



# TattleTails & Tidbits



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## Contributors:

- Bonnie Reynolds, SFC Pres/Co-founder
- Dawn Hayman, SFC VP/Co-founder
- Matthew Perry, Naturalist/Director of SFC Nature Sanctuary

## Life of Gratitude

**I**n the work we do here at Spring Farm CARES, there is not a day that goes by where we do not experience the gratitude that animals hold in their hearts for another chance at life. Sometimes in our human existence we take a lot of things for granted. Seeing things through the animals' eyes and feeling things through their hearts is an opportunity to reconnect with our own love and gratitude for life.

There is so much to be grateful for in this world. But many of us struggle to get past and through the mounds of negativity that feed our thoughts and senses every single day. We need to be reminded of the simple pleasures and the daily miracles of life. When was the last time you truly enjoyed a sunrise or sunset? When was the last time you let the fragrance of a single flower fill your senses with delight? When was the last time you allowed yourself to just be present .... totally present ... in a moment and just breathe and feel yourself ground to the earth. The animals love to do this all the time. And they love to help us get there too.

This issue is dedicated to all of the reasons to be grateful in life. Because the world is bursting with beauty and wonder. We just need to allow it in our lives.

**To learn more about Spring Farm CARES, to donate to our mission, to sign up for our email list, and to download a copy of any of our publications, go to**

**[www.springfarmcares.org](http://www.springfarmcares.org)**

## CONNECT WITH US:

3364 State Route 12,  
Clinton, NY 13323  
(315) 737-9339  
[office@springfarmcares.org](mailto:office@springfarmcares.org)

Visit our Website and Blog:  
[www.springfarmcares.org](http://www.springfarmcares.org)

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# Building From Our Roots

by Bonnie Reynolds

## SPRING FARM'S THIRD CENTURY

Spring Farm is no Spring Chicken. About 1798, settlers from Connecticut began to populate what is now the nearby village of Paris Hill. Some of the settlers spread out and began farming in the vicinity. It was probably 1799 or 1800 when Noah Humiston and his new bride Freelove Graves purchased acreage bordering both sides of the Iroquois/Mohawk Indian Trail now known as NYS Route 12. This was choice property, as it had copious springs. Indeed, it was the only property in the area that did have springs, and, throughout the following years, its spring water was piped – via handmade wooden pipes – to neighboring farms in what came to be known as the “Chuckery” area. (When I bought the farm in 1970, our water was still flowing through those ancient pipes to a couple of our neighbors. This came to my attention when one of them informed me that water from Spring Farm was guaranteed in their deed, and I had better keep sending it, as they intended to build a swimming pool!)

While Noah and Freelove worked the acreage to the east of the Indian Trail, in a part of the Humiston property to the west, over in what is now our Nature Sanctuary, young Salmon Seymour and his bride Clarissa, Freelove’s younger sister, built a log cabin beside one of the many springs and farmed that area. During his childhood, my father used to play in the still-extant ruins of that cabin, known in the area as “Seymour’s Spring.”

In 1816, Noah and Freelove sold Spring Farm to Seymour and Clarissa and moved on westward. We can know that they had built what is now the homestead in which I live sometime before 1816, as Seymour’s 1816 deed referred to the east side of the Indian Trail as “Mr. Seymour’s house lot.”

In the 1830’s, Seymour and Clarissa themselves moved to another farm in the area, renting, and then in the 1840’s selling, Spring Farm to Welch immigrant cousins of mine, the Meredith Joneses.

Then in 1856, over in the tiny village of Pont Robert in Wales, my great-great-grandfather, Francis Jones, was killed when thrown from his horse. All alone now, as her parents and brothers had all emigrated to America and the Paris Hill area some years before, his widow Mary packed her meager valuables into one trunk--which I still have--and, with her children, my then 5-year-old great-grandfather, Thomas, and his sisters Mary and Margaret, aged 3 and 1, she got herself to a port, sailed the Atlantic, and trained up to join her family. (Alone and with three tiny kids, that must have been one hell of a voyage!) She went to work for her Meredith Jones cousins, and, in 1860, married their youngest son, Alfred. (Born Mary Jones, she had married Francis Jones, and now Alfred Jones, making her Mary Jones Jones Jones, a genealogist’s nightmare.)

Alfred died in 1870, Mary inherited the farm and, with son Thomas and his own new bride, carried on farming.

In 1884, tragedy struck. Grandmother Mary died of a stroke, then daughters Mary and Margaret and two of her children by Alfred, William and Alfred, succumbed. The culprit was thought to be typhus. The old well was condemned and the house was saturated with carbolic acid and sealed up for a year.

At the end of that year, Thomas, who had paid off his remaining siblings for their shares of the farm, moved in with his own little family – Including my grandfather, Francis Merritt Jones, then 5.

Under the management of Grandfather Francis from 1906 to 1929, Spring Farm became literally world famous. Because Francis began raising Purebred Holsteins and was wildly successful at that endeavor. Two of his cows became the Holstein world champions in butterfat production (which, in those days, long before butter unjustly got a bad name, was immensely important.) Buyers came from as far away as Argentina and New Zealand to buy young Spring Farm heifers and bulls. Cows were sent in by rail from as far away as California to be bred to Grandfather’s Spring Farm King. Those were halcyon days. His animals sold for, with today’s inflation, the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Francis was virtually worth millions.

Then the Great Depression struck. There were other tragedies. His magnificent barn burned (with no insurance.) He had to sell off his Purebred herd. Then the grade herd that he bought to replace them was declared tuberculin and had to be destroyed. He went bankrupt and managed to hang on only to the old homestead and its fifty surrounding acres. I wrote about this whole tragedy in my first novel, "The Truth About Unicorns."

He farmed on, with a few grade cows, till, in 1945, my father Harwood Jones bought the old homestead and acreage from him. And we set to farming ourselves.

In 1970, my parents retired from farming and thought of selling the farm and moving to an apartment in the village. I would have none of it. I treasured the farm's history. Though I was living in California, I bought Spring Farm from them and, in 1975, I was also able to buy back the portion of the farm that Grandfather Francis had lost in the bankruptcy. Spring Farm was whole once more.

It was in 1986, after I had returned home to be with my parents on the farm, that I met Dawn Hayman and we began to work together on what, in 1991, was incorporated as the non-profit animal and nature sanctuary, Spring Farm CARES. In 1993, I donated the entire farm to that non-profit, and, in 1995, we were joined by our 3rd partner, Margot Unkel. The rest is history.

We hope that you have enjoyed this brief recounting of Spring Farm's past. We plan to see to such security for Spring Farm CARES that it will still be here in another hundred years, entering a 4th century, still serving needy domestic animals and insuring habitat and safety for the wild kind.

And you, with your love and donations, are now a major part of this blessed farm's history and future.



*The homestead in 1885.  
Five-year-old Francis is on the left. Thomas is holding the white horse.*



# Reaching Towards Our Future

by Dawn E. Hayman



*Spring Farm CARES Today*

**T**he rich history that Spring Farm is built upon provides us with a foundation that is always grounding us to the energy of this land. Our connection to this land is deeply rooted. And it is our intention to find the next generation who will not only continue our mission, but who will also continue reaching for the future.

Spring Farm CARES is more than an animal and nature sanctuary. We are not a place where animals just come and go. We are a place where every life form is welcomed to contribute to the energy of the very fabric of all that we are. In other words, the animals keep giving us more of their unconditional love and wisdom and it is stored here like a giant bank of batteries.

Everything that is contributed to our organization immediately feeds that mission of compassion and enables us to build on our foundation and reach for the future.

# The Turtle Nest

by Matt Perry

A few years ago, on a day in late June, turtles were on the move. I was coming across them on our footpaths, by the beaver ponds, and even on some upland trails. I was mostly seeing Snapping Turtles, but occasionally a Painted Turtle was encountered. One day I came face to face (or foot to shell) with a large female Snapping Turtle on the trail between our man-made pond and the preserve's access gate. She was going one way, and I, the other. I could see she wasn't the least bit intimidated by me. She had the look of complete resolve; she had a mission to carry out and she wasn't going to alter her plans on account of a person. I surrendered the path and let her pass. I thought she was probably on her way to lay eggs. That's hard to do at our sanctuary since there are few places with soft, loose soil that turtles prefer to excavate their nests into. Tragically, the next day the lifeless body of the same turtle was found on the side of the highway. She had been struck by a vehicle. Soft gravelly soil along roadsides is sometimes selected by turtles as places to dig their nest burrows. Clearly, this is a choice wrought with danger for adult and hatchling turtles alike. As it happened, the Snapper had not come to the roadside for egg laying. I realized this when one of the sanctuary staff inadvertently discovered a fresh turtle nest in one of our mulch piles. This meant that the female Snapper had found a place to lay her eggs. After accidentally exposing some of the eggs, we quickly covered them up and marked the spot so they wouldn't be disturbed again, at least by us. Raccoons and other turtle egg predators would be another matter. A few of the eggs near the top of the cache were just barely covered and I wondered if they were still viable. Certainly, if all the eggs hatched, we could potentially have a great number of Snapping Turtles around our pond system. Although that may not be the best news for any of the turtles' prey species, it would represent a significant legacy for the female turtle that lost her life.



*Snapping Turtle*

Periodically, through the summer, we monitored the turtle nest to see if the young had hatched or if a predator had taken the eggs. After a couple of months went by, I was sure that the eggs were not going to hatch. Perhaps they had been exposed to too much sun. Then, to my great surprise, on a day in late September, the eggs began hatching. One by one, tiny turtles emerged from their soft white shells and climbed out of the burrow. They descended the side of the mulch pile and headed down the trail. They had an uncanny ability to sense in what direction they needed to go. Instead of heading into the field, most proceeded downhill towards the creek and the ponds. Only a few started in the wrong direction or got hung up in obstacles and required assistance. In all, seventeen turtles successfully hatched over the course of five days. So they would not get inadvertently stepped on, we carried several of them to the shore of the man-made pond. In my hands they were like animated walnut shells – certainly no bigger. On a particularly cold afternoon, one turtle that had trouble hatching was brought up to Spring Farm's facilities and placed in a warm terrarium overnight. The next morning, she had fully hatched and was ready to go home. We took her to the man-made pond for release. Placed on the silty shore, she knew just what to do and made a beeline for the water. Once in the pond she immediately disappeared beneath submerged vegetation. It was late in the season for these little turtles to be just getting their start. Soon they would need to prepare for winter. To survive, turtles in the Northeast go into a state of torpor in which their metabolism significantly slows down. Before cold temperatures hit, the turtles burrow into the muck at the bottom of the pond. There they refrain from eating and breathing. They remain there until warm weather returns.

Now, whenever I come across a Snapping Turtle in the water or see one basking in the sun on a warm summer day, I wonder if it is one of those intrepid little hatchlings from the mulch pile – the progeny of the female Snapper I yielded the trail to on that one summer day.



# Facing End Of Life Decisions

by Dawn E. Hayman

As an animal communicator, the most frequent calls that I have gotten are from people asking for assistance with end of life decisions for their animal friends. It is also one of the most important roles I play here at home with the sanctuary animals. Being a sanctuary, we face life and death decisions on a frequent basis. It is a sacred part of the duties and responsibilities of running a sanctuary.

I am asked all of the time, “do animals understand when it’s their time to go?” “How do they face their own death?”, and “how do animals feel about euthanasia?” These, of course, are huge topics and more than I can answer in one essay. However, we have recently had several losses in our sanctuary and each one of them was very different. By presenting their stories, you will see a lot about how animals feel about life and death from very different perspectives.

**Lizzie** came to us in 2019 and died in April of this year at age 28. When Lizzie arrived here she was extremely depressed and, as we soon discovered, had several medical issues that were not being treated prior to her coming here. In short, she felt miserable and looked like she had given up. Lizzie was largely emotionally shut down. Over the years, Lizzie began to heal and decompress and eventually she started to let people in. Her heart softened. And we started to see a glimpse of the real Lizzie.

At 28 years old, she was tired. With medications, we were keeping her comfortable. But then early this year we discovered she had a mass in her sinus area. It was inoperable. What we were not prepared for was how fast this mass metastasized into her lungs. By the time we realized what was happening, she only had days left. Her caretakers came in one morning and found her struggling to breathe. One look and we knew her end had come. Lizzie was ready to leave this body behind. She trusted us to help her. She was so tired that she just wanted a good rest. Her life was complete. She felt there was nothing more she needed to do or express. And she understood she was leaving at what was the right time for her. She very peacefully left our loving embrace. Euthanasia decisions are never easy. It is an enormous responsibility. But Lizzie could not have been more clear that it was her time to leave. She was ready. It was up to us to say good-bye and let her move on.



**Coal** came to us in 2017 at about one year old. He had been found as an emaciated and very sick stray out on the streets and was rescued by someone who then brought him to a cat rescue. Unfortunately, Coal tested positive for both FIV and FeLV and was thought to be actively exhibiting one or both of those diseases. His prognosis was extremely poor and we were asked if we could take him in as he was unadoptable for the rescue.

Coal made an amazing recovery and went into remission after several weeks. He was thriving here. Everyone loved Coal and Coal loved everyone he met. He was grateful for every single day he

was here. He amazingly lived with us for 6 years as a healthy cat. But one day in April, he suddenly spiked a fever of unknown origin. We had trouble getting his fever down. Drugs would help break it temporarily, but then it would spike again. We began treating him in earnest, but his blood work eventually showed us the reality of what was going on. Coal's body was no longer producing red blood cells. Clearly, one (or both) of those diseases had reignited. There was nothing more we could do but keep him comfortable with hospice care. His caretakers were devastated as Coal was such a kind and loving cat.

Dr. Christine was able to keep him comfortable in hospice care. But Coal inevitably began to feel weaker as time went on. He would still eat and he'd still purr when people petted him. But he just slept most of the time. Dr. Christine and I checked in with him multiple times a day. Then, one afternoon, as he was peacefully laying in his room with his other cat friends, he expressed to me that he was ok to leave now and didn't need to stay with his body that was fading. We had everyone take their time to say good-bye. And then Dr. Christine and I sat with him one last time, scratching his head in his favorite spot, as he purred until the sedative took effect. Coal passed very peacefully in the place he loved most, with his cat friends nearby, and purring his contentment and gratitude right up until the end.

Coal had loved the gift of having time to say good-bye and to savor the life he found here. He was ready to go and let us know when he was ready. And euthanasia can be a priceless gift in these moments.



**Ziek** presents an entirely different story. Ziek came to the farm in 2016 with his donkey friend Noah after their owners could no longer care for them. Ziek was kind of a lost soul when he came here. But over the last 7 years we watched him grow and truly find himself. He was only 24 years old. Although he had several health issues, they were all being treated and were under control. So it was a total shock when right before our eyes, Ziek suddenly became neurologically impaired and it rapidly progressed. Testing through a process of elimination of diseases, protozoa, and tick borne ailments, it is believed he had a tumor pressing on his spine. No matter what the cause, he deteriorated rapidly. We came in the barn one morning to suddenly find him struggling to just walk to his hay. He was barely able to hold himself upright, let alone walk. We obviously

had come to the end. There was nothing left to do for him but help him out of this body that was rapidly failing. But this time, when I went to connect with Ziek about euthanasia, his response cut me to the core. "But I don't want to go." I didn't even have to double check this message. He was crystal clear.

Yet the fact was very clear that we were out of options. He was just moments away from going down in his stall and not being able to get up. There were safety factors for him as well as his caretakers. Horses cannot live paralyzed on the ground. We can't pick them up and put them in walkers. It is the way it is.

I stood with him and with Dr. Christine knowing that the decision had to be. And also understanding that emotionally, he wasn't in synch with this decision yet. These situations are difficult for me. But in the end, it always resolves by putting myself aside and staying totally present with the animal. And that is just what I did with Ziek. He managed to get his head over his stall door where I was standing and he put his chin on my shoulder.

"Oh Ziek," I said. And I just stood with him for what seemed like an eternity but in reality was just a few brief minutes.

"It's ok", he said. "No matter when this would be, I just wouldn't want to leave. I have found my true heart here and I love this place so much. I trust you totally with this decision. I know my body cannot go on. But my heart wants to stay. I just needed you to know that. You are ok. You are hearing me just fine. And I know how difficult this is for you too. But it is all ok. I am safe with you."

His message cut straight through me. I had to leave the barn and go outside alone to be sure I was hearing him right. As I grounded with the energy of the farm, I could feel all the others who had passed before him. The ghost brigade as we call them. There was a herd ready to greet him. He would not be alone. And I knew he would be fine. But he needed me to acknowledge his grief of having to leave. And he asked me to hold space for him to be present with me through it all. And in that moment of two hearts being present, Ziek gave me one last message.



"I'm taking it all in," he told me. "Savoring every last taste of what you all mean to me. I thought I'd have so much longer, but I don't. I trust you to help me now. But I need you to know I never would have wanted to go. So a part of me now will stay with you. Right in your heart. I need you to hold me there so that a part of my energy will remain here safe with you. This farm is sacred to the heart of the horse. I think that you still don't truly understand that. But we animals do. Every single day I spent here was a gift. From the minute the sun came up and the rooster began to crow and the donkeys announced the arrival of our human friends to feed us, I would face each day with knowing it was all going to be good. From the sounds of the birds and the breeze through the barn and the sound of the gentle creek flowing through the pastures. And oh how I love my horse friends. It is here that I found people who truly understood me. The first part of my life I couldn't find that. I was never good enough to be what people wanted me to be. But here .... Here is where I learned that I only had to be me. I could breathe. And I could just be. I could spend lifetimes here with you and it would never be enough. But, and this is so important, as you help me to leave this body, I want you to know how grateful I am for it all. I will leave here filled with gratitude. My heart full. My body spent. And my spirit grateful to know the grace and love from all of you. No, I would never want to leave. But I know I must now go. Hold space for me. You'll still feel me here. Of that I'm sure. Thank you for all you've done and for all you are. Now let's be still and breathe together. Love. Gratitude. Peace."

And with a flood of tears, we stood with him in his final moment with us. And surrounded by his caretakers and his beloved horse friend Brandy, he left our embrace to be free of a body no longer useful to him and was greeted by a loving herd of friends waiting for him in Spirit.

While difficult, there is a sacredness and grace in the fact that he loved it here so much that no matter how long he had here, for him it just didn't seem to be enough. It was not that he was opposed to the euthanasia. His body understood it was at the end. But his heart was filled with the love and joy he found here. What Ziek discovered though is that he still can feel all of that in Spirit. It was not limited to his body. Heart connections are eternal. Love is an energy that is not confined to the physical realm. And that connection will always connect two beings to one another, no matter where they may be.