**Chinese New Year a real ‘kidding’ matter**

**Eatonton Messenger**

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**Susan Larson Meetin’ Eatonton**

**As the Chinese Year of the Horse gallops off into the sunset, it brings us to a fork in the road, we can choose to follow the Year of the Goat or the Year of the Sheep.**

**There are several explanations for this. Since I’m not Chinese I don’t know which to believe, but one source claims people don’t find the goat to be very cuddly, so for marketing purposes it’s more profitable to sell cute little stuffed sheep.**

**OK, I can see that – but c’mon, not that long ago we celebrated the Year of the Dragon and the Year of the Snake. I don’t remember any cuddly alternatives for them!**

**Anyway, to commemorate the year, I set out to find out what I could about any goats – or sheep – in Putnam County. The first person I asked was Uyvonna Copelan at Southern Manor Farms on Wards Chapel Road.**

**After all, Uyvonna has taught me just about everything I know about farm animals.**

**She was aware, of course, of goats around the countryside, but had no contacts for me. However, she did mention she has two rams she’d like to breed and is looking for some cute little ewes.**

**My next step was to visit Hickory Hill Farm and Garden. Just inside the door I spotted a huge pile of goat feed. I asked Forrest Gentry, the young man behind the counter, if he knew anything about goats in the county.**

**Actually, he said, he keeps a few himself, mainly as pets, but kiddingly added they do a great job of mowing his lawn.**

**As I was about to leave, he said, “Oh, yes, Jesse Copelan raises goats and sheep. He buys his feed here.”**

**When I called Mr. Copelan, he was excited to tell me that he took up raising goats and sheep in his retirement. And maybe when all is said and done in view of the election results, nurturing sheep and goats might be a more pleasant way to spend one’s golden years than butting heads with donkeys and elephants.**

**And that somehow made me think of Uyvonna’s rams. Now, I don’t want it to look like I’m using my column as a dating service or anything, but maybe we can get a little something going here.**

**As I pondered the Year of the Goat, I thought it would be remiss not to mention Goat Island. It was about the time we moved here in 2012 that Billy, the island’s only surviving resident, passed away. There was talk then of erecting some sort of memorial to Billy, but time passed, and well, you know how that goes.**

**I asked around everywhere trying to dig up something about Goat Island, but no one seemed to know anything. Then a few weeks ago, when I had my teeth cleaned, it occurred to me that my dentist, Dr. Brown, lives on Lake Sinclair.**

**I was amazed at how much information I was able to extract from him!**

**He referred me to Sara Shepherd, who referred me to Sonny Poole, Horace Harper, Tommy and April Thomas, Jay Copelan and Elaine Hatcher, who then referred me to Mark Waddleton, who really had the lowdown on Goat Island.**

**Only a year after Billy’s demise, “somebody” put a pair of goats on the island. Then after they begat two little nannies (one of which drowned, sad to say), “somebody else” took the billy to a vet and had him fixed.**

**Then “somebody else” put another billy on the island.**

**Visitors, including Waddleton and his grandkids, love to boat up to the island to feed the four goats. In fact, Waddleton, an associate broker and Realtor for Drake Realty, Lake Area, loves to take prospective home buyers to Goat Island.**

**“It’s a real source of entertainment,” Waddleton said, chuckling about how the goats try to get on people’s pontoon boats, which creates a really unique experience. (A bit more interactive and memorable than playing computer games.)**

**And besides all this, Waddleton said it looks like both nannies are about to expand the population of Goat Island.**

**Maybe there the Chinese New Year greeting “Gung Hay Fat Choy,” which means “good fortune,” might really apply to the Year of the Goat!**

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**Susan Larson is a Putnam County resident who writes a monthly column for The Eatonton Messenger. Email her at** [**susanlar@bellsouth.net**](mailto:susanlar@bellsouth.net)**.**

**Susan**[**www.gwinnettdailypost.com/susanlarson**](http://www.gwinnettdailypost.com/susanlarson)