



Community Comes Together to Raise Barn

by Mathilda Gregory, Editor-in-Chief

Although his precious horses were saved, when local stable owner Theodore Stoltz lost one of his barns to fire, it was still a catastrophic event.

“It was the barn where I stored most of the hay and feed,” said Mr. Stoltz. “Not to mention the tractor and some other tools. It was all gone, just like that. We tried to save it, but once the hay caught, there was no stopping it.”

Stoltz and others fought the blaze until the fire company could get out to his farm but to no avail. Although we’ve had a lot of rain this spring, a worker’s thoughtless toss of an illicit cigarette butt brought about thousands and thousands of dollars’ worth of damage in moments. Damage Mr. Stoltz could not afford.

“I had some insurance,” he said, “But it’s been a rough couple of years, and I was spending everything I had on the horses. I guess I could have sold off some land, but this acreage has been in my family for three generations. So, I dropped down the insurance.” He sighed. “They hardly covered anything.”

That was when Calvin Hardy, his father Ronald, and other members of the Hardy Falls community stepped in.

“When I found out the insurance wasn’t going to cover Ted’s losses, I knew we needed to do something,” said Calvin Hardy, owner of Hardy Hardware. “It’s not right. He’s lived his whole life in this town. He held onto his farm even when other people were selling out. He loves his horses and is always willing to bring in abused or sick animals and help them get well enough to find new homes. He needed help, so we helped him.”

A plan was quickly hatched. Mayor Truelove contacted a few of the wealthier citizens. Fundraising efforts were launched at The Country Time Bar and Grill, Murphy Lanes, and most of the other local businesses in town. And last Saturday, eight weeks after the devastating fire, most of the able-bodied people from Hardy Falls descended on Stoltz Stables with tools, picnic baskets, and a new pole barn kit.

“I’m overwhelmed. Simply overwhelmed,” said Mr. Stoltz, wiping his eyes with his bandanna. “Calvin told me they were going to collect money, and I saw the signs around town, of course, but I had no idea this was going to happen. It was so much more than I could ever have expected.”

“Well, we were going to get him supplies and a new tractor,” said Calvin Hardy, “but then June pointed out that he didn’t have anywhere to put the stuff. Dad and I realized we had to go further. We talked to Albert Cromwell and his friends, got their input, and the rest is history.”

With so many people in the community having experience putting up barns for themselves and neighbors, the work went quickly. Bernie Housemann donated siding, and general contractor Noah Chertok joined the Hardys to spearhead efforts and keep people organized.

“It was like herding cats,” Mr. Chertok said, “but worth it. We wouldn’t have made nearly as much progress if everyone wasn’t willing to pitch in.”

As the new barn went up, those not taking a turn hoisting trusses were warming themselves in heated tents set up by the Country Time and Murphy Lanes. Both businesses had food for sale, proceeds of which went directly to Mr. Stoltz.

“We couldn’t do much,” said Hannah Frederickson, owner of the Country Time, “but we wanted to do what we could.”

“Mr. Stoltz is part of our town,” said Pat Murphy, owner of Murphy Lanes. “We weren’t going to turn our backs on him.”

It should be noted, however, that the Country Time and Murphy Lanes tents were set up on opposite sides of the field.

By the end of the day, most of the barn structure was up with Mr. Chertok and both of the Hardy men committed to coming back the next day to finish things before more snow was forecast. A load of hay and feed was due to arrive as soon as the barn was complete, and so was a new tractor, on loan from Hardy Hardware until Mr. Stoltz could evaluate his financial situation.

“We want to give it to him, but Ted is stubborn,” said an obviously tired, but happy, Calvin Hardy.

“We’ll wear him down,” added his fiancée, June Esperanza. “He’s going to get that tractor if I have anything to say about it.”

“I just can’t explain what this means to me,” said Mr. Stoltz, blowing his nose loudly into a handkerchief. “To have everyone come out this way...to have them do all of this...I can’t repay this. How can I ever repay this?”

I don’t think you’ll have to repay this, Mr. Stoltz. Neighbors help neighbors when they fall on hard times. Especially here in Hardy Falls.