

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Goats USN

I knew nothing of this until a dear beloved friend mentioned this to me. Sounded very interesting, so here goes:

Goats were once a food source, but became mascots to our Navy. Back in the early days perhaps as far back as when ships were made of wood and men were made of steel, goats and other stock were kept aboard for nourishment of sailors. As it were, not all livestock could adapt well to live aboard ships. Hens even only survived well in good weather. Sheep did not do well at all. However goats adapted well to any kind of weather, didn't get sick and maintained their "sea legs" no matter what. The weather brought down upon the ships of our Navy. Hence goats have a long history with our US Navy. And naturally some goats became beloved mascots of sailors at a later day and time. Sometimes there were goats that were a tad temperamental, as per an account given by Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans when as a junior officer was ordered to milk a not so willing goat on board the Shenandoah in 1873. The goat butted a Marine and a captain's steward, not willing to give up her milk. It required some patience and manpower for those men to obtain goat milk that day!

Into the 20th century goats became mascots. They served well as morale boosters, pets and pals aboard Navy ships, no more needed as sources of food. Would one think that the goats appreciated that change? The US Navy's first official mascot was "El Cid", aboard the Cruiser New York (Armored Cruiser #2). El Cid was later brought to Annapolis for the Army-Navy game. Our men in uniform attribute their win to the presence of El Cid, hence was born the tradition of the glorious goat as US Naval Academy's tradition of their beloved mascot.

In 1893, the Chief Petty Officer rank was established, whereas the goat locker was ongoing as the area where the goats were kept. Then the CPOs were given the responsibility of caring for the goats. From that day forward, the term "Goat Locker" is still used for the CPO quarters, mess and berthing. That term was made "official" in the Bluejackets Manual. Personally I often heard that term used to describe CPOs as "old goats" and the "goat locker" while aboard our USCG Cutter, but in my young naive days, never questioned or bothered to learn that very interesting history. I would imagine, like a lot of modern sailors, they assume that CPOs are just hard headed old goats. Of course that term is a loving, respectable term, given the knowledge of actual history or not. The older CPOs, having matured through the ranks, for the most part are invaluable to our ships and to our young sailors. In retrospect, the CPOs I knew were far advanced in their abilities, experience, and expertise than most officers, who often took credit for what the "OLD GOATS" aboard our sailing vessels did and can do every day, 24/7/365. I can attest to the fact that an "OLD GOAT" saved my bacon more than once while aboard USCG Cutter Diligence.

- Semper Paratus

Ginseng

Ginseng is a plant that has long had an important place in Appalachia. It is important economically and culturally. Unfortunately, there is less and less ginseng growing in the wild. Let's talk about ginseng, some of its history, and how to start your own ginseng patch.

The market for American ginseng started in the 1700's. In Asia ginseng has been used for thousands of years. It's been used as a dietary supplement and in herbal teas. There are many traditional medicine uses of ginseng. Many of the health claims about ginseng are not supported by clinical studies. In spite of this ginseng is still incredibly valuable because of its use in Asia. The root of the plant is what is sold, which means that harvesting kills the plant. Wild ginseng roots can sell for hundreds of dollars per pound, depending on the quality of the root. Wild ginseng roots have more character to them. They will have more lines across them and usually have splits in them that make them look like legs. Cultivated ginseng is not as valuable as wild ginseng, but it can still be sold.

The native range of ginseng is eastern north America from Canada down to North Georgia. Ginseng's status in Georgia is rated as vulnerable. Ginseng is very rare to find in the wild. This is thought to be because of habitat decline, wildlife eating it, its slow reproduction, and the demand for the root. There are stories from the early 1800s of bundles of ginseng the size of hay bales being floated down the river to be sold at market. Ginseng at that scale does not exist anymore.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources regulates the harvest and sale of ginseng in Georgia. Growers and dealers must be registered. Ginseng can only be harvested from September 1 through December 31. This is to give plants an opportunity to put on seeds before they are harvested. Only plants with 3 or more prongs can be harvested. As plants age they gain more prongs, or leaves. By only harvesting plants with 3 prongs or more, you don't harvest plants that are too young to reproduce. When you harvest ginseng, you must also plant any berries that are on the plant. This is to encourage new plants to start growing. No ginseng is to be harvested on state owned land or national forest at this time.

Ginseng can be grown on private property. You want to look for a place that has at least 1000 feet in elevation, a slope of > 30%, and has a north, east, northeast, or northwest facing aspect. Ginseng must be grown in the shade. About 75% shade is what is needed. Hardwoods are better than pine. Some indicator plants to look for are mayapple, bloodroot, trilliums, foam flower, ferns, and cohosh. When planting seeds keep in mind that they may take two or more years to germinate. Once plants are growing it can take 8+ years before they reach harvest age. Ginseng can be a valuable crop, but it's best to temper expectations because there is a lot that can go wrong in 8+ years. Wildlife damage, washout, theft, diseases, and insects can all take their toll.

If you have questions about ginseng contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

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"WELL, I WAS BORN A COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER"



October

These cool October mornings bode well for the pies destined to emerge from our oven in November. I would never refuse a slice of pumpkin, but the seasonal favorite at our house growing up was Mom's butternut squash pie.

Right now the Waltham's in our garden are pulling the last bit of sweetness from their withering vines and waiting for that touch of frost to seal in the flavor.

Every season has its own particular beauty and benefit, but for many of us the passage of time is marked by the anticipation, fellowship and faith that happens between October and December. This is the time when some of the best childhood memories are born.

I remember walking in the October woods with my grandfather, leaves crunching, the smell of oaky, arboraceous ripeness, warm sun on our backs in the morning chill. Age, gravity, even time itself stepped aside for him to share with us the secret pleasure of a chinquapin patch that no one else knew about. I now know the tender ache of his faraway gait that day, back to his own childhood, and our memories are links in a chain that reaches so far back in time that memory becomes mythology.

October at our house brought growing anticipation of candy and costumes. I remember our mother patiently cutting and sewing to bring our fantasies to life, and Batman was a much friendlier face back then. Almost all the neighbors had prepared for the night, gathering enough candy to buy every dentist in the county a new boat. Yes, we really did roam the neighborhoods in little Charlie Brown gangs, glad on a chilly night for the extra warmth of that bed sheet with holes cut out that didn't quite match up to our eyes, eight year old pirates and ghosts, bold adventurers, with someone's mom or dad at a discreet but watchful distance behind.

For many of us tied to these mountains or to the vast wooded countryside of the rural South, October marked a rite of passage as old as humanity. I was lucky to have a father and two grandfathers to share the traditions of the first hunt, which had to be repeated to give each one the opportunity to impart their own secret wisdom. I realize now that their sense of fulfillment in passing along that gift was just as important, or perhaps more so, than our excitement in receiving it.

There are many today who would deny the first thousand years or so of our most basic heritage, but there was nothing at all of sport in those careful and reverent harvests. Nothing was wasted, and perhaps in acknowledgement of our Native American ancestry, there were never any trophies made. On this October day, however, the deer munching on the partridge pea below the garden have names, and they gather here for safety during hunting season. That doesn't mean that when I look at "Fred" "with the fine rack of antlers that I don't consider how good he might taste in a pot of chili, and Fred, looking back at me, knows this as well as he stomps and snorts.

October apples make the best cider; ask any yellow jacket. If I had a nickel for every apple we ate, put in a bucket, stepped on, or threw at each other with well-raising vigor, I would have a house full of nickels. I can still smell the apples drying on Granny's front porch, and taste the dried apple pies she made. Alas, some things just don't "progress," and much is lost as the years roll by. It seems much harder to get an apple tree to grow these days, and I can't quite get the apples to taste the way she made them.

We are all links in a chain. If we are fortunate, we will become a treasured part of someone else's memory. It's ironic, isn't it? When we are young and restless we strive to break anything that resembles a chain because we think they imprison us. As we get older, we realize that we need some of those chains, the ones that keep us from losing our load, the ones that measure the ground we walk on, and the ones that weigh the anchors we need in a storm.

The colors of October are coming, and all too soon, the tourists will descend upon us again to take selfies in the leaves and embrace the drive-by scenery through the windshield. It's going to take a lot longer on the weekends to get from one side of town to the other, but it's hard to resent the intrusion knowing what they seek but don't quite understand.

We're all tourists here, or as my grandmother used to sing, "Poor wayfaring strangers, traveling through this world alone." Every one of us is trying to link a chain of memories that gives our lives meaning. Sadly, each year the crowds contain more people with chains forged of popular culture, adult fantasies no more real than the ghosts of Halloweens past, but less friendly.

This October, let's take a moment to count our blessings, grateful for our memories forged from fresh air, clean water, and room to breathe, from soil under our fingernails, neighbors we know, little country churches and stars in the clear night sky. We have strong chains tied to these mountains, and maybe, just maybe, during this time of year when we're going to share what we have with a lot of strangers, like it or not, we can help them forge a stronger link from having been here among us.

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Sunbelt Ag Expo

The Sunbelt Ag Expo is an agricultural-based trade show to be held at Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia, Oct. 18-20, 2022. Known as "North America's Premier Farm Show," its mission is to produce the premier farm show in the world, one that is conducive to trade and emphasizes information, education and implementation of the latest agricultural technology, research and equipment.

The expo's unique site has a 100-acre exhibit area adjoining a 600-acre working research farm. In the exhibit area that includes both outdoor and indoor exhibits, visitors will find every imaginable product or service a farm could ever need. In addition to the static exhibits, visitors can attend educational and entertaining seminars as well as demonstrations offered in a variety of specialized areas.

Visitors can take a tram from the exhibit area to the fields where cotton, peanuts, corn, soybeans and hay are being harvested. These harvesting demonstrations, as well as tillage demonstrations, equipment driving ranges, irrigation technology and precision ag demonstrations, all provide opportunities to see and compare a wide range of equipment in an actual working setting. Company representatives and specialists are in the fields to answer visitor questions.

The expo originated from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College's Ag Engineering Technology Club Dealer Days. The very first Dealer Days was held on the ABAC campus in 1964. These mini trade shows were designed to allow local dealers to show off their new tractors and implements. At the same time, they provided students an opportunity to meet with potential employers. More often than not, many students working with Dealer Days went on to find employment with the local equipment dealers.

Visitors attend the expo for various reasons. One of the main reasons is the annual event attracts more than 1,200 exhibitors each year who highlight the latest in farming technology. Whether you are a large acreage production farmer or a weekend lifestyle farmer, the expo is an event you don't want to miss. They guarantee that each year visitors will see and learn something new! No two expos are ever the same. There are also over 300 different seminars and demonstrations offered over the course of the three-day event, covering topics such as Beef Cattle Management; Equine, Goat & Sheep Health; Fish/Pond Management; Alpaca; Dairy; Poultry; Electrical Safety; backyard gardening; and sustainable living topics.

The expo works with 22 Land Grant Colleges and Universities from the Southeastern U.S. to provide these educational opportunities at no additional cost to expo visitors. A variety of exhibitor areas offer something for everyone. These include Agribusiness, Tractors/Equipment, irrigation, Precision Farming, Livestock (Beef Cattle, Horses, Dairy, Poultry, Sheep, Goats, Alpacas), Forestry, Antique Tractors, Automotive Section, Lawn, Garden, Fishponds, Electricity, Propane Gas, Hunting, Fishing, Family Living, Backyard Gardening, ATV, and American Grand Finals Stock Dog Trials. There is an Antique Tractor Parade held daily, test tracks for Trucks, ATVs and XUVs. Visitors can take a tram from the exhibit area to the fields where cotton, peanuts, corn, soybeans, and hay are being harvested. These harvesting demonstrations, as well as tillage demonstrations, Compact Tractor driving ranges, irrigation technology and precision ag demonstrations all provide opportunities to see and compare a wide range of equipment in an actual working setting.

Have you seen a \$1.1 million cotton picker? It's there. As mentioned above, company reps and specialists are in the fields to answer questions. At the expo, they are proudest of the fact that they continue to produce "North America's Premier Farm Show." Each year they strive to do better, make improvements, and add something unique. They continue to reach these goals and are pleased to hear that their exhibitors are returning each year because they make good sales and contacts at the event.

Many exhibitors have commented that this is the easiest show staff to work with in the industry. They are also proud of the fact that they are continuing to experience growth and are seeing more exhibitors making long-term commitments to the show by building permanent facilities, which says that they believe in the expo and in the future of agriculture.

Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D always participates in this exciting event, and this year we are setting up our "dog and pony" show to showcase the projects we are working on. We will be in a tent on the grounds along with the Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Georgia Association of Conservation Districts, and as many of the other 10 RC&Ds in Georgia that will show up. Kim and I wouldn't miss it, because where else can you have this much fun and get paid to do it! Even old-time farmers can learn something there, and the emerging technology that is growing continuously is mind blowing.

I grew up on an A John Deere and an 8N Ford, and now it's GPS, computers, and cellphones that run precision farming. Can't imagine what it will be like in the next 10 years.

For more information on the Sunbelt Ag Expo, visit www.sunbeltexpo.com.

RC&D

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