

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



An empty room. We have an empty room in the house.

Glancing at it on the way from upstairs to downstairs, I get just a faint twinge of "empty nest syndrome" feelings on occasion.

"So, how does it feel to have all your kids gone?" inquired a smiling young farmer friend recently, his own two children of elementary school age.

"I really miss them on days like Christmas and Easter; and you miss them a little bit all the time," was my reply, tacking on with a grin, "Except when the flu is going around."

It was nearly a year ago that the youngest packed up a limited

amount of belongings to move into his own apartment near Penn State. Over the ensuing months, a flow of other possessions followed. The bikes, the skis, the skateboards disappeared from miscellaneous corners where they'd been kept.

Though the eldest departed more than four years ago, her room had been pretty much left as it was. On visits home, she sorted, pitched, gave away and stored items in the attic against the day when she could move it into her own home somewhere.

So there was no rush to change the rooms of either. Hers gradually became more of a storage room for Christmas gifts, off-season

clothing, favored upstairs snoozing place for the cat and an overflow office once in awhile.

New possibilities were presented when the youngest announced he was not returning home this summer because he so enjoyed his apartment, college campus life, and his job. With some furniture shifting, we now had not one, but two spare rooms of sorts. Guests were forewarned that they could have a cat jumping onto their bed in the middle of the night.

Then came his recent announcement that he was moving out of his apartment — and into a house out in the country in a beautiful, isolated mountain valley. A rather large house, as it turns out, with lots of rooms. Empty rooms.

"Mom, can I have my bed back?" said the voice on the other end of the telephone. "I need furniture — any furniture. And do you by any chance have a spare washer and dryer?"

We tore down the bed. Packed up bedding. A piece of carpeting. Spare odds 'n ends of furniture. The Farmer gathered some miscellaneous tools he figured might come in handy in settling into a country house. Grandma contributed some unused curtains. The decor will be what most of us

started out with — and may still have to some degree. A blend of Early American, This 'N That, and Contemporary collected from home pieces.

So, now. What to do with this empty room?

No, we are NOT housing excess baby calves in it.

A sewing-crafts room has always been a wish of mine, but the upstairs is unheated. Ever tried to sew with frozen fingers? Same reason nixes it as a permanent office or a library/reading room.

Wait. For two years, I haven't been able to easily access our stored, back-years business records. Or been able to reach my supply of computer paper without clunking my head. Or even gotten close to a cupboard filled with

photos, miscellaneous fabric — and frankly, I'm not sure anymore what else is in there.

Building the miniature railroad layout in our original only spare room had, admittedly, been an idea of efficiency. The youngest had engineered the layout at chest-high level, leaving the space beneath for continued storage. But it literally covered the whole room, with only a tiny walk-through along the wall to the attic. And, guess who was left to crawl into the packed storage space and search for whatever it is you want.

Ah ha! Finally. A room for all the stuff I lost a room for before.

Someday, the railroad layout will get a new home in the youngest's own home.

Then I'll figure out what to do with a real spare room.

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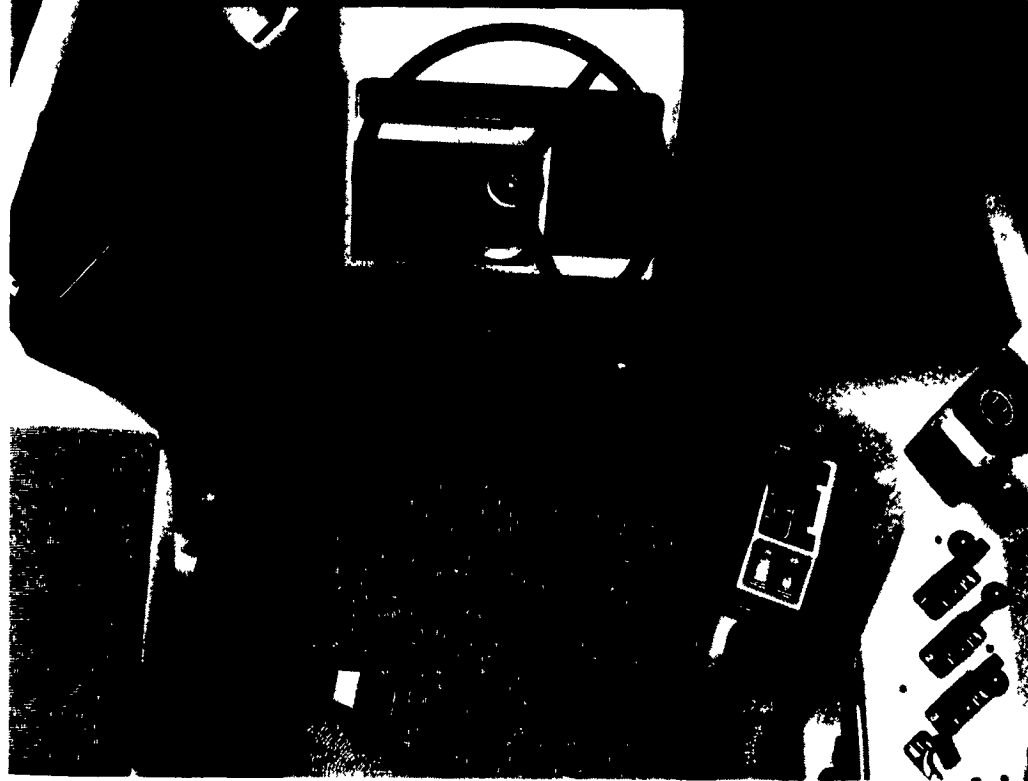
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