

Yes, Aurora, Dreams Really DO Come True!

An Alpaca Christmas Story

By Paul Mager

Photo courtesy of Paul Mager

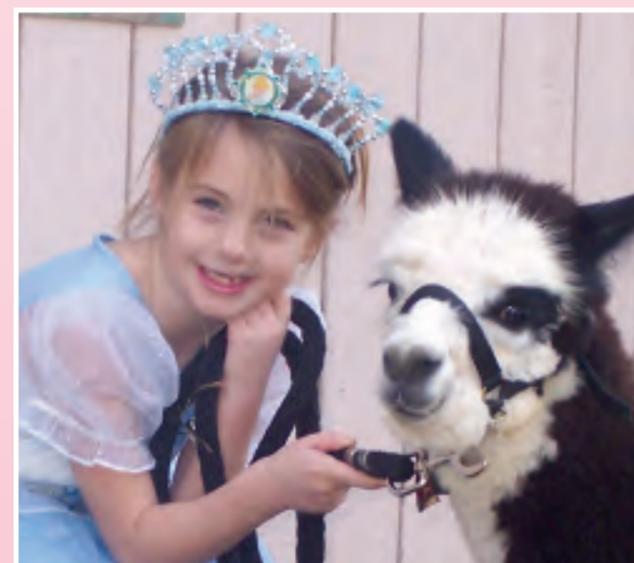
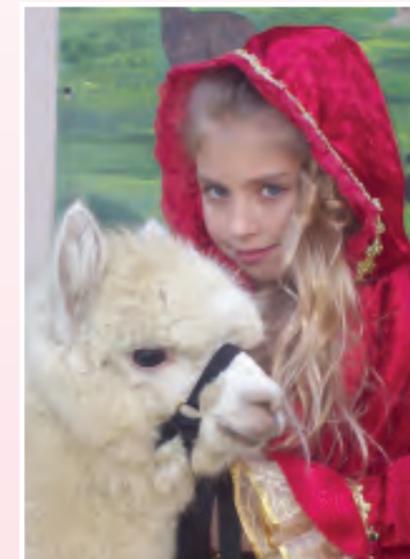
This is the story of how raising alpacas made one little girl's dreams come true. Our tale starts at Christmas 2005 when my wife Sue and I hosted a family holiday party. Christmas has always been my favorite time of year. Living in Western New York, we are blessed with the type of weather that provides the perfect setting for such a magical time of year. Snow falling gently from the heavens added to the white blanket on the ground for frolicking children and crias



alike. Nestled around the fireplace, the family gathered to exchange gifts. The room was abuzz with a dozen different conversations, laughter, and merriment. My then 7-year-old granddaughter, Aurora, had just finished scratching off a lottery ticket when she screamed "I Won, I Won, I won five dollars!" Her excitement drew everyone's attention and cheers. She ran to me and said "Grandpa, I want you to save this for me." When I inquired what she was saving for, she replied that when



Top, Aurora Mager meets her heroine, Sleeping Beauty, at Disney World. Above, The children of "The Alpaca Group" prepare to go to Disney World. From left to right: Andie Hill, Taylor Mager, Austin Hill, Gabriella Rose Marie Mager, Aly Hill, Aurora Mager, and grandparents, Suzanne and Paul Mager.



Photos courtesy of Paul Mager

she saved enough, she was going to take the whole family to Disney World for Christmas.

“Dream on, Aurora” shouted one of her great-uncles, with a sarcastic tone. Aurora turned to me with all the innocence of a child and said, “Grandpa, dreams really can come true, can’t they?”

I looked up to see her Grandma’s eyes fill with tears as she felt pride in her granddaughter’s selfless act of generosity. With her nod I said,

“Yes Aurora, sometimes dreams DO come true!” From that moment on, our goal was set. We knew scratch-off tickets were not going to get us to Disney World. Our alpaca farm would have to be our vehicle to the “Magic Kingdom!”

We had only been raising alpacas for less than two years, but we were confident of the foundation we had built. During our alpaca open house the grandkids sold cider and donuts. They offered the stud services of “their”

herd sire, Don Juan, to the “Disney Fund.” They worked hard, halter training crias, helping at seminars, and doing chores. The kids were very determined in their endeavors. In fact, five Disney Princess dresses for the girls and a tuxedo for our grandson were purchased when it came time to pose for the farm Christmas card.

As sales of alpacas grew, so did the excitement with the realization that this was actually going to happen. The grandchildren had no doubt. Grandma and Grandpa remained confident. Even the skeptics became believers, as reservations were made and an itinerary was set.

Aurora’s “Disney Fund” at the local bank grew so each child had “pocket money” to spend. When it came time to withdraw her savings at the bank, the bank President wanted to meet this extraordinary little girl with the big dreams. He provided her with a postage stamp and asked her to please send him a postcard from Disney. Her story and Christmas card picture were published in all the local newspapers.

Two years after Aurora proclaimed her dream, a limo picked up the 14 of us for our trip to the airport. Within hours, we arrived at Disney World in Florida. For the next 10 days, “the Alpaca Group” as we became known, experienced as much of the Magic Kingdom as possible. The unmatched hospitality of Disney, combined with the spirit of the holidays made for an emotional experience for all of us.

When Aurora’s sister, Taylar, celebrated her seventh birthday, we scheduled a “Princess Breakfast.” Gowned in their princess dresses and Austin in his tux, they were welcomed at the park by

“The Alpaca Group” arrives at the Magic Kingdom for a “Princess Birthday Party.” Disney employees literally roll out the red carpet to entertain their young guests.



Top, Family members prepare to board a special white limousine that would take them to Disney World. Middle, All 14 members of the Paul and Sue Mager Family enjoy their Disney holiday, including: Michelle and Donnie Hill (children Austin, Andie, and Aly); Mike and Crystal Steinbar; and Damien and Tiffany Mager (children Aurora, Taylar, and Gabriella Rose Marie). Above, “Belle” from “Beauty and the Beast” pays a visit to the “Princess Birthday Party” given in honor of Taylar’s birthday.

seven Disney employees, balloons, and a red carpet. Everyone sang “Happy Birthday” to Taylar as she got off the bus. We all coined the phrase “how Disney was that”! Taylar later remarked that it was “the best day of my life.” Our son-in-law, Donnie’s, birthday was the same day, so after breakfast the boys hit the golf course, while the girls headed for Downtown Disney for shopping with some of that hard-earned pocket money. All the magical experiences are too many to list here but will remain in our hearts and memories forever.

When people inquire if you can really make money raising alpacas, I always respond that it is all what you make of it. For our farm, the alpaca lifestyle means much more than financial gain.

Most important to Sue and I is that we can now say with certainty, “Yes Aurora, dreams really do come true!”

Paul and Sue Mager own Mager Mountain Alpacas in Little Valley, New York. They can be reached at info@magermountainalpacas.com or (716) 938-9077.