



Barb Falvey and Karl Kaufman prepare to shear on of Barb's sheep. In the background is the Merino display she plans to show at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival.

Shared Love For Sheep Shearing Leads To Wedding

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BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) — With sheep shearing clippers in one hand and a bridal gown in the other, Barb Falvey is a woman of the '90s combining career and matrimony plans with ease.

And, it all started when Bedford County sheep shearer, Karl Kaufman said, "yes," to a simple request.

"Barb's dad asked me if I would teach her how to shear," remembers Karl, "And, I said, 'Sure, I have some time.'"

"I never saw anyone catch on any quicker. And, she worked better than half a day without once complaining about her back. That's almost unheard of."

Delving even deeper into the shearing world, Barb enrolled in a sheep shearing school in New York and, it was there she met her finance, Vaughn Wood, better known as "Woodie".

Promising to help her land a job in New Zealand, his native country, Woodie persuaded Barb to travel "down under" where she stayed on his family's farm. "The Woods raise sheep and musk melons," explains Barb. "They are a special type of melon that sells for \$15 to \$25 per melon on the Japanese market. They are gourmet eating and very much in demand by the Japanese."

"Before going to New Zealand, I thought I was fast at shearing," Barb laughs. "I could shear better than 30 sheep a day. I soon found out I was too slow for the New Zealanders, they were doing 300 to 400. But, with practice, I kept improving. My record now stands at about 180."

Since she was a little too slow to work as a full-time shearer, Barb settled for a "roustabout," job. Every shearing crew in New Zealand has six shearers, six rousies, two wool pressers, and a cook.

The rousies skirt the fleece, take out the black wool and cut out the heads and bellies. Because there is practically no black wool on the New Zealand sheep, the wool brings a good price. "Much of the wool in the United States is imported from New Zealand or Australia," Barb explains.

"Wool would bring a better price in the United States if we would separate the black fibers," she continues. "Black wool does not hold the dyes, therefore mak-

ing it less desirable."

Sheep shearing New Zealand style is a long, hard day that begins at 5 a.m. and goes to 5 p.m. Barb is quick to agree there's plenty to eat, but the diet in New Zealand is limited.

"We have mutton for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and even mutton sandwiches for snacks. For meals, we get cabbage, potatoes, and mutton."

Barb's stomach was ready for a change when shearing ended in New Zealand and the shearers headed for Scotland. There, the young American woman found cooks to be of a more gourmet variety.

"We were invited to eat in the homes and we had delicious soups, varied main courses, and melt-in-your-mouth brownies," she recalls happily.

By the time she reached Scotland, Barb had enough experience to start clipping on her own. "There were a number of women shearers," she says.

One team consisted of Barb, another girl, Alison, and her baby daughter, Alison's mother (the baby sitter), and one guy. "With that team, we sheared 2,000 sheep in one week."

"Scotland is a beautiful country," Barb said. "It's a like a dream come true to be able to work outside in that kind of scenery all day long. They have stone fences and rolling hills, it's just beautiful."

It was somewhere in these travels that Woodie and Barb felt they would like to share their lives with each other. And, in the proper manner, Woodie called Barb's father, John, to ask for his daughter's hand.

The wedding is planned for May 21 in the Falvey barn and

mals as guests, home cooked food, great friends, and a good time for all.

Barb began showing sheep along with her older sister, Susan, at the age of nine.

Her first sheep were Suffolks, but it was instant love when Barb first saw the Merino breed. "We went to a sale and when I saw those sheep with all that wool, I wanted one. Before I knew it, I had raised my hand and bought two."

Merinos are a wool breed of sheep. When Barb first introduced them at the Bedford Fair, they were rare. "But, I kept promoting them," she says. "And, this year, I got the grand champion trophy at the Somerset County Fair. It was a first for a wool breed."

"Merino wool is worth more because it is very fine and excellent for weaving," Barb says.

Barb has also participated in and won prizes at the Pennsylvania State Farm Show and the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival. Despite wedding plans for May 21, Barb and Woodie plan to have a display of Merinos at the Maryland Festival several weeks before the big day.

Merinos, Barb says, originated in Spain and, when first coming to this country, sometimes went for as high as \$10,000 to \$18,000.

In late October, Barb returned to New Zealand where they will work out the shearing season there. Then, it's on to Scotland before returning to the United States.

The pair hopes to work as a shearing team until wedding team.

They will be available in the spring of '94 and can be reached by calling the John Falvey residence.



Karl and Barb look over some of their latest shearing successes.

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