

**On being
a farm wife
- And other
hazards
Joyce Bupp**



Get that child off that tractor!
That's what I wanted to scream
at a farmer as I passed the fields
he was mowing a few weeks ago.

The morning was just beautiful,
the sun shining, the air crisp and
clean. Forecasts were for a stretch
of several days of the same.

Across the countryside, one
farmer after another was mowing
down neat passes through fields of
alfalfa, clover, and orchard grass,
perfuming the air with that clean,
wonderful scent of fresh-cut grass.

And on the fender of this partic-
ular tractor rode a child. About
ten maybe. Just behind the tractor
a mower blade worked, chattering
noisily as it sliced through thick,
green stems.

Knowing I'd be considered a
neighborhood pest and quack if I
proceeded to vent my anger at
strangers mowing their fields, I
resisted a strong urge to do so. And
felt guilty at the same time.

Suppose that youngster fell from
that fender perch and under the
rolling, ominous weight of those
massive tires?

Suppose the equipment hit a
groundhog hole, the rig tilted and
tossed the youngster into the path
of those deadly rows of razor-sharp
blades?

Five miles farther along the
road, up around a barn came a
tractor hauling a manure
spreader, filled with straw.

On the driver's lap - the mother I
presume - was a small baby.

Sitting on the fender was a
second youngster.

And riding in the spreader were
a third and a fourth child.

Why? Why? Why?

A tractor is not an amusement
park ride. What does it take to get
that point across?

To this day, I can barely speak of
a close call we had with one of our
youngsters, who scrambled onto
equipment in a span of perhaps 15
seconds as the operator stopped for
that brief period. We still consider
it a minor miracle that no accident
occurred and remain eternally
thankful.

But it made me a real bug about
mixing kids and machinery.

Yes, I've heard that argument
that kids must be around
machinery in order to learn how it
operates and how to in turn operate
it.

But teaching machinery know-
how, safety and respect is not
accomplished by approaching it
from a "fun ride" angle.

The 4-H has a Tractor Club
program for youngsters genuinely
interested in learning to operate
farm equipment.

It stresses - above all else -
safety. And maintenance. Knowing
the operator's manual. And the
neat little cartoons in the book
point out some of the really stupid
things that are done with farm
equipment.

Look into it if your youngster is
truly interested in operating farm
machinery - and not just taking a
joy ride.

Get that child off the tractor!
Please.

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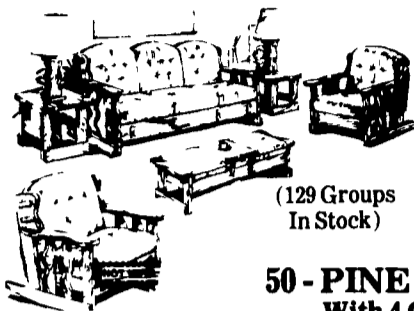
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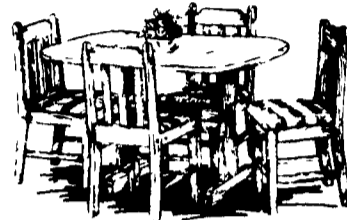
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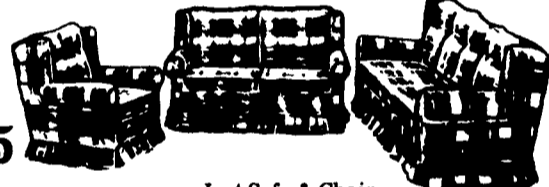
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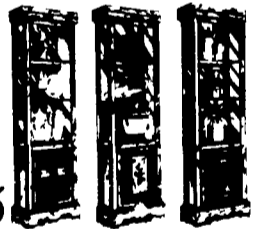
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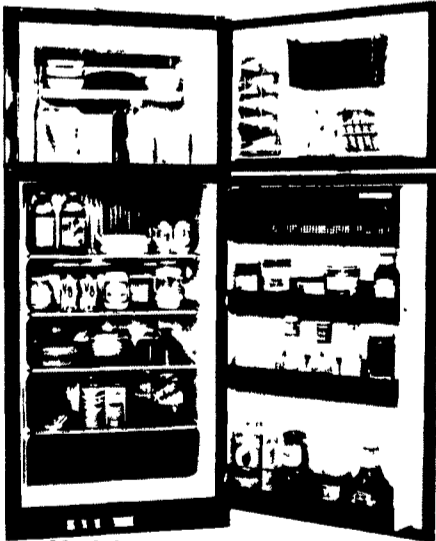
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