Looking Back and Still Going Forward

Recently, I took a look through some old photos from our farm. I had only reached back a couple of years but the difference was clear. Looking back adds perspective. In the pictures, Raven and Quincey were enjoying some kale, Yellow Chicken was constantly on the wrong side of the fence, and Ike was just a baby. Ike is still small, being a babydoll Southdown, but the farm has grown so much. The cows are all gone, more rabbits, and chickens have joined the fun. Many favorites have gone on to peaceful eternity and I now have my bantam chickens in addition to the full size layers. Just because. The pigs provide farminess and amusement, and the sheep flock doubled in size. The most recent farm product, the launch of our yarn label, Free Range Yarn, is something that was a dream of mine since we brought home the first 5 Pygora goats, ten years ago. Only Gary Goat remains of those first five that started the dream. But beautiful yarn lives on. When I think even further
back to 20 some years ago, when we thought it would be a good way for our kids to grow up, and we started cleaning up a much abused corner of the family tree farm property to bring the horses home, I am amazed at how far we have come. Horses, donkeys, goats, ducks, chickens, rabbits, cows, pigs, and sheep. The journey has been both bittersweet and amazing. I really do like this life. As I reminisce for a little while about how today’s historical events impacted our way of life, enjoy some photos I took that represent America to me. Even though the attacks were intended to stop us in our tracks, and steal our dreams, we continued to dream. Futures are still being sought and enjoyed, friendships are formed, couples married, children born, and homes established.

A lot has happened to the world in the last 20 years while we were building our farm. Twenty years ago, we never thought about our country being attacked by terrorists using our own planes. We moved our horses to the farm from where they were boarded and began learning about our piece of earth, teaching our children to respect Creation and care for the animals. The work was hard. The rewards were varied. As time went on, we farmed for different reasons. Keeping horses for our daughter,
and boarding horses for friends shifted gradually to my own
dream of raising wool animals. Farming as a way to teach our
children responsibility and hard work, turned to raising food
and learning to eat what the farm provided. Self sustainable
living became more of a goal and less of a pretty thought.
Having a safe place became more real, in a world that had
seemed to change too much and too quickly.

I can still stand in the same place I stood in 2001 while
watching a crystal clear blue sky become silent as all planes
were ordered to the ground. I clearly remember finishing the
animal care that morning, wondering if I needed to change and
go to the kids schools to get them. It was surreal. And yet it
became our reality. I never realized how much background
noise airplanes made over our farm, until they didn’t make any
noise at all.
A lot changed in our lives after 9/11/01. Security became commonplace. And more security. We grew used to long lines to enter public buildings, and long lines to access air travel. The children in grade school at that time, most likely don’t remember any other way. I recently heard someone say that this year’s high school freshmen will learn about 9/11/01 as an event that happened before they were born. Seniors graduating from high school likely don’t remember the events of the day. They were too little and they were most likely shielded from the horror and tragedy and rightly so. We put up with things we never imagined in the name of public security. And this is just the tip of the iceberg of changes that occurred after 9/11/01.
A new consumer was born from the event too. Preparedness became a buzz word in our lives. Thinking about if canned food should be stored, and water. We heard story after story about being prepared in case of emergency, another attack, or act of terrorism taking out the power grid. Books, videos and kits were prepared to help us navigate this new ocean of information on being prepared. More and more people saw the
value and need to live simpler lives. Leaning back to our ancestors ways, being self sufficient, in case we need to be. Learning to plant, nurture, grow, harvest and cook what we can produce. Remembering that in an instant, it can all change and we may, in fact, need to depend solely on ourselves and our neighbors.

Do I think it is a bad thing to remember? No, in fact, I think we should remember the facts of the day. September 11, 2001, changed my way of thinking about life. At the very least it should give us pause. No matter how far from the date we get, the truth is, our lives changed that day.
Farming a small place, 15 years post 9/11 gives me a sense of the peace. When caring for the farm I don’t have much time to dwell on the news, corruption, and ugliness of the days we live in. Animals demand our attention. Just as I had to tend the animals when I wanted to park my shocked mind in front of the television on 9/11/01, the daily rhythm demands my first attention. Other things must wait. And maybe that’s not such a bad way to start the day.

When I started this blog, I made a decision to write about September 11, 2001, every year. I feel it is important that the story tellers keep the events of that day fresh. Thank you to the first responders who selflessly answered the overwhelming calls for help that day and the days after. God Bless America