

Childhood, Farm, Church Impact Joan Hershey's Life

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— Things are not always what they appear to be.

Look at Joan Hershey. Because she is an active farm wife on a 124-acre Elizabethtown farm and a board member of several agriculture organizations, many are surprised to learn that Joan grew up in the city. As a gracious hostess of the attractive farm house filled with family heirlooms, many refinished by Joan, she would appear to have little time for other duties. But, Joan maintains leadership in local, national, and international church affairs and is a renowned speaker for many agriculture and church events.

Even Joan's name is pronounced differently than it appears. Called "Joanne," she appears to be sunny, confident, and a take charge person who is not afraid of anything.

"But that wasn't always true," said Joan. "I always had an overactive fear."

That was until 1974, when just two days after Mother's Day, Joan said that every thing changed.

That was the day, she prayed that God would remove the constant fear of "what ifs" that often kept her from joyfully living each moment.

It was also the day that her 14-year-old son Steve was severely injured, hemorrhaging from a damaged kidney.

In the weeks ahead, the threat of death, of permanent injury, and of financial ruin hung over the family, for they had no health insurance.

But to Joan's amazement, she felt an undescribable peace even when her son's kidney needed to be removed two months later.

Joan is convinced that those weeks would have been filled with constant agony of fear if she had not prayed that little prayer of relinquishment.

Another surprise for her was to hear the doctors say that Steve had been born with a hydronephrotic kidney. If he had not been injured and the kidney removed, he might have died suddenly or the kidney deformity could have destroyed his other kidney.

"So the accident was really a blessing in disguise," Joan said.

The operation was successful, the hospital bills paid from community fundraisers, fear con-

quered, and Joan's faith secured. Since that time, Joan said, "I have not been crippled by fear like I would have been before I prayed that prayer."

It is not that she has not had plenty of things to worry about.

In fact, within a year of her son's injury, Joan's husband suffered hemorrhaging behind his eye when a nail from an electric nailer ricocheted and hit his eye, and her daughter was beat up by school bullies and was terrified of going to school for a year.

"Cancer has not escaped our family; Harry's father was killed in a car accident; we lost our birds during the Avian Influenza, and our chicken house went down when we had 7½ -inches of rain within 1½ hours," Joan said.

But those experiences only made Joan stronger. She said, "I'm not afraid of tomorrow, I've seen yesterday, and I'm in love with today."

Because she is aware of how much fear can rob people from enjoying life, Joan wants to help others conquer fear. For that reason, she commits herself to inspirational and motivational speaking and involvement in many church offices at the local, national, and international levels. Her involvement has taken her across the U.S. and to Korea.

Joan and her husband serve as deacon and deaconess of the Florin Church of the Brethren. She teaches a married young adult Sunday School class, is on a local board ministry commission, a district board, church development, Korean advisory committee, gifts discernment and structure team, moderator of the chair steering committee, evangelism director, and numerous related committees.

Joan is a charter member of Farm Women Society 26. She joined about 25 years ago. In addition to leadership in Society 26, Joan also has been county secretary and president.

After completing a term as Lancaster County Farm Women president, Joan published a book, *Happiness, Hollyhocks, and Heaven*, in appreciation for the farm women members. The book, which is in its third printing, is based on the saying that happiness, hollyhocks, and a touch of heaven are three special gifts that Farm Women freely give. The book includes Joan's poems, wise sayings, and favorite recipes.



The Hersheys are uncertain when their farm house was built, but it was owned by Simeon Cameron, Sec. of War under President Abraham Lincoln. The house has had two additions and its spacioussness allows Joan to entertain large groups.

Joan said that her childhood had a large impact on her involvement in church and community.

"When I grew up, it wasn't a question on whether or not we go to church. We went. As a teen-ager, she spoke on Youth Sunday, participated in district youth cabinet, and in national youth conferences. She was active in plays, choir, and other activities.

During her childhood, Joan was encouraged to memorize poetry and expected to recite it at family reunions.

"I didn't exactly love that," said Joan. But she believes that reciting poetry developed her public speaking ability and influenced her love for poetry, which she began writing in later years.

A city girl, daughter of a chiropractor, Joan eased into farm life as a 19-year-old bride of Harry Hershey.

They settled on the farm where they still live. The farm is one of nine farms originally belonging to Simeon Cameron, who was the Secretary of War under President Abraham Lincoln. Maple trees line the road and the long lane leading into the Hersheys' 124-acre farm that borders Joan's husband's home farm.

The Hersheys have 172 head of steers and 110,000 layers in partnership with her husband's brother John.

When first married, Joan learned to bale, fill silo, and help with tobacco.

"I had a wonderful mother-in-law who made my transition from city to farm easy," Joan said.

Joan no longer works daily on the farm, but she does keep the farm records on the computer and help with egg packing when needed.

She is a second term board member for the Farm and Home Foundation and a former director of the Lancaster County Extension board.

Although the Hersheys plan to

move this spring from their farmhouse to a rancher built on their property, Joan stresses that they are not retiring. Her husband will continue to farm with son Steve, who also does custom silo filling. The Hersheys also have a daughter Sharon, married to Barry Kreider, Mount Joy.

For recreation, Joan is part of a women's bowling league and delights in entertaining her five grandchildren.

Joan's book, *Happiness, Hollyhocks and Heaven* is available for \$5 plus postage, which varies according to where it is shipped. For a copy of the book, which is a collection of Joan's poetry, wise sayings, and recipes, call Joan at (717) 653-5808.

Joan is famous for her Cocoa Chiffon Cake. Here is the recipe, one of those which appear in her book.

COCOA CHIFFON CAKE

Stir together and cool:

- ¼ cup boiling water
 - ½ cup baking cocoa
- Mix together in bowl:
- 1½ cup cake flour
 - 1¼ cup granulated sugar
 - 1½ teaspoon baking soda
 - 1 teaspoon salt

Add:

- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 7 egg yolks, unbeaten
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Add chocolate mixture. Beat. In clean bowl, measure and beat until stiff:

- 1 cup egg whites
- ½ teaspoon cream of tartar

When egg whites are stiff, pour chocolate mixture over whites. Fold in carefully. Pour into ungreased tube pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 55 minutes then at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. Invert to cool.



Joan's book, *Happiness, Hollyhocks, and Heaven*, is a collection of Joan's poetry, recipes, and "heavenly thoughts."



Many of the antiques are family heirlooms, which Joan has refinished in between her speaking engagements and leadership duties.