



Fall/Winter 2009

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# VERMONT'S VOICE

AGRICULTURE

GOVERNMENT

NATURAL BEAUTY

## Our Singing Neighbors

By Johanna Solms

We've always enjoyed coyote concerts, whether it's a lone bark or a howl or the full chorus—especially in early summer when the pups are still pretty disorganized about their language. The call and response of up to four different packs in our area is sometimes very close, sometimes off over the hills. We often hear the nearest pack being called to gather and then doing a group singalong just before dawn.

Our wonderful senior dog utterly despised coyotes. She went totally nuts bellowing at them, indoors or out, any time they made a sound. For several years, she and our Big Guy had to sleep in our outbuilding or we'd never get any rest from the ruckus. When the dogs went out at night for their bedtime walk, Stoker would rush to the edge of the lawn and bounce furiously, shouting all the while, getting even more worked up over the echoes of her own barks. Even towards the end, blind and barely walking, she still protected her turf. The coyotes often seemed to interact with her, responding to her threats with calls of their own.

We don't get to enjoy that uproar anymore, because BG has always been more reserved. Most of the time he seems to prefer that the coyotes not notice him so much. Now we have a new pup, and BG is naturally quite protective. We take lil' miss pup out many times a day and in the evening, as well as in the morning before dawn. Especially after dark, BG stands watch and listens, very much aware of the coyotes' proximity and direction, as are we, of course.

The coyotes seem to respect the dogs' marked territorial boundaries. We've never seen or heard a coyote in our yard or found scat on our small (two acre) property, but quite often there is evidence on the road near our driveway, and in the prairie north of us, so we know they come within thirty yards of the house at night.



In the seven years I've lived out here, we've had two puppies, plus two indoor/outdoor cats and several new grandkids, so we certainly have a healthy respect for the "prairie wolves" as they are also known. They are very clever and opportunistic and while there are plenty of mice, voles, rabbits and other prey around here, they are likely always looking out for an easy meal. So the cats have a curfew, too bad, and pups and toddlers are always accompanied.

Coyotes are well adapted to live alongside us here in the Town of Vermont, or, for that matter, almost anywhere. For them, as for us, this is a wonderful environment for living, raising families, hunting, playing, and exploring. We enjoy the near-nightly sounds and rare sightings of coyotes, but Vermont residents who raise sheep, goats, cattle, or chickens are understandably far less enthusiastic about their presence, especially if they have lost a lamb or a calf to these clever predators. Coyotes do help to control mice and rabbits, which can cause habitat degradation and destroy crops.



I believe that with proper mutual respect and caution, coyotes and humans can co-exist. After all, we are the newcomers - they have been in North America for 1.8 million years.

If you'd like to know more about these interesting relatives of our domesticated dogs, the library has material on coyotes for all ages and you'll find plenty of good information and images as well as audio clips of coyote calls on the Web.

# VERMONT'S VOICE

## Renewable Energy: Fern Frame

By David Standfield

We hear frequently these days about the importance of renewable energy sources, as a solution to the problems which will come from dramatic climate change.

In our usually cool Vermont Township, we are blessed by many local energy sources—people like Fern Frame, who warmed many lives and our community before she passed away November 21, 2009 at age 88.

Fern married Glen when she was 17 and they rented a dairy farm from Uncle Rudy Luder where the Hoda farm is today. She worked side by side with Glen on that farm for half of a monthly milk check of \$40, shared with Uncle Rudy. After their first child David was born, they bought their farm on Ryan Road with a loan from another uncle, and Fern continued her milking cows morning and night. She plowed fields, baled hay, tended a large garden and raised chickens and calves as well as three children. She was a practical cook, preparing rabbits, venison, squirrels, beef, chicken accompanied by vegetables from the garden or the pantry.

She became a good deer hunter after a few years of not having much luck, and usually got her deer. Her method? She once said: "I just go to a place, sit down, keep quiet, don't move and a deer comes along, gets close enough and I shoot it." She got her last deer when she was 80 years old.

Fern helped with the elections at the Town of Vermont for over 50 years. She worked for 26 years as a cook in the Mt. Horeb schools and was an active member of area churches all her life. Her youngest, Steve, continued this public service tradition by serving as a supervisor several years and then as Town Chairman for the Town of Vermont.

Fern also channeled her energies into art. She added painting and rose malling to her long passion for needlework. She bought a few ceramic molds and a kiln—"she was like a one woman factory" says her daughter Donna, making trolls and other items and then selling them at Little Norway and the Art Fair.

But with all this physical energy, she seemed to glow from an inside energy source when she spoke with people, family or just visitors. Her hearty laugh warmed many hearts. As one friend said: "I have known and respected Fern for so many years. No matter when or where I would see her, she was always laughing—she brightened everyone's day and would do anything for anyone at any time if she could." We will miss Fern and her special energies that helped warm our lives.

## The Gentle Strength of Farmers

By Jon Urness

There's a handshake that distinctively belongs to a dairy farmer. Knuckles the size of golf balls and a palm, or paw if you will, the width of a small frying pan. And a grip that is at once powerful and gentle. Arnold Forshaug had such a handshake and he certainly passed it on to sons Eric and Rolf.

I stopped up to see Eric during his evening milking on a recent Sunday night. I didn't know exactly when Eric started chores but I was sure it would be early. That's just Eric. So when I arrived at 5:00, sure enough, he had just put on the first milkers. Eric milks about forty-five Holsteins in the old stanchion and tie-stall barn, part of which dates back to before World War I. Once inside though, the walls are gleaming white and you hear the clickety-clack of milking machine pulsators. There are a few empty stalls where calves are tied and one space seems reserved for the mottled grey and black cow dog. He must be a cow dog because he's certainly no watch dog. He did raise an eyebrow though as I entered the barn, interrupting his rest. It had been quite a few years since I had been in the Forshaug dairy barn and was I struck by the cleanliness and pleasantness of the place. And of course there was the bear-paw handshake and welcoming grin of Eric himself.

Eric's one of the remaining half-dozen or so dairy farmers in the Town of Vermont so it was only natural that we compared memories of growing up in that culture. One thing we both agreed on, it seemed like we spent summers doing almost nothing besides baling hay. Eric said he even raised the angst of his teachers when they asked at the beginning of the school year about summer activities. Eric naturally told them he baled hay all summer. His teacher persisted. You must have done something besides baling hay. Eric dryly responded, "Yeah, we baled some straw too."

*More on page 3*



Eric Forshaug, a great dairy farmer and man

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## *Forshaug, continued from page 3*

Eric admits that baling hay was the source of some conflict between himself and his Dad when Eric proposed building a silo to relieve some of the monotony and uncertainty of making hay between summer thunderstorms. A silo, Eric reasoned would shorten the long weeks of baling hay into a few days of chopping haylage. After the silo was built, Arnold was amazed and pleased to see how quickly the hay harvest could be accomplished with a little mechanization.

Eric was reminded of a day some forty years ago, when he was helping the Skalet boys, Jorgen, Grant and Phil make hay. Eric was in the mow and a couple un-named local athletes were employed to unload hay onto the hay elevator. Apparently the bales were coming up very infrequently and far apart. Eric peered out of the mow and noticed the young strappers were pretty well winded. A sort time later, all at once the bales seemed to be coming up the elevator almost back to back. After hustling to stack away the last of the bales, barely able to keep up with the flow of hay bales, Eric slid down out of the mow to find Jorgen Skalet on the hay rack. What happen to the young guys, Eric asked. I sent them home, Jorgen replied. They were wearing out my elevator.

During my visit we were also both reminded of the summer (right around 1965) when Eric's Dad suffered from the effects of a brain tumor and spent many weeks recovering, part of the time in the Mayo clinic. A group of neighbors rallied at the Forshaug farm with hay racks, mowers, rakes, tractors and balers, and filled the barn with hay in about a day. That's what folks did back then.

Finally, as Eric put the milking machines on the last few cows, I said I better be leaving. After a couple more quick anecdotes, Eric agreed and said, I guess we could talk all night.

## Tyrol Basin Gets Ready for Winter

By Chris Coffin

How do you get ready for winter? Loading in wood, cleaning out garden beds or draining mowers might be a few tasks to do. At Tyrol Basin the list includes a multitude of changes and preparations for the busiest time of year.

To start with, in late fall, all the machinery needs maintenance, repairing and servicing. This includes three chair lifts, 4 snow cats and 30 snow making machines. Then, there is the rental ski equipment. All skis must be tuned, sharpened and waxed and the releases checked for safety.

The inside of the main building is transformed from a banquet, restaurant setting to a fast food winter café so skiers and boarders can grab a quick bite between runs. And, finally there is interviewing, hiring and training to do as Tyrol changes from an organization of 3 full time year round and 4-5 part-time employees, to 175 people who do everything from grooming snow to teaching skiing, renting equipment or cooking hamburgers.

Manager Don McKay hopes to have all the slopes covered by Christmas. He likes to have a base layer of 30-36 inches of snow to guard against warm temperatures in March. Snow making will continue throughout the season and probably be a nightly job until January.

Tyrol opened in 1958 and was run by Sandy Stevenson until the spring of 1985. It was re-opened in 1989 by four equal investors. Don McKay was hired at that time and dubs it the "New Tyrol". Since then it has been providing a fun-filled family oriented venue for people from all over the Midwest for skiing, snow boarding and, in the summer months, a place to have events such as weddings or reunions.

The ski season goes until the last Sunday in March. Tyrol holds a post season event during the third weekend in April as well. Don enjoys "creating a venue where people can have fun sliding in the snow." To hear laughter and see people enjoying the ski hill is what he likes the best. All the preparations are well worth the enjoyment he sees.



**Tyrol snow-making machine in action, despite that Vermont Township had gotten 12+ inches of snow the night before!**

# VERMONT'S VOICE

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**Mission Statement:** It is the mission of Vermont's Voice to provide information about our town and articles of interest to the residents of our town in order to promote a sense of community, encourage participation in and understanding of town government, and improve communication among residents. Vermont's Voice is a volunteer, citizen-run publication that encourages and depends on citizen participation in providing information, articles, or suggestions for articles, photos, criticism, and help with mailings. The cost of printing and postage is included in the town budget. Vermont's Voice is not the official voice or viewpoint of the town government.

Look for this issue of the Vermont Voice on the Vermont Web Page! Check it out at <http://www.vermonttown.com>.

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