

On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



The idea sounds too good to be true.

A machine you can program with your voice.

Machines ARE getting smarter all the time. Even my beloved computer - which is obsolete by today's supermegabyte measures - knows enough to tell me when I've done something wrong.

"Disc error," it politely corrects when the disc drive is not properly locked in place. Or, "Are you sure you want to erase?" asks the little gnome who puts the letters up on the screen, before obediently deleting data saved in the memory.

Fortunately, it refrains from added comments such as, "You empty-brained lunkhead, you oughta' know better!"

In the last year, I've been reading about technology that will allow the operations of computerized equipment by voice command. (Don't ask me, I don't understand at all how it works.)

Now, it's become reality. Last week I heard a radio commercial promoting a voice-programmable VCR.

"Just tell it to tape the movie on Channel 18 at 7 o'clock on Thursday evening," said the advertisement. And it will.

Like, awesome. Especially if you've ever faced a VCR blinking "12:00.....12:00.....12:00..." while you're trying to figure out how to set it. But just think of the handy possibilities for this technology.

"At 11:30 a.m., turn on to cook for five minutes, off for two, on for five more, off for two, and then finish with a three," you admonish the microwave concerning the meatloaf planned for lunch. No more programming a bunch of settings, anticipating a steaming entree awaiting your return - and finding only a lump of seasoned raw hamburger because a button was punched out of sequence.

How about being able to insert a pair of torn jeans and a patch under the needle of the sewing machine and instructing, "Mend." Think how many less fingers we would skewer on pins in the process. And maybe a floor scrubber that cleans, polishes and buffs, all from a few simple voice commands.

Looking more wishfully into the sci-fi future, just imagine voice-activated chips we could put on the cows.

You could program them something like this: "Go to the buck feeder for a half-hour, then walk

to the pasture. Graze and drink unlimited amount of time. Rest only in grassy areas. Keep out of all muddy spots. At 3:30, return to the barn and your stall. Make manure only over gutter grates."

Dry cows, awaiting the birth of their calves, could have delay-activation chips which would kick in at the beginning of calving. At that point, the chip would direct the cow to proceed immediately to the calving pen (do not pass go, do not collect any feed). Her entrance to that area would activate another chip that set off a siren alert at both barn and house.

"Stand still!" is the voice message I'd like to program for calves being sketched for registration. It would help alleviate getting a tail-end view when you intended to sketch the head, or a left side exposure when you were still only half-finished drawing the markings on the right side.

In fact, if a whole penful of playful baby heifers could be voice-activated to all stand still at once, it would end forever the chewed-on elbows, nibbled-at knees and clipboards nudged by ever-curious calves.

Taken to even farther extreme, imagine voice-activating kids to do their chores, finish homework, clean their rooms, enjoy broccoli and lima beans and only watch television on rare occasions. And never punch their siblings.

What about voice-activators for spouses?

C'mon, folks, even science-fiction has it limits.

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Search For Granny To Represent Apples

WENATCHEE, Wash. — They're looking for a few good grannies.

To promote a bumper crop of Granny Smith apples, the Washington Apple Commission has started a nationwide search to find a grandmother whose lifestyle personifies the healthful attributes of the state's famous apples.

The first *Search For Granny Smith* will be coast-to-coast, said the commission's vice president Vicky Scharlau.

"We're looking for grandmothers who are outgoing women, live life to the fullest and are active in their community," Scharlau explained. "We're looking for movers and shakers, as well as cookie bakers."

Scharlau said the success of the search depends totally on the children, grandchildren, spouse or friends of a noteworthy grandma. Those wishing to nominate someone for the Granny Smith search should write, in 100 words or less, why the nominee should be considered and enclose their photo. Nominations should be sent to Granny Smith, P.O. Box 18, Wenatchee, WA 98807, and received by April 16, 1993.

"We set the guidelines of our search to mirror the key attributes of our apples, and allow any grandmother the opportunity to participate," Scharlau said. "Thankfully, the name 'Smith' is widely used. So we could have a Granny Smith from any part of the country or any ethnic group."

Seven grandmothers, and the person who nominated them, will be chosen to participate in the "Granny Finale," to be held May 1 in Washington at the annual Apple Blossom Festival in Wenatchee. Finalists will be interviewed by a board of apple growers and celebrities to pick the national Granny Smith winner, who will be featured on grocery store posters and for the upcoming year. Airfare and trip expenses will be picked up by the Washington Apple Commission.

The guidelines include:

- * Nominee must be a grandmother who's sweet to the core and the apple of someone's eye. They must be hand-picked by their children, grandchildren, spouse or friends to be a Granny Smith nominee.

- * Nominee should have "apple," exemplifying health and fitness by being able to carry large volumes of grandkid photos wherever she goes.

- * Nominations can include a picture of the nominee, but the photo — like Washington Granny Smith apples — must be in good taste.

"Finding a real Granny Smith is something we've wanted to do for some time," Scharlau said. "Youth and beauty are always being celebrated, so it will be nice to recognize the beauty of seniors for a change. It's also a way of honoring our best customers — the 35-and-over crowd buys the most Granny Smith apples."

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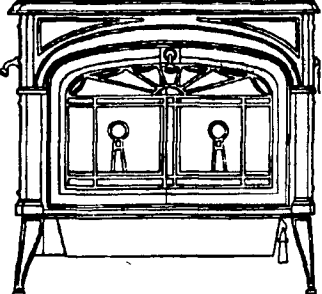
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