

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



There could be no mistaking that sound.

Beginning as a steady hum, growing to a diesel roar, the throbbing voice of the combine's horsepower vibrated against the air on a morning thick with choking humidity. A glimpse of dusty red through the calf barn windows confirmed the machine's approach. Slowly it crept down the drive for an appointment with the high pressure hose at the milkhouse.

No champagne bottle smashing across her bow commissions this battleship of the barley fields and corn shelling, as we open each grain harvest season. Instead, with the flip of a milk house switch and pressure on the hand-held hose nozzle, the faithful old combine is once again readied for service with a thorough cleanout of winter dirt, dust and spider family condominiums.

More than a mere commissioning ceremony, the annual, opening day combine hoseout is, rather, a precautionary measure.

Combines, I'm convinced, can be one of a farmer's most faithful mechanical servants — or a

deadly, unforgiving enemy.

All the ingredients are there for potential disaster: what seems like miles of moving chains and belts; gears and other turning parts lubricated in thick, sticky grease; a binful of dry, dusty grains; weed seeds, chaff and more dust accumulating in filters and in every exposed nook and cranny; a tank full of volatile fuel; and heat from a pounding motor adding to that shimmering above fields of dry, easily-combustible stems.

Even a tiny, insignificant spark can erupt this scenario into disaster.

With the combine being bathed, I headed for the basement, grabbed two objects and delivered them to the hose-down supervisor.

"Put 'em in there — and keep 'em in there," I order, handing the youngest a large fire extinguisher and a smaller, aerosol can. With the woodstove shut down for the summer, I will rob the extinguishers kept close to it for temporary use on this most fire-prone piece of field equipment.

"But there's one already in here," he laughs, handing out from the combine cab an identical large

extinguisher, minus safety pin and reading "recharge" on the contents indicator.

"That's exactly what I've been hollering about!" I grumble.

"Are you expecting a fire?" queries the other kid, exiting the milkhouse after morning cleanup.

And with that I spout one of my favorite personal philosophies: "When you're prepared for a disaster, it doesn't usually happen."

Thus, this household has been listening for the past few weeks to Mother's tirades about getting fire extinguishers on all the tractors and major pieces of equipment. No one disagrees. In fact, for once we all agree on something.

Just 48 hours previous, a spark from a weld repair on the baler had started a very minor fire in the dry grass of the field where the equipment sat. After stomping out the flames with his foot, the farmer kidded (maybe not?) that he'd set his shoe on fire in the process.

Was there a fire extinguisher near? Of course not.

Adding fuel to my continuing fire tirades was an incident shared recently at a meeting by a young farmer, who was able to contain a grease fire in the family's remodeled home when he quickly grabbed and used a working fire extinguisher kept on hand for woodstove problem protection. Though the foam left a household mess, the cleaning up was minor compared to the devastation of a major fire.

We have had occasional small motor and grass fires in and around field equipment. Con-

tainers of drinks, handfuls of dirt, and the intervention of the Almighty have thus far contained them with little damage. Our fire extinguishers are still too few — and too far between.

Both a nagging mother and a teenager two-time graduate of 4-H tractor safety club have declared our mission to pester and persist

on the issue of more plentiful — and full! — fire extinguishers.

Farm wives and mothers, this is a completely valid issue to nag about. Please join me in nagging your men about fire extinguishers in machinery and buildings.

Not that I need a legitimate reason to nag. The farmer would quickly confirm that. But, at least he sees the value in it this time.

FFA Activities Week

(Continued from Page B2)

Stiffer Greater Johnstown Sonya Spangler Willowstreet Jeneen Fields W B Saul

Forestry

Eric Rose Somerset Co AVTS Rick Yoder Somerset Co AVTS Russ Wilson Brockway Mike Mowrey Somerset Co AVTS Roland Welker Clearfield

FFA Interview

Kevin Hawk James Buchanan Sue Burkhardt Twin Valley Bob Dunkle Redbank Valley

Land Judging

James Leshar Jr Upper Dauphin Tim Leshar Upper Dauphin Melissa Merritts Central Henry Hank Penn Manor Dirk Reifsnnyder Oley Valley Gregory Huber Garden Spot Jamie Richardson Williamsburg Larry Coole Coudersport Brian Smith West Greene Troy Cool Waynesboro Ronald Rishel Penns Valley George Bachorski Selinsgrove Ruth Bicher Cowanesque Valley Tony Bitts Penn Manor Lonnie Martin Garden Spot

Livestock Judging

Richard Hicks Twin Valley Doug Musser Elizabethtown Tiffany Rohrer Oxford Kermit Stahl Somerset Jerrel Boyer Mount Union Michael Stoltzfus Twin Valley Dennis Cooper Kutztown Kim Hoppole Cumberland Valley

Meats Judging

Robert Rush Lampeter Strasburg Jared Burkholder Penn Manor Jeremy Cattau Apollo Ridge

Nursery Landscape

Charles Thourot Willow Street Lisa McManus Willow Street Gayle Moore York Co AVTS

Pleasure Horse

Cindy Frey Cumberland Valley Julie Truax Everett Kim Brossman Twin Valley

Poultry Judging

Shawn Broderick Penn Manor Andrew Smeltz Upper Dauphin Keith Pettit West Greene

Public Speaking (FFA)

Susan Elliott Annville Cleona Don Gilliland Northern Potter Joetta Denman West Greene Mark Anderson Dover Tim Brown Linesville Conneaut John Hess Manheim Central Seth Hopkins Northern Potter Irene Benner Greenwood Kay Fessler, Conrad Weiser Brian Overmoyer Linesville Conneaut Kathy Stahlnecker Mifflinburg

Public Speaking (Conservation)

Leslie Young Berlin Brothers Valley Dwight Freed Penns Valley Cheri Bisele Cowanesque Valley Rhonda Holland Tyrone Scott Landis Berlin Brothers Valley Cliff Ocker James Buchanan Kimberly Dietrich Mifflinburg Tom Morgan Twin Valley Craig Wanner Oley Valley Robin Sustrik McGuffey Denise Glick Solanco Bob Raker James Buchanan

Public Speaking (Extemporaneous)

Rebecca Sonnen Conrad Weiser Tammy Balthaser Hamburg Pete Gryzbek Brockway Kirk Sattazahn Conrad Weiser Dan McNutt United Terry Engle Upper Dauphin Walter Gunn Cowanesque Valley M Abe Harpster Tyrone Caressa Compton Danville Todd Mar wine Dover Mike Strohecker Line Mountain

Scrapbook Contest

Cedar Crest Somerset Twin Valley Lower Dauphin Brothersvalley Grassland

Small Gasoline Engines (Individual)

Brandon Miller Halifax Mark Strohecker Halifax Andy Byerly Sugar Valley

Small Gasoline Engines (Team)

Halifax Mark Strohecker Brandon Miller

Tractor Driving

Alan Kaler Mifflinburg John Deamer Juniata

Wildlife

Scott Davis Reynolds Pegg Grover United Dan Schoonover Northern Potter Phil McCall Grove City Craig Logan Somerset Co AVTS Mike Lapearl Oley Valley Chuck Buchanan Garden Spot Richard Grove Altoona AVTS

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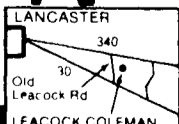
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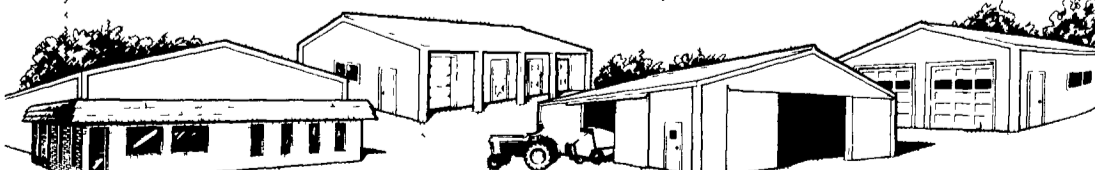
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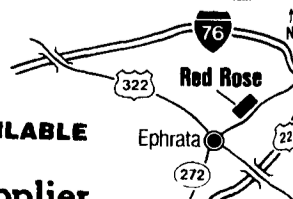
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