

My Thoughts

And welcome to them

By **JOANNE SPAHR**
Associate Editor



It was Friday, and although it wasn't the 13th, it was clearly one of those days. I'd tripped over and into the waste basket once, run into the side of my desk twice, and edited the same paragraph five times before I realized that I'd read those words somewhere before. And, I found myself wishing I had hepatitis so I could turn orange and visually portray the way I felt. But, I couldn't, and to top it all off, I still had a story to get that night!

So, at 6:30 p.m. I picked my head up off the desk top and with one eye open and one eye shut, navigated my way to the car, rolled down the windows and let the rain drip on my head to keep me awake. At 23, I was really feeling my age.

As I drove through the semi-darkened, murky night, my spirits ebbed as the fatigue took over. And, by the time I got to my destination, I was so depressed that I wished I would have fallen head first into the waste basket that afternoon and never come out.

At about the same time, I spotted my subjects—a group of eight 4-H'ers gathering trash from along the roadside

Mustering all my strength, I shoved open the car door, cranked up my smile, and cheerfully said, "Hi, I'm from Lancaster Farming, and I want to take your picture."

Like a drain run amuck, eight delighted excited, giggling little persons swarmed in all directions grabbing every piece of trash in sight and in a split second coagulated to form a circus-act picture in front of me, full of crazy poses and jubilant grins.

"Hee, hee" grinned one thrilled seven-year-old, "I'm gonna be famous." With that, a united giggle went up from the pack, and everybody felt compelled to get into a crazier pose.

After the picture, I sought out my interview with

the 4-H'ers. As usual, I began interrogating the tallest one when I felt a tap on my hand.

Turning my head, I saw a toothy-grinned, cowlicky haired, wet sneakered six-year-old holding a treasure up for me to see.

"Look what I got," he yelled, jumping up and down.

"What's that?" I questioned, ignorant of the great find.

"It's a jaw," he stated proudly. And, indeed, it was. It was most likely a jaw of a rat, but it was broken, which didn't daunt his spirits a bit.

"See this," he said again. He was pointing to a two-inch long, thin, protruding broken piece.

Again I was ignorant to what he was pointing at. "It's a tusk," he stated with an air of authority. Imagine that—ivory on a rat.

With the last statement, all seven other 4-H'ers converged on the little fellow and forgot about me and being famous. So, I was forced to talk to an adult to get my story.

But, while they forgot me, I'll never forget them. When I turned to leave, all my fatigue was gone and I felt cheerful and exuberant. The boundless energy that those children displayed was catching, and I was lucky enough to catch a little of it. At that point I knew the secret every parent knows—children are the fountain of youth.

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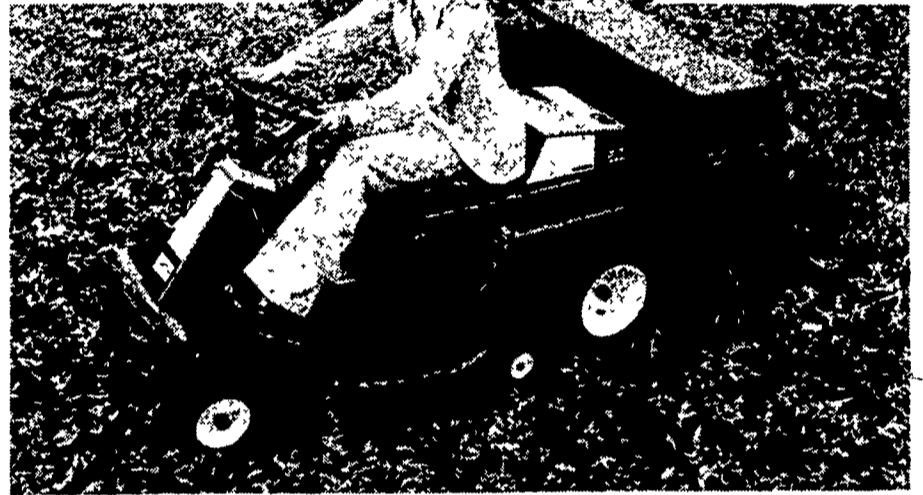
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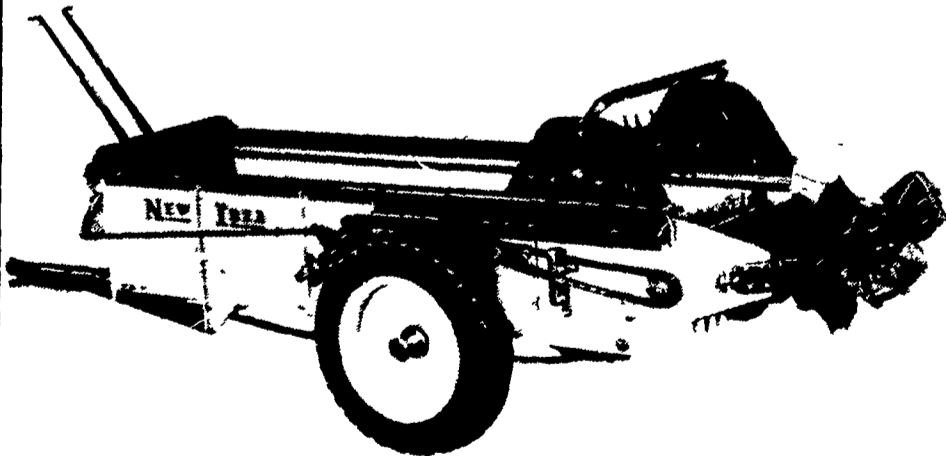
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