

Farm Women: An organization for Pa.'s rural women

BY SUZANNE KEENE

LITITZ — Rural women across the state will be meeting in homes and restaurants Monday to celebrate Farm Women Day. Some will gather for a shared meal, while others will simply convene for fellowship and celebration.

In Cambria County, Farm Women and their husbands will meet at Raystown Lake for a boat ride and fellowship, while one society in York County will meet for breakfast.

"There will be an awful lot of Farm Women gathering to observe Farm Women Day," says State Farm Women President Naomi Bupp.

But just what is Farm Women and what do Farm Women do when they meet?

The organization began in 1914 when Mrs. Frank Black of Somerset County got together with a group of her friends and neighbors to form the first Farm Women society.

"Back then women didn't get out of the home often," Naomi explains. For them, Farm Women offered an afternoon out of the house and an opportunity to exchange recipes or to work on some handiwork and chat.

But even in the beginning Farm Women was much more than simply a social organization. The purposes set out by the first society were to contribute to the power and influence of farm women and the farm home, and to contribute to community activities, Naomi said.

Today 3,990 Farm Women form 89 societies in Pennsylvania, a far cry from the handful of neighbors who gathered to form the first group.

And, while Farm Women still meet in homes to exchange recipes and learn crafts, the membership and emphasis has changed, Naomi said.

"It isn't that our goals are much different, but our members have changed," Naomi explains. "It has changed in the sense that young mothers who joined are now older."

And as the membership has matured, the pace of the meetings and the emphasis of the organization have changed. The older women, who make up the majority of the membership, like more inactive meetings. Getting younger women involved is difficult, Naomi stressed, because many work outside the home in addition to many other commitments.

It is the older members who hold the meetings together because they can take time out to attend them, Naomi said.

But some younger women, many of them daughters of Farm Women, are starting their own societies and gearing meetings to meet their own active lifestyles. This way, Naomi explains, when the younger societies have family picnics or other family events, the children can play together and the husbands share common interests.

Because there are fewer farms today, more and more of the Farm Women membership consists of rural women who do not live on farms. Some of the older members, Naomi said, have retired to the city, but still attend the meetings.

New members are always welcome and do not have to meet any special criteria to join, Naomi said. All they need, she continued "is the desire to be part of us."

Ten interested members are needed to form a new Society Naomi said, noting that she will soon be welcoming a new group in her home county of York. With the changes in members and lifestyles, the emphasis on an afternoon out has been replaced by contributions to the community.



Pennsylvania Farm Women president Naomi Bupp receives her pin from Marie Baughman, former Farm Women president, during the 1985 Farm Women Convention. On Monday, Farm Women will celebrate Farm Women Day.

"We have turned our needlework into things for the county home," Naomi said, referring to county operated nursing homes.

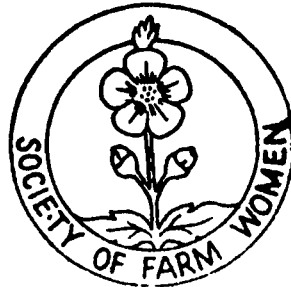
Farm Women devote many, many hours to the community, whether it is by rolling bandages for cancer patients or donating money to the local 4-H center. "The hours of labor given to the cancer society and nursing homes is almost unbelievable," Naomi said.

Every year, Farm Women in each county choose a project that they will contribute to. For example, Naomi said, York County Farm women have selected the 4-H center as their project and they will be making a sizable donation to the center at their upcoming county convention.

In Franklin County, Farm Women make kits for the Mont Alto children's home, and in Berks County, they support Berks Heim, the county home. "Every county has its own things," she explained.

In addition to their efforts in the community, Farm Women give four \$500 scholarships to students majoring in home economics or foods-related careers each year. Twenty cents of the \$2.10 membership fee goes to the scholarship fund, 90 cents goes to the state, 36 cents to the county and the remainder to the individual society.

To keep the organization farm related, Naomi said they hold their state convention during the Pennsylvania Farm Show in January.



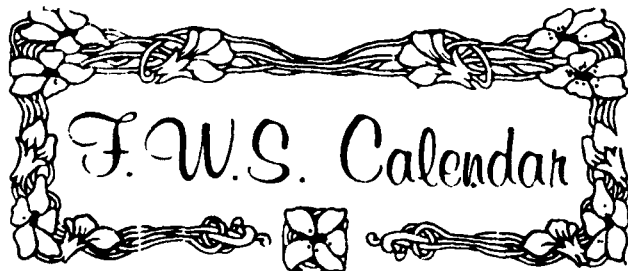
Naomi was elected president during last year's convention, when the group traditionally selects its new officers.

During her two-year term as president, Naomi said she would like to see a Farm Women society organized in a county where there aren't any Farm Women yet. Pennsylvania is the only state in the United States that has Farm Women; seventeen counties in the state have at least one society.

This year's state project, a Farm Women cookbook, is another of Naomi's ideas. Naomi says when she first thought of a state cookbook she did not consider the revenue it will bring in. "I just thought it would be fun to have a state cookbook," she said.

But now that the idea has progressed and Farm Women across the state are preparing their recipes, she realizes it will be a major fund raiser. "If this works, we should always have money coming in," she said.

But making money isn't Naomi's primary concern. She says, "I'd like to think we've made an impact on our farm women."



Saturday, October 12
Lancaster Society 19 meets for a program on "Nutrition for People Over 55" by Doris Thomas.

Lancaster Society 25 meets for a program to be announced.

Lancaster Society 2 meets to elect a new treasurer and plan for 1986.

Lancaster Society 1 meets for a crafts program.

Tuesday, October 15
Lancaster Society 12 sews for cancer at 9 a.m. Members will pay dues.

Lancaster Society 27 meets to elect

officers.

Thursday, October 17
Lancaster Society 15 meets at 1 p.m. for a program on flowers for Christmas.

Saturday, October 19
Lancaster Society 3 meets for a program by Charles Achey Jr. called, "Your Handwriting Shows."

Lancaster Society 18 meets for a program by Dick McMillen of the Water Street Rescue Mission.

Lancaster Society 8 meets for an auction

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