

## Dutch Barn Preservation Society

### DBPS News:

Some bad news, and a good program coming up.

First, the bad news-our oldest member, Ev Rau, has passed away. I sent the link to the article separately. If you didn't see it, Here is the link to the article in the Altamont Paper: EV has long been one of the most dedicated and enthusiastic DBPS Members, and he will be missed.



Everett Rau

Monday, March 26, 2018 - 14:55

Everett Rau

— Photo by Ron Ginsburg

Everett Rau

ALTAMONT — Everett Rau, who lived and died on the farm his family had tended for more than two centuries, did more than make do with what he had. He transcended it.

As he prepared for his death, he shared some of what he called the “fine points” of his life in an Enterprise podcast. Chief among them was a story about rescuing the discarded and refashioning it for a noble purpose, which acted as a metaphor for his life.

“My son Ernest was remodeling an old antiquated building on County Line Road,” Mr. Rau said. “It was built with round roof rafters, not acceptable for modern code.”

The rafters once had been “tall proud pine trees,” he said, “and served for years to protect an old ancient family in a little house on County Line Road.” But they were now considered worthless.

“Like many of us, they were ready to be successful for a long life of honest work ... Someone comes along and tosses us to the ground. We’re not needed any longer.”

He continues his story, “Someone came along — his name was Ev Rau — and picked up the timbers and said, ‘You’ve served a hundred years or more. I’ve another service for you.’”

Mr. Rau fashioned crosses from the discarded timbers that are used annually in an Easter procession to St. John’s Church in Altamont, the church he was raised in and returned to and where his memorial service will be held. One of his crosses is also used for a sunrise Easter service at the farm on Lainhart Road.

He concluded his story, “When Easter dawn comes and I’m no longer here, my spirit will be here in the cross at Easter service.”

Mr. Rau died a week before Easter, on Sunday, March 25, 2018, in the Pleasant View farmhouse where he was raised, where he had brought his wife, and where they raised their four children. He was 98.

He was well-known locally for his knowledge of traditional agricultural practices, from the building of Dutch barns to the restoration of antique farm machinery. He loved sharing his knowledge and was a fixture at the Altamont Fair, helping to restore now-antique equipment and teaching others how to use it. Mr. Rau once not only grew appropriate grain to thatch an Elizabethan-style theater but even harvested it with period tools.

He was born on Aug. 22, 1919, the son of Margaret Van Valkenburg Ogsbury Rau and Frank Emil Rau. He was the youngest of seven children, all boys; two died in infancy and two more — Clayton and Edward — died in childhood. Ernest Rau died in his 20s, in 1928. Raymond Rau lived into his sixties, dying in 1973.

Raymond was 15 years older than Everett Rau. He lived at Pleasant View Farm with his wife, Barbara, for many years, working the land with a tractor he bought in 1929, which is still on the farm today.

“I learn something every time I go over there,” said Chris Stewart, left, of visiting the farm of his Settles Hill neighbor, Everett Rau. Here, in August 2007, they were harvesting Mr. Rau’s wheat for a demonstration at the Altamont Fair.

Frank Rau worked a variety of jobs before becoming an artist for General Electric in Schenectady. The young Rauses lived in Schenectady, often visiting Pleasant View Farm on Settle’s Hill where Everett Rau’s mother, Margaret Rau, had been raised.

Mr. Rau looked up to his grandfather, Peter J. Ogsbury, a Civil War veteran who fought for the Union and died in 1928. Mr. Rau drew on the lessons about farming he had learned from his grandfather for the rest of his life.

When his mother's mother, Sarah Frederick Ogsbury, died in 1917, the Raus moved to Pleasant View Farm and his father gave up his job at General Electric. Mr. Rau was much younger than three of his brothers and, after his closet brother, Edward, died of polio, he was a solitary child.

"I mostly stayed to myself with a rock and a bent nail that I kept in my pocket and fondled in my hand for companionship," Mr. Rau told Laura Shore, who wrote a book about his life, "Stand Tall Against the Odds," when he was in his nineties. "Except for the summer boarders, there was so little conversation in our house that my memories of those years are like snapshots without captions."

His homelife was unhappy. "During the day my parents could avoid each other, coming together for meals, which were consumed with silent intensity," he told Ms. Shore. "My father often badgered Mother with ugly insults ... When I was very young, he crossed the line and hit her face and broke her glasses. Even now, as I cross the threshold to the kitchen, I can see the steel-cut picture of her smashed glasses and I still remember the screaming sound of my own voice and the bruising on her face ...."

A sickly child, Mr. Rau didn't start school until he was 8. He attended the Dunnsville school and recalled once, during recess, picking up the brightest dime he'd ever seen and putting it in his pocket. Later, when the teacher asked who had picked up Robert's dime, Rau confessed. "I was raised to believe that your family name was your net worth and, at the time," he told Ms. Shore, "I thought that everyone knew about my family situation of poverty and abuse. I was determined to uphold the family name, even at a young age."

Scouting was one of the positive forces in his youth. Mr. Rau belonged to Altamont's Troop 51. "A really important part of my life," he said, "was going to the Boy Scout jamboree in Washington, D.C. in 1938. We camped on the plains where the Pentagon is today for one week. I met Scouts from all over the world ... We marched en masse — 38,000 Boy Scouts — past the White House. I carried the heavy New York State flag ... For a farm boy that had not had a lot of recognition or respect, it gave me a tremendous confidence in who I was and who I could be."

Mr. Rau said he graduated from Altamont High School "by the skin of my teeth" but was proud of his diploma. Soon after, he worked at a variety of jobs for General Electric. It was there that he met the woman who would become his wife — Margaret Vedder.

"We both had tough starts in life," said Mr. Rau. "Somehow, in each other, we found peace and love."

He recalled meeting her as she worked in the payroll department at G.E. "I looked through the iron safety bars and somebody looked up at me and smiled ... and that was Peg," said Mr. Rau. "I knew her for almost 75 years," he said as he sat in the parlor of his farmhouse. Behind him on

the wall was a plaque that read, "All because two people fell in love," around which was a gallery of pictures of children and grandchildren.

"The night I brought my prospective girlfriend out to eat a dinner my mother prepared, I was confronted with two people who had found each other in the dark," said Mr. Rau. He explained that his mother had never had a daughter and that his wife had lost her mother at the age of 3, and so they bonded as mother and daughter.

The couple married on June 20, 1943. The year they married, the Raus joined Giffords Grange, which Mr. Rau explained, "worked for the benefit of the farmers." He went on, "We were just common farm workers" but through the Grange, he said, "We met people that helped raise our sights."

Mr. Rau particularly admired Jared Van Wagenen. "He was the first man I witnessed stand up in a crowd and be able to talk in a way that would benefit the farmers and the Grange. He wrote a book, 'The Golden Age of Homespun.' If you want to live in a romantic period of civilization ... you will feel fulfilled once you have finished that book," said Mr. Rau.

In addition to farming and taking in city boarders over the summer, the Raus also started a business selling turkeys. "One of the failed serendipities of our life was greatly successful but, as business changed, we lost everything," said Mr. Rau.

Turkeyland, as the Raus called their business in Schenectady, sold roasted turkeys at 89 cents a pound while the competing supermarket charged 59 cents. "My turkeys were raised on a ramp off the ground. They did not walk on dirt. This was my selling point," said Mr. Rau. "We were successful until the arrival of the first shopping center in Schenectady."

The Shoporama "approached me with large marquis drawings of Turkeyland. I was searching for identity. Their verbal words and picture gave me an identity ... It was the biggest egotistical mistake I made in my life," said Mr. Rau. In 1961, after 10 years, he was in debt for \$30,000, he said.

"I don't even remember how I climbed out of the abyss," Mr. Rau said, correcting himself, "I didn't. We did." Mr. Rau told Ms. Shore about the deep depression he suffered after the Turkeyland debacle, recalling, "Peg never badgered me about my condition, but one day after breakfast she stood up and said, 'Well, you never wanted me to work but somebody has to have a job around here.' She worked in the accounting department of Schenectady International, now called SIGroup, for 26 years until she retired in 1988.

Mr. Rau said he was pleased that today his grandson Timothy, and his wife, Amanda, as well as his son Ken Rau's family continue to preserve the centuries-old legacy of Pleasant View Farm. "They are successful today raising and selling pasture-raised pork, turkey, and chickens. People out there will pay a premium when they can see these animals being raised natural ... no exotic chemicals, hormones or GMOs ... They just stay healthy because they are eating pretty much like God intended them to."

He concluded, “It is so gratifying to me to know there is a future.”

Looking back at his long life, Mr. Rau said, “Some of the dramatic experiences I went through as a child became a solid foundation for me to see through the troubles and believe there was a greater power to draw strength from.”

He also said, “During my life, early on, my wife and I looked at life and said, we have to make friends.” He attributed the richness of his life to his many friends. Mr. Rau described himself as the wealthiest person he knows even though he didn’t have a lot of money.

“The peace of mind that passes all understanding ... is in my heart and in my brain,” he said, “and I only can thank my Lord and savior for that.”

Everett Rau is survived by his four children and their spouses and children: Jim Rau and his wife, Patricia, of Felton, Delaware and their four children, Teresa, Sherry, Jamie, and Shawn; Mary-Jane Rau-Pelzer of Saratoga Springs and her two children, Meredith and Jason; Ernie Rau and his wife, Joyce, of Altamont, and their four children, David, Kelly, Erika, and Derik; and Ken Rau and his wife, Patricia, and their three children, Kristin, Sarah, and Timothy.

He is also survived by 23 great-grandchildren; one great-great-granddaughter; and by two nieces, Susan Tome of Georgetown, Texas, and Rae Rau of Guilderland.

Mr. Rau’s wife, Margaret J. Rau, died before him, as did his granddaughter, Laura Rau, the daughter of Ernie and Joyce Rau.

A service will be held at St. John’s Lutheran Church at 140 Maple Ave. in Altamont on Sunday, April 22, at 2 p.m. with Pastor Greg Zajac presiding. A gathering will be held in the church hall afterward.

Memorial contributions may be made to Albany Community Hospice at 445 New Karner Rd., Albany, NY 12205.

— Melissa Hale-Spencer

<https://altamontenterprise.com/03262018/everett-rau>

Second, I’ve received a notice of an **interesting barn talk coming up** next week, sponsored by the **Columbia County Historical Society** [ <http://www.cchsny.org/> ]

'Barns of the Hudson Valley'

Lecture by Ted Hilscher

The CCHS Volunteers present: '**Barns of the Hudson Valley,**' an **illustrated lecture by Ted Hilscher** --

What is the difference between English Barns and Dutch Barns? Hilscher will give an overview of local barns in the Hudson Valley, mostly in Columbia and Greene Counties.

### **ABOUT THE SPEAKER:**

Ted Hilscher is New Baltimore Town Historian and a professor of American History at Columbia Greene Community College.

**This lecture is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.**

**Tuesday, April 10 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm**

**Van Buren Hall ([6 Chatham Street](#) (Upstairs), Kinderhook NY 12106)**

### **CCHS VOLUNTEERS**

*At 6:30pm, prior to the lecture, the CCHS Volunteers will hold their regular meeting. New volunteers are always welcome and training is provided. Volunteer opportunities exist in many of the CCHS operations, including at the c. 1819 James Vanderpoel House, the 1737 Van Allen House, the c. 1850 Ichabod Crane Schoolhouse, and the CCHS Museum & Library. New volunteers are always welcome and training is provided.*

*CCHS Volunteers meet on a regular basis to discuss volunteer projects and other opportunities to support the organization.*

*Anyone interested in volunteering is welcome to attend the meeting at 6:30pm, and can check the [CCHS Volunteers' page online](#) for more information.*

**-Ned Pratt**