

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



No, it wasn't Friday the 13th. Good grief, it wasn't even Friday. But it was one heck of a good start on the next one.

Looking back, the Friday -the-13th-like string of wackiness actually took root a couple of days before.

Those roots were sunk deep in the soggy soils (not so soggy this year) of our meadow below the house and barn. That meadow is the site of a smidgen of remodeling at the moment, this farm's bit part toward a cleaner Chesapeake Bay.

At least the super-dry summer had been beneficial in drying up the swampy sections, and skirting the expanded manure storage with tile drains would be less hassle

since we wouldn't be digging in muck. Just dust.

Until a backhoe bite suddenly hit water the drainage ditch was unexpectedly in full flow.

The farmers' dismayed suspicion of where the water originated was pretty much confirmed in short order. Frighteningly little extra water - a mere trickle - was running away from our underground farm supply. And, we soon discovered, when the thirsties hit the herd of dairy cows, none ran away.

With the extreme dry conditions, the usually abundant water had not been anything impressive in volume to begin with. A diversion of a good portion of it wasn't

exactly helpful.

Introduce Alternate Plan A. Across the lower yard went a re- diversion ditch, aimed at coaxing the underground supply back toward where it originally flowed.

Backup Plan B followed shortly thereafter. The reserve area would be enlarged, holding more water for those peak usage times when the cows were guzzling.

An extension of the pumping system into the expanded reserve area was deemed a further bit of insurance, and would require shutting down the farm's complete water supply for but a brief duration, I was assured.

The kettles of tomatoes cooking on the stove for canning and the load of laundry underway in the washing machine would be basically unaffected, only delayed.

Four hours later, supertime, the pump system extension was still cranking only air bubbles, the laundry sat in stagnating water and the tomatoes had long been cold.

Supper - such as it was - came and went. Waterless. Fortunately there was plenty of cold milk in the milk tank.

The cows bawled for admittance to the barn, figuring the dry outside watering troughs could be forgotten while gulping at the barn fountains. The accusing looks we got when they repeatedly shoved at dry fountains weren't pretty.

We females of the family milked, keeping a wary eye on the rumbling black cloud front descending over the barn. Meanwhile, the two mud-and-clay coated males of the family doubled their efforts to fill the farm water system pipes with the precious liquid we normally take for granted.

When the fury descended, sheeting rain, blowing wind, and a fireball of lightning that turned the woods next to us a momentary hot pink shade, there was plenty of water. It blew through the barn, cascaded into the manure storage area, and tumbled gallons of muddy runoff into the diversion ditches - one of which, of course, diverted the muddy cloudburst runoff right into our water supplies.

As we finished the milking, the cows began eagerly lapping at the trickles they were finally finding in the fountains. A defective pipe extension had been the air-bubble culprit.

Eventually the muddy runoff diverted through the water supply -

via Alternate Plans A and B and the unexpected storm - would settle.

But, left behind were bits of gravel which jammed valves in several fountains scattered through the barns and, by the next morning, had created mini-floods here and there in the cattle housing.

Storm past, cattle finally watered, milking finished and calves fed, I headed for the house to tackle the supper remains, left petrifying on the kitchen table while we had coped with more pressing "challenges."

Fritz, terrified of storms, had cowered underfoot while we milked, then finally sneaked admittance to his favorite storm refuge, the house, just before I got there. I found him soothing his trauma with a piece of supper's leftover roast beef.

Here's hoping the Chesapeake blue crabs appreciate our efforts in their behalf. I'll never again feel guilty when I steam 'em.

York Clubs Compete

In 4-H Olympics

YORK - Eight York County 4-H clubs gathered Aug. 8th at the Red Lion Senior High School track to test their athletic abilities. The 4-H Olympics, which consists of events such as, 50 yard dash, wheel barrow race, volleyball, mile

relay, balloon toss, and softball throw, to name a few, is a day full of fun.

The top scoring club was Airville 4-H, second place Club was Hanover 4-H and in 3rd place was the Loganville 4-H Club.

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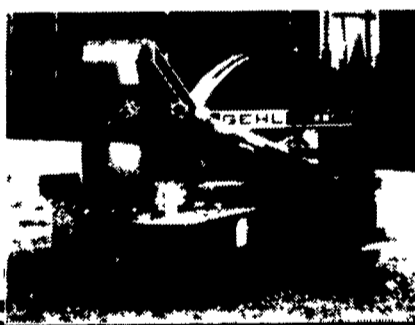
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