

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Is the lion an endangered species?

I mean, as I look out the front window on this early March morning, a damp fog shrouds the meadow and the contoured fields curling around our sloping hills. Stark silhouettes of bare-branch trees in the meadow fencerow poke through the floating gray mist. And the edges of our world close in, nebulous walls that have shrunken our horizons to just a few hundred yards in every direction.

Like, where is the lion?

You know, "in like a lion, out like a lamb." March is supposed to do just that, march in like the conquering, victorious lion, with authority and briskness and vim and vigor. It's supposed to have gusty winds that whip the pond into sparkling glitter, shake out the last of the loose limbs and twigs in the maples and send up dependably, changeable, "March-like" weather conditions.

Instead, March tippy-toed in more lamb than lion-like. So, wooed by the dry, gentle weather, plowing got an early start around the neighborhood.

There is something mystical about plowing that seems to stir the heart and blood and soul of farmers. Perhaps it's the symbolic sense of turning under the past for a fresh beginning. It's "scratching the itch" of preparing for another growing season. It's breaking the bonds of wintry, inside barn and shop chores to burst free across the vistas of stubble and sod, as seen from a tractor seat.

Plowing, I'm convinced, is a sort of springtime love affair between farmers and their land.

Shiny plowshares turned over our first furrows of the season on

an early March morning. Dark, rich earth, smelling wonderfully musky and fresh, is like no other scent. Loose and crumbly, it lies receptive to a promise, the seed embryos of the season's harvest.

Perfect soil conditions for planting. Too dry, too loose, too ideal. Too perfect, too early. Frankly, a little March mud would be more reassuring about the moisture possibilities of the next few months.

Then, as the pointed, steel bottoms move on to another field to slice and turn moist earth into gentle ridges, the plowing "groupies" appear. First four, then 40, then a few hundred of the graceful, white seagulls circle the moving equipment and alight on the fresh furrows in search of a quick snack. Once a rarity in this no-sea-shore countryside, flocks of seagulls circling, swooping and scouting snacks in plow wakes have become another harbinger of spring.

In a finished field, a single, appreciative crow similarly "grazes" the bountiful buffet of underground goodies turned up by the passage of the shiny blades - fat earthworms, pudgy grubs and assorted larvae of bugs-to-be.

Walking out the road to examine the fresh furrows, I notice another sort of "plowing" on the roadbank along the field. The soil around the entrance to a very large groundhog hole is soft, crumbling and recently disturbed. And the inner part of the apron of grass circling the lower side of the hole is distinctly shorter than that nearer the outer edges, noticeably nibbled.

At least one hungry neighborhood rodent has paid no attention to the February advertisement that he/she stay inside and sleep until

official Spring.

But then, our groundhogs aren't afraid of their shadows. Matter of fact, our groundhogs don't seem to be afraid of much of anything.

And so I hurry to finish these musings, so that, I, too, can get an

early start on turning ground. If the low-lying field beyond the yard is as dry as the others, the Younger Farmer thought he might be able to make a pass through the garden. At least enough for a few onion sets and some early peas.

Yeah, maybe it's a little early; maybe the lion will roar in and chase off the lamb.

But my green thumb's gettin' itchy enough to wager that the lion has given up chasing lambs in favor of a long snooze.

Are Quilters Normal People?

There are two kinds of people in this this world: those who quilt and those who don't. Quilters feel that they are really no different from other people, but...

- Quilters have basements filled with boxes of fabric, and rolls of batting leaning against the wall. Normal people have pingpong or pool tables, pictures on the walls and empty suitcases.

- Quilters children wear shoes at all times and never crawl once they have learned to walk. Normal peoples' kids run barefoot through the house. They have no fear of pins in their feet.

- Quilters have the ironing board next to the sewing machine. Their points and corners are perfectly pressed. Normal people have pressed skirts and pants, and they have all the buttons on their shirts.

- Quilters have co-ordinated bedrooms, with matching quilts, pillows and wall hangings. Normal people have co-ordinated wardrobes.

- Quilts read quilt magazines, quilt books and pattern instructions. Normal people read the

newspaper, the latest novels and Reader's Digest.

- Quilters families eat chili, meals from the crockpot and anything they can fix themselves. Normal people eat quiche, vegetables and homemade cookies.

- Quilters drive out-of-state to visit quilt shows. Normal people visit State Parks and historic monuments.

- Quilters receive flyers from fabric stores announcing sales. Normal people clip coupons and take advantage of refund offers.

- Quilters receive a discount at the local quilt shop. Normal people have credit at major stores.

- Quilters use their dining room for quilting. Normal people have silk flower centerpieces and guests for dinner.

- Quilters save milk cartons and detergent boxes for storage. Normal people throw out their trash.

- Quilters carry 3x5 cards with yardage requirements and snips of fabric to be matched. Normal people carry 3x5 cards with their husband's sleeve length, and the children's sizes written on them.

- Quilters carry photos of quilt

shows and finished products. Normal people carry pictures of their children.

- Quilters have rough hands, split nails, rounded shoulders and saddle bag hips. Normal people have manicures, straight backs and trim hips from attending Aerobic classes.

- Quilters have eyeglasses and purple shadows under their eyes from sewing late into the night. Normal people get 8 hours sleep and wear contact lenses, if they need glasses at all.

- Quilters have needle-nosed pliers, razor blades and sandpaper in their sewing boxes. Normal people have two spools of thread-one light, one dark- and a few assorted buttons.

- Quilters will never live long enough to finish everything they would like to do, and usually wear themselves out trying. Normal people make a will and wait for the end when they quietly fade away.

- Quilters leave works of art filled with memories that will one day be of historic importance.

Tips For Quilt Care

You do not have to wash your quilt all the time. Even if you have your quilt on your bed constantly, a day long airing on the clothesline every six months usually keeps the quilt looking good and smelling good as well.

You must never sit on your bed while the quilt is on it. This strains the fabric and puts undue strain-stress on the threads in the quilting.

Never allow the binding (edges of quilt) to touch the floor. Doing this will wear out the binding.

If something sticky (a spot small as a dime or large as a din-

ner plate) gets on your quilt, sponge the spot with cold water then blot dry.

When washing your quilt, always use cold water and Woolite detergent. Always line dry. Place quilt on line either longwise or side-wise and clip clothespins spaced 6-8 inches apart. Never line dry on a windy day. Allow quilt to line dry then fluff in automatic dryer for no longer than 10 minutes.

When removing the quilt from your bed, try to fold it in a different way each time. This helps to prevent permanent creases, which

do not harm the quilt, but are unsightly when the quilt is on the bed.

These suggestions are made in an attempt to bring to your attention certain considerations which we advise when handling delicate items such as quilts. Since we have no control over the human element in such handling, we cannot be responsible for the outcome of such handling. All sales are final.

If you take proper care of your quilt, it will last for many years, remaining as beautiful as the day you purchased it.

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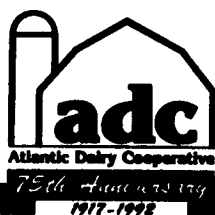
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