

## A SALUTE TO CHARTER AND EARLY AGS MEMBERS

A talk given at the 1984 AGS Convention

By Alice Hall

The subject I was asked to speak on, charter and early members of the American Goat Society, on this, the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AGS, is difficult for me. For one thing, AGS is twice as old as my association with it. For another thing, although I often am asked to speak on goats, I'm not usually asked to talk about goat people.

I made a fine friend in California about a decade ago. Dr. Maud O'Neill, now deceased, was an R.N., a missionary, held several doctorates, and taught at the university level. She related to me that back in the 1940s, she was staying overnight in a motel in Missouri. She saw a group of very distinguished, well-dressed gentlemen gathered in the lobby, and she assumed that it was a convention of preachers. She found out later it was the American Goat Society convention. I told her that her first guess probably wasn't too far off, that most of those early leaders of AGS were also great men of God.

Actually, it was the sparkling spiritual camaraderie that first appealed to me in AGS, and tonight I would like to ask that the American Goat Society take back into its fellowship that first and greatest charter member, God!

But I'm not here to preach, so on with the subject! Most of my research on the early years of AGS was done in its Yearbooks, especially the first one, done in 1937. Also helpful was the book from 1939-40, which contained two articles on artificial insemination in dairy goats and a five-year history of AGS. I also appreciated the 1944-45 Yearbook, the 1952-53 Yearbook, which contained a talk by Marion Mell about AGS history, and the 1979 yearbook, which included an article by Carl Romer pertaining to the same subject.

I came to the conclusion in doing this research, that if YOU want to go down in history, contribute in some way to an AGS Yearbook!

AGS was voted into existence in August, 1935, and its first convention was held in October of that year. Its purpose was to bring democracy and closed herd books into the American goat world. In 1939, AGS was combined with the International Dairy Goat Registry, which had formed in 1925 for the same purposes. So AGS actually has accurate

records from 1925, and both boards ruled the combined registry jointly from unification in October 1939 until October 2, 1940.

The early presidents of American Goat Society were Arthur Lewis in 1935; Corl Leach (founder of Dairy Goat Journal) presiding officer at the 1936 convention in Doylestown, PA; Ira J. Mills, who presided at the first annual meeting in Newburgh, NY and at the 1937 meeting in Columbia, MO and the 1938 meeting in Syracuse, NY. Judge Wil Chappel was president for the 1939 Waukesha, WI and 1940 Wichita, KS meetings. He was followed by R.A. Kern, P.E. Clement, Roy Dever Weis, and Carl Romer, all of whom were praised by Marion Mell, a later president, from keeping AGS democratic, an organization of, for, and by the members.

Secretaries from the beginning were: 1935—Don Allen secretary and A.F. Konig treasurer, 1936—H.D. White and Konig, 1937—John D. Brox, 1948—Roy DeVere Weis, 1961—Carl Romer, 1967—Nancy Wolfe, and 1968—J. Willett Taylor.

Charter members mentioned in the Yearbooks were Arthur Lewis, Mrs. Hugh Miller, Emma Trego Fell, Mrs. Edward Schnabel, Marion Mell, Carl Romer, Ira Mills, J.M. Jessup, and J.F. Fetter.

Editor of the 1937 Yearbook was Marion Augustine Thompson, and associate editor was Cara Thatcher. Cover design was done by Robert M. Reinhardt, whose wife wrote the first edition of *Nubian History; American and Great Britain*. President Arthur Lewis was given credit for being the founder of AGS, which was described as being the largest body of goat breeders in the United States, an impartial society giving authentic registrations of purebred animals with a modern spirit of efficiency.

In 1937, vice president was Ira Mills, and other directors were Mrs. Henry Coit, Emma Trego Fell, J.F. Fetter, J.M. Jessup, Marion Mell, and Mrs. Edward Schnabel. Other contributors to that yearbook were W.T. Crandall of NY; Mary E. Rock, developer of the Rock Alpine (half Alpine, quarter Saanen and Toggenburg) of CA; J.C. Marquart; H.E. Jeffrey of England; J. Arthur Stinson of FL; Rev. W.L. Russel; A.J. Durant of MO; K.J. Coon of NY; E.V. Harrett of OR; Peter Tamburro of OH; Frank Steele of MA; R.A. Mordoff of NY; Herbert Gericke of NY; H.E. Twining of PA; R.C. Newman; Mrs. G.C. Tuttle of FL; J. Arthur Rosenberger of PA; Belva Mean of IL; S.G. Richardson of MA; Nora V. Tew of KS; Violet Kirby of CA; H.P. Sweetser of ME; A.L. Snowman of ME;

Ms. Joseph M. Tatem of NJ; N.S. and E. L. Goodridge of CA; Edward T. Curry of NY; Col. George P. Hawes, Jr. of NC; H.A. and J.A. Neville of PA; and W. L. Russell of NM.

The 1939-40 Yearbook mentioned Will Chappell of OR as president, with Dr. Marg Sharp of PA as vice president. Directors were Emma Trego Fell of PA, Marion Mell of CA, E.C. Schmad of NB, Ira J. Mills of PA, J.P. Campbell of NC, Freeman Prasse of NY, and Mrs. G.C. Tuggle of FL.

Other contributors to that yearbooks were Mrs. C.B. Ward of NJ, Veterinarian David Roberts of WI, R.D. Weis of IL, A.F.A. Konig of CN, W.D. Stambaugh of NB, Frank Coutant of CN, L.M. Winters of MN, the Theodore Moellers of IL, Eldon Schmad of NB, W.T. and E.L. Sparks of CA, Dr. C.W. Turner of MO, William Pipkorn of WI, Dr. H.A. Herman of MO, William Burt of OR, Robert Reinhardt of WI, Herbert Gericke of NY, Mrs. Channing Gilson of NJ, Dr. C.E. Leach of NB, Mrs. T.N. (Lucy) Tyler from Canada, Mary Aldemann of MO, Mrs. A. Sechler of NY, Mrs. J. Franklin Wilson of VA, Irvin and Irene Fritch of CA, the Goodridges of CA, Harrison Sales of PA, L.H. Wells of IL, William Cassin of VT, and Norris Stauffer of KS.

In the mid-1940s, there was a strong push for unification of AGS and AMGRA (American Milk Goat Records Association). A reflection of that are the American Dairy Goat Yearbook, which served both registries from 1943-1946, and the United Dairy Goat Yearbook in 1947-8, again serving both registries. Carl Romer edited all of those issues. Friends and neighbors in California, Marion Mell and Marvin Maxwell, were presidents respectively of AGS and AMGRA during that time. Maxwell told me that the reason the two registries didn't meld was that AMGRA did not like the name selected—American Dairy Goat Association. AMGRA did not want to change its name, but it did so a few decades later, and the name it selected was ADGA.

Directors not previously mention in this talk from the 1944-5 Yearbook were Walter Crum of OH, W.T. Sparks of CA, Rose Saunders of CA, R.D. Weis now of AR instead of IL, Mrs. Tuttle now of ME instead of FL, and Lucy Tyler, who had left Canada for NJ. Other contributors to the '44-45 Yearbook were Duncan Gillies, Thomas McLaughlin, Ivan Underhill, Willett Randall, Mrs. Veral Green, Effie Evans, Alison Sanford, Melvina and LeRoy Nordfelt (a brother of Wes of Laurelwood Acres fame), Mrs. Thomas Doncan, Marian Meed, George P. Hawes, May Handy, L.H. and Betty

England, Robert W. Gwillom, Mr. and Mrs. H. and Maarie Schellenberger, W.A. Reese, Sally Dean, C.J. Hensley, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Fifer, and Harold Walmsley.

The 1954 Yearbook mentions some new names to fill some gaps. Vice President in 1950 was Dr. Margaret Sharpe. In 1951, AGS donated \$1,400 to research. Mary Adelmann Shanks, who met her husband, Louis, at an AGS convention, joined the board in 1945, and other new additions were Mrs. Edward Buckley III, E.W. St. Johns, and Col. R. Lindquest. Mrs. J.C. Lincoln of AZ was president in 1952-3, and Earl Redwine of GA was vice president. Other directors in those years not previously mentioned were Elam Horst of PA, Mrs. Charles Horton of NY, Dr. Charles Hoefle of CN, Charles Taylor of OR, and Glen Newcomer, Jr. of LA. Other contributors to the Yearbook not previously mentioned were Eva Heron, Dolly Rose, Mrs. George Owen, Keith Randle, Charles and Helene Adams, Dr. W.R. McCuistion, Wilson Shope, Mrs. Philip Parsons, Corl Leach, Joy Quistorff, Helen Kirby, George Rogers, Helen Scott, Marion Russell, Stella Randall, Claude Cooley, Mr. and Mrs. G.R. Purcell, Charles and Ruby Knapp, Harold and Maryann England, Dr. Charles Hoefle, Ida M. Law, Gilbert Austin, Frances Steyer, Dorothy Martin, Jerry Gass, C.E. Angel, Olga Yarmchuk, Mrs. Frank Piliero, Mr. and Mrs. G. McLaughlin, Mr. and Mrs. H.L. Woods, and Mrs. C.M. Stanford.

The editor of the 1954 AGS Yearbook was Secretary R.D. Weis. Mrs. Lincoln was still president, and Elam Horst was vice president. New members to the board were George Rogers, R.L. Byron, and Eugene Bond. the list of 1954 Judges is a long on with many familiar names on it—George Rogers of WA, C.F. Calkins and Robert Casebeer of OR, Frank Ecker, Marvin Maxwell, Sidney Hill, Wes Nordfelt, Myrtle Nordfelt, Vernon (Pop) Hill, and Ira Peel all of CA, Helen Adams of AZ, J. Willett Taylor and Carl Romer of KS, Dr. C.E. Leach of MO, Ben Banum and Mrs. Mont Dailey of IN, Joseph Wheatley of KY, Ira Mills and Elam Horst of PA, Lucy Tyler of NJ, Mrs. Charles Horton and Robert Harris of NY, and R.D. Weis of AR. Other contributors to the 1954 Yearbook were Alice Tracy (Hurricane Acres Nubians), Mrs. H.A. Foote, Betty Nordfelt (Laurelwood Acres Dairy), J.F. Fetter, Carl Aa, Virginia Moore, Elsie McLaughlin, Myrtle Hill, and Elodie Cooper.

Now I'll deviate from my academic research and talk from personal experience about AGS and some of the people who helped to mold both it and me. In 1961 I bought

two AGS-registered Nubian kids. Living in CA, where the emphasis was certainly not on AGS, I was soon convinced to change registries because “AGS wins won’t count.” Had I been more knowledgeable, I’d have realized that those two goats would never have any wins, but instead, I switched. For the next two years we continued to hear negative things about AGS—not only negative but unreasonable and unjust. That made us curious.

In 1963, we had a heavy buck year, so we wrote to every Nubian breeder in the mid-west listed in the Roster and Directory of both registries and offered to trade California Nubian buck kids for their doe kids. We had four takers and made a goat-trading trip to Ok, TX, and MO. Enroute we visited goat breeders we’d heard about and wanted to meet.

Our first positive comments about AGS came from Keith Randle in Granbury, TX. His wife gave us some heavenly divinity fudge she’d made, and Keith bent our ears with tall Texas tales and showed us how he convinced an unwilling doe to adopt orphan kids so he wouldn’t have to bottle feed. He locked the kids in a darkened stall with the uncooperative doe for a few days and force fed the kids during that time. Then he turned a dog in. He insisted that in every case the doe would go to the rescue of the kids, defending them from the dog, and from then on, they would be hers. We were glad to meet Keith Randle—partly because of the positive picture he painted of AGS and partly because he died shortly thereafter. An incident that followed his death cast an eerie glow of unreality on our goat endeavors. I received a letter from Texas implying that Randle’s death had not been natural or accidental and saying that I would be next! However, since that was decades ago, I don’t worry about it.

Mainly because of what Keith said, we made a point of visiting the AGS office while we were in Missouri in 1963. Here we were, complete strangers, not even current members of AGS, when we knocked on the door of Carl and Violet Romer in whose home the AGS office was located. We were VERY impressed! Violet was hospitable and served refreshments. I was impressed with her eyes. They obviously took in everything and filed in away for future reference, although she didn’t say much. Carl was very open and took us through the office, showed us how the records were kept, and he even registered a couple of goats right then and there so we could see how it was done. He was very open with all the AGS records and was willing to discuss even the financial

standing of AGS—something we had not found of directors of the other registry we visited. They were very secretive. We found out later that it was because the organization was in bad financial straits, and the board didn't want the members to know how bad it was. But the comparison at the time put AGS in a very good light for us. We joined AGS on the spot and reregistered our two AGS does, as well as everything else. We were always impressed with the integrity of Carl Romer. One couldn't know him very long without getting on his bad side because he was rigid in his beliefs. I spent several years on his dark side, but I never thought any less of him.

In the years of showing and judging (I took the AMGRA training school in 1961 and started judging in 1962. My AGS license came in 1963 or 4), I met many of the people mentioned in the AGS Yearbooks as being involved with AGS, even if they no longer were. Marvin and Gladys Maxwell were among our friends. They were a pleasant, friendly couple, and we were always impressed with their honest, open, but tactful personalities. Maxwell was AMGRA president when his friend, Marion Mell, was AGS president. Although we never met Mell, we have never heard a negative thing said about him. He was a highly respected, well-thought-of man. These two men, as presidents of the two registries, were in the forefront of the efforts to unify the two organizations. I sounded as if AMGRA was especially anxious for the unification in 1946, and AGS was pushing for it in 1947 when the two registries had a joint convention and national show in Southern California. I wasn't there, so I don't know what happened, but choice of a name that would not defer to either organization any kind of preeminence was a real factor in destroying the willingness to work together.

Alice Tracy (Hurricane Acres) and Effie Evans (Evania) are two names from the past of AGS that had a great impact on my goat life. Both these ladies were pace-setters in Nubian breeding. Effie set the pace in inbreeding, and Alice held many of the show and production records. Both were very protective of their reputations, especially in the show ring, but once they decided I was established, they became protective of my herd name, too. Alice turned 82 on July 4, 1984, and she died 11 days later. Effie Evans claimed to be six months older than Alice, and she kept her goats until 1983. They both earned a lot of respect!

Frank Ecker, found in the AGS judges list, was an outspoken, open-minded, personable Californian. He made it very clear to me that he would not be doing what I was doing—trying to work with both registries, but he was very willing to go out on a limb to support my right to do so. I always appreciated Frank's support and considered him a friend.

On one of our goat jaunts to the mid-west, we met Dorothy Sharkey, who claimed to be a charter member of AGS. At the time we met her, she was too old to work directly with the animals, so she modeled goats, goat profiles, and goat plaques out of plaster—all free hand. She did lovely work and furnished trophies for some of our shows. At the time we met her, she was living with Merrill and Thera Morris on their goat dairy in Hot Springs, AR. We were impressed with Dorothy's sharp mind, which she kept sharp by reading her fabulous library of old goat publications. The Morrises impressed us, too, and as more and more regulations have been passed on how milk must be handled and treated before it can be sold, I remember what Merrill said on the subject, "Hey, if they tell you to color your milk blue to sell it, you color your milk blue!"

We met A.J. Durant on another such trip at the University of MO where he was a professor. At the time we met him, his goats were a long way in the past, but we sure heard a lot about his coon hounds! He was quite an interesting person!

Dorothy Hope Young was another early member of AGS from MO. I never had the privilege of meeting her, but for a few years we carried on a lively correspondence, in which I found her to be sweet-tempered and supportive.

We drove to AZ to meet our AGS director, Bob Brauch. He was a retired gentleman, who lived with his sister, Marie. They had a goat operation that is unrivaled. They had a small herd of Nubians on a small lot. Because of its size and nearby neighbors, they SWEPT the goat pens every day! Flies didn't have a chance! they never registered a doe until after she had freshened, and they many of their animals went to the rendering plant before registration because they didn't fulfill expectations. It was a very fine herd, one that would have classified well.

Also in AZ I finally met Mrs. Lincoln. Her husband had made his fortune off Lincoln welders, and while they were very unpretentious people, they didn't take kindly to being discriminated against because of appearances. Mr. Lincoln had stopped at a fine

motel on one of his travels and was refused a room because he didn't look like the kind of clientele the motel wanted to advertise. He got a little miffed, went out and bought the motel, and made the changes he wanted. When I finally met Mrs. Lincoln, goats were way back in her past, and she couldn't even tell me much about her famous Champion Nubian. She was delighted to talk about the dances she attended at the senior center!

I met Eugene Bond at several of the shows I judged in the mid-west, and that man tugged at my heart. He was such a gentle man, so conscientious and kind, and he carried with him to his death the burden of some of the things that had happened in and to AGS during his presidency. I tried to assure him that problems that arose from those things were in no way his fault, but he was a hard man to convince.

The name Nordfelt showed up several times in the Yearbooks. No wonder! There were nine Nordfelt children, and many of them had goats. I met Melvina and Leroy after they were out of goats, but they impressed me as being a cordial, homey couple. Myrtle Nordfelt was the wife of one of the Nordfelt brothers, and she was a lot of fun to know! She'd be the one to grab some of us at a fair and head us all for the fun zone where, with Myrtle, we'd be sure to have a great time! The last time I saw Myrtle, she was running a goat dairy in Northern California with her brother, Robin Pease.

Of course, Wes and Betty Nordfelt were the most famous of the family. They ran the 1,000-doe dairy Laurelwood Acres and were ambitious, innovative leaders in the goat world. Betty Garman was the mother of Wes's fiancée who was killed in an accident while hauling goats. Her father was killed a year later hauling milk. In consoling one another, the pair fell in love and married, and Wes was a thoughtful, caring husband. After Betty's death, Wes married one of his milk-maids who produced a son for him. He sold the dairy but staying in the business as a consultant almost up to his death.

I met Helen Kirby when she moved from New York to California several years ago. She was an impressive, active lady with excellent Alpines and a long career of artificial insemination. She used AI long before it became popular or common, and she stayed with it to the end.

Three Hills were mentioned in the Yearbooks—Vernon or "Pop", his wife Myrtle, and their son Sid. "Pop" did much of the designing and building of goat barns and other



facilities for Laurelwood Acres. Myrtle taught a Capriculture course at Pierce College in CA for many years, and Sid was a vocational agriculture teacher.

Ira Peel ran the famous Chevonshire Dairy in Pomona, CA, and he had some legendary Toggenburgs. I never had a chance to meet him, but a few years ago I met his wife. Their son worked with Heifer Project, so Mrs. Peel lived between Heifer goat pens while they were being collected for shipment. I thanked her for having published her super recipe for Dunkard Cheese in an old magazine, and she was thrilled that I had it, as she had lost it and wanted it back. It was my pleasure to share her recipe with her.

From 1968 to 1979 I missed very few AGS conventions, and I met a lot of interesting people at those. At the 1968 Michigan convention, I roomed with Nancy Wolfe of Kansas City, MO, who was then the interim secretary of AGS. She was a young mother, who'd taken the job because she'd interviewed with Carol Romer, who assured her that he did the work in four hours a day. She reasoned that if an old man could do it in four, she could do it in two. Instead it was taking her eight or nine hours a day, and she was thoroughly frustrated. She just didn't realize she was following a human dynamo!

Very briefly I met Bob Harris of NY, who had earlier served on the AGS board. I found him to be very confused and disturbed about the new directions being taken by AGS.

Of course, I met Louis and Mary Shanks—the romance of AGS. They were a sweet old couple. Louis was very tall and thin, quiet and reserved. Mary was short and chubby and very loving, bubbly, and caring. Altogether a charming couple who stayed active in AGS long after they'd had to give up their goats.

One of the most memorable AGS members I ever met was Lucy Tyler. What a woman! She traveled all over the country classifying, judging, and showing. Besides that, she ran a Grade A dairy, first in Canada and then in NJ with deliveries to NY City. She delivered milk to the roughest part of the city, and I asked her if she was ever afraid. "Of course not," she barked. She went on to explain that she had utmost confidence in God to protect her, and furthermore, she reasoned that since she had something those people needed, she certainly would not bother her. She was right. She liked to tell of her trip from New Jersey to the State Fair in AZ. As she drove, rather fast I gathered, through NM, a long-horn herd started across the road in front of her. She tried to gage her speed

and distance so she could squeeze between the lead steer and the next one, as she couldn't stop. The second steer speeded up, and she hit it. So she pulled over and was trying to pull a downed steer off the road. A trucker stopped to help. As they heaved and struggled with the huge steer, he suddenly snorted, stood up, and took off with the rest of the herd. After that, the rest of the trip to AZ was uneventful.

Edna Connell was a memorable president in the '60s. Besides running a goat dairy and raising several children, she worked hard for AGS.

No story would be complete without mention of J. Willett and Ellyn Taylor, who so aptly ran the AGS office for years. They were a sweet, conscientious couple, and I would have to say that Willett was probably a workaholic. Besides running the AGS office, they both held full-time jobs (Willett taught agriculture), and besides that, Willett did yard work and house repairs for some of the widows in his church and town. During one visit with them, Willett mentioned having to go mow a lawn. My husband offered to help. Willett came back looking as if he could go do another. Roger came home with a very bad back and the statement that he'd never mowed a lawn on the run before! But that's how Willett and Ellyn worked. They had to, or they never would have accomplished all they did. That was one couple that served AGS diligently but who had never owned a goat!

It seems that a whole bunch of goat exhibitors had gathered for a show in KS. The judge was late—and then later. Finally the call came that he'd been in an accident on the way to the show and wouldn't be there. Carl Romer could have judged, but for Alpine numbers he needed to show. So he made some calls to see if he could find an extension agent to judge. The closest anyone came was an agriculture teacher and Jersey classifier. Carl knocked on the door, and J. Willett came to the rescue! Actually, what he said was that he didn't know a thing about goats. Carl told him to use the cattle score card and keep in mind differences in udder and teat structure, a more sloping rump in a caprine, and softer texture. J. Willett judged the goat show successfully and was hooked. He served AGS from that time until he retired from being secretary.

Generally, AGS was started and has been run by generous, involved, concerned, conscientious, active people. These people have been willing to do what they believe

needs to be done regardless of consequences or remuneration. These are people I have been proud to know, people I have been pleased to be able to call my friends!

More recent people of note in AGS are mentioned here, but this list is by no means complete.

Roger Hall, Hallcienda Saanens of CA served as president when Pygmies were brought into AGS, thus introducing the mini-breeds into popularity.

Bruce (and Lois) Hair of TX served AGS as president during a time of difficult flux and ended up started the International Dairy Goat Registry.

Classifiers and judges Sandi Hardin Liska, Rawhide Alpines and Pygmies of AZ and Ray Greer, Elm Valley Alpines of MO both showed strong wills and values in their dealings with and for AGS. Their retirement has left a hole. They both were on the board when it became necessary to find a new secretary quickly, and they acted with decisiveness.

John (and Bea) Howland of Rocky Nook Alpines in NY served AGS as secretary and saved it from financial ruin. Their contribution cannot be overstated.

Hazel McTeer, Fancy M Alpines of MO served ably as president when John Howland was struggling to bring AGS back into the black.

Eddie and Lora Fugate of MO both served on the AGS board, and Eddie, an agriculture teacher, also judged.