

# The Ram and Ewe

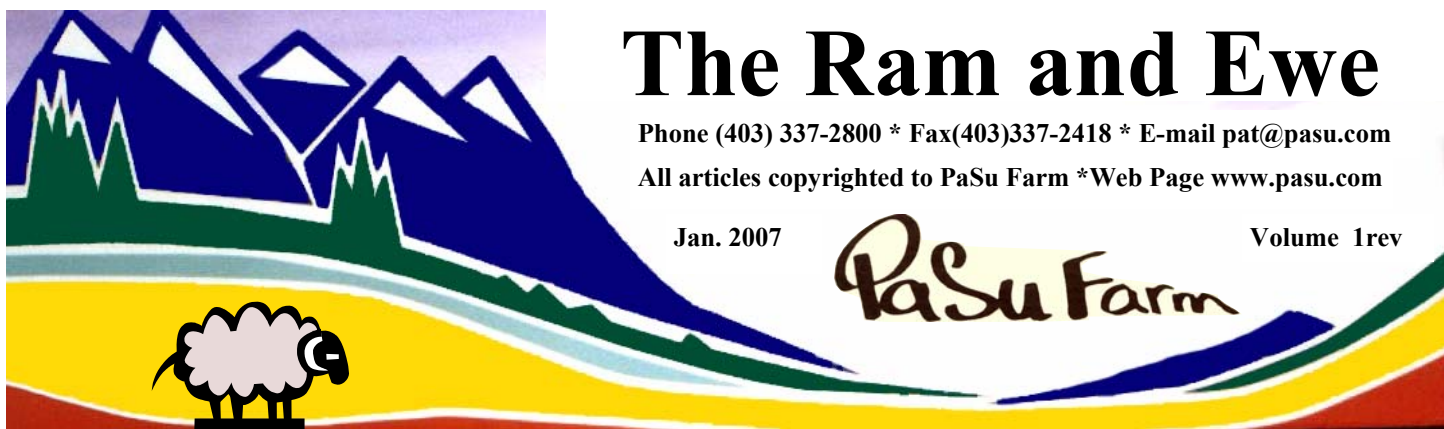
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## Dedicated to a lamb called Nancy

This story was first written in May 1994 but its origins date back to 1992. It has been re-edited in final preparation for the book my family has badgered me to complete.

In the early 80's, the back of the Quonset was a lambing barn and our house was in the front part. This accommodation arrangement was not a matter of choice but necessity, as in those days we had no money to build two separate structures. The barn part was actually only used during the lambing season in February and March after which it was sanitized and left vacant of sheep.

In-between the lambing barn and the house a ten foot strip, the width of the barn, provided a barrier we considered to be no-mans land. We used this area as workshop, utility area and lamb recovery hospital. It had the added advantage of putting some distance between us and the sheep.

In those days our flock comprised of approximately four hundred assorted commercial ewes mostly Suffolk, Dorsets and North Country Cheviots. This would have been a challenge for an experienced farmer never mind an urban raised family with less than three years experience in animal husbandry. For Sue, the children and I it was a brutal time of the year. We worked around the clock assisting our fat overfed, porky ewes with the lambing process. During the year we inevitably over fed the flock which adversely affected their lambing performance thereby requiring an inordinate amount of midwifery.

The lambing barn was resonant with the cacophony of at least thirty to forty ewes and probably double that quantity of lambs all bawling for attention. We rushed around feeding, watering and assisting distraught ewes who were

vocally bemoaning the fact that they had paid little attention to the size of the rams head before their little dalliance in the pasture and were now paying the price. Some of these older biddies were chronic birthing hypochondriacs who were not satisfied until we had fussed over them, examined their rear ends and proclaimed them fit to complete the process on their own. As if this was not enough, there was always the nursery of orphaned lambs to attend to. They were the unwanted issue of multiple births and ewes who were not disposed to feed more than two lambs. This raucous bunch of juveniles made a point of noisily harassing us in the hope of securing an extra feed. As we were in the lambing barn most of the day and night we were the constantly harassed by these demanding creatures for an extra feed.

Now an orphan lamb has the same hunger demands as that of a new born human baby, with the exception that they are far from helpless and a hell of a lot more assertive, smarter and mobile. They were fed, every four hours night and day, a warm milk formula in a bottle with a teat. Missing a feed session was not an option as they would invariably overfeed at the next session resulting in bloat and other potentially terminal complications.

The milk preparation was done in the kitchen where the bottles and teats were sanitized, filled and taken to the barn. Even before they saw us, they would hear the bottles clinking and set up an incredible din.

The easy part was preparing the milk formula, however, getting into the lambs pen without adequate protection was another matter especially if you were a male. The lamb's instinctive behavior is to bunt the ewe's teat to release the milk. An aggressive set of twins will often lift a mother right off her back feet and you can hear her grunt as she absorbs the blow in the

soft tissue of her milk bag and abdomen. I don't know how they put up with it, but if I were a ewe no persuasion by the La Lieche Ewe Breast Feeding League would persuade me to continue that sort of harassment to a delicate part of my anatomy. Entry into the pen without bottles was perilous enough; however, attempting the same feat with an armful of bottles required courage and dexterity. As a man I had other concerns about the damage those bunting happy juveniles could inflict upon my person. On entering the pen I would immediately crouch and assume a defensive position until all the lambs were satisfied.

On one of these occasions a little lamb lay in the corner of the pen and bleated pathetically as it struggled to get to me and it's fair share of dinner. The front legs were working but the back legs were dragging behind and seemed completely paralyzed.

This is the despairing dark and moment in any farmer's life when you have a choice to make. Can you fix it? Is it worth the additional drain on your time resources? Would it be kinder to put it out of its misery?

I looked down at the little beggar as it reached me, top lip curling back and hungrily reaching up and searching for a nipple. It is hard to resist that trusting expectancy and I have never been smart enough to take the easy way out. Nancy became a new responsibility.

At first she could not stand at all. After every bottle feed we would help her to stand holding her upright so that her back legs would strengthen. In this position we could wipe her down and lay her on a fresh bed of dry straw as she could not relieve herself in the normal way.

This went on for weeks and gradually Nancy regained partial use of her back legs enabling her to stand and drag them. She was a spunky little lamb who loved her meals and grew much attached to me. Sheep are flocking creatures, but they inevitably form close and strong attachments to one or two other members of the flock. Now when all the other lambs had left the lambing pen Nancy figured it would be appropriate if not expedient to develop a strong buddy relationship with me. Hey, why not go for the top guy in the joint. Besides he packs a good lunch every day.

The instinct to flock means that they hate to

## RESTAURANT NEWS

During the week

Will be open Tuesdays to Saturdays for lunch and afternoon tea.

On Sunday

We will serve our buffet or plate service if there are fewer than 15 reservations.

Fine dining

will commence in April. Check our web site for times and for any new information that will be posted.

**PLEASE REMEMBER**

That we book up very quickly for  
Easter

Mothers Day & Fathers Day

Also

Remember that reservations are essential for all events and recommended during the week.

## LADIES NIGHT

Buffet Dinner & Guest Speaker

16th March

Speaker to be announced

Cocktails 6pm. Buffet Dinner served 7pm

\$25 per person Reservations Essential

Does not include GST or Gratuity

Let us do your  
**PRIVATE FUNCTION**  
OR  
**WEDDING**

## *Seafood Evening*

March 24th

A gourmet 7 course meal including fresh Oysters, Lobsters and other succulent sea food delights.

\$65 per head

Does not include GST or gratuity

be left on their own no matter what the circumstances. Leaving Nancy unaccompanied with no one or nothing alive in sight was, as far as she was concerned, unthinkable. Besides which, her vocal and heartrending remonstrations could be heard at quite some distance until I could take it no more. I would go to wherever she had been left, collect her in my arms and take her back to where I was working.

Nancy would lie contentedly in the sun as long as she could hear or see me at work. From time to time she would stand up and hobble to where I had moved and reestablish herself closer to me. If I had to run off to the tool shed or workshop she would also get up and try to follow protesting loudly at my unfair desertion.

Her devotion to me was certainly flattering but also very demanding. By constantly having to get up and follow me her back legs strengthened and soon her clumsy hobble turned into a ungainly run and by mid summer she showed remarkable recovery. The time had come to return Nancy to the flock and convince her that she was a sheep and not a human.

Repatriation was not as simple as we would have like it to be. Nancy had never imagined that she would be parted from us or, for that matter, forced into a pasture full of sheep. After all she was quite convinced she had nothing in common with them. Whenever a gate was opened Nancy would try to slip out and rejoin her human flock.

It took Nancy the best part of two months to accept her lot and merge with the other sheep. She was smaller than the average ewe and had a slight deformity that made her top lip puff out on one side giving her a lopsided appearance. Definitely not a pretty flock animal and by rights she should have been culled. Nancy was an animal friend and that was just not an acceptable option. I am of the opinion that once you have crossed the threshold and gained the trust of an animal that you should never abrogate that confidence.

I am glad we kept her. In her first year of lambing I found her in a corner of the barn licking off two large healthy lambs. God knows how she managed to pack them in such a small frame. Most ewes will move away or fiercely protect their lambs from the attention of a human being. Nancy did not even flinch when I approached. Nor when I reached out to pet the lamb she was

# African Feast

with  
**David Thiaw**  
and  
**Domba**

An extravagant selection of wonderful  
African Food, followed by Music,  
Stories and Dancing.  
5th May 2007

Cocktails at 6 pm Dinner at 7:15 pm  
Reservations Essential & Ticket Purchase  
Tickets are \$70 per person  
Service and GST for meal  
included in above price

## SHEEP MANURE

Dress your Spring garden with Sheep Manure ready for the spring and have a few bags in the potting shed for a great mix with potting soil. Phone first to make sure that bags are available or that there is a tractor operator if you are buying by the truck load.

Price is \$5 per bag or 6 bags for \$25.

Can we send you our news letter through the internet and save on postage?

If this is acceptable please  
E-mail us your approval and  
you will get future news letters  
via the internet.

Thank you

# COMPLETE STORE SALE

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CONSIGNMENT MERCHANDISE

## BUY ONE AND GET THE SECOND HALF PRICE

APPLIES TO ALL  
MERCHANDISE  
WITHOUT A  
SALE PRICE  
ON IT  
SALE BEGINS

**1 Feb. and ends 20 Feb**

licking clean. For a few seconds she diverted her attention from the lamb and gave my hand a few maternal licks. Wow! I don't think I will ever forget that moment.

She became one of super ewes in our flock with lots of milk and a special caring attitude to her own lambs and yet she remained always friendly to humans. Every year she produced a healthy set of twins and would always come for a head scratch and nuzzle our pockets for cookies.

Nancy's real value to us, was not in the lambs she produced, but in the lesson we learned which was to never give up on one of our animals, or anything for that matter just because its the easy way out. With a little perseverance there could be a miracle around the corner.

Nancy died of natural causes at an old age for a sheep. Like all the animals, with a special place in our hearts, she never left the farm.

Please note...

## SPRING & SUMMER MERCHANDISE

Will be arriving the beginning of  
March

Summer Fashions  
Home Décor  
Garden Pots  
Collectables  
Gourmet Food  
And home spar items

## VALENTINES EROTIC GOURMET EVENING

Once again by popular request we having our special Valentine's Dinner menu where the food is daringly arranged and selected for it's aphrodisiacal properties. If you are sensitive to amorous issues this is not for you. It has been so successful in the past that we are having two evenings. Reservations absolutely essential and this is a ticketed evening.

Warm Intimate Atmosphere  
8 to 9 Gourmet Courses  
Flowers on the Tables

Lamb as Entrée  
Plate Service  
Soft Sexy Music

And a Night to Remember

Arrive between 6pm and 6.30pm

Dinner starts at 7pm prompt

Saturday 10& 17 Feb.

Price \$70per person

(Gst & Service  
included)

