

Benton Beach Beacon



August 1995

Family Clambake

Mark your calendars for Sunday, August 13, 1995 when Edwin and Eliot Benton will host another famous New England clambake! The pit will be opened at 3:00 p.m., though any special items to be baked must be put into the pit before 12:00 noon. High tide will be at 1:30 p.m..

The "standard menu" includes corn, clams, mussels and potato. Additionally, chicken and/or lobster may also be ordered. Plates, napkins, and utensils will also be provided, though beverages will not. Children under twelve years pay half price except for lobster entrees.

Please RSVP to Edwin Benton with food orders by August 9, 1995:

Edwin E. Benton
396 Vineyard Point Rd.
Guilford, CT 06437

We'll all be looking forward to a fun time rain or shine!

Cow Down the Well!

by Joel Helander
(A true Sachem's Farm tale related by
H. Milton Benton)

About 1945, in the heyday of Sachem's Farm, Eliot H. Benton and son Milton took a break from work for mealtime. It had been a hot, drought summer and recently they had dug a new well in the swale behind the farmhouse.

Mabel Benton looked out her back kitchen window and observed that the cows were restless. She admonished the men to "water the cows" as soon as possible. Eliot and Milton finished eating with that chore in mind.

Suddenly, Mabel exclaimed, "Eliot, a cow just went down the well!" According to Milton, "we thought that was about the funniest thing we ever heard" until - in alarm - they saw water bubbling over the rim of the well's tile casing. Running out, they discovered that Mabel's report was completely true! Wedged down the well was one of the milking cows, struggling in the deep water.

Although the well is considered shallow (12 feet), it is in a good vein of water and usually filled. In their frenzy for water, one of the animals evidently

brushed against the well tile, without an enclosure that was due to be built, and was pushed off balance, backwards, down into the open well.

Milton knew that the cow was struggling to keep her head above the water line to breathe. He also knew they must get her out - dead or alive - and fast! While he held her head up in the best way possible, Eliot summoned help from the Leete family in Leete's Island. Mr. Will Leete raced his old telephone company truck (a pole-setter) with winch and boom down the winding Vineyard Road.

While waiting for Leete's arrival, thoughts filled Milton's mind about how to make a rescue. Fortunately, he had recently read a *National Geographic* article about off-loading cattle from barges into freighters in Africa. They were hoisted by rope wrapped around their horns. The Benton cows were hornless, but Milton adapted the idea for this emergency. Using 1¼ inch hay rope, he tied a bowline around the cow's neck - high up near its chin to avoid choking. Will Leete operated the winch truck, delicately raising the big animal from its death trap.

Although Bentons' cow immediately went into grazing upon her release and seemed none worse for her down-the-well experience, her back looked like a piece of raw, red steak. In the process of going down and coming up through the narrow concrete tiles, her skin was severely abraded, which required careful treatment with *Watkins Carbola Salve*.

Another consequence from this whole fiasco was a polluted water supply. The well water looked like murky coffee grounds because not only did the frightened cow lose its bladder control, but also its bowel control! They pumped and purged and chlorinated the well for many days. The Bentons couldn't use their new well for almost one month and this one day in their life down on Sachem's Farm has been talked about for fifty years!

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Our Ring-Necked Friends

by Joel Helander

There's a new sound in the air in the land of Benton Beach! It's a novel and twisted sound that resembles the noise of a broken horn or sick duck, carrying for long distances across the Vineyard Meadow or Long Lot Pasture. Our new wildlife residents are seldom seen, but when they do appear on parade, they strut handsomely and present a joyful sight. They have brought new pleasure to the beauty of our unspoiled landscape and soundscape: Ring-Necked Pheasants!

How did these showy oriental birds get introduced into Sachem's Head? At first a mystery, the facts have slowly come together. Mr. Frank Ifkovic, who lives on former Benton land over on Indian Hill Road, is the man behind the mystery. Frank grew up on a farm in Branford and loves animals and farming. He is a Guilford businessman

who has done many good deeds in the town he loves.

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In 1994, Frank bought fifteen one-day-old Korean Ring-Necked Pheasant chicks from the *Agway* store in North Branford. He converted the fireplace in his home into a brooder place, which was ideal because of the brick firebox and fireplace screen for containment. When their feathers developed and the birds no longer required close attention, he put them into an outdoor wire cage. One night on Memorial Day weekend, raccoons massacred the juvenile pheasants, but three survived. Frank bought 20 more chicks and sequestered them in his garage (after graduation from the fireplace).

Later in the summer, Frank released his pheasants into the wild, believing that Sachem's Head's more temperate climate (Long Island Sound influence) would allow them to grub for food through the snow cover. They're great "scratchers" and eat insects and grain seeds pulled out of the ground. A heavy and lasting snow can cause high mortality in their population.

Frank Ifkovic's agenda to establish a breeding flock of Ring-Necked Pheasants has proven successful. There are at least two generations of them living in Sachem's Head. Most of them tend to migrate to the eastern shorelands which are the Stevens/Benton properties. They won't overpopulate, according to Frank, because they can be nomadic and, besides, their chief predators seem to be dogs and cats.

Welcome to our new Ring-Necked friends!

Notes

Please submit any articles or family updates to either David and Lisa Ott or Tim Chemacki for incorporation into next year's issues. Their addresses are as follows:

David and Lisa Ott
197 Village Pond Road
Guilford, CT 06437
(203) 458-7964

Timothy Chemacki
83 Mansfield Rd., Unit 325
New London, CT 06320
(203) 443-0409