

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



"Well, I could do with about another half-inch of rain yet," observed the farmer.

No one voiced a comment. But, silently, we knew that we all agreed.

Sitting here on the back porch, munching supper sandwiches, we watched as the rain slowed, thunder and lightning still jarring the thick, gray overcast. Not a leaf stirred. Grateful, we were, for a gentle, late afternoon storm adding a bit to the blessed moisture

that had finally dampened our blooming, sparse, six-inch high alfalfa, and gray, curled, stunted corn, tasseling with no signs of ears.

Already, for many local fields, it was too late. For hay and soybeans, well, maybe relentless pleas to the Heavens for moisture were finally coming to fruition.

I glanced to the north, from whence this and most of our noisy storms originated, and, as the novelists say, "gasped audibly."

"Oh my gosh."

Slate-gray, dark, ominous clouds had piled up over the hill, and were galloping across the sky, straight toward the farm. The only thing missing was the funnelcloud I fully expected to drop down in the next seconds. Memories of the devastation leveled by last year's tornadoes in Pennsylvania intensified the sick feeling that hit my stomach.

With the speed and seeming impact of a freight train, wind and rain crashed over the farm.

I heard the first limb plummet through the trees as we raced up the stairs to yank down open windows.

"Limb on the greenhouse!" shouted the youngest.

"Wire on the ground!" came next.

The farmer took a look around the house corner, through the wind and rain, both blowing horizontally, as our giant maple trees writhed and wrestled against the fury.

"That's the main feeder line to the house." Sure enough, the fat gray cable sagged against the wet ground, yanked from the securing brackets by the falling limb. At least it had not broken, only fallen,

and the lights still shone.

Following at me heels as I paced from window to door to window was the youngest, offering scientific explanation about how low pressure systems and high pressure systems override each other and a hole opens up in the clouds and that's how tornadoes are formed in storms like...

And another wave of freight-train wind tossed branches and pummeled the windows with water.

"To the basement!" I yelled. Surely the roof would go next.

From the basement I could see where the thick limb lay, curled around the edge of the greenhouse. And missed the glass structure by a mere quarter-inch or so.

Riding this out on the porch was the farmer, who has a fascination for summer storms. No basement for him - he was going to watch every drop he'd waited for so long.

One muddy-footed, thunder-terrified dog was covering on the living room carpet. And a strange outside cat had sneaked inside hunting a dry spot.

"Geez!" exclaimed the kid coming back inside after checking the outside. "I just saw a cat blow past."

A cat? Blow past? Aw, c'mon.

Gradually, the storm did subside. Electrical lines sagged - but held. Several large limbs and

dozens of smaller bits of tree residue created a mess - but no worse damage.

And the farmer had gotten his half-inch - and more - of rain.

With gratitude for the added moisture that had fallen - and hopes that friends who needed it even more desperately had also gotten rain - I jogged from the house, around the fallen limb to head toward the barn and help start the evening milking.

My feet went out from under me on the turn and I landed with a solid thud in the mud, jarring primarily my ego and only a few hundred muscles. Cackling laughter erupted from inside the basement.

What else would you expect from a kid who entertains his mother during the summer's worst storm with tales of how tornadoes are formed and sees cats fly by on the wind?

But, ummm, if a strange cat turns up at your place, looking a bit windblown... I have an idea where it came from.



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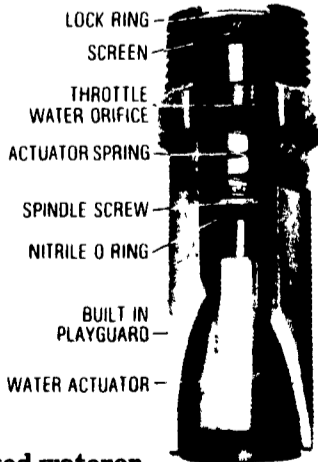
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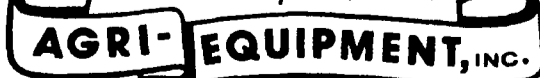


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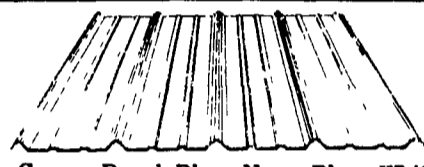
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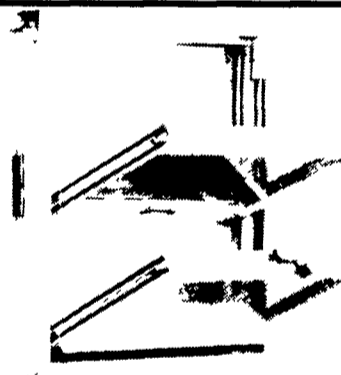


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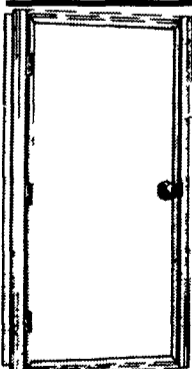


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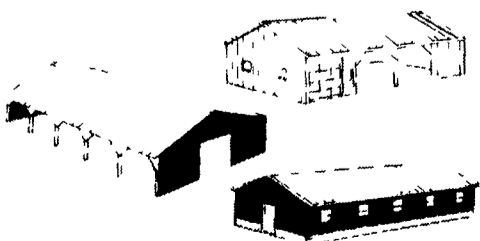
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