

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



Our last livestock auction in York County has gone out of business.

So what? The closing of this one agribusiness will not have any great, devastating, earth-shaking impact on the area's economics. As numbers go, it was a relatively small piece of the auction action that goes on weekly across heavily-agriculture-oriented Pennsylvania.

For those of us who used its facilities, its closing means finding new places to market, perhaps traveling a little farther, facing a little more inconvenience. But producers adapt. They have to — or they get out of the farming business.

No, the larger implication of the closing of this auction's livestock doors is that it is indicative of what is happening to a backbone industry of our beautiful York County.

In a county that long prided itself on its agriculture diversity, on its highly-productive soils, on its rural heritage, one more domino has toppled.

We continue to move from an agriculture community to a "bedroom" community. There contin-

uing small-town ag businesses, the equipment people, the feed mills, the little hardware stores — and the rural auctions — closed up shop.

Farmers today, like everyone else, have moved into a larger community and embraced the age of technology. We still swap local news and market information at the few remaining equipment dealers and feed mills . . . or compare cattle pedigrees across states by phone or video . . . or pull data reports off nationwide info-nets with PCs, modems and FAXs.

If a part or piece of equipment is needed, farmers are likely to phone-shop first before hopping into a pickup — or simply have the part sent overnight air or via a parcel handler. Feedstuffs may come from central mixing facilities 25 to 100 miles away. Few rural towns have a source where a farmer can buy a tractor tire or cattle cartags or fencing. Those suppliers for what we need have increasingly specialized — but in fewer locations that serve increasingly-distant customers.

And those remaining agriculture-oriented businesses have with merchandising savvy and of economic necessity expanded to include garden equipment, horticulture supplies, pet needs, country craft items.

I do not want to go back to the "good old days," thank you. (I'd have to give up my computer!) But, it's what the "good old days" represent that I think we miss: neighborliness, the country lifestyle, the slower pace of an earlier, more rural, more helpful to one another, way of life.

Our last livestock auction in York County has gone out of business. And for what that represents, I am saddened.

ues to be fewer farms — and more front yards. Less corn and more geraniums. Fewer tractors on the roads — and more commuter cars.

We began farming here in our native York County nearly 30 years ago. Nearly every small rural town had a feed mill or store, a farm equipment dealer, a hardware store. As it became increasingly difficult to make a living from a small general farm, they either grew larger to remain economically viable — or went up for sale. Some farmland stayed in production; far more went under parking lots, malls, fast food establishments, houses. With diminishing numbers of farmers sup-

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Kids Learn Life's Lessons On Ball Field

NEWARK, Del. — Kids can learn a lot from playing organized sports. In the microcosm of life that is the ball field, children realize the importance of teamwork and the value of persistence, patience and commitment.

Occasionally, kids learn less positive lessons. They may come to believe that winning is all that matters, or that they can't feel good about themselves if they aren't the star of the game.

According to University of Delaware Cooperative Extension 4-H agent Mark Manno, what a child learns on the playing field is influenced, to a large degree, by the philosophy of his or her coach.

"Coaches are the linchpin of the team," says Manno, who will soon be leading coaching seminars in New Castle County. "They set the tone for how the game will be played. A good coach teaches the basics of the sport and helps the children develop self-esteem and a sense of team. Most of all, a good coach makes sure that practices and games are a lot of fun."

However, many well-meaning coaches make the error of taking the game too seriously. According to Manno, some coaches feel that they are there to win as many games as possible.

That's the wrong message to send, especially to young children, the 4-H agent says. He believes that a moderate amount of competition is appropriate and even beneficial for children 9 and older. Competition allows middle-school-age youngsters to discover ways to be good losers — and good winners.

But an overly competitive environment can quickly squelch the enthusiasm of 5- to 7-year-olds in the Pee-Wee leagues.

"Young children are very sensitive," says Manno. "The biggest mistake coaches make with these kids is to criticize too much and too often. Instead, coaches need to work on encouraging young children in the things they do well."

Of course, the only way that coaches can do their job well is by having the support and involvement of parents.

"Parents must recognize that coaching isn't as easy as it looks," says Manno. "It's a difficult job — and remember, it's a volunteer job."

Parents can lend a hand by maintaining equipment, pitching in with coaching duties or treating the team to an occasional pizza. Parents also should inform the coach of their child's special needs, whether it's hyperactivity, allergies or developmental delays.

Share relevant information, but stifle the urge to brag about your child's hook shot or future NBA career.

"Parents foster competitiveness and create stress when they set unrealistic expectations for their child," says Manno.

Over the years, Manno says he has known many good coaches, but one man stands out in his mind. This Little League coach gathered his players around him after every game, win or lose, then each child shared at least one contribution he or she made to the game. In this way, the children began to learn the real meaning of team.

Cranberry Care

Fresh cranberries are packaged in film bags. Store them in the refrigerator for up to one month. Before using, sort out stems and any soft berries, then rinse cranberries gently in cold water.

You can easily freeze fresh cranberries for use all year. Simply freeze them in the original, unopened package and place in extra plastic wrap. Frozen cranberries will keep up to one year. When using frozen cranberries, don't thaw them — just follow recipe directions using frozen berries.

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