

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



Time marches on. Yes, yes, I know it's a trite cliché. But it's true.

The mirror tells me that every morning. Plus, there's a middle school kid on the premises who makes a point of telling me that about once an hour — or everytime he runs me down in the kitchen in his eternal quest for food.

Just as we change and wear out — eek! another gray hair — with the mounting years, so do those implements with which we work and live.

We're talking repair here, folks. Repair as in veteran equipment, and vital organ transplants of head gaskets, gear systems, chopping knives and gathering chains. To say nothing of aging automobiles, tired pickup trucks, cranky washing machines and a dishwasher that occasionally has an accident on the kitchen floor.

And typewriters. For ten years now, the sound of a clattering typewriter has been as much a part of the farmstead background noise as has the hum of the milk-cooling compressors and bawling cattle.

My first ancient office sidekick was acquired some 20 years ago during my very first secretarial job out of school. It eventually retired to be replaced by a portable electric model, which came under such heavy abuse it blew a key at least once every six months and needed emergency surgery — invariably on a deadline day.

Its replacement was a like-new, heavy-duty office model, which has served faithfully many years, with just occasional lapses into \$45-

per-hour house-call depression. The last time we settled for the

damages, the verdict was terminal: "They don't make parts for this model any longer."

For years the writing — so to speak — had been on the wall. Friends and acquaintances, with glowing enthusiasm, waxed poetic about the joys of a word processor (translate "computer").

Thus it came to be some time back that I plunged into the personal computer age, shoved by a dying typewriter, two teenagers with word processing needs for school and college, and a priceslashed sale on all the necessary components.

Twenty-four hours later, the first finished copy clucked into black and white. And there was new appreciation for the school

training that made a 14-year-old computer-wise.

I have since become slave to this quarter-inch white square which flashes at me, hour after hour, marking the spot of writing progress. It's called a "cursor." (Well-named, too.) The flashing cursor is the equivalent of a machine sitting and drumming its fingers impatiently on the table, grumbling: "Get on with it, will ya?"

Not only does it grumble-flash, this bossy machine also burps, when a wrong control is hit, and prints out a stern lecture on obeying instructions when some goof is keyed in. Sort of like having another kid in the family, except for not having to wash its clothes.

But it also remembers, erases, adds, moves around and does all sorts of hi-tech writing stuff. The kid interrupts the endless quest for food long enough to enter cattle registry data on the freebie filing program that hitchhiked in with the other boxes. Homework writing assignments are faced with considerably more interest, too. (And, thanks to a super-generous, disc-sharing brother-in-law, the arcade sounds of battling alien invaders, bugs and exploding rocketships whirr and crash late into the evening.)

Which leads to invalidate another trite cliché! You can teach an old dog new tricks.

See, let me show you how this works when I just put my paws here on this keyboard...

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