

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



Early on in our relationship, he proved his uncanny ability to figure out how mechanical mysteries worked, and to fix them when they didn't.

For instance, his prized baby blue-and-white '54 Chevy had some miniscule thingamajig that periodically slipped away from some other doohickey it was supposed to be attached to, which kept the car from working at the most inopportune times. Like

when he'd been in the field long hours that day, and was already late for a date.

So, he always kept on hand in the ashtray a couple of spare rubberbands, which kept the thingamajig attached to the doohickey, and the car running when it was supposed to.

Except, of course, for when you tried to restart it while the motor was still warm. Then, due to another of the car's personality

quirks, it also usually refused to start. Generally when we were due to meet friends or attend some function at a pre-set time.

Fortunately, I lived at the top of a long hill, and the '54 Chevy rarely failed to start as it drifted down the steep grade.

This mechanical aptitude has passed through the male lineage of the family, as indicated by the volume of grease which now oozes from the skin pores of both the older and younger Farmers. In the wake of their collective travels on a typical day are greasy, grimy oil tracks on cakes of white soap, the bathroom and kitchen sinks, t-shirts, blue jeans, hand towels, and the white woodwork.

Boggled by the intricacies under the hood of my car or the lawn mower, I marvel at and admire their mechanical aptitudes. Sometimes I wish at least a little bit of that ability would rub off onto the mother side of the household, as easily as the residue rubs off onto the handtowels.

Fact is, I figure they can fix just about anything with baler twine, duct tape, pop rivets, and a dazzle-

eyed, oxygen-acetylene-eating, smoke-and-fire-belching dragon, which they affectionately refer to a lot as The Welder.

Of course, they seem to need unbelievable amounts of nuts, bolts, pins, shear bars, gears, bearings and miscellaneous sundry and assorted steel, metal and plastic parts in a variety of shapes and sizes, for which the bills arrive regularly each month.

While I always admire their "fixin'" abilities, sometimes the level of appreciation rises and falls with the parts and tools which turn up everywhere: from the trunk of the car to the front porch to the kitchen counter, on their way to installation in some ailing piece of equipment.

Saturday evening, my appreciation level reached a new high.

The 50th anniversary celebration for my folks was to begin in just an hour. In my little car, already running, were flowers, photos, decorations, cards and such assorted items. I tossed in my handbag, retrieved an almost-

forgotten camera, tucked it into the passenger side, locked and closed the door, ran around to crawl in the driver's side -- and came face to face with a locked door on the other side of the two-door car.

Never before in my entire life had I locked myself out of the car. And I hadn't locked the driver-side door; it must have somehow gotten bumped as I was putting things inside. There was an extra set of keys -- inside my handbag, which was inside the locked, running car. (But you had probably figured that out already, right?)

The panic rising from the pit of my stomach collided with my sinking heart, as I rushed into the house wailing, "You're never gonna' believe what I just did!" He believed.

And promptly retrieved a coat-hanger from upstairs. Using a tool which just happened to be handy, he cut the hanger, bent it straight, pried the door gasket apart enough to slip the wire through, and neatly yanked up the lock. All in about five minutes time.

"Easiest car I ever broke into," he told the kids later.

As I said, I've always admired his "fixin'" abilities. But I think we may have to look into where this particular "fixin'" experience came from.



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