

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



"Do you realize," I said, admitting a sobering thought to The Farmer, "that we're the oldest people here?"

Not that there were many people around to begin with.

Towering around us were thick stands of classic, Pennsylvania hardwood forest. Rocky walls climbed steeply from the streambed draining an increasingly narrow ravine. A well-worn trail led the way through the seemingly-endless stretch of creekside hiking, occasionally crossing the water's sometimes turbulent, sometimes placid stretches. High overhead, blue skies framed the far-away tops of the trees and fingers of bright sunshine poked through the canopy of green.

What a wild, beautiful and peaceful setting. In an hour of hiking, we'd seen less than a dozen fellow humans. And they all appeared to be under about 22 years of age.

But where were the waterfalls we'd heard about? After gentle, uphill, climbing at a steady pace on this trail for what was beginning to seem like forever, frankly, I was getting impatient. Sure, this medium-sized stream had three and four-foot cascades tumbling over rocks, but, gosh, there must be more than this to warrant the raves we'd heard.

Suddenly, we rounded a bend and were given a choice, two forks to the trail, splitting off in a "Y." One paralleled the stream we'd been enjoying, the other took a steep climb along a slightly smaller one.

And a wooden sign-map showed that along the loop formed by the split trails were the natural attractions of this isolated mountain preserve: more than twenty waterfalls ranging from less than 20 feet of drop to the highest—nearly 100 feet. There were also warnings about slippery trails, steep dropoffs and extreme danger posed by icy conditions.

On that May afternoon, there was no ice; and early, dry conditions had rendered the streamflow lower than usual for the season. Still, the rugged climb along increasingly steep ravine sides was exhilarating and challenging, laced with steps sometimes cut into the rock and wet spots where small springs oozed across the narrow cliffside path.

Nothing we'd ever read or heard prepared us for the awesome, rugged beauty of the Glens Natural Area, a national natural landmark. The few-mile loop along the series of waterfalls that drop hundreds of feet down these mountains took less time to hike than the lengthy walk in from the lower parking area. Each waterfall was beautiful, some more majestic than others; the highest one was breathtaking. Especially from the edge of the trail along the top. Looking down.

On the border of Sullivan and Luzerne counties, Glens Natural Area is part of Ricketts Glen State Park, a secluded preserve in a heavily-forested mountain area. Though it has lakes and camping, the weekday we hiked there few people seemed to know it exist-

Video Dispels Misconceptions About Agriculture

UNIVERSITY PARK, (Centre Co.) — Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences has a new tool to attract high school students who may be more familiar with microbiology than farming.

"Penn State Ag Sciences... We're more than you think!," a 23-minute video, is aimed at high school students, science teachers and guidance counselors who may not know the scope of agricultural science. About a dozen undergraduates explain why they attend Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Dr. Marianne Houser, coordinator of undergraduate recruitment in the college, supervised

production, identified undergraduates and conducted the interviews. "We wanted to present the laboratories, classes, living environments and other aspects of college life from the point of view of the students," says Houser.

Rebecca Sonnen, who graduated with a degree in agricultural science in 1993, narrates the video. She begins by stopping Penn Staters at random and asking what they think agricultural science is about. Almost all answer "just farming." That misconception is shattered as the program showcases opportunities in fields ranging from agronomy to wildlife science.

The video covers academic life from enrolling to graduating and starting a career. Students discuss not only their majors, but also their experiences with research projects, internships and study-abroad programs, as well as nonacademic activities. The video was produced by Agricultural Information Services in the college. "We tried to tell the personal stories of these students," says Elissa Morgan, senior producer-director. "We wanted viewers to know what it's really like to attend college here, not just what programs or new equipment we had."

ed—the very sort of place we seek out on those limited times we can sneak away from the farm.

This pristine, well-hidden glen of waterfalls is accessible only by foot—preferably clad in sturdy hiking shoes or solid sneakers. We trekked up, down and around some eight miles of mountain that afternoon in under four hours, learning midway that the park's upper entrance is much closer to the waterfalls trail. And we did eventually pass on a steep section of rocky path one couple obviously older than we were, physically-fit and probably each 70-years-old-plus.

Crisp air, bright sunshine, clear blue skies and colored-leaves scenery are all free and never more gorgeous than now in mid-October. And all around us are beautiful, untouched places—like Glens Natural Area—waiting to be discovered, just by putting one foot in front of the other.

Do yourself a favor. Take a hike.

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One segment focuses on different housing options, including the Freshman in Science and Engineering (FISE) special interest residence hall, an agriculture honorary fraternity house and even the student housing at the college's research farms.

Many of the students interviewed report that the college's close-knit and supportive nature is a key to making their academic experience a success. "Penn State is a big place, but in the College of Agricultural Sciences I can feel like I'm home," said Robert Torres, a senior with a dual major in agricultural science and philosophy.

The College of Agricultural Sciences Alumni Society sponsored duplication of the video. Over 500 copies have been delivered to extension agents, alumni, Penn State admission officers and select high schools.

To see the video or to obtain a copy for your high school or youth group, contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county or the Office for Resident Education, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, 101 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16801; (814) 865-7521.

Gingerbread House Competition

Lebanon (Lebanon Co.) — North Mountain 4-H Club will hold a Gingerbread House Competition at the Quality Inn, Lebanon, on November 18 and 19.

Seven categories are available for individual, adults, children, groups, and professionals. Contestants pay to enter. A first prize is available in each category.

Profits will be distributed to the

educational computer fund for a 4-H member of the North Mountain Club who has leukemia and cannot attend school and to the Four Diamonds Program of the Leukemia Society.

Pick up rules at the Lebanon Extension office or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to 2120 Cornwall Rd., Suite 1, Lebanon, PA 17042-9777.

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