

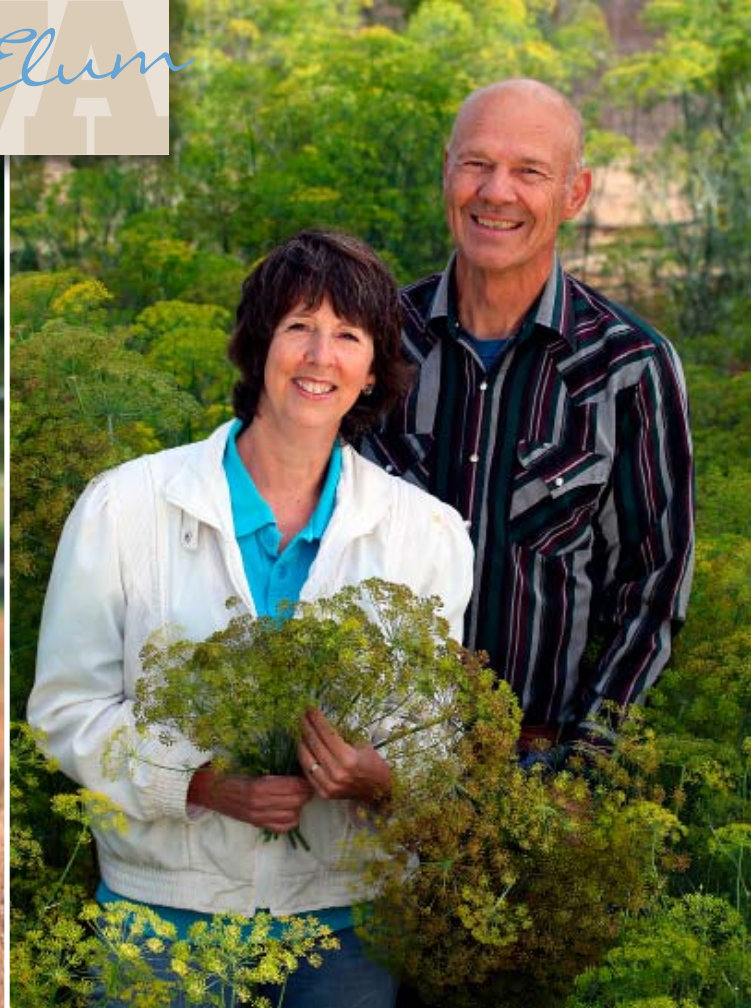


The Way We  
Live in

*Cle Elum*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
**Lance Johnson**



# Love at First Sight

After retiring to their dream farm, they're working harder and happier than ever. **By Bill and Val Barschaw, CLE ELUM, WASHINGTON**

Val here, writing to you from the beautiful Swauk Prairie, with an altitude of roughly 2,200 feet and strong winds sailing down from the Cascade Mountains. Most people would find the conditions too irregular for farming. But, then, our journey here was a bit irregular, too.

It's so easy to recall one of the first conversations Bill and I ever had: two co-workers just getting to know each other and chatting about our favorite places. When I said that the rest stop on I-90 called Indian John Hill was the most beautiful spot in all of Washington state, Bill instantly agreed with me. I figured he was just being nice.

Little did I know that 10 years later not only would we be married, but we would be buying this land a mere stone's throw from Indian John Hill and about 100 miles east of Seattle. It was truly love at first sight. We bought the land and figured we'd be ready to move by retirement.

Of course, things don't always happen the way we plan them. Bill doesn't talk about it much, but his health took a turn for the worse, and he faced an uncertain future on a heart-transplant waiting list. What happened next became another miracle in our lives.

One evening, as I was heading out, Bill looked at me and asked, "How can we move to the property sooner?"

I think he was afraid that he would never be able to enjoy our land. We were nowhere near the stage in our lives to make that move. And Bill had to be close to the University of

Washington Medical Center in case a donor heart became available.

If you are reading this magazine, chances are you already have a firm grasp on what is good and true. I can tell you straight up, everyone needs to have something to live for. Without a goal, illness will win.

So we picked a spot on the property for our home and hired a well driller. At this stage Bill was mere skin and bones. On Thursday, Sept. 7, 2000, the well driller found water. Bill received a new heart the following Tuesday.

Bill's recovery took a long time, but we never lost sight of where we wanted to be. To make a long story short, we came home Cle Elum.

Now that Bill is technically retired he is working harder than ever, but he's enjoying it ever so much more. He loves organic gardening and living with the land. We grow garlic, dill, onions, shallots, Swiss chard, lettuce and a few other vegetables in our 4,500-square-foot garden. And, we have two beautiful horses, Adonis and Star, a nice flock of chickens and a limited bank account.

It might seem like work to most people, but to us it is pure bliss. Bill and I always work as a team. I've done my part; now you'll hear from Bill. As you read the rest of our diary, I hope you become inspired to seek your dream, too.

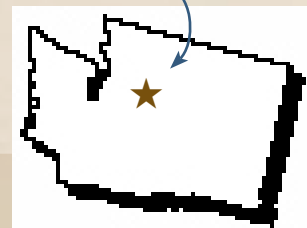
■ **AUG. 2**—Every Sunday from June through Labor Day we bring our produce to the Roslyn Sunday Market. Roslyn is famous for the television series "Northern Exposure," which was filmed here. We hope the market

## OUR BUSIEST MONTH

**IN AUGUST** we sell produce at several local farmers markets, fill custom orders of jams and such, and try to keep up with all the garden work. There is massive home canning to be done, plus we take our organic garlic and dill to a cannery in Gold Bar, Washington, and use it to make our low-sodium pickles—about 1,200 quarts in one day!

Much as we would love to produce more food of our own food, we just focus on what we can grow well in our conditions and get the rest such as berries from other farmers. The entire Yakima Valley is known for abundant agriculture and has a variety of places we go for U-pick fruits and vegetables.

*Cle Elum*



**Val and Bill Barschaw** realized their dream of living with the land (bottom right). They raise spirited horses like Adonis (bottom left) and grow organic produce such as dill, onions, shallots and Swiss chard to sell at local farmer markets



will bring us some exposure, too.

Some of our time today was spent reorganizing our gear from yesterday and getting produce ready for the next market. Onions and shallots had to be pulled and set out to dry, which gives them a protective skin.

This morning Val and our neighbor Carolyn went to Wapato to pick blueberries. Since we're on a well (the state has virtually shut down all irrigation permits), we don't grow crops that require constant watering.

■ **AUG. 3**—Tuesday. It's been a month since I stopped watering our rows of garlic. By now most of the leaves have turned brown, so it's time to pull up the bulbs. With the clay soil, the rows have to be soaked for about an hour before the garlic

can be removed. The garlic is dug up and left on the ground for a day to dry.

Next I went through the dill to find what was ready to harvest. I like the dill heads to be dark green just before they turn brown and start dropping the seeds.

■ **AUG. 4**—Wednesday. At noon we started getting ready to go to another farmers market we'd heard about in Selah, about an hour away. At this time of year, I have an abundance of lettuce, beets, carrots, green onions and Swiss chard. We didn't get home until 9:30.

■ **AUG. 5**—Thursday. We evaluated whether it was worth our time and effort to go to this other market during the week. After mileage and

total time spent in preparation and travel, we figured we netted 50 cents an hour. Obviously, we're doing this to get rich.

■ **AUG. 6**—Friday. I brought some of the garlic into the house, and after dinner Val and I sat in the comfort of the living room and sorted and peeled it. I saved the largest cloves—also called “toes”—to plant this fall for next year's crop.

■ **AUG. 7**—Saturday. Both of us went out and finished digging the last two rows of the garlic that had been soaked yesterday. I pulled all the beets that were big enough to sell and set them in pails of cold water to clean for tomorrow's market.



**From left:** Radishes fresh from the garden; early morning in the chicken coop; Bill made these drying screens for shallots, onions and sweet peas; the sign outside Bill and Val's place lets visitors know they've come to the right place for homegrown goodies.



We went to St. John the Baptist in Cle Elum for the 5 p.m. Mass. During the summer we attend church on Saturday, which allows us to go to the market on Sunday.

■ **AUG. 8**—Sunday. It takes three-plus hours to get ready for the farmers market. I went out in the garden to get the lettuce, Swiss chard, parsley and dill, while Val picked the snow peas and filet beans. Then we brought it all into the house to be washed, sorted and bundled to sell. After that I gathered the garlic, shallots and onions that had been drying in the barn and fit everything into the car.

This was our eighth Sunday at the Roslyn market this season. We love the market's homey, small-town, friendly atmosphere.

■ **AUG. 9**—Monday. After lunch I helped my neighbor John build a retaining wall. At about 4 p.m., Val called to say that Star was in distress. The vet had been summoned, and I needed to be there when he arrived.

When I got to the barn, Star wouldn't eat and wouldn't walk on the lead rope. Then the vet arrived

and listened to Star's intestines.

At first he couldn't hear any stomach gurgling—not good for a horse. But a little while later the vet said his stomach was making a lot of noise—whoopee! The official diagnosis was

short-term impaction colic. By 6:30, Star perked up and thankfully was back to normal.

■ **AUG. 10**—Tuesday. First thing I soaked the entire garden and pulled a few more weeds. Then I spent some time sorting and cleaning all the dry shallots and getting them ready for upcoming markets.

After lunch I was back out in the garden looking for more dill.

■ **AUG. 11**—Wednesday. The morning started with Val rearranging bark in the area she wanted landscaped and transplanting a lilac bush. She is having great success with propagating more of these bushes, because they're tolerant of

our weather and not a favorite of the deer and turkeys.

■ **AUG. 12**—Thursday. Our helper, D.J., and I scooped horse manure and placed it in the staging area where it will later get shredded. We till the

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soil with “Star power.”

■ **AUG. 13**—Friday. This morning a friend called to take Val up on her offer to help with a wedding this weekend. So now she'll be making finger sandwiches. This is a great honor and we are both delighted to help.

■ **AUG. 14**—Saturday. This morning Val made finger sandwiches for the wedding party. Each one featured something fresh from our garden.

While she was busy in the kitchen, I helped another neighbor fill in an electrical ditch for his wind turbine. We take advantage of the wind and sun to save energy costs. We back-filled a 90-foot trench to the turbine.

■ **AUG. 15**—Sunday. The day was



perfect for the Roslyn market: bright and 90 degrees, with a little breeze. We did well, and at the end of the day we were glad to get home.

Val tended to the messages on the answering machine, and it turns out that the local newspaper wants to get a photo of our garden for a special publication. We were flattered that the market manager in Roslyn, Jonine Collins, had recommended us for this honor.

■ **AUG. 16**—Monday. While I was at the computer entering details about what we sold at the market on Sunday, Val heard Star whinny. A few minutes later she heard it again, and this time it could not be ignored.

We both headed for the barn,

where we saw that Adonis was free and grazing on some green grass. How was it that one horse was loose and the other was shouting objections from the gate area? Turned out I hadn't completely closed the door to the stall where the horses were fed their hay that morning. Star was not about to step over the good food, while Adonis, the precocious one, couldn't resist.

■ **AUG. 17**—Tuesday. This morn-

ing I started building another screen rack where I can dry the garlic, shallots and onions. I hang them to dry for a bit and then I clip the stems and spread them out so air continues to circulate around them. You never want to have your onions touching one another while stored. They will begin to rot where they touch.

■ **AUG. 18**—Wednesday. I finished the drying rack this morning and moved it into the stall, which

**“We love the market’s homey, small-town atmosphere.”**

doubles as a drying room. The other rack I took to the cool basement where we store goods. That way all the cleaned shallots, onions and garlic are cool and easy to get at for the weekend market.

■ **AUG. 19**—Thursday. The wind has slowed my outside work. The temperature in the afternoon is about 85 degrees, but the wind chill factor is 70. The winds come off the mountain range to the west that still has snow at the higher elevations, and you really feel the chill.

■ **AUG. 20**—Friday. In the afternoon I pulled beets, green onions, carrots and parsnips for the Saturday market in Ellensburg, then put them in buckets of cold water to keep them fresh overnight. In the evening I did the same with the lettuce.

■ **AUG. 21**—Saturday. Val was the lector at church tonight. Afterwards we treated ourselves to dinner at a Mexican restaurant.

■ **AUG. 22**—Sunday. As we were about to depart for the market, I noticed the temperature was 45 degrees, so extra coats were in order. It was so windy that we packed extra weights for our canopy so it wouldn't fly away. Turned out that one vendor

Val and Bill meet, greet and sell at the Roslyn Sunday Market. It's their eighth appearance at this season's market.





did lose his tent today.

We did great with our pre-sale pickles, but for some reason the Swiss chard was not a good seller. Not a problem—Val is great at cooking that up for dinner.

■ **AUG. 23**—Monday. After two days of markets, the garden really needed some cleaning up. I turned on the drip irrigation lines to give the whole garden a good watering.

■ **AUG. 24**—Tuesday. George Wolf, the owner of the cannery, called at about 7:30 last night to advise us that our day for canning this year's pickles will be next Tuesday. We've been waiting for this call for the last two weeks. Now we have a deadline.

■ **AUG. 25**—Wednesday. I left at 3 p.m. for the Selah Farmers Market and returned about 9:30. It was a pretty slow day: only \$57.25 in total sales. But we get to meet friendly people and, with luck, develop another location to sell our pickles in September and our produce again next summer.

■ **AUG. 26**—Thursday. Today the winds came again with some bluster at 15 to 18 mph, with gusts of up to 24 to 30 mph. I spent most of the day mowing the fields so I didn't have to fight the wind.

■ **AUG. 27**—Friday. After lunch I spent several hours at the garlic table. I now have over 17 pounds of the largest cloves for next season, which are planted in mid-October. Those remaining are divided between good ones for the market and smaller ones for our pickles.

■ **AUG. 28**—Saturday. While out in the garden getting the green onions, carrots and beets this afternoon, I felt a few drops of rain. By 3 the few drops had turned into a steady downpour. Around 4 we had hail, enough to turn the ground white. Was this August or October?

■ **AUG. 29**—Sunday. After the market we had to get ready for Tuesday's canning. There was still a lot of garlic to peel.

■ **AUG. 30**—Monday. We packed

an overnight bag and finally started the two-hour drive to the canning facility in Gold Bar. The plan was to stay with Val's parents, who live only 30 minutes from the cannery.

Val continued to peel garlic as I drove. Between the garlic and the dill, the inside of our car was quite aromatic, and we were delighted to be one step closer to the end.

■ **AUG. 31**—Tuesday. We arrived before 7 a.m. and looked over the bin of cucumbers that had been picked on Monday for our order. Then we began the assembly process.

Jars were set up, packed with dill and garlic first and then packed tight with the cucumbers. Once all the cucumbers were packed, the brine was poured into each jar and the jars were set on a conveyor belt.

The first stage heated up the works, and then the lids were screwed in place. The next stage was to process the jars in a heated tunnel and gather them at the other end to put in wooden trays.

The trays were then stacked and placed in a breezeway to let the jars cool. After cooling completely for a day or two, they will go to another area where their quality-control code is printed on the lids. The last step is packaging in cardboard cartons.

With smiles on our tired faces, we got back to the farm before dark. We didn't have to peel any garlic tonight, so we rested. For the next day's activity: volunteering at Indian John Hill Rest Stop. Several times a year we give out free coffee at the place that is so dear to our hearts.

We kindly invite you to stop by



Bill loves to work in his garden.

and look in on our small operation. Or, if you're just driving through, perhaps you'll take a moment and stop in at Indian John Hill Rest Stop. Who knows? Maybe we'll be in the booth serving coffee. If not, you can look to the northeast and know that we're just a stone's throw away.

*Bill Baruchan*



### Web Exclusive!

See more photos at [farmandranchliving.com](http://farmandranchliving.com), then go to [spproduce.com](http://spproduce.com) to read more about Bill and Val.