

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



In 25 years as a "professional farm wife" (a term favored by a good friend), certain absolutes have been ingrained on my brain.

One of them is that nails lying around on paved driving areas are taboo, and generally create flat tires at most inopportune times. (Is there an opportune time for a flat tire, anyway?)

Thus, I have dutifully picked up over the years a hardware-store-worth of nails in various shapes and sizes. So when I spied the brownish head of a nail lying on the blacktop last week, I automatically bent to retrieve it from among the dusty residue of ancient roof shingles recently replaced.

This was not just any old roofing nail. Once shiny, it was now brown and pitted with many decades of age. But most astonishing about the nail was that it was shaped into a perfectly stylized letter "J."

My initial. On an old pitted nail from the shed roof. Why? What had caused a once straight nail to be formed like this? Delighted with finding what immediately felt like a sort of personal good luck charm, I cradled the curling nail into my gloved hand to show The Farmer. He surely would have some insight into its unique shape.

On the way from barn to house, stops at the ground cellar, greenhouse, bird feeders and woodpile side-tracked my thoughts. Some

minutes later, I realized that my "J" nail of farm antiquity was missing.

Backtracking yielded no nail, just a couple more cats tagging at my feet. The nail was gone.

Disappointment at the loss of this novel piece of family farm history set me thinking about other small, commonplace items which have become personal "treasures." Some are worth little dollar-wise, but prized as bits of the heritage of our families.

Two old wooden buckets have served for years as magazine holders in the living room. The Farmer remembers them as lime buckets kept near the outdoor "facilities" before plumbing graced this old house.

A handful of fat, wooden pegs waits in a box in the attic for installation - some day - as coat hooks. Originally for barn use, their wood is cracked and aged to a soft silvery shade. How many halters and harnesses, old hay forks or crosscut saws might they have once held in their original use?

Old, worn horseshoes have turned up so frequently over the years that they got little attention - except for my wondering if horses ran barefooted around here when they kicked their shoes off. I plan to hang one over the door - another good luck charm. Tradition

dictates a horseshoe be hung points up and curved side down, so the luck doesn't run out.

Years ago, when the rage for digging bottles and glass-item collecting was peaking, the Farmer brought me an assortment of dust-encrusted bottles and jars. He gathered them from long-forgotten corners of the barns, where they had likely at one time held nails, or spikes, cow or horse treatments - maybe even a bit of bootleg "cold medicine" if the full truth be known.

All have been cleaned up and safely put away. A few of the more prized ones share display space with my cow collectibles. They've become part of our family's heritage now, too.

Through the weekend, I scanned blacktop and pathways, porch and basement floors, all the places where it seemed a small nail might have fallen and been overlooked. No "J" nail.

I had all but given up hope of finding it again, and felt as sense of loss, I couldn't even explain, over something as small and silly as a bent nail.

Monday morning, I knelt on the stone floor of the greenhouse to check the progress of hyacinths I'm forcing for Easter. There, lying at the tip of my left foot, was the nail.

The Farmer figures the nail hit a knot in the wood as that shingle was being fastened, and curved away from the wood with successive hammer blows.

My good luck charm. Probably useless in its intended purpose all these many years.

I hope that's not an omen.

## A Moosical Event

HERSHEY — When the planners of the annual Hershey Chocolate Festival in Hershey were putting together their February 19 event at Hershey's Chocolate World, they turned to the PA Dairy Promotion Program for assistance.

PDPP Promotions Specialist Lolly Long worked with staff at Chocolate World to develop activities for "Cows, Cows, Cows: A Moosical Event," which was part of the February 17-20 traditional chocolate extravaganza for guests at the Hotel Hershey and Hershey Motor Lodge and Convention Center.

"Hershey Chocolate is a major purchaser of Pennsylvania-produced milk," said PDPP Program Manager Donna Verner, "and

we're pleased to help them with their promotional events however and whenever we can."

Games such as "Moosical Chairs" and "Pin the Tail on the Cow" were combined with activities to promote Hershey's new chocolate milk mix product. In addition to helping with ideas for activities and refreshments, such as chocolate cow ice cream sundaes and "How-Now" cow-shaped chocolates, the PDPP also lined up Dairy Princesses to give out information on milk, and loaned its film on Pennsylvania milk production, entitled "Lands of Milk and Honey."

## MacRone Named Associate Extension Agent

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre) — Judy V. MacRone has been named an associate extension agent for Penn State Cooperative Extension in Delaware County. She joined extension as a program aide in 1985.

Her responsibilities as an associate extension agent are with the 4-H youth program. She teaches 4-H'ers the fundamentals of plant science and skills such as wood-working. She also oversees the Summer Specials program, a day camp where participants complete a 4-H project over a four-day period. She enjoys the variety of responsibilities in her work and likes visiting schools to present 4H programs.

Her favorite part of the job is working with handicapped children. "I thoroughly enjoy it," she says. "Even when I feel tired, working with those children

makes me feel great."

She hopes to continue a hydroponics project started by the Philadelphia extension office and would like to see the 4-H youth program include more physical fitness activities.

MacRone, a graduate of West Chester High School, received her bachelor's degree in health and physical education from West Chester State College. Prior to joining extension, she taught health and physical education to kindergarten through eighth-grade children at the Torah Academy in Wynnewood, Pa. She also coached and taught health and physical education to girls in grades 10 through 12 at Lower Merion High School in Ardmore, Pa.

MacRone resides in Delaware County with her husband, Richard, and their four children, Mindy, Michelle, Marcy and Melissa.

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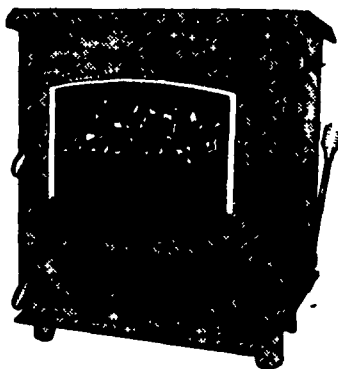
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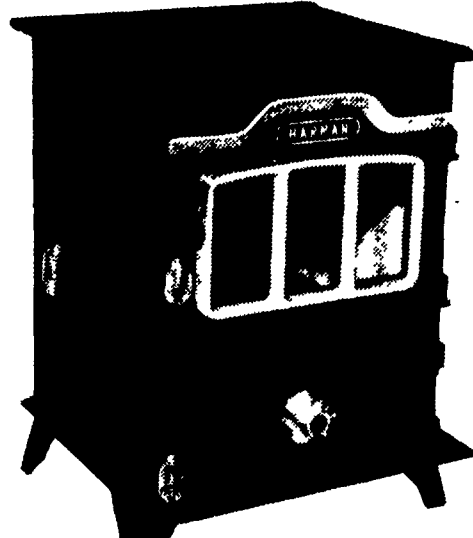


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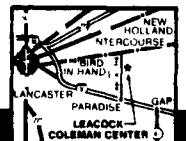
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