

# The Year of the Barn

By Gloria Hildebrandt

**M**y father and I talked about what he would like done with his land after his death. He wanted it kept as a nature preserve and a managed forest. He liked bequeathing it to me because I wanted it kept the same way. My sister was to get the family house and surrounding land. I would get 14 acres. One thing my father and I didn't discuss was his Honey House, a large shed he had had built when he was seriously into beekeeping. In later years it was used to store tractors and equipment to maintain the property. The Honey House went with the residence.

We never discussed the fact that I would need something

similar. I had no storage shed. I didn't even have a garage. But thanks to Mike's enjoyment of machinery I soon had several large pieces that make forest management much easier, without a place to secure them.

This year, therefore, has been the year of a barn construction. It took several months of research, planning and consultations. For a while it looked like it might not get built this year. But suddenly in an August heat wave, the construction company was ready to build it the next week. And they did.

What turmoil! First I panicked because a pile of wood chips had to be moved off the lane to the barn site. This was not easy, as it meant shovelling them into the small tractor-wagon, driving

them to the path at the back of the property, dumping them and raking them out. The weather was brutally hot. I had to do this about 10 times. It was made easier when Mike used the Kubota's front shovel to load the wagon. I don't use the Kubota because I am intimidated by it. It was even better when Mike got his friend Steve to help. By Monday morning the lane could be used.

## Escarpment Rocks

Then, the chosen site had to be cleared of rocks and trees. It felt bad to have so many healthy trees cut down in the name of forest management. There was more turmoil as Escarpment rocks the size of Victorian bathtubs were excavated. I asked the guy to pile them onto a pioneer rubble rock wall nearby but didn't realize they would form a long stretch almost as tall as I am.

Materials were being delivered faster than they were needed, because of unforeseen difficulty with the foundation footings. Unforeseen by the construction company; I warned that there would be plenty of rocks. I should have said boulders or bedrock. Rock prevented some footings from being as deep as intended. The town inspector required more digging to see if there was bedrock, which would be a secure base for a footing. Fortunately there was bedrock.

Meanwhile lumber was piled on my back yard. Metal siding and roofing was in another pile. A portable toilet needed to be placed somewhere. Roof trusses came soon, and after a day of concrete pouring for the footings, piles of gravel appeared for fill and flooring. I had no idea where it could all go.

My property is woodland, not a wide-open farmer's field. It was a real challenge to find space for all the materials, and the delivery men were not happy that there wasn't a clear, wide driveway to the barn site. There was a former laneway now covered by lawn. Soon heavy trucks churned the lawn into deep ruts and carved wheel tracks down the lane. I retreated into the house and let the professionals work it out.

## Barn Raising

What could have been total chaos was actually well controlled. All materials were neatly piled around my garden beds, and for a couple of days a mountain of gravel filled half of my short driveway. Parking became the next challenge. Steadily we got past this bottleneck as the barn began to rise and materials were used.

The end result is a handsome, well-built structure that accommodates everything. Mike has installed a solar panel lighting system that makes the interior look a bit like a nightclub. After a horrific thunderstorm, toads moved in to make homes under some pallets holding lumber off the floor. A breeze caused a corner of the barn to moan as if it were haunted, so strangely that my dog barked at it and I looked for a wounded animal. I hope it wasn't the spirit of my father objecting to what I have done.

It's an odd feeling to have the power to alter a landscape as much as a building does. But it's needed. When you live in the country you need a place to store equipment. This barn lets me maintain the property much as my father did.

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