

Goatpacking in the Lower-48 Has Lost a Bright Light

by Larry Robinson



1959-2009... Jan Huffaker, past President of the North American Packgoat Association, long-time goatpacking aficionado, goat breeder and goat-products manufacturer, walked out of this life, Thursday, November 3rd, 2009. Her time with us was so short, and her impact on us so great, to have to say goodbye at this early time in her life has been heartbreaking.

I first 'met' Jan *online* during the NAPgA (North American Packgoat Association) meetings in 2005 when I was wrassled into becoming the Treasurer for the organization. It was immediately apparent that she had a business-like, but soft manner about her and that she was invested in this organization heart and soul. Her enthusiasm was infectious and although in any all-volunteer group things don't always happen as fast as one might like, she never 'ragged' at us, but did keep reminding us of those things that we needed to get accomplished.

One time she was trying to conduct one of our quarterly meetings, and to her it seemed like no one gave a rip because out of the 5 board members, only she and one other showed up. Turned out that one person had to work late, another had computer troubles, and yours truly fell asleep on the couch. By the time I actually joined the meeting, she was more than a little put out, said she would reschedule, and promptly left the meeting. However, after a number of individual mea culpas, she sent me an email that I still cherish, in which she said, "You know I still love you"... and I did.

Jan was the sponsor and organizer for the 2007 yearly Rendezvous in the high plains of Colorado. The environs were beautiful, the gatherings fun, and she had engaged the Forest Service in a great trail-building project that we successfully completed. One of the high points of that event was an impromptu goat-training exercise with an ill-behaved animal that made a very distinct difference in this animal's outlook on his human counterparts, and a very great lesson on discipline for the attendees.

Jan, although struggling with chemotherapy and the ravages of her disease, attended the 2009 Rendezvous with Vicky Jordan (who facilitated her presence there), and was awarded a NAPgA achievement award for the contributions she had made during her tenure as President. Following the June Rendezvous, she and Vicky toured number of places that Jan had wanted to see, but never had been able to. What an incredible gift Vicky gave to her friend during her last days alive.

Jan Huffaker left some massive-sized shoes to fill. Let's hope that we who were left to pick up the torch can do her justice.

A memorial page with pictures is at: <http://www.napga.org>