

Welcome to the World of Goats!

By Mary Young Robinson, *Google Queen*

On the Home Front

I was lying in bed the other night and all of a sudden I got rather giggly as I looked back to the early days of Larry and I acquiring goats for packing. After we chose our first two, one black and white Alpine and one Oberhasli, our Alpine broke his leg almost immediately. Larry was horrified because he didn't know yet that putting them on a regular stake instead of high lining was asking for problems. Of course, Shadow had to find the closest hole and place his foot there!

We were both pretty shaken when we saw the leg! Dangling! After trying to bring goats into the laundry room for the night, we took him as soon as possible to the Vet. They set his leg wrong and he has now become the "Chester" of the goatherd. So, here we are with an Ober with an attitude and a "Chester". We then heard about some young goats that had been grazers and still not understanding the whole method of hands on bonding, decided to try two beautiful tan and black Alpines.

To see goats bouncing off the ground like basketball players is not what we expected the day we picked them up. We were trying to corral our crazy male goats and put them in a truck, but they flipped their backs around and bucked like wild horses. I already had a feeling we were in for a wild ride ourselves!

As we tried to touch the boys and get close, I could see a glazed over look in their eyes, like saying, "I am crazy, I do not care and I will not change"! This was why we decided to name the scariest one, "Doubting Thomas" and the other one that was like a Siamese twin, "Little Brother". Little Brother followed Doubting Thomas everywhere. When Thomas ran, Brother ran. When Thomas jumped, Brother jumped. When Larry let them out to feed for a few minutes, it turned into an hour of chase because he couldn't catch them. I told Larry, "Doubting Thomas is empty headed, he has to go". I believed that Brother might have a chance of adjusting if his role model was not present.

Doubting Thomas went to market. That hurt, too, because I care about animals, but when you have tried everything and nothing is working, sometimes you have to break down and make a hard decision. It was the right one. It has taken several years and lots of patience for Larry and I to keep Little Brother. One time he ran into a tree, had Larry's personal ID in his pack, and it went flying to "Never, Never Land"! Little Brother has grown to about 170 pounds now and usually carries about 30 pounds on his back and only lays down on the trail occasionally, but he is a character indeed. He will usually come near me now, especially if he smells peanuts, but a goat that is not truly bonded cannot ever be totally trusted to serve you or love you like the ones you might have bottle fed or touched when a baby. He is at the bottom of the pecking order.

How much a goat knows and understands will probably always be a question to ponder. They seem to have better memories than Larry and I! We both are still learning about these entertaining animals and I imagine you are too! Welcome to the "World of Goats!"

