

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



It was a silent night. Overhead, a thousand pinpoints of silver sparkled in the blackness of the heavens. Nebulous drifts of clouds, almost unmoving in the still, clear evening, veiled small sections of the glittering sky.

No voice broke the reverie. All was hushed, save for the soft sound of footsteps upon the dry grass of winter. Breaths came more rapidly, as the slope of the hill grew steeper, and until the crest was breached.

Spread below, across the meadows, the immediate world seemed to lie at complete peace this night.

Then, an unexpected light.

It startled me for a split second, the flickering flames stretching orange fingers into the night. The fire's flow shed shadowy, wavering light on the machine shed, and into the cattle bunk feeding area between old and newer barns.

But, then I relaxed almost immediately, remembering that our youngest was busy "house-cleaning" the machine shop, and burning a bit of the discarded trash. This bonfire centered where

people were finishing long hours of work, completing mundane, daily chores, on an "everyday" evening. A string of white-lit, rectangular windows not far from the flickering flames told of dairy barn chores being wrapped up.

Soon, the bonfire would cool and die, the barn lights go dark, and rest come quickly to those whose bodies were weary with honest toil.

Business as usual, on an ordinary evening.

Well, maybe not completely as usual.

For, on the glossy-ice surface of the pond, a multi-hued pyramid shape reflected into the dark of this very ordinary night. The mirror image of shimmering color was of a neighbor's seasonally decorated outdoor evergreen, bright with bulbs of brilliant blue, cheery yellow, glowing orange, seasonal red and green.

The pyramid of colors, and its mirror image on the frozen surface, seemed a vivid reminder of another similar - and yet very special - silent night so long ago.

There, too, perhaps bonfires

flicked in the darkness, as men prepared to end the most hectic of their toils for the day. Dry, crackly grass of hillside pastures whispered under footsteps. Flocks of sheep and goats, which had nibbled the grasses in daylight, were counted, checked, and settled under watch for the night.

Ordinary, everyday, people, on a "business as usual" evening.

People who rose early and worked late, who wrestled their livelihoods from livestock and the land. People with ordinary families, who worried about their children, squabbled occasionally with their spouses, tried to make "ends meet" in their family

finances.

People who coaxed newborn animals to eat, grumbled about the weather, and loved a good laugh with close friends. And, people who no doubt cursed the government of Caesar Augustus for the levy of yet another burdensome and unpopular tax they must pay.

People surprised in the nighttime darkness by sudden, brilliant light. Who in awe abandoned "business as usual" to chase the light of a mysterious star that silent night.

People. Ordinary, everyday people.

People who went to visit other ordinary people, in an everyday - even humble - setting. People to whom a most extraordinary thing had occurred, an event that still shapes our world today.

That's what Christmas is about, isn't it? Ordinary people, abandoning everyday, "business as usual," to again celebrate the extraordinary gift of the Christ Child.

May the extraordinary gift of the Christ Child bring to you and yours at this season great blessing and peace.

Merry Christmas!

Adolescent Pregnancy: A National Crisis

Adolescent pregnancy is a national crisis that robs our children of their childhood and often condemns them and their babies to lives of poverty.

Regardless of how you feel about childbearing in adolescence, the facts are present that adolescents, for a variety of reasons, are becoming parents. Young girls in this country are bearing children at a time when their own bodies are growing. They are bearing children at a time when they are not equipped to deal with the many social aspects of pregnancy and parenthood. In addition, there is seldom a firm economic situation present.

Out of these less than desirable circumstances arise numerous medical and social problems. Many of these girls do not receive adequate prenatal care. In one study it was shown that adolescent girls who received prenatal care

during the first three months experienced an infant death rate of 6.6 per thousand, while those who received no prenatal care until the time of the birth experienced an infant death rate of 16.1 per thousand.

Adolescents, again for a variety of reasons, often have very poor nutrition habits. Their diets contain many of the junk foods. Pregnancy puts added demands on the system and if poor nutrition habits are present during those crucial months, the newborn experiences many risks.

Another aspect of adolescent pregnancy involves the education of the girl. Some schools discourage or will not permit adolescent mothers to continue in the regular program. And if the girl does return to school, what are the consequences of child care? And what effort is made to help the adolescent learn how to be a caring parent?

raises dozens of social and medical questions. Questions that many communities are either ignoring or very slowly beginning to answer.

The reality of the situation is that adolescents are becoming parents. What are the long-range social costs of not providing adequate medical care? Or, if not allowing the young parent to return to school? If a 16 year old does not finish high school, what are the chances of getting a job? What does this mean to the adolescent or to the infant ten years from now? Serious questions indeed, and questions that we all must attempt to find answers to.



For parents, indeed for many adults, adolescent pregnancy

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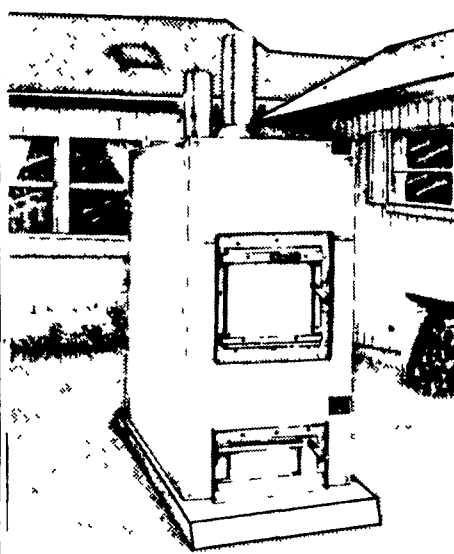
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