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Valley Rural Electric
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10700 Fairgrounds Road
P.O. Box 477
Huntingdon, PA 16652-0477
814/643-2650
1-800-432-0680
www.valleyrec.com

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FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

September 11 reflections



by Rich Bauer
President & CEO

IT IS hard to believe 13 years have gone by since that dreadful day in 2001. Each anniversary causes me to think about how tragedy has affected our lives.

I remember hearing my mother say there will be events that cause me to remember where I was when I heard about them. She used to bring up Pearl Harbor and the JFK assassina-

tion. In my life, the space shuttle Challenger explosion had been the only such event ... until Sept. 11, 2001.

It seems so long ago, yet it is still fresh in my mind. I guess we have to remember the good things that come from a bad situation. I'd like to take a walk down memory lane with you because in 2001, I was working for our sister cooperative, Somerset REC, and Flight 93 crashed into our rural backyard.

The beautiful fall day in southern Pennsylvania started out as any other. It was clear and crisp, and I can still see that bright blue sky. I even commented to the other employees that it was the prettiest blue sky I had ever seen.

Then my wife called to say a plane had hit one of the Twin Towers in New York City. The details were sketchy. How could we have fathomed what was going to unfold over the next few hours? My first thoughts were that it was a small plane, and I turned on the "Today" show to get a firsthand look. As the next series of events unfolded in New York and Washington, D.C., I thought, "Thank God we live in rural America because things like this just don't happen around here." The timing of my comments seems so strange now.

The office phones began ringing. There were outages around Indian Lake and Shanksville. We directed a crew in that area to find the problem and restore power. As they radioed back that it

appeared a small plane had taken out our three-phase line, Somerset Emergency Management Agency interrupted our transmission, saying an airliner had gone down in the Lambertsville area.

I immediately went out to the site and stared in disbelief. As one of the first on the scene, I would have bet anything that it wasn't a large airplane. There just wasn't enough debris. The next few days showed the plane was there, just underground.

That week was a blur to most of the cooperative employees. We worked non-stop building lines, hooking up government trailers and basically doing anything in our power to help. We kept so busy most of us didn't have the time to truly comprehend what had happened and how our world had changed.

I missed so many details because my mind was on the task at hand. But some things stand out. Pride in our country came to the surface, though I had taken for granted the freedoms we enjoy. The work ethic, pride and friendliness of rural America also stood out. When the going gets tough and someone needs a hand, you can always count on the rural community to pull together. Whether it was the rural electric crews, the fire departments, EMA, volunteers, police and sheriff departments, etc., everyone worked as one. Nothing on that day makes me prouder than to say I was a part of that team.

The last item that stands out for me is the unselfish acts of those passengers on that flight. They are truly American heroes who put the lives of others above their own. I could only hope I could do the same as they did if I were in that situation.

There isn't a day that passes that something doesn't remind me of that day and I doubt there ever will be. I am sure every one of you has memories of Sept. 11 that will be with you forever. This September, remember the good things as well as the bad, knowing that we will never forget.

Take care and God bless America. 

McBurney Manor offers travelers a taste of local history

BY DOUG ROLES
Director of Member Services

WHEN the folks at McBurney Manor in McAlevy's Fort, Huntingdon County, say they're going to fire up the oven to bake bread or pizza for visitors, they literally mean to strike a match and start a blaze. Owners Jay and Nancy Yoder have incorporated a wood-fueled, 19th-century masonry oven into the bed and breakfast business they started recently.

The Yoders, members of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, opened their business in the spring of 2011 after purchasing the Federal-style building in the spring of 2007. A local baker began using the oven this summer after Jay refurbished it. The baker, Lisa Hershey of Huntingdon, makes organic bread to supply the bed and breakfast and to sell at local markets. The oven is housed in an outbuilding just behind the main building that the Yoders now call home.

Jay and Nancy grew up in the Big Valley area of Mifflin County. They married and settled in Stone Valley, where they built a house and a woodshop about a mile from the manor. Jay continues to do custom carpentry from his shop, while Nancy splits her time between providing child care in State College and tending to manor guests. With their three children reared and out of the home, Jay calls the manor "an adventure in our latter years."

"I always enjoyed early American furniture, lifestyle and structures," he explains. "I've always admired this property."

Nancy says that after working for 25 years in an orthodontist's office, the time was right for starting the business.

"We were at the point where we needed a lifestyle change," she says.

The Yoders spent the first two years trimming vines and vegetation around the property, served by Valley REC, and paving the driveway to the parking area.

"Structurally, the house was pretty well intact," Jay says.

He built a footbridge over the stream between the parking lot and the manor. Back indoors, he installed a wood-fueled heating and hot water system, having the plumbing and radiator work done by Kish Valley Electric. He also remodeled the upstairs bathroom, which hadn't been upgraded since 1968, when a bathroom was first installed in the house.

Jay also remodeled an upstairs fireplace, remaking all the woodwork and trim.

"We've kept the furnishings and the style pretty simple," Jay points out.

The 12-room, brick, Federal-style structure houses three bedrooms for guests. Upon entering the front door, visitors see the main hall of the home and the stairs to the second story. To the left is a dining room and the kitchen, while the doorway to the right leads into a great room the Yoders use to host events such as pizza bake/folk music get-togethers.

"We just love this room, the big windows and lots of natural light," Jay says.

Nancy selected the colors and window



MANOR OWNERS: Jay and Nancy Yoder stand beside McBurney Manor.

dressings for the rooms and did the painting and wallpapering. Some of the furniture in the home, including the vanity in the upstairs bathroom and the twin beds in one bedroom, was made by Jay. An old rope bed was refurbished by Jay and placed in one of the bedrooms.

The improvements to the building haven't taken away from its historical appearance. Jay is quick to recount the history of the manor as told to him by a previous owner and area residents familiar with the property. He states the house was built in 1843 by Robert McBurney, an immigrant who found work as a clerk in the general store of the Greenwood Furnace iron works. McBurney worked his way up to head bookkeeper for the business, Jay says, eventually opening his own general store adjacent to the manor.

The store housed a post office, and McBurney served as deputy postmaster, according to J. Simpson Africa's *History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania*.

"He came to the area as a single Irish immigrant," Jay recounts. "He was very successful in the area."

Jay says McBurney owned the house until 1889. Then the property was sold and



PHOTOS BY DOUG ROLES



INSIDE THE MANOR: Rooms feature a mix of collected antiques and woodworking by Jay Yoder, such as tables, clothes racks and other furniture. The vanity in the common bathroom (far right) was made by Jay.



resold several times in the next decade until a doctor (Dr. Matthew Miller, according to Africa's history) bought it. The home stayed in that family through the 1980s. Jay credits the periods of long-term ownership with keeping the structure in good repair.

The refurbishment of the oven brings a piece of the property's history to life. Jay says the bake house was "in pretty rough shape" when he and Nancy took over the property. With the help of some friends, Jay disassembled the oven and rebuilt it. He says the oven is larger than what would have been needed for one family.

"Oftentimes they were treated as a community oven," he says.

The fire is built right in the oven using seasoned hardwood such as maple. For baking bread, the masonry is heated to about 550 degrees. The oven is heated to nearly 700 degrees for pizza, though the cook time is shorter than for bread.

For bread, the coals are removed prior to baking. For pizza, a small fire is kept burning in the back of the oven.

"We're baking for several hours for our gatherings," Jay adds. "It's been a lot of fun. It's a nice mix of people who show up. There's something about wood-fired pizza that's not the same as coming out of a conventional oven."

Special events aside, Lisa bakes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Lisa says it takes about 15 to 20 minutes to bake a loaf of bread. Baking begins once the coals have been removed and the hot spot of the oven has been allowed time to even out.

"I honestly don't time it; I just check it," says Lisa, who is also a manager at Stand-

ing Stone Coffee Company, a coffee and sandwich shop in Huntingdon.

Lisa sees herself as an artisan and enjoys food production. She apprenticed last fall with another artisan baker and found the craft to be "even more up my alley than I thought it would be."

Lisa sells through Plowshare Produce, a Community Supported Agriculture enterprise in Stone Valley. She also sells at University Mennonite Church in State College, at the manor and at the summer Farmers Market in Huntingdon.

Nancy enjoys including Lisa's breads in the breakfasts she prepares for guests. She says the Italian Ciabatta makes "an amazing, flavorful bread for French toast." She usually serves a seasonal sauce of locally grown fruit (typically black cherries, raspberries, peaches, baked apples or pears) over the French toast. She buys breakfast meat either from the nearby Couchs Subs and Groceries or from Peachey Foods in Belleville.

On bake day, Lisa will make 50 to 60 loaves using all organic-certified flours.

"All my suppliers are in Pennsylvania," she says.

Lisa named her business LeFevre Bakery. She said her mother's lineage is linked to the LeFevre family of French Huguenots that fled 17th-century France to escape religious persecution. Legend states they concealed the family Bible in a loaf of bread.

From McBurney's arrival in central Pennsylvania to the flight of the LeFevre family to wood smoke once again billowing from the bake house, the manor offers visitors plenty of history. Nancy feels that sharing history and giving guests an opportu-



nity to get comfortable and have a time of refreshment is very satisfying.

"Meeting the guests who stay with us is the most valuable satisfaction of our business," she says. "It is a great feeling, sharing the unique features of our home with others who appreciate the ambiance of an 1840s' home. And we get a glimpse of their life and lifestyles. It's really fun!"

Nancy says the bed and breakfast is open year-round.

"But really our business is pretty seasonal," Nancy says. "I had quite a few guests this spring and summer. It's been a great variety of people to meet."

Guests have come from distant places, including a Swede who stayed there this summer while attending a week-long conference at Penn State University.

Jay and Nancy are grateful for the backing his aunt and uncle, James and Marian Payne of Richmond, Va., have provided. Jay says the couple was instrumental in financing the start-up of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. An important goal for the manor property is to help support a peacebuilding program whose influence reaches beyond Stone Valley.

The next pizza bake at the manor will be held Sept. 20, from 5 to 8 p.m. ☀



Above: Baker Lisa Hershey measures out 1.5 pound boules that will be shaped into oblong batards for baking. The bread is 60 percent whole wheat, 10 percent rye and 30 percent white flour. "The final loaf is very airy and light. It's a good bread for French toast," Hershey says. Above, center: The bake house stands behind the manor. It houses the oven and a room that once was a smokehouse. At right: Lisa pulls loaves of bread from a wood-fueled oven during her first bake at McBurney Manor this summer. A fire is built in the oven the evening before a bake and is kept going overnight. Once the coals are removed, the residual heat in the masonry does the cooking. Thermometers placed in the brick indicate the temperature. Top of page: The manor is located at the intersection of Routes 26 and 305.



Veteran Valley REC supervisor enjoys retirement filled with family time

A 40-year Valley Rural Electric Cooperative employee has traded in her supervisory duties at the co-op office for walks to a backyard creek to fish with the grandkids.

Linda Kreidler retired in August 2013. She started at VREC in 1970 through a work-study program offered by Huntingdon Area High School.

“I was a senior in high school,” Linda recalls. “When I started out, I worked in billing. I did a lot of the data entry.”

Linda remembers the punch cards the co-op used and the now-antiquated machines that processed them with the pull of a lever. Her first summer went well, a sign of things to come.

“They were really good to me,” she says. “D.W. Smith was the CEO. He was a good guy, the greatest.”

When she graduated from high school in 1971, Linda was offered a full-time job. She learned to staff the front counter and to process payments that came in by mail, a process called “doing the remit.” Linda worked in a part-time status at times while rearing her children with her husband, Ben. In the late 1980s, she went full time again, in the engineering department where she would work for the next 15 years. There she worked with new member connections and work orders, a process she said “has all changed” from years ago because of advances in technology.

Linda worked for her last eight years with the co-op as office services supervisor. As the office services supervisor, she worked with member issues, such as service interruptions and property transfers. She prides herself on having been a



PHOTO BY DOUG ROLES

THE RETIRED LIFE: Valley REC retiree Linda Kreidler shows off her pair of 8-year-old granddaughters, Maeve, left, and Oona Kreidler. Since retiring a year ago, Linda is enjoying having more time to spend with family and to pursue various projects around the house.

working supervisor, someone who led by example. As she transitioned into this position, she continued to assist the engineering department. Talk about staying busy!

Linda joins her husband, Ben, in retirement. He retired two and one-half years ago from All-Tec in State College, where he worked in materials research. Ben is using some of his newfound spare time to volunteer with the local Meals on Wheels program, while Linda enjoys scrapbooking, completing various home and garden projects, and spending time

with family. She especially enjoys when the grandkids visit the Kreidlers' property near Standing Stone Creek in Miller Township, Huntingdon County.

Linda says she was blessed to have a good job with the co-op, but is enjoying making her own schedule now.

“I just really enjoy being home and having no schedule,” Linda says. “I don't know how people get bored.”

Linda and Ben are the parents of two sons, Toby and Travis, both of Pittsburgh, and have five grandchildren, and one on the way in November. ☀

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