

Lycoming County Dancers Square Off in Repaired Barn To Benefit 4-H

BY BARBARA MILLER

Lycoming Co. Correspondent
WILLIAMSPORT — Seventeen squares of dancers recently promenaded in a barn whose roof was ripped off by a tornado last May.

For the tenth consecutive year the Bald Eagle Creek 4-H Club held its annual square dance at the Burton Stamen farm, Montgomery. It was also a celebration for the Stamen family, whose barn was again complete with a new, round, clear spanned roof. The Stamens, Burton Sr. and wife, Marjorie, and their sons Burton Jr., Eric and wife, Lori, farm 200 acres and milk a herd of 80 registered Holsteins.

Shortly after the dance last May a tornado touched down in the Elimsport area, cutting a swath of destruction miles in length. The tornado not only sheared off the Stamens' barn roof, but extensively damaged their home, garage, and vehicles.

The Stamens weren't surprised when neighbors streamed in to help, for they'd experienced such a caring attitude 10 years before. At that time their original barn had burned and with the help of neighbors was rebuilt.

Some farmers baled hay from their own fields to fill the Stamen barn. According to Burt Jr., the first dance was held then to thank everyone who helped with the barn building.

The last two years, Burt Jr. notes, they've had well over 200 people attending the dance on their 100-by-60 barn floor. The barn has accommodated as many as 19 squares at one time. This year the Lycoming County Holstein Association helped sponsor the dance.

Although there are a number of square dances in the area, actual barn dances are rare. They afford nonrural people a taste of the farming life.

"It is a perfect night for a square

dance," someone observed.

She was right. It was a balmy you-feel-like-16 again spring night!

After the guests parked their cars in a nearby field, some petted the calves in nearby hutches on their way to entering the pulled back barn doors to pay admission. Spotlights hung from the cathedral-like ceiling and the band played from a two-haywagon stage.

Guests either danced or sat upon bales of hay encircling the floor. Or tucked away here and there, they perched upon bags of feed or a grain drill or just leaned against a feed mixer. If thirsty, they found the corner of the barn with two old bathtubs full of soda covered with ice.

"It's a lot of fun," Burt Jr. observed "You get to see a lot of people you see once a year."

Tornadoes aside, the Stamen family plans to continue the tradition of the barn dance for years to come.



Square dancers swing their partners during the Bald Eagle Creek 4-H Club annual dance at the Burton Stamen farm. The roof of the barn was destroyed by a tornado last May, but it was repaired in time for this year's dance.



BACK HOME

By Michelle S. Rodgers

Berks Extension
Home Economist

Let's Celebrate

Well, recently I experienced another traumatic event...an additional candle on the birthday cake. It's not that I feel old, it's just that in my younger years I thought this age was old.

Regardless of the number of years, birthdays have always been special occasions in my family. We hold such favorite traditions as choosing our favorite type of cake, having our ears pulled, getting birthday presents, and throwing big parties on our fifth and 16th birthdays. Many people share this kind of birthday tradition. Recently, my father-in-law shared a new tradition with me. He showed me a photo of himself under the table that held the birthday cake. I thought it was most unusual, but it's not for them... it's their own birthday tradition. Whoever is the birthday person has to sit under the table.

Birthdays mark the rite of passage; they mark our progress. Change and growth cannot, of course, be encapsulated in a single day, but these formal events give symbolic representation to our moving forward. Birthdays become occasions that pull us together to give praise or comfort or sustenance to each other. This event carves a space in our busy lives to focus on the family unit and on each individual within it. Birthdays provide an opportunity to take time to say a special, 'I love you.'

Birthday traditions are a lovely way to make a family member feel important. There are many adventurous ways to celebrate. Here are a few ideas.

School age children who have birthdays in the summer often miss sharing their celebrations with friends. Try celebrating the birthday on a half year. Make two cakes at one time and freeze half of

one to eat on the real birthday.

Have an only-me birthday dinner. If things in your house are like a zoo and you feel like you have little opportunity to give each child his own space and individuality, try this birthday tradition. Have the child choose his favorite restaurant and take him to dinner alone. This is just his special time where you can talk alone uninterrupted by anyone.

Create a birthday flag for each person in the family. Fly the flag from sunup to sundown on the day of each person's birthday.

Have an annual birthday interview. On each child's birthday, record on cassette tape an interview with him or her. Ask your child to describe special memories about the past year. Add to the recording each year, then play back the previous years.

Try giving some creative gifts. How about tickets to the zoo, a concert, or a movie. For a small child, a large roll of tape to use as he wishes. For parents, a prepaid motel reservation so that they can get away for a little while.

I must admit, birthdays really are special occasions even though I would like to put off the years that go with them. As a matter of fact, birthdays in our family have become a monthly event, rather than just a day. My dad started celebrating his birthday for an entire month preceding or following the official day. We tease him about it, but it does give all of us a chance to help him celebrate in our own individual way. I guess it's a new tradition in the making.

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