

Perseverance and laughter

(Continued from Page B2)

the worst thing now is that I can't work like I used to."

"This is the best shape I've been in since the accident," adds a pleased Mary. That condition she refers to is just being able to get around. It is what many take for granted everyday. For the first time since November 1982, Mary walked on her own at Easter.

Her right leg is enclosed in a hard plastic casing, which Mary says holds her leg together. She wears a crude hook on her right arm sometimes, which will be traded for a more sophisticated model when more surgery is performed.

She has had about 25 operations since the accident and requires at least 4 or 5 more. "They're trying to save my leg. It won't be the same, but the projection looks good," reports the thankful patient.

She first had pins and rods in her leg which confined her in traction and bed for six months. "I can take a lot of pain, but I couldn't stand it." Recently one plate was removed from her leg and another will be taken out next month. Once the foreign objects are out of her leg, doctors hope the constant infection will heal.

Doctors are unable to operate anywhere else on their young patient until her leg heals. Mary anticipates being in much better shape in a year. "You learn to endure and have to keep smiling," she laughs.

The kindness, helpfulness and

generosity of her family, friends and neighbors make it easier to handle each day. The community has conducted a number of fundraisers to assist with the huge medical bills that the Stetter family encounters.

"My neighbors were really good to me. When I had my accident, they had my corn picked the next day," remembers Mary. "I had nice corn that year, too."

Her young niece and nephew are a big help doing farm chores that she is still unable to manage. And a hardworking neighbor woman keeps the hog pens spotless.

Mary is able to use some of the farm equipment once again. The tractor which was with her on the day of her accident has a hand brake which Mary built herself. Some of the other machinery has the pedals built up so she can use the heal of her injured leg. The victim admits that she is hesitant around the tractor and other implements. "Machinery is tough and dangerous for the average person," says Mary. "I'm not a mechanic, but I'm very mechanical."

The farmer has only temporarily been slowed down. "I plan to continue farming, if my health stays with me. I enjoy it," she quickly adds. Mary doesn't regret choosing agriculture as her occupation, but does wish many times that her accident had never happened.

November 1982 wasn't the first encounter she had with hardship. Upon high school graduation in

1975, doctors thought she had bone cancer of the lower spine. A tumor which was removed came back malignant. Following 25 radiation treatments and two years of chemotherapy, Mary was thought to be healthy.

Several weeks ago while visiting a tumor specialist she was told that she never had cancer. She laughs as she relates another dramatic episode of her life. She now has a blastoma tumor, which does not travel. Mary looks at her necessary surgery as a minor operation. Her lower spine will be fused together making bending difficult.

Mary has had to make many

compromises in her young life, but hopes to live to do much more than she is able to do now. "The Lord won't give you a bigger cross than what you can bear," she firmly

states. She considers herself to be lucky to be alive. Living and enjoying her extended life is a challenge Mary gladly accepts. "I should write a book," she jokes.

Perry 4-H Dairy Club

The Perry County 4-H Dairy Club held a meeting July 5 at the Richard Kriebel farm. Ben Dum and Rick Kriebel gave a showbox demonstration, informing members of the articles needed in the showbox.

Ken Benner then explained the procedure of the show and the significance of the various ribbons and premiums to be awarded.

Next, Kim Kriebel reported on the National Holstein Convention,

followed by Jennifer Kriebel's report on the Capital Region 4-H Dairy Judging Contest held in Shippensburg.

John Harris reminded members to turn in their entry cards for the show and information about cattle health requirements was distributed.

1984 Perry County Dairy Princess Nancy Dum emphasized the goodness of dairy products and then everyone made his own ice cream sundae.

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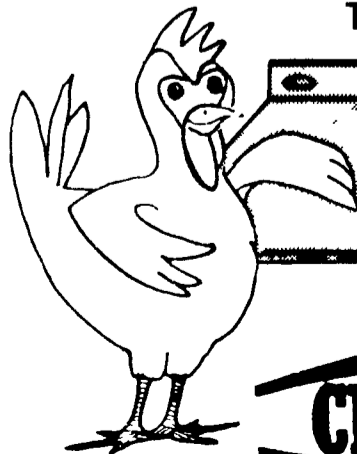
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