

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Organization. That was the point.

That was the purpose for assembling the printed directions with a map, the hotel room confirmation, and a newspaper clipping containing some information needed for a program. Having carefully folded those three pertinent items together into the hotel's confirmation envelope, I'd tucked the little packet into a section of my handbag "filing cabinet."

In fact, after arriving home after midnight and a long day of meetings the night before, I'd even taken a few moments to jot down a

short list of items. These things needed to be gathered or attended to before we departed the next day for the annual convention of our Pennsylvania Holstein cattle association.

This envelope of information topped the list.

The PHA annual meeting is one we rarely miss, a joint opportunity to update our education and knowledge of the dairy breeding business, as well as visiting with Holstein friends from across the state. This year's late February meeting was in the Pittsburgh area, a four-hour-plus drive out the Turnpike.

Before packing anything else, the envelope with all the pertinent data was in my handbag, along with checks that would be deposited at the neighborhood branch of the bank on our way.

Last detail to be taken care of before we went out the door was writing down the hotel's name, address, and phone number, to be left at the house and the barn in case of some cow or equipment emergency.

"You have the directions?" asked The Farmer as we headed up the road toward the bank.

"Yep," I confirmed.

We whipped through the bank's drive-thru and a half-hour later swung westward onto the Turnpike. Somewhere between the Gettysburg Pike and the Carlisle exits, I reached down to retrieve my envelope of data and check exactly where around Pittsburgh it was we were headed.

The envelope was gone. Absent. Missing. Nowhere in sight.

(You'd already figured that out, right?)

I dug through the other sections of my handbag, hoping I'd accidentally misplaced it. Not a sign. I dug through the coats, camera bag

and miscellaneous stuff in the back seat, hoping... hoping... hoping I'd somehow gotten the little white envelope tangled in there.

No such luck.

Suddenly the realization struck that we were headed west, with a car full of clothes, coats and related paraphernalia - and I, who always carefully gathers directions and related papers or tickets before we depart for such journeys, had only a general sense of the exact destination. A vision of driving around Pittsburgh for the next two days hunting the proper Sheraton Inn flashed uncomfortably through my mind.

"We can just stop and call the hotel," said The Farmer.

"Except that the hotel's phone number is on the confirmation paper, which is probably on the kitchen table," I sighed. When I removed the papers to write down the hotel's phone number, just before going out the door, I must have simply forgotten to put them back in my hurry to leave.

"Well, we'll watch for a Sheraton along the Turnpike, get off and ask them," suggested The Farmer, who remains calm over things like leaving for a destination with no directions. Another option was to call back home and ask for the number, if we were close to a phone when someone would be

close to the barn office. But miles later, not a single Sheraton had been spotted.

Fate intervened. Two hours into our trip, and nearly time to try phoning home, a service area popped up along the highway. In the fat phone book inside the door was an 800-line for the Sheraton Worldwide. A friendly voice on the other end not only gave me the correct phone number, but offered directions right to the hotel's entrance.

Thanks, Sheraton Inns Worldwide, for a bail-out for this farm wife.

I didn't even have to pay for the phone call.

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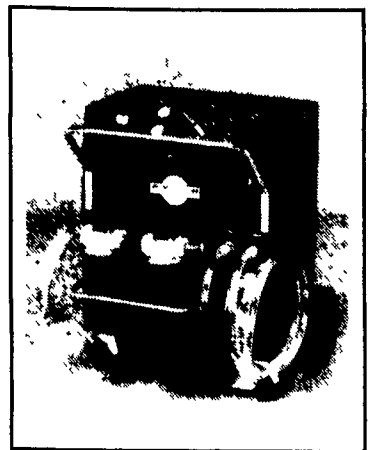
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