

Brush with tragedy leads couple to a new lifestyle

◆9/11 prompted a reassessment: Couple turns the former Grace Metalious property into an alpaca farm and future winery.

By **ROGER AMSDEN**
Sunday News Correspondent

GILMANTON — A 1756 Colonial-style home once owned by author Grace Metalious, whose novel "Peyton Place" gained national fame and notoriety in the late 1950s, is now home to a herd of alpacas. In the not-too distant future it might also become the site of a small, boutique winery.

Camelot Alpaca Farm is owned by Sunny and Marshall Bishop, who say their life was forever changed by the events of Sept. 11, 2001. That day gave them a new outlook that makes them determined to make the most of every day.

They were living in Sanford, N.C., at the time and Sunny was a flight attendant with American Airlines. She had originally been

scheduled to work American Flight 11 out Boston's Logan Airport to Los Angeles.

Her schedule had been changed, however, and she avoided the fate of all those aboard the airplane, which was the first one to crash into the World Trade Center towers in New York City.

Marshall Bishop, a retired Marine sergeant major who was then public works director for Sanford, said the realization of how close Sunny had come to death led them to reassess their priorities and look for a new way of life.

They moved to Gilford and lived in a hilltop home in Gunstock Acres for four years with Marshall, who was in the Marine Corps from 1969 to 1989 where he was a combat photographer, working at the Gilford



PHOTOS BY ROGER AMSDEN

Sunny and Marshall Bishop are making a new life at Camelot Alpaca Farm, which is located at the former Grace Metalious home in Gilmanton. They are shown on the porch of their home with Sergeant and Spice Girl, their pet Dobermans.

Public Works Department.

"It was our dream home," says Sunny, who began her journey to becoming an alpaca farmer with a knitting class she

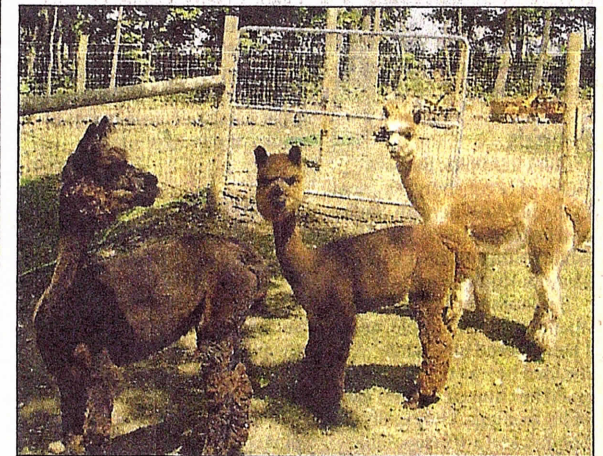
took in January 2006.

"Somewhere in between knitting and purling we wondered what it would be like to do the

► See Alpacas, Page F4

"Finally I settled on (raising alpacas) and said to Marshall ... that this was the one thing I really wanted to do."

SUNNY BISHOP



Andromeda, Queen Guinevere and Lady Renaissance in their pen at Camelot Alpaca Farm.

D... ful long-haired dachshund

... was a stray — a village dog from a foreign country.

9/11 led couple to new life as NH alpaca farmers

Alpacas

Continued From Page F1

whole process, from animal to fiber. So I started researching and we started visiting alpaca farms. Finally I settled on that and said to Marshall — who said at one time that there was no way that we were going to raise animals — that this was the one thing I really wanted to do," says Sunny.

"If that's what your heart is set on, then that's what we're going to do," Marshall told her. And, although neither of them had any experience in raising any kind of livestock, they took the leap into a whole new way of life.

Shortly thereafter they put their house on the market and

started looking for a place out in the country with room for a barn and a grazing pasture, finding the perfect location at the former Grace Metalious home on Meadow Pond Road in Gilmanton.

Last summer they built a barn and fenced in an area above the barn, which is now home to eight alpacas. The barn has a workshop area and store that is filled with a wide variety of alpaca yarn, highly sought after for making some of the finest sweaters, coats and other apparel.

Smaller cousins of llamas, alpacas are native to the Andes mountains in South America. During the reign of the Incas, the alpaca fiber was to be worn only by high-ranking officials

and nobility.

The fiber is still sometimes called "Incan Gold."

In addition to raising alpacas and Muscovy ducks George and Gracie, who are around for bug control, the Bishops are also growing grapes that they will use to produce their own wine.

They're growing three hardy varieties of grapes well-suited to the shorter New England growing season. Seyval, a white French hybrid; Concord, a grape native to New England; and Marechal Foch, a splendid grape that produces a fine red wine.

They plan on putting up a building for their winery, which will also serve as a small function hall for weddings and other special occasions, and are

busy learning all they can about winemaking and grape growing. They hope to be in business with their winery in three to five years.

They find it easy to get hay for their alpacas as they live right next to a farm with large fields owned by Jeanne Gallant, who was a close friend of Grace Metalious and knows the history of their new home, including its reputation for being haunted, better than anyone.

Marshall says that he's already had an experience with one of the several ghosts said to inhabit the home, one that sat down on the bed beside him.

"I said I was all right with it as long as the ghost didn't get under the covers with me," he says.

she'd lick him... of his feedings. They really bonded and are inseparable now, always sleep together and still groom each other."

— Heloise

and then quality... plain piece.

Works every time!

— Shery
in San Angelo, Texas

cleaning or other types of husbandry is to take it slow — very slow.

Be prepared for many, many

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