



The David Svonavec family stands in the snow with Floppy, left and Wrinkles, the revived twin lambs that froze after their birth on a frigid January 15 morning. From left, Heidi, Gabe and Luke. Standing are Dave and Betty Lou Svonavec from Rockwood.

Frozen Twin Lambs Survive Frigid Weather

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ROCKWOOD (Somerset Co.)**
— David Svonavec, following his usual morning ritual rose at 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 15. Outside, an arctic winter storm, dubbed the "Siberian Express" by weather forecasters, was gripping the eastern United States. It had sent the mercury plummeting to minus 22 degrees and lower. Fierce winds lowered the chill factor to life-threatening levels.

The coal-industry businessman thought about his kids' animals in the barn and wondered if they were okay. They were potential county fair 4-H projects — market swine, steers and lambs. One pregnant ewe was nearing her due date.

So while Betty Lou, his wife, and their kids — Heidi, 13; Luke, 12; and Gabe, 8, — slept peacefully upstairs, Svonavec, listening to his conscience, donned heavy coveralls, then went to the barn. He needed the assurance that the animals were well.

"I saw one (newborn) lamb," said Svonavec, "and I looked, and then I saw the other one. They were frozen."

But they were alive. Apparently, the bigger lamb was delivered first, noted Svonavec, recalling its extremely poor condition with its under skin layered with ice. The smaller lamb, born later, was also icy.

Quickly, he removed his coveralls. Into each leg section he gently placed a stiff lamb. Gathering the bundle in his arms, he sped toward the house basement, not considering, as he ran, his own exposure to the frigid elements.

He needed assistance. Rousing Betty Lou, the two then laid the bedraggled, ovine twins on rug-covered, low-temperature heating pads. Carefully, they used hair blow dryers to penetrate more heat through the icy skin of the lambs. Too much heat at the outset, they knew, was also dangerous.

Svonavec gently rubbed them to increase circulation.

"I came down and looked at them and said to myself, 'Why does the man bother?'" said Betty Lou. "I thought it was too late."

"I've seen a lot of lambs that were a lot healthier that didn't make it," she added. She said the ear of the largest lamb was covered with ice at least a quarter of an inch thick and it was awkwardly bent.

Hopeless as it seemed, the two continued their relentless life-saving effort. Finally, little gasps were heard with long seconds between them, according to Betty Lou.

But every time, Svonavec and his wife stopped applying heat, the coal immediately resurfaced to the lambs' outer skin. The two worked for hours, unable to stop as long as there was life.

After three hours the lambs appeared better. They needed their mother. "As soon as they were warmed up, I got the ewe," said Svonavec.

Art & Craft Directory Available

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)
— The 1994 Art and Craft Show Directory for Lancaster County and Surrounding Areas is now available. Published by the Market House Craft Center, the directory provides information for art and craft shows in the area. It is intended for people who are interested in exhibiting in the shows as well as for patrons who like to attend them. The booklet includes an index of shows by towns, which facilitates locating a specific show when the date is unknown. Each event is described, with date, title, location, hours, special attributes, the number of exhibitors, the expected attendance, and the admission charge. Also given is information for potential exhibitors such as the fees, the requirements and deadlines for applications and the contact person.

There is a \$5 charge which covers postage, tax and printing costs. Directories may be ordered by sending a check or money order to: 1994 Show Directory, Market House Craft Center, P.O. Box 552, Lancaster, PA 17608.

However, the 1992 Grand Champion of the Somerset Co. Lamb Jackpot Show (shown by Luke), was completely disoriented in the unfamiliar surroundings, making it initially impossible for the lambs to be naturally nourished by her.

The kids, who discovered, not only that twin lambs were born but also were in the house, were ecstatic. Their mission was to milk the ewe, then bottle-feed the lambs.

They named the bigger lamb "Wrinkles," and the other, "Floppy."

Tuesday finally arrived with temperatures moderating sufficiently to warrant the trio's return to the barn — not a moment too soon for Betty Lou. The atmosphere in her gracious house was evincing unwelcome odors from below.

From storage, Luke's baby sweaters and vests, worn also by Gabe, were cut down the front and stripped over the lambs for added warmth.

A family friend, hearing of Saturday's events, told the tale to a Johnstown television personality. The story went through western and central Pennsylvania TV news like wildfire and was picked up by the Associated Press.

Coming when winter's weather had paralyzed millions in the country and the major earthquake had shaken California, television-watching was the "In" activity. Viewers had a viewing diet of lowering news that sunk emotional spirits.

So when the story of Svonavec's lamb rescue was aired over CNN and reportedly mentioned by Paul Harvey, the Svonavec's were astonished.

Folks responded from around the nation. The story had boosted their morale they told the Svonavecs, and helped to alleviate mild feelings of depression.

"I just had a feeling in my hands when I was rubbing them," said Svonavec, "that mine were the hands, but the power in them came from a higher source. I think there was divine intervention," he said, "because they (the lambs) shouldn't have lived."

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