

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



"What'd you break?" has become the question of the summer, generally aimed at our youngest as he hustles through the front door, coated with grease, field dust and hay dirt. Often, because of the heavy use given our not-new haymaking machinery and tractors, he has a ready answer.

He may well soon turn the tables and throw that question at me. Everything I touch this summer seems to break.

It began with a tiny chip in the car's windshield, result of a small stone tossed my way many months ago. In the winter's most severe weather, just the simple motion of the car sent cracks out either side of the tiny chip across the expanse of glass.

Although it was low enough that no vision interference occurred, the time came when it simply had to go visit the glassworks, coming home with an unbelievably clean transplant.

Less than two weeks later, I glanced in the car's mirror to back out of the garage and saw only an astounding spider-web-like mass of cracked glass over the entire rear window of the car.

Even the glass experts could not come up with an explanation of why an automobile, sitting in a shaded garage, with the windows rolled down, would have such a broken rear glass.

It was just about this same time that our family's youngest "breaker" was left sitting in the middle of a field by a tractor that simply refused to budge an inch. Hauled away to the shop, it underwent a life-saving operation that unfortunately Medicare will not cover.

Then came the day when my typewriter - which now costs \$50 per hour for repair work - went bananas and began furiously typing, non-stop, rows of the letter "f." Only turning off the switch rendered the "f" key any rest.

A housecall by the typewriter brain surgeon repaired the "f" flaw, but left it printing not quite in the proper space. When the surgeon departed the second time,

the tab key had unsprung. On the third visit, he hauled my poor blue machine away, for a proper burial, I feared.

Ten weeks ago, my camera entered a repair shop. A recent call brought the answer that the small part for which we're waiting was shipped "yesterday."

Dinner in the oven one afternoon, while trying to type with a fouled-up letter "f," the oven heating element erupted in flames, almost turning a casserole into a barbecue.

Perhaps it had fallen victim to an electrical problem that, just days before, had the house current turning lights to spotlight brilliance, then dimming to almost nothing. An emergency call to our

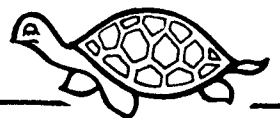
faithful and reliable neighborhood electrical magician decked the house electrical system with a brand new ground cable.

After a few hours in the field, the returned, repaired tractor once again gave up the ghost. At last check, no one, from mechanic to factory wizards, had figured out the puzzle.

The local camera shop still babysits that item. Save dirt spots, the car windows at the moment are intact. Steady heat has returned to the oven, from a renewed supply of steadily-flowing electrical current.

And the typewriter is in operable order, although the "5" now sticks periodically. But it's hard to use the thing with your fingers crossed.

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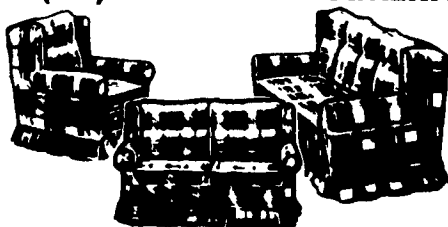
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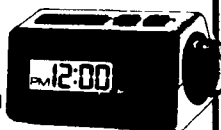
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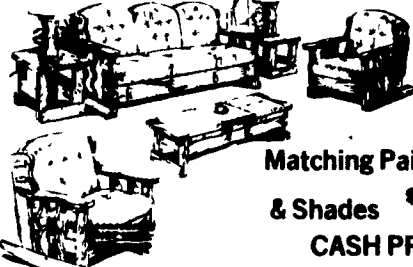
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