

The Old Man and I

—Ulf Kintzel

November 11, 1995. I remember the date because it would become my wedding date a few years later. Just that I hadn't met my wife yet that year. I knocked on the door of a former dairy farmer in New Jersey whom I didn't know. I had just arrived in the U.S. two months earlier. I had only a few sheep at that time but had started to run out of pasture. What I been doing for many years in Germany was still "in my blood," so I had scouted the immediate neighborhood for hay fields with enough residual to graze. This farmer had plenty of these. When I knocked, a small and skinny older man opened the door. I introduced myself and told him what I had in mind. Ah, the beauty of young age when you don't necessarily think through what you do. At times, this can be a blessing. I suspect had someone from Mars knocked on his door he would have had a similar, if not same, expression on his face. It was too unusual. His initial response was, "I don't have any fencing." I explained to him my electric nettings, which I would use to fence the pasture. He answered that he would think about it and get back to me. Unbeknown to me, he jumped in his old red Chevy pick-up truck and drove a couple of streets over to my neighbors and asked them who I was. They said I am all right, and he decided to let me graze some of his hayfields.

Over time I rented more and more pasture from him, also for the summer. When I moved longer distances down the road, he came along, securing the road with his red flag, which he had used working for the local utility company after his retirement from farming.

He was 67 in 1995 and I was 28. Yet we became friends despite the age difference. I was invited to his home for Easter dinner as well as Chinese take-out. On occasion, I took him out to the local diner for lunch. Memorable was how slowly he ate, but when it was time to eat ice cream he ate it faster than anyone else. I suspect he inhaled it. When my family and I moved to upstate New York I had to go daily for almost a week to bring up the many things I had accumulated for the farm, a five-hour drive one way. He came with me once and drove on the way back. On the ramp to the highway he was heading straight for the curb instead of taking the turn. He was already 78 at that time.



One of the pastures I rented from Barret, right next to a favorite place of his, a waterfall in the woods to the left.

It was dark and rainy. "Watch the curb!" I yelled. "I am!" he yelled back. Then he hit the curb full frontal. Boy, I was laughing so hard!

Where I found him to be a treasure trove was the ins and outs of the neighborhood. He lived all his life in the house that I went to when I asked for pasture for my sheep. In fact, he was born there. He knew every family in the neighborhood. We never ran short on topics when we went out for lunch.

He apparently also had faith in me. The first winter arrived with a strong Nor'easter. I knew nothing about storms like these and found myself all of a sudden in the need of hay. However, I had just started my business and was notoriously short on money. I asked him for hay but stated I have no money. He said, "Pay me when you can." I paid him every dime. Eventually. It took a while. You know these stories of people who are successful and will tell you they pulled themselves up by their boot strings and did it all themselves? Yeah, you heard these stories? They are bogus! Everybody, no matter how driven, and I am certainly driven, will need help from others at one point or another. This man was such a help to me when I needed help the most.

The old man's name was Barret V. Dalrymple. Barret with one t, as he would point out to me. He turned 90 years old in June, when I spoke with him last. He died today, All-Saints' Day, November 1, 2018. Eleven days more and I would have known him for 23 years. As I am writing this, tears are running down my cheeks. While I am sad, I also know that 90 is a wonderful age and I am happy for him at the same time. He told me years ago he was ready to die. He told me he had a good life. He was a good man. We had so much fun together when I pastured my sheep in his fields. He gave me the red flag he had kept from the utility company. There will be many more years when I will be using it, waving traffic down when I hit the road with my sheep. Barret will be with me then. Rest in peace, Barret.



Ulf owns and operates White Clover Sheep Farm and breeds and raises grass-fed White Dorper sheep and Kiko goats without any grain feeding and offers breeding stock suitable for grazing. He is a native of Germany and lives in the US since 1995. He farms in the Finger Lakes area in upstate New York. His website address is www.whitecloversheepfarm.com. He can be reached by e-mail at ulf@whitecloversheepfarm.com or by phone during "calling hour" indicated on the answering machine at 585-554-3313.