

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



In that semi-conscious state between deep sleep and barely awake, one's mind is fuzzy and distorted, kind of like an out-of-focus camera lens. For a moment, the fuzziness of disrupted slumber nearly won out over the tiny corner of my brain awake and trying to focus.

The sound took a moment to recognize. Rain. Rain? RAIN! Falling gently, pitter-pattering on the trees . . . and the hay, and the beans, and the corn, hopefully all over the neighborhood.

A mental offering of gratitude for the moisture brought a new peacefulness to a fast-returning state of slumber. Until a new sound rudely jerked me wide awake.

"Mmmwwwwaaaaaaahhh!" Loud. Very loud. And right under the open bedroom window.

Digital red numbers on the alarm clock read at a few minutes after 1 a.m. Maybe the calf would go back to sleep.

Sure. Right. When snails fly. "Mmmwwwwaaaaahhhhh!"

The baby bull calf hadn't been too impressed with a bottle of warm milk as a replacement for his own mama. Earlier in the eve-

ning, he'd knocked down the moveable front of his pen and gone high-tailing off through the knee-high corn, disappeared and apparently curled up to take a nap. And we had not found him before dark.

Awakened probably by the brief shower, the little guy was hungry - and bawling it to the world. At 1 a.m. Right under the open bedroom window.

I crawled out of bed, looked out the window and, in the faint glow from the barn light, the calf's white coat shone in the darkness. That little guy standing there had no intention of going back to sleep.

By this time the Farmer was awake, too. The front door banged as he headed out to retrieve the escapee - then silence. And more silence. Had the calf run off? Hidden again? A sudden and very upset tone of "Mmmwwwwaaaaahhhhh!" confirmed that the midnight wanderings of one very irate and loud baby bull calf had ended, for the moment at least.

Morning calf feeding chores brought evidence that the baby had not been the only overnight escapee. A bag of heifer feed in

the alley lay torn and scattered. Bales of hay and straw were up-ended and ripped and splattered with fresh manure.

And the culprit was still there at the alleyway's dead end.

I managed to get ahead of the big, bred heifer, turn her in the cramped space and send her moving back to the open door. Chasing her back out (with me admittedly in a rather bad mood by now), my bald-soled sneaker connected with a patch of her fresh manure - and I crashed.

Hard. Onto the concrete floor. And, solidly smacked the back of my head against the cement block wall on the way. The world went white, bright, turning like those cartoon characters with stars circling their heads.

The bruise was already swelling and painfully sensitive by the time the dizziness finally began to fade. Hair would cover the bruised head, but bleeding gashes on hand and arm couldn't be so easily hidden.

Planning next to deliver promised items for the afternoon's Sunday School picnic, fate intervened again. A large, torn, V-belt. The Farmer-mechanic temporarily elsewhere, could I go search for a replacement, since feeding the dairy herd hinged on the operations of that particular belt?

One hour and three parts-place pleadings later, the (hopefully) proper-length belt and I emerged victorious from the local, hardware store - surely a branch of Heaven on this particular morn-

ing. Triumphantly presenting the belt, I was informed that an old one had been located in the shop, the feeder repaired, and the cows already eating.

In haste and absolute frustration, I fled to the picnic prepara-

tions. And the laughter and caring of dear friends at church instantly turned around that off-on-the-wrong-foot day.

Thank God for friends - and for no long-term damage from the crack on the head to remind me of that.

Cumberland Pageant

CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.) — Melanie Dietrich wears the Cumberland County Dairy Princess banner and crown with pride.

Crowned the 24th county princess at the pageant held on June 21, at Embers Convention Center, Carlisle, Melanie will be assisted by Alternate Dairy Princess Jennifer Baum of Shippensburg.

Melanie is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Dietrich of Newburg. Her assistant is the daughter

of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Baum. Junior representatives, Heather Glennon, Laura Deitch Christine Deitch, and Mandy Naugle will also assist the dairy industry in promotional activities.

Danielle Gutshall crowned the new princess after giving a farewell speech.

Judges for the event were Barb Wilson, Peg Adams, and Dwight M. Hawbaker.



Cumberland County Dairy Princess Melanie Dietrich, left, and Alternate Jennifer Baum are eager to promote the dairy industry.

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