

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Nostalgia always weighs pretty heavy on my mind this time of year.

Maybe it's the finality of the golden leaves cascading about the house, tumbling about in the wind in a last festive dance to the ground, piling up to crunch and crackle underfoot.

Maybe it's the fragrance of woodsmoke, curling from the chimney on a crisp morning, while the sun inches over the eastern fields to shatter a pinkish-orange morning sky.

Maybe its gathering the last colorful chrysanthemums, treasured remnants of summer's blessings, to add a cheerful touch to the kitchen table.

unfortunate birds on the bottom.

I equate them with our resident guinea fowl, the size of their heads in comparison to their bodies being indicative of their I.Q. level. And turkeys and guineas have small heads.

So, when we'd coddled our first dozen or so turkey chicks beyond fluffy infancy and into the feathering of early adolescence, we took pride in having at least raised them past the crisis stage. By then, of course, they were large enough not to be easily snagged by mother cats with hungry kittens.

So the turkeys got the run of the farm. They'd make their daily trips around the meadow and to the garden, scratching for worms and bugs, finding tidbits along their travels. A favorite treat was the contests that collected daily in the trough of the electronic bug zapper in the calf nursery. When the day's catch of flies and moths were dumped out, the turkeys would scramble for their shares like kids around a broken pinata.

More than once, drivers along our little country road would have to slow for a little flock of turkeys

meandering along the side — or up the center. It was a favorite spot to pick up the bits of grit and gravel that all birds need for their digestive processes — no scratching, just hunt and peck.

This turkey nostalgia always makes me smile. At least until I dig a little deeper into the memories.

Like their roosting habits.

Turkeys, by nature, like to sit up high, probably a throwback to ancestral instincts. Wild turkeys, of course, still roost in trees, while domestic ones are usually too plump to execute successful takeoffs.

Still, our turkeys managed to find their way up onto raised sites on which they were not at all welcome.

Like automobiles. One young friend who then worked for us had a prized, sporty Mustang. He was not at all happy — nor were we — when turkey tracks turned up all over his favorite car.

And where there are turkey tracks, there is also turkey... "residue."

None of us much cared for such decorative effects on our vehicles.

Nor did I appreciate their roosting on the bannister of the back porch. A half-dozen 30-pound turkeys messin' up the porch is six too many.

Their persistent habit of inhabiting the dairy barn, though, finally "did in" our raise-your-own-holiday-dinner venture. Those turkeys knew to the minute when The Farmer fed corn - and daily showed up like clockwork to claim their share. Again, leaving behind abundant residue.

I recently bought a turkey - cleaned, dressed, ready to roast. Paid about the same price as the cost of one infant turkey.

We can't afford to raise our own turkeys.

Thanks, turkey growers. And a blessed Thanksgiving!

For whatever reason, the seasonal nostalgia stirs turkey memories.

Those turkeys were an experiment that first year, a fun challenge for the kids and us alike. We just wanted to see if we could raise a couple of our own holiday birds.

Any turkey hunter can attest to the cleverness, the elusiveness, the street-smarts (er, forest smarts) of the wild turkey. But, domestic turkeys are sometimes plain down stupid.

A domestic turkey poult lacks the sense to come in out of the rain. Literally. Scares at the drop of a hat and fleas into a corner with a couple dozen frightened flockmates, likely smothering the

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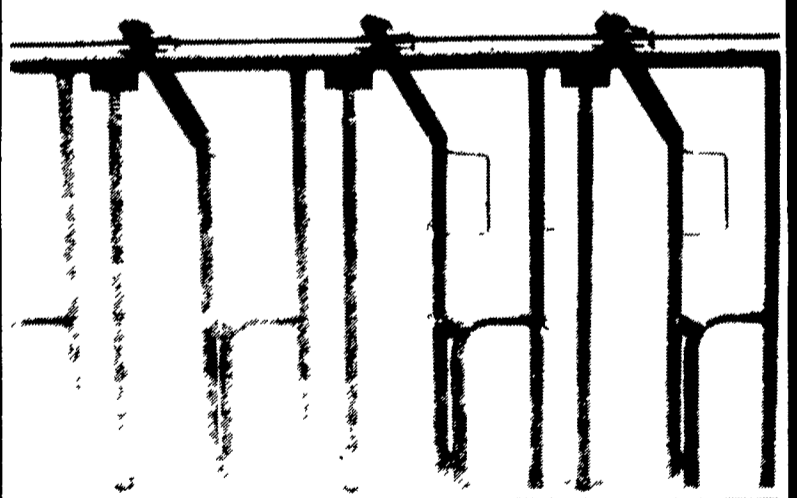
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