain a list of members, and a link to change your personal information.

Rendezvous: Rendezvous from the past, and the next upcoming will have their information posted here. Join us for great fun with goats!

Packgoat Destinations: Suggested/possible destinations will be shown here with pictures and some helps for finding the locations. These ideally will be places that members have already taken their goats and therefore are intimately familiar with. Please forward all write-ups and pictures to napga@hisurfer.net This section will only be available to logged-in NAPgaA members.

General Information: This information will cover all facets of having/owning and using animals for packgoating. This section is already very thorough and I would hope that with the help of the membership it will continue to be refined.

Goat Health Issues: This is a section that is primarily links to information on the normal maladies that goat-owning folks experience. It can be expanded to include information submitted by members.