

Even that yearly period of confusion, sleep deprivation, smiles, labor, and worry that we call the lambing season can't erase the our fears as we see our country, for decades the envy of the world, go down that fast road to autocracy. But, just for this morning, I am going to try to concentrate, at least for a few paragraphs for our website essay this week, on this spring ritual of the arrival of baby lambs here on Coe Creek.

We have a smaller flock than we shepherded a number of years ago. It is, perhaps, wise to act in deference to one's advancing ages, though we seem to get the work done in the same way as we always have. I do recall, though, an acquaintance saying, "I can still do a full day's work; it just takes me two days now." Maybe, that is the way it is with us, and we just haven't noticed.

However much wisdom there may be in that remark, we have, I think, 84 ewes in the flock now, plus a dozen or so yearlings we did not breed. As of today, a week and a day after that first lamb was born, we have 75 babies in the barn with their mothers.

For the past few years, we have crossed at least some of our white-faced ewes with Clun Forest rams, giving us a sheep that is not quite so large. The Clun Forest breed is black faced, but a more compact, smaller animal than the more popular Suffolk or Hampshire. So, part of the fun of lambing is seeing how that crossbreeding asserts itself in the appearance of the lambs.

Most of our ewes have twins. So far this year, I believe there are five sets of triplets, maybe three single lambs, and the rest are twins. The majority of the crossbred lambs have spotted faces and some dark patches on their bodies that will disappear as they grow up, leaving patterned faces and either black or white legs, but with all white wool. But, one never knows until the lambs are born.

We have one part Icelandic ewe that is solid black. Last year, she gave birth to an all white ram (we call them bucks) lamb and a solid black ewe lamb. She had her new lambs a couple of days ago—two pure white bucks.

Then, this morning, when we checked the sheep at 5 a.m., a large white Polypay/Dorset ewe had a new lamb—a black ewe lamb with a "badger" pattern of white on her face. We moved her into a lambing jug where she gave birth to another black ewe lamb with a slightly different facial pattern.

We will soon be halfway through the lambing season, and then, we will be occupied with docking and castrating, shearing,

and after a progression of spring tasks that gather momentum as April moves along, we will head pellmell to that day in early May when all those ewes and lambs forsake the quiet, dry barn for green pastures and the vagaries of Nature. And, we move on to the next set of tasks. For now, though, we not only go to sleep counting sheep, we awaken in the early morning in the same way.

And, after that first minute of pleasure at the thoughts of the day to come, the reality of the peril our country is in intrudes. As Trump and his oligarchs and the unprincipled elected Members of Congress and Senators that have enabled them continue their headlong descent into the demise of democracy, our only option is to resist, protest, and vote in every election. Someone pointed out recently that Trump not only did not win a “landslide,” as he says, only 32 percent of registered voters cast their ballots for him. So, the answer is with us.