

VIVIAN BEATTY

by Kenneth Greene

Vivian Beatty, a regular Gardiner Library volunteer, has as many stories to tell as are contained in the books on the shelves.

She comes in once a week to help with odd jobs and keeping the overcrowded stacks tidy. Today she is sitting at the small library's one table, surrounded by books, addressing envelopes in her elegant longhand, which gracefully alludes to a bygone era.



Vivian Beatty, 2007 (Photo: Roger Thorpe)

FARM LIFE – LIVING OFF THE LAND

Vivian has been living in Gardiner since well before there ever was a library. She moved to Gardiner with her husband, Joe, in 1951. They had already been married seven years; Vivian was 27 and Joe was 29. They were poor, wanted land, and knew they could be self-sufficient. “We were born farmer’s children,” she says, “and we both loved the land.” As she speaks, Vivian’s voice crackles with an energy that contrasts with the matter of fact tone of many of her statements. There is a vibrant energy that visibly runs through her small frame. It is this inner strength that undoubtedly led Vivian to take on the challenge of moving away from home and making a go of farming.

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The two were living in Goshen, which was becoming residentially developed and unaffordable to farmers. She says that many Orange County farmers were moving further upstate as failing farms were being sold to build homes. Vivian and Joe saw an advertisement in the newspaper for land for sale in Gardiner. Auctioneer and real estate salesman A.J. DiBennio advertised the land as having two never failing water

supplies – the Wallkill River and Shawangunk Creek. The house, which was situated where the two streams came together, “was very run down,” says Vivian, “No bathroom, no water, and no heat, no electric... but the land! We fell in love.” Vivian was unfazed. “Farmers don’t look at the house,” she says. “They look at the land.” Vivian laughs at her statement. She remembers her mother’s concern about the dilapidated house and shakes her head as if ignoring her mother’s worry once again.

The two bought the 70-acre farm from Dick Decker, who had bought the parcel from the Beviers. The land, which ran from route 44/55 down to the river and across the other side, had



1955. The old barn, flooded.

long been settled. The original barn was sitting on the banks of the Shawangunk. The land itself was also run down and full of brush. The price was \$11,500. Another 115 acres were available for rent. “At that time people thought it was an outlandish price,” says Vivian, “but we believed that land is the only safe investment – God isn’t going to make more land.” The couple moved up from Orange County and got to work. They had a small herd of dairy cows, grew grain to grind for feed and hay and corn for ensilage. “Livelihood, meaning money, was next to non-existent for a while,” says

Viv. Instead, Vivian tended a large vegetable garden, grew fruit trees, and cared for other animals. Joe was a good hunter and for a while supplemented the garden produce with wild meat.

Two years into their new life the couple learned the truth of their Realtor’s statement about the “never failing” water supplies; the land flooded out twice in one year. “What caused the trouble down in Tuthilltown is the Shawangunk comes out of the mountain, see, riding fast down to the confluence of the Wallkill. Ice and logs lodged on abutments causing jams – the waters gotta go someplace,” says Vivian. “We had to get in and out with canoes.”

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Not one to be defeated by challenges, Vivian and Joe moved the barn back to a foundation up the hill where an older barn had burned. Again, Vivian’s frank descriptions of hard times make canoeing to and from the front door and moving a barn sound like waking up in the morning – just something that had to be done. “In days gone by they used to move buildings. They would tie them, grease big heavy timbers, attach come-alongs, and pull them with trucks.” Luckily, some of Vivian’s relatives were house movers and helped the couple out.



1958. Moving the barn.

As Vivian looks back on her beginnings in Gardiner, she sees similarities between her situation and modern trends. “It’s a cycle,” she says, thoughtfully nodding her head. Vivian began noticing this repeat by the early 1970’s. “Dairy was not profitable,” she says, “land prices were rising, farmers were selling and chopping up their parcels for houses, and people did not want their children to work so hard.” Vivian and Joe stopped renting their extra land, their equipment was wearing out,



Joe Beatty setting off to check the farm after a flood.

and their kids were grown and gone, making it hard to keep up with the work. “We looked around,” says Vivian, “and we thought: we’re gonna die on the tractor.” Then she laughs and sighs at the same time, as if remembering a joke between Joe and her. Even though farming was a hard life, and one that Vivian eventually left behind, she still says, “it’s a rewarding living but you make up your mind you’re not going to get rich.”

In the end, the cows were sold at a high-class auction. “There were different grades of auctions depending on the quality of animals,” explains Vivian. When asked why her cows went to the premium auction in the Mohawk Valley, Vivian displays her knack for understatement, “I suppose because of the way we took care of them and amount of milk they produced. The auctioneer just really wanted those cows.”

Vivian and Joe ran the campsite for nine years. Vivian says that although they enjoyed the business, many people, including Joe, never really understood why it was popular. She recalls Joe saying, “If they want to live in a tent, let ‘em.”

After this, the hay fields were left fallow since, as Vivian puts it, “we didn’t have cows pooping all over it.” Farm life gave way to a new kind of life. Vivian and Joe still had their land, and over time, found a new way of making a living off of it. Joe got a job at the Highland Training School and Vivian got the idea of starting a small campsite.

“There weren’t any around,” says Vivian her hazel eyes bright and framed by her curly

hair. But there was a need. More and more climbers were coming to the area and looking for an inexpensive place to stay close to the ridge.

Vivian and Joe ran the campsite for nine and a half years, from 1969-1979. The campground was called the Ganaghgote Campsites, which is the Indian name for “meeting of the waters,” and grew into a big operation. Vivian says that although they enjoyed the business, many people, including Joe, never really understood why it was popular. She recalls Joe saying, “If they want to live in a tent, let ‘em.” Eventually Joe got sick of the camp, so the two decided to sell the grounds and business, split the property in half, and built a new house at the top of the property. The camping spot became Jellystone Campground.



From front: Willy (Crow) Majestic, Joe Beatty, Charlie Scott (standing) and Ray Scott 1961



The fire at the central co-op and feed store (now Kiss My Face) in the 1960s.

TOWN LIFE

“When we moved up,” says Vivian, “Gardiner was a farming town and Tuthilltown was a shantytown.” The railroad had already come through and caused Gardiner to be built up and Tuthilltown to fade. “Gardiner was a small town,” says Vivian, “but it was a town. When you get down to thinking about it, there was a lot there.”

After Vivian and Joe, more farmers were moving up to buy cheap land from an older generation’s farms. Because of this, says Vivian, “in the 50s and 60s all activities and

businesses were keyed to farming and farm hours.” Moran’s (now Majestic’s) was mostly farm supplies. What is now Kiss My Face was a central co-op and feed store. Vivian can still remember seeing smoke over the store from her house one day. “Boy was that a hot day,” she recalls. “At least half the town was fighting the fire. We had big washtubs of water to stick the firemen’s heads in.” Although not sure of the exact date, Vivian recalls that the fire squad was fairly new, placing the fire in the early 1960s. “It was right in the center of town,” she says. “Everybody turned out bringin’ water, coffee, and towels. It took a long time to get the fire under control.”

Vivian recalls that people saw each other a lot. She remembers one man, Roy Every, as the town greeter. “He was the friendliest man,” she says. “He made it a point to visit all the new people.” But Vivian did feel a division in class between the descendents of the old settlers and the newcomers, a separation she again points out as being repeated in present-day Gardiner.

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Vivian and Joe

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Over time, the farming focus of the community began to change. Parades, which had once been frequent and scheduled so that farmers could participate, became few and far between.

Businesses changed their hours and goods to accommodate nine-to-fivers. Traffic patterns changed as well. “You could park any which way on Main Street,” laughs Vivian. “And then, one day, I had to wait for two cars to pass before I could pull out onto 44/55. I went home and said to Joe, ‘What is the world coming to!’”

AN EXPANSIVE IDEA OF FAMILY

Over 29 years Vivian and Joe raised 16 children. Many were children the Beatty’s took in, whether it was because their families were having trouble, going through a difficult divorce, or,

as Vivian puts it, “until the nastiness was gone.” Their biological child Judy, now Mrs. Judy DePuy, was born in 1945 followed by, as Vivian jokes, “too many to name.”

The Beatty's first started taking in needy children in their Goshen rental. The home was not considered big enough by social services for them to adopt, but two children who had run away from difficult circumstances stayed with and were cared for by Vivian and Joe. In Gardiner, the couple decided to pursue formal adoption possibilities. Eventually, Vivian's family consisted of children referred by social services, local children needing respite from family problems, and their biological child.

The one-room country schools were still open and Vivian's kids went to the Tuthilltown School until it closed. The schoolhouse had no water, so the kids had to carry it in buckets from the neighboring Stokes farm. “In summer it took ‘em a long time,” says Vivian, “and in winter there just wasn't much water.” Over time, the schools were being centralized. Eventually, Vivian's children attended the New Paltz schools.

When comparing the one-room school experience to the centralized system, Vivian sees pros and cons for both. In the one-room environment, if a student and teacher did not hit it off it was a bad situation. On the other hand, the country kids knew more than the New Paltz students from listening to the content of the curricula being given to older students. The New Paltz teachers echoed this saying they felt the country kids were ahead academically but behind socially.



From left: niece Helen Beatty, daughter, Judy (Beatty) DePuy, niece, Nancy Beatty in front of the house in 1950.

“Our kids walked to school,” says Vivian, “and they took their time. They did this and that clear around the mulberry bush.” She did not encourage or discourage her children from attending clubs or after school activities, but most country kids, including her own, had to come home to do some work. Chores included feeding animals and working in the hay fields. “Whatever size they were they had a job appropriate to their age,” says Vivian. Because of this, Vivian feels her children learned responsibility at a very young age.

To encourage her children's independence, Vivian would send them shopping on their own. She would call ahead to the Carrol's shoe store in New Paltz. “I would say to Jimmy, ‘So and so is on the way to buy shoes, but they gotta be sensible shoes.’ That way, the kids felt they were shopping on their own, but Vivian would know they would get what they needed. “We did so much together you can't set anything apart,” says Vivian. The family worked together and played together. Recreation included playing ball and ice-skating. At times we would go to Tillson Lake to go swimming or roller skating. “We had a nice little spot,” says Vivian.

In 1990, Vivian's husband had a severe stroke. After leaving the hospital he lived in a nursing home for two years. Vivian then hired an aide so that Joe could move back home. In 1995 after two more years back on the land, as Vivian puts it, he truly "went home."

TRAVELING LIFE

Even before Joe passed away, Vivian had a taste of traveling. Her first trip had been hunting with him in Wyoming. The two had increased their travel, but always drove to their destinations. Her first trip without her husband was with her son George Watts and friends Scott Mosher and John Klis. The four went to the Kentucky Mountains for two weeks to work with Lend-A-Hand, a volunteer organization that provides medical care and religious instruction to the rural poor of the area. By then, Vivian had caught the travel bug and wanted to experience more of the world outside Gardiner.

"The first big trip I took by myself was a pleasure trip on the canals of England and Wales," she recalls. She also remembers that she was tricked into going by her brother. "But I was happy I went," she adds. After being away from home for a while, Vivian always found her return emotional. "It is very sentimental to cross the Wallkill River at New Paltz and soak up the view while driving down to Gardiner." Although she was always happy to return to the land, Vivian also noticed that bit by bit Gardiner was going downhill. "It was the result of the natural passing of time," says Vivian, "everything and everybody ages."

In between running her own tax preparation business, Vivian always found time to be active in the community. Her involvement in Operation Christmas Child eventually led her on her first international journey. Vivian traveled to Ghana with the group from OCC. While there, she met an orphanage director from Mexico. Although the days were long and hard in Ghana, it was there that Vivian decided to take on a new mission; this time at an orphanage in Mexico where she would teach the girls how to sew. Vivian collected used sewing machines and took them with her to Mexico the following year. "It seems to have been a mutual concern, of Joe and me, to help the less fortunate," Vivian says. "I can't explain it. I have to say it kind of grew naturally."

Vivian steadfastly endured living conditions in the field that she found had no comparison to living in Gardiner. "If one is interested [in mission traveling] one must leave all behind," explains Vivian. Vivian presses her finger into the table. Her hands look as strong as her convictions. "One has to leave behind cultural ideas and thoughts of conveniences, and it is no place for the delicate – either physically or mentally." Again, returning to Gardiner was welcome. "It always felt like being home," says Vivian, "peaceful and quiet."

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Vivian, proving once again the strength she embodies in her small frame, traveled to Honduras the next year with The Reformed Church. “We were out in the boonies,” she says. Vivian helped in the grade school while assisting in building an addition for the local health clinic. Back in Gardiner, Vivian became involved in the Church’s Youth Group.

Now 83, Vivian is in her third semester of Spanish language classes at SUNY New Paltz. She views the class as preparing her for the possibility of visiting a Central American country. Although she is not sure exactly how or where she will go, she does know that there are kids down there that need help. “I think this trip is more fitting for my age,” she says. “My heart is in Africa, but I don’t think I can make the trip.” There have been some protests from her children but Vivian brushes them off saying, “I suppose they may not approve, but will accept it!”

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Vivian remembers when there were two grocery stores, a large hardware store, and the central coop was a busy place. She also recalls the stores closing and the farmers moving further out. “Now, with more stores opening up it’s the same thing,” she says. “I see younger people greeting each other; they are the new generation setting out to accomplish their own dreams.”

Editor’s Note: Vivian Beatty died in a car crash on November 5, 2007 as this story was in the final stages of editing. The Hudson Valley History Project Gardiner is saddened by the loss of so vital a member of its family and is grateful to Vivian, and to author Ken Greene, for having left us with this moving portrait of her and of a time in Gardiner’s history that is no more. Ken Green says, “Vivian’s energy and enthusiasm were infectious. I am so grateful that the History Project brought us closer together and gave me the chance to be graced by her wisdom, compassion and wit. Her life stories and lessons resonate with my own experience, a generation apart, and I am sorry not to have had more time to listen to her memories. I’m glad, though, that we can share at least the few I did manage to capture here.”

The following obituary was written by her family and adds another dimension to the rich portrait we already have of her:

Vivian Mae Beatty

August 4, 1924 – November 5, 2007

Vivian Mae Van Duzer born August 4, 1924, late in the afternoon, at home, on Third and Liberty Street, Newburgh. She was the daughter of the late John and Laura Van Duzer of Middletown. She has a brother, Bill and a sister, Margaret. She married Joseph Garlinghouse Beatty on October 1, 1944, and it was her husband that brought her to know Christ. They operated a farm in Goshen and moved to Gardiner in 1951 where they farmed until 1969 when they retired and started the Ganahgote Campsites.

Vivian lived her life for the Lord, and started every day with prayer and Bible study. She did, and accomplished many things. A mind can’t remember all, but to name a few:

She started out as a wife, farmer, mother of many (raised 18 children) and took in Fresh Air children over the summers; she was Superintendent, Sunday School teacher, Youth group leader, member of the RCW, and prayer warrior of the Gardiner Reformed Church. She worked with the youth and taught Sunday school at the Shawangunk Reformed Church and helped start “Children in Worship”; she taught religious instructions at the Wallkill High School 1958-1960; area 4-H leader; member of the Gardiner Rescue Squad working as an EMT; for many years she taught reading at the Wallkill Prison and to many area children; she went to school for income tax; worked at H & R Block

and retired to be a self-employed Tax Consultant; she was tour guide for Huguenot Street; member of the Spinners Association; taught knitting classes and spun her own wool. She was involved in the Samaritan's Purse – one year she collected over 3,000 shoe boxes from local churches that were to be shipped to Ghana. Just collecting boxes did not satisfy her so she did a fund raiser to send herself to Ghana to help distribute the boxes to local villages. She did this at the age of 74 and traveled by donkey from village to village. Through the church she traveled to Honduras where she helped build a Children's hospital, Mexico where she brought sewing machines and taught sewing to the teenage girls, and Walker, KY where she worked with Lend-a-Hand. She belonged to the AARP and the Red Hat's Society; she was presently a volunteer at the Gardiner Library and a Spanish student at SUNY New Paltz. She loved gardening and deer hunting (what she got, she cleaned herself); she canned all her food; was a superb seamstress and made her families clothes.

She was of a determined mind and succeeded at what she did.

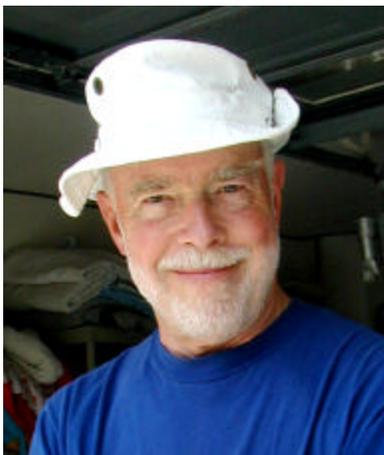
When the Lord called her home he said, "Well done, Good and Faithful Servant".



Ken Green

Writer

Ken Greene, author of the Vivian Beatty story for the [Hudson Valley History Project Gardiner](#), is an aspiring modern homesteader. He lives and farms in Accord with his partner Doug and the three other members of his cooperative land stewardship community, Camp Project Institute. He runs the Hudson Valley Seed Library. Housed at the Gardiner Library, the not-for-profit works towards preserving seed saving heritage and the diversity of Hudson Valley heirloom vegetables, herbs and flowers.



Raymond D. Smith, Jr.

Editor

Ray Smith, author of the Dot Decker story and Editor of the Betty Moran, Annie O'Neill and Vivian Beatty stories for the [Hudson Valley History Project Gardiner](#), spent 37 years as an international banker and credit officer at Bankers Trust Company in New York City and London. He retired twelve years ago. Ray and his wife, Anne Allbright Smith, moved to Gardiner three years ago.

Ray was an English major in college and during his undergraduate years was, at one time or another, either editor or managing editor of every student publication on campus except the yearbook. He is an avid reader and enjoys writing.