

The Villager Article
Evergreen Acres
First Dairy Farm in Evergreen Village - Last Farm in the City?



Henry Hassler originally built our house in Evergreen Village in 1915. It was a Victorian style farmhouse. The house had a dirt foundation and a small cellar beneath the kitchen from where milk was sold to the local community. The old cellar still exists under the kitchen. The Hassler family, Henry and his three sisters, lived here for many years and operated the farm as a dairy.

When we first moved here our neighbors, Mary and John Cirelli were still alive. They were also pioneers in Evergreen Village who moved from New York at about the same time and settled in Evergreen Village next to the Hassler farm. They recalled many stories of what happened in the early days of Evergreen.

In 1915 Evergreen was in the center of the East Valley orchards of prune and apricot trees. Back then Cadwallader Avenue where our farm is located, Aborn Road and San Felipe Road were the only main roads in the Village. Now we are surrounded by urban housing developments and our many neighbors seem surprised that they live next to a farm in San Jose. Our surprise is that there are only a few agricultural properties left for miles around.

In 2005 my wife Jane and I started our own business and decided to be self supporting in our retirement. Neither of us have a pension and social security is not going to go far. I am British and from London and Jane is Chinese from Beijing yet we have a lot in common believe it or not. We are both engineers, we can design websites and yet getting a job when your 64 is not easy. Full retirement is not an option for us.

We decided to work for ourselves and be self-supporting as far as we could rather than look for jobs that would not exist as we got older. We decided to go green and sell what we could grow locally. We started a petting farm with chickens, rabbits and peacocks and now a small herd of milk goats. This year we are growing tomatoes and strawberries and Chinese Squash and will sell what we can locally. So life has its cycles and with this latest industrial downturn in the Bay Area, Evergreen Acres has gone back to being a small farm.

Two years ago we had an opportunity to rescue a small herd of 12 Boer goats from the Gilroy Animal Shelter. We knew practically nothing about goats back then but we love animals and had our small farm so we decided to rescue these goats. The small herd was complete with three beautifully developed 250 pound bucks carrying magnificent twisted horns. The loading of the herd into our rented trailer was nothing short of a breathtaking private rodeo. It took three 200 pound men to load the scared goats one by one onto the trailer. On the drive back from the animal shelter in Gilroy with the twelve goats in tow, we wondered what we had started.

Little did we know that within a few months we would fall in love with these beautiful sensitive intelligent animals. We also learned that by training the goats to be responsive pets, loading them onto a trailer was no more effort than leading them willingly into the milking stand for food and attention.

We now have a herd of 14 milking Nubian and Guernsey goats and enough kids to drive you crazy just feeding them milk twice a day.



The kidding season this year brought us 32 kids, many of whom have found happy new homes already. For those of you who wonder what a goat is like as a pet think of a cross between a deer and a Labrador dog. They can jump like a deer, be trained faster than a dog, and have an attitude that demands attention. They love attention and are extremely affectionate. One local doctor has a male pygmy goat from us that watches TV and sleeps with the dog albeit with a diaper to catch the problems before they happen.

We operate the petting farm every day and take visitors who schedule online to see and pet our animals. Today we have over 12 peacocks in India Blue, Purple and White breeds, three breeds of chickens including Americanaunas, Rhode Island Reds, White and Brown Silkies. Silkies look like fuzzballs but are great layers with rich eggs. We also have a dozen Minilop rabbits that are bred for pets and we take care of rescue bunnies that people cannot take care of any longer and we find them new homes on our "Pet Sitting Exchange" website www.PetsTouch.com. The website pet database services are free.

Things are a little calmer today but everyday is milking day. Our goats produce sweet easily digestible milk that will make you sleep soundly. Gone are the days of cow milk fat sitting on your tummy. Goats milk is rapidly digested and twice as nutritious as cows milk. It also has all the natural probiotics that fortify your stomachs ability to fight pathogens such as Salmonella, E-coli and Listeria. Recent cases have shown that Listeria even survives Pasteurization of cows milk which kills all the natural good biotics. This is a whole new discussion with changes in the law on the horizon to allow consumers to buy raw milk in your local store. Today it is legal to buy goat or cow shares and use the milk from your animals as you wish.

So now Evergreen Acres is returned to being a small goat farm with 15 milking does that produce a sweet nutrient rich milk full of the proteins and minerals we all need to grow.

Note: If you would like to meet Mike and Jane Hulme they often attend The Villages Farmers Market on Wednesdays and will often have products from their farm for sale.