

## Sleepless in Alaska

by Suzy Hopkins

My daughter Tina and her husband Ron are homesteading somewhere in Alaska. Their P. O. Box is in Skwentna. I've never heard of it either. In the winter, you can get there in four hours by sled dog after you land at the tiny airstrip. In the summer, you can reach their property by barge on the river and then walk for an hour after you land somewhere on the shore. Yep. Just like the old days. Her husband built their cabin but it doesn't have insulation. She says the calendar I gave her that hangs on the wall sometimes flutters from the draft coming through the cracks. They keep goats for milk and meat, chickens for eggs and meat, rabbits for meat, ducks for eggs and meat. Every summer she has a garden which grows like wildfire since it is daylight almost 24 hours. Did I mention no plumbing or electricity? Have I plans to visit them? Not likely.

Tina writes to me every day, sometimes more than once depending on what is happening. Once a month when she goes to the Post Office she mails me her 30 days journal. She bakes bread in the woodstove which is kept going year round. That's where the sleeplessness comes from. Every night she and Ron take turns getting up every **hour and a half** to put wood in the stove. The wood is outside since their house is only 12' x 16'. So rain, snow, sun or the dark of night the stove must be fed. Sometimes Tina has had to split firewood at 3:00 A.M. They have ordered a larger stove but at 250 pounds it will take up the entire delivery airplane and therefore the \$200 fee. Then they have to get it to and into the cabin. Knowing them they will figure it out and get it done. That's the way it is when you are homesteading in Alaska.