

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Waking out of a sound sleep, it takes a moment to identify the sound.

It's not the steady hum that sometimes echoes near the upper reaches of the chimney, where a colony of bumble bees (we think) cohabit with us under the same roof.

Nor is it the rolling clatter that once, years ago, stirred me from a sound sleep, a noise that took some time and thought to identify. We finally speculated that a busy-body rodent had discovered a stash of English walnuts drying on the attic floor, and took to moving them away down the walls, bowling style.

We ultimately won the bowling tournament with a strike — of a peanut-butter-baited mousetrap.

No, this is not that sound. What it is I finally recognize is Monk, our housecat, banging at the bedroom door with her own demanding, paw-driven, wake-up-call. Day will soon be breaking — and she wants breakfast. Now.

One of the tradeoffs for the never-caught-up schedule of farm life is the space and the freedom to

keep an assortment of pets — inside and outside. While some of our dairy herd members are special pets, they don't come carrying a ball to be thrown or hop up on the easy chair, meowing, late at night to curl up in our laps.

Like anything worth having or caring about, pets are cuddly but sometimes inconvenient, loveable but sometimes in the way, touching but sometimes troublesome. (Folks sometimes don't think about that, get tired of a pet and dump it off along a road somewhere to fend for itself — a behaviour I figure oughta' be addressed by doing the same thing to the former pet owner.

Our dozen or so barn cats are pets, sort of, at least some of them. A few are rather standoffish, willing to show up for cat food and milk, but not wanting to be picked up or petted. Like many farm pets, the barn cats are expected to help earn their keep by helping control the inevitable mice and rats.

Solomon, the Sheltie, was adopted from his former owner because we were dog-less at the time. His primary responsibility is

to alert us with his barking to visitors and escaped heifers, a job he takes most seriously — so much so that he comes barking even at us sometimes. That he is affectionate and playful is a bonus.

He also thrives on the occasional opportunity to help move cattle — and would be an absolute perfect farm dog if he could ever learn which end of a cow is the one that should be chased.

Then there are the poultry pets — and I use the term "pets" loosely. Our couple of barnyard chickens are not tame, are noisy and periodically scratch up parts of the flower beds. Still, they clean up spilled grain and gobble up flies and insect larvae, a true natural, all-organic sort of pest patrol with neat, crowing sounds and beautiful feathers.

One recent morning, The Farmer showed up at the calf nursery door, his hands cupped. Peeking out between his thumbs were two tiny, feathered-and-beaked heads.

Our single bantam had hatched out her third round of the season. She lost every one of the first hatch, raised several chicks from the second and now produced this third clutch. Two babies she had with her, somewhere. These two, which she had left behind, were alive only because The Farmer had found them before the cats.

As pets go, our barnyard chickens hardly meet any of the criteria for keeping them around.

Makes one wonder who is more bird-brained — the chickens or their keepers.

## Apple Dumpling Festival At Ephrata Cloister

EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — Taste the freshest, best-tasting apple dumplings at Ephrata Cloister's 13th annual Apple Dumpling Festival on October 9.

The Festival benefits the Back to the Cloister Fund, which enables the Ephrata Cloister Associates to buy and preserve significant artifacts and pieces of Cloister history. In the past, the fund raiser enabled the Associates to purchase letters written by founder Conrad Beissel as well as spiritual leader Peter Miller. Beautifully illuminated music manuscripts, books, furniture, and deeds and documents from the William Y. Zerfass collection help make the history and interpretation of the Ephrata Cloister come alive.

Ephrata Cloister was one of

America's earliest communal societies. Housed in a unique collection of medieval style buildings, this community of religious celibates practiced an austere lifestyle that emphasized spiritual and mystical goals rather than material objectives. Known for its original music and fraktur, the Ephrata Cloister was also an early center for printing and publishing in Pennsylvania. Ten of the original buildings have been restored and interpreted to recreate this unusual 18th century communal society.

Located at the junction of Routes 322 and 272 in Ephrata, the Cloister will open at 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the day of the festival. Admission is \$5 for adults; \$4 for seniors, \$3 for youth; and under 6 is free.

## Enroll In Home Landscape Design

WESTMINSTER, Md. — Whether you are installing a new landscape or just upgrading an existing landscape, the fall home landscape design course is the place to upgrade your skills. All facets of home landscape design will be covered including: site assessment, landscape concepts, themes, maintenance and installation strategies and more. Also included is a survey of locally recommended woody plants and their usage in the landscape.

The course will be held at the Extension Office on five consecutive Thursdays starting October 14, 1993 through November 11, from 7:00-9:30 p.m. The fee for the course is \$55 and includes all texts and handouts. Registration forms are available at most area garden centers and Carroll County Public Libraries or by calling the Carroll County Extension Office at (410) 848-4611 or (410) 875-2801.

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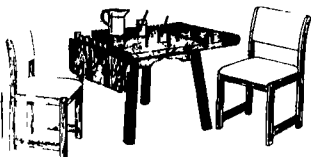
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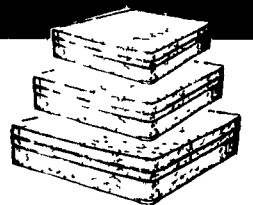
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