

## On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp

Gasoline, diesel and fuel oil at \$2 per gallon? Interest rates at 25 percent? Homes priced at a hundred-thousand and the average family-size bringing a million?

"Impossible!" we may have once shouted. Those are no longer just mere possibilities, but hard, cold realities of tomorrow

Serious as those economic woes appear, they may soon take a collective backseat to a more immediate, and almost unsolvable crisis

Water. Or rather, the lack of it. Heifers housed on a farm nearby lick at the slow drips trickling from a barn waterer. Inside the old home, a 78-year-old farmwoman wrings her hands with nagging fear. Her once-abundant spring has diminished to a puddle.

"Since early in the 1900's, our water has always run strong," confides a farmer I chat with recently at a meeting, as he slowly shakes his head from side to side with concern "And now it's almost dry."

A new acquaintance laments that her family's small flock of sheep must be moved from their pasture. Ewes, heavy with lamb, once slaked their thirst at the small stream that chattered and gurgled its way through the grass. Now the pleasant sounds of water over small stones is stilled and the sheep can only nose at the moist ground.

Poultry-producing friends haul tankfuls of water to pump into the empty water lines of their chicken house, where the well has gone dry, until a new shaft and deeper pipe can be sunk in search of diminishing underground flows.

And a barnful of top-producing dairy cows suck at their water fountains, searching for the flow that barely trickles in. With heavy hearts, our dairy farm friends begin filling buckets from a nearby spring supply to supplement the meager moisture running through the lines. Soon they will know if they must also drill in search of a steady flow.

What is more precious, more necessary and more used, abused and taken for granted than water?

The technology of man can zoom a person to the moon, enable us to annihilate one another with sophisticated computer weaponry, build machines to perform almost any task.

But man cannot create a water supply.

And even while our collective lips begin to dry and crack, and the tongue of the American people parches, we continue to systematically foul and destroy the water absorption and filtration system of the earth that surrounds us.

Hour after hour, bulldozers rip up tons of topsoil and level forests for more housing developments, more shopping malls, more highways. Concrete and asphalt shape an impenetrable seal that shuts out the life-giving moisture when it does fall, sending it into storm sewers and on to the sea.

Daily we dig more wells to take up underground supplies while septic systems and landfills threaten to further pollute the limited supply of water that does run somewhere beneath our feet.

In the name of progress, we are rushing down a path of self-destruction to the very essence of our survival. Water.

One storm, two storms, even the proverbial "good, wet Spring" will not solve this long-range crisis.

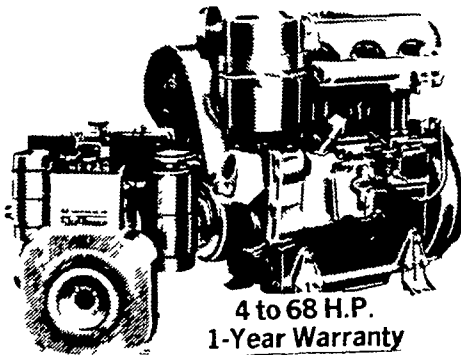
Perhaps the time has come when we must fall to our knees and seek help from a higher source, not just for moisture for our immediate needs, but for some wisdom and guidance in learning how to better use our most precious natural resource.

It could be our last chance.



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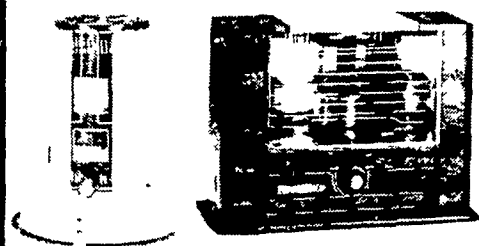
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