

of anesthesia that morning following the surgery. “It’s okay! It’s all right! The tumor was benign!”

The love has always been there – sometimes hidden by misunderstandings or selfishness on the parts of one or the other of us, but it is there. That love and support has given me the courage to not only face the possibility of death, but to realize that each of us must try to do something beneficial with our lives – to make each day count – always and forever.

### **BUZZARD DUCK**

Buzzard Duck “B.D.” was a member of that large mute breed of black and white duck that looks like it has a hamburger patty wrapped around its face... the Muscovy Duck. He came to live on our farm many years ago when someone gave him to us (that’s one of the “perks” of living on a farm... you get all of the animals that your friends and acquaintances no longer want!). Buzzard Duck had the run of the barnyard along with an assortment of chickens and a pair of turkeys. Because he didn’t have a mate, he had to use his imagination. He took a shine to his own image that reflected from a piece of shiny aluminum that patched a large hole on the bottom of the barn door. B.D. stood before his reflection for hours on end, whispering sweet nothings to it in duck-fashion, and caressing it’s smooth surface with his head and beak. He was so enamored with his own image that we didn’t think that any of us existed in his mind. But, apparently, he did feel he owed my husband Jim a debt of gratitude for feeding him each day.

One day, B.D. was in rapt discussion with his reflection, as usual, while my husband was hammering away on a piece of equipment in the barnyard. Jim was completely oblivious to the fact that our huge Tom Turkey was nearby. Tom, who had long before instilled terror in the hearts of our 4 children by chasing them across the barnyard whenever they ventured near, began to circle Jim, preparing for a full charge. Then, with wings spread and neck extended, the turkey sped (as fast as a 50 lb. hunk of white meat can speed) straight towards Jim. Jim was at first unaware that he was a target, but when he heard the rustle of feathers, he looked up to see a black and white duck streaking past him. When he turned around to see where Buzzard Duck was going in such a hurry, he saw what looked like a potential game of “Chicken” between a turkey and a duck. It was the turkey that put on his brakes and made a retreat for the far reaches of the barn lot with a very mad Buzzard Duck in fast pursuit. When B.D. figured that Jim was once again out of harm’s way, he calmly returned to courting his aluminum mate.

It was not too long afterwards that we found someone who had a female Muscovy who was looking

for a mate. It was to be Buzzard’s reward for saving the dignity of his benefactor. And a few months’ later, it was Thanksgiving. (No, we didn’t eat Tom, but we did find him and his mate a new home.)

### **COWS AND BINGO**

A little over 10 years ago, a local radio personality, trying to be funny, “pushed my button,” and I wrote the following letter of complaint. I never got a response, but I felt better for having written it!

“How do you get 200 cows in a barn? You put up a Bingo sign!” Cute, John, cute! Let’s see, maybe you’re referring to that rather overweight lady sitting in Row 6. She’s dressed rather sloppily and is smoking a cigarette. As she shuffles up to the snack bar, her breathing sounds like a locomotive. The money that she pays for her Bingo buy-in probably could be used for food, clothing or other necessities, but just maybe she needs a little release from her dull life? Ok. She’s one candidate for your “cow” description. How about that “cow” in Row 2 (in the non-smoking section)? She is in her 60’s – has been a housewife all of her life; lives in a mobile home in a park in the Danebo district. Her husband just passed away 2 months ago, and she has a son who comes to see her on weekends. Life has become pretty lonely during the week, but the friends that sit with her at Bingo share conversation and concern and give her an interest outside of herself. And, occasionally being able yell “Bingo” gives her that little rush of adrenaline that has been so absent in her life for so long. Or maybe your picture of the Bingo cow is of the lady sitting in Row 8 next to her husband. Her chair just happens to be on wheels and her husband attentively pushes her into the Bingo hall and settles her in amongst their regular group of friends while he goes to the snack bar to buy her a taco salad before “the games begin.” She always gets hugs and hellos from the regulars. Cow? Oh, but you forget. There are lots of bulls in the barn as well! One of them comes to play Bingo two or three times a week. He used to come with his wife. They were such a “cute” couple. Many people would stop at their table to chat and to ask how they were doing. Soon, she no longer came with him. Some said she was in the hospital with a stroke. Many of the cows and bulls stopped by regularly to inquire about her and to give him hugs and moral support. The “stroke” was actually Alzheimer’s and he continued to come – to get out into the world of the other cows and bulls for a couple of hours of social interaction. But, the Bingo “cows” and “bulls” are not all ailing or gummers! There is the family – mother, father, daughter and son-in-law in Row 1 who just wanted to get out and do something fun where they could laugh and converse and maybe even pick up some extra spending money. You can’t do that in a movie