

# Lightning strikes milker, lifts her over cows

**BY PAT KAUFFMAN**  
**ELKTON, Md.** — Judy Puckett says she owes her life to a pair of sneakers. On Father's Day, June 15, she was milking the last cow in the herd of 100 Holsteins when a bolt of lightning struck her and lifted her from her crouched position next to the milker right over the cow's back.

Judy, interviewed by phone from her hospital bed in Union Hospital here, says she never felt the bolt that hit her. She only remembers looking down from her airborne position onto the top of the cows' backs and the tops of the milking lines.

Judy said they've had a lot of storms lately when the power was off and on this particular Sunday evening there had already been 1/4 inch of rain in a matter of a few seconds during an earlier downpour. When it

was obvious to the family from the looks of the sky that a storm was fast approaching, she and her husband, Medford, their son and her brother hurried to finish the milking.

While milking the last cow, Judy remembered a cow that she had skipped because of an udder injury the cow had received earlier that day. She sent her brother back to the milkhous for another milker. It was then that the bolt hit. She was crouched down next to the cow and remembers looking up and seeing her brother silhouetted in the doorway with the milker in his hand.

Without any feeling, she remembers being hurled into the air and seeing blue sparks all along the tops of the stainless steel milk lines and blue sparks shooting from the stallcocks. When she landed on the cement,

her husband who had been feeding calves in an adjacent area came to help her and all she felt was a heavy feeling like a dead weight from the waist down.

The milking barn has an aluminum roof and is a one story barn. The barn is situated down in a woods with tall trees all around it. She says she doesn't understand why the bolt hit the low barn and not the trees.

But what particularly puzzles her is why on that one evening she wore shoes. Judy said she is always barefoot. But for some dumb reason she threw her shoes into the car when her husband and she hurried for

the barn. And after sanitizing the lines, she went out to the car and put her shoes on — a pair of sneakers.

The bolt apparently hit the compressor for the cooler which is situated on a cement slab outside the milkhous. The current then blew out a transformer and followed either the pipes or the milk in the lines back to Judy.

Judy, 33, was raised on the farm. Although she worked for 8 years as a restaurant manager and helped on weekends and evenings at her family farm, she came back to the farm fulltime in 1976 when her dad died.

She and her brother and

mother own portions of the herd and were milking about 47 at the time of the accident. She does custom work and had just the week before bought a new no-till bean planter.

In addition to her custom work, Judy fills about 340 additional acres in corn, beans, wheat and alfalfa.

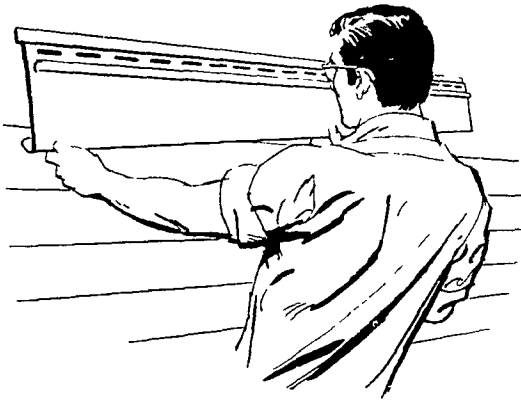
She says she got her love of dairy from working with the herd when she was younger. Seems she sunburned too easily for field work, so she was put to work in the barn. It's evident by the sound of her voice that she's particularly worried about her almost 50 calves. She said she hasn't lost a calf in

years. "I just notice things right away," she said.

She said her right side feels as though the muscles have been fused together. Doctors expect her to be in the hospital for some time yet and say it could be a year before she reaches something near a complete recovery.

She longs to be home for at least a short while to see her animals and smell the corn growing, a smell she says reminds her of watermelon.

But she's glad to be alive and appreciates the cards she receives. While she works hard at her recovery, she has only these words of advice for milking in a storm. Keep your shoes on.



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Brief answers  
 to short questions  
**Sheila's  
 Shorts**  
 By Sheila Miller

This week's column deals with sayings and superstitions.

**Who's got cold feet?**

A young reader of Lancaster Farming writes and asks:

"Where did the saying 'get cold feet' originate?"

**John Zimmerman**  
 R1 Mount Joy

Once again I had to sit and scratch my head for a couple of minutes and wonder "who thinks up these questions?"

Then, I kind of smiled and thought that John Zimmerman must have been told at sometime by someone in his family, probably a parent or brother or sister, that he was getting or they had cold feet about something.

If that sounds vague, get ready for the answer to the question.

Not being able to answer the question of where the old saying originated myself, I called my local library. Luckily I must have called them on a not-so-busy day, and they were willing to research the question and call me back.

Well, they told me that the first record of that saying being put down in print occurred in 1896. It was part of an old poem, actually.

But, as the librarian quickly noted, the saying probably was one of those that was handed down from one generation to the next, with no definite origin.

He added, however, that

the Old English Dictionary defines the word cold in terms of being afraid, or showing fear.

Where the feet came in may have been because someone who is so afraid of something generally tries to run away from it but the fear seems to paralyze them. Hence, cold feet would make more sense than cold nose.

But, this is just guess work. The only real hard facts are that someone finally decided to write down the old saying in 1896.

**Full moon, cut hay?**

The next question made me take a step back too, but not in time.

The reader asks:

**When is a good time of the month to cut hay for baling? Is it true during the full moon the weather is generally clear? I know Dad would say the end of the month and the first of the month the weather changes.**

**Roland G. Kamoda**  
 R1 Monongahela

I must confess, Mr. Kamoda, I don't pay particular attention to the moon or the day of the month for my weather forecasting.

Being a child of the technological era, I have come to rely on the voice coming out of a box that tells me every hour on the hour just what to expect in the weather.

Sometimes, I admit, this source is probably as reliable as watching the

planets.

As far as when to cut hay, I think more than weather, your first concern should be for the hay's quality. When the optimum time comes as far as protein and vitamins are concerned, then listen for the forecast, and gamble.

A handy reference to have around is the Agronomy Guide, put out by Penn State and generally available at the county offices of the Cooperative Extension Service.

This publication provides a wealth of information on the various hay crops, how to establish, harvest, and maintain them.

Alfalfa, for example, is recommended to be harvested for first cutting at full bud to very early bloom.

Red clover by itself, they say, should be cut by August 1, before full bloom, the year it was seeded. An established stand should be harvested at 0.25 to 0.50 bloom.

If you're cutting grasses, like orchardgrass, timothy, or smooth brome grass, for hay, Penn State recommends making the first cutting when heads emerge from the boot, with later cuttings following in 6 to 7 weeks.

These recommendations don't guarantee the hay you mow down won't get rained on, but it does assure that it will be the best quality hay if everything goes your way.

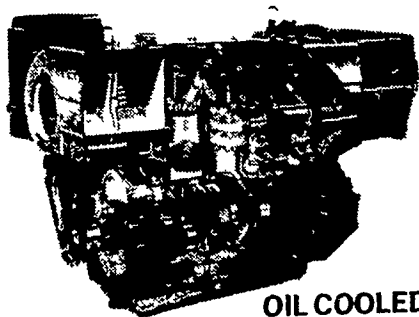
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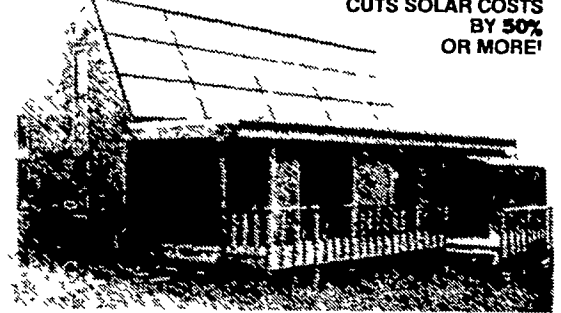
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