

On being a farm wife - And other hazards

Joyce Bupp



But I don't have a thing to wear. Thus I debated, rummaging in the dark of early morning through a drawer stuffed with short-sleeved tee-shirts and sleeveless, cotton blouses.

Appropriate clothes for late-afternoon milkings in a barn warmed from the body heat of a herd of dairy cows. Not so appropriate, though, on a morning when lingering tomatoes shiver under a frost blanket and ice crystals accent the fading zinnia blossoms. And when the turtle-necked, long-sleeved stuff is all still stuck away in some closet.

The "in-between" season, fashion consultants sometimes call these weather transition periods. Cool, chilly mornings, warming by noon, almost hot in the barn at 4:30 when we start milking chores and temperatures fading as fast as the sun by finish time. Added to a shaded old house that—unless the woodstove is burning—is chilly inside when the sun is warm outside and warm inside when the night is brisk.

Fashion designers may take credit for inventing the layered look. However, this popular style of dressing actually evolved from generations of farm wives alternately piling on and shucking off clothes, dependent on the whims of sunshine, shadows, and whatever chore The Farmer lined up next.

For instance, you might be out on a pleasant, fall afternoon raking leaves out of the yard, basking in the warm sunshine. Ten minutes later, seated on an open-air tractor seat, helping drag a swamped grain truck out of some mucky wet spot in a low-lying field, you're wishing

between chattering teeth that you'd added a layer or two on the way.

Or you've been sent to the field to disk cornstalks on a gray, sullen November afternoon. After cocooning yourself in thermal underwear, wool socks, insulated coveralls, ear muffs and mittens, you find yourself in a tractor cab—solar heated when the sun bursts through the cloud cover. And wishing you could dispense with a layer or two without losing your dignity.

Conveniently for this layer-loving farm wife, the clothing residue of two now-grown children lingers on in our basement, barn-dressing-room. Comfort and practicality long ago edged out vanity as my prime motivation when selecting a farm wardrobe. A variety of sweaters, sweatshirts, shirts old jackets that didn't "suit" and were left behind by the kids reinforced that trend.

Which is why I have two identical gray sweatshirts embossed with cow head-ends on the front and cow tail-ends on the back—except that the sleeves of one are chopped off at half-mast. That's the preferred one for milking, since no cuffs dangle in the udder-sanitizing water and their roominess allows for a long-sleeved turtle-neck top layered beneath.

When a sweatshirt is too hot, a matching set of lightweight, navy and white sweaters our daughter brought home from a rural electric cooperative youth conference offer an alternative. Layered over one of the assorted cow-theme tee-shirts she likewise bequeathed to me for barn garb.

One of the benefits of a six-foot-plus son is that his hand-me-downs tend to be sized "for tall men." A

Farm Show Seeks Stories, Photographs Of World War II Agricultural Life

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The 1995 state Farm Show is to feature displays and a theme of the role of Pennsylvania agriculture during World War II and a committee is seeking people who farmed during that time who may have stories or photographs they would be willing to share to help make the public presentation as truthful and interesting as possible.

According to Fred Walters, pro-

worn, quilted red-plaid-flannel shirt not quite good enough to haul along to college is a perfect example. Warmer than most jackets, its oversized, extra length covers my legs almost to the knees and prevents that cold rush of air that hits your back when bending over in a short jacket.

On really chilly days, a patched, extra large, synthetic down vest emblazoned with an ag pharmaceutical firm logo can go atop any or all of above—or be the first layer pitched aside as the sun warms the morning. Which highlights the only real drawback to layers: they tend to get scattered hither and yon with the weather's whims.

I don't have a thing to wear. It's layered. All over the place.

ject officer, the theme was suggested by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania World War II Commemorative Committee, a state-level affiliate organization of the national committee, formally recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense.

Pennsylvania's committee is chaired by Joseph R. Clelan, Pennsylvania's deputy adjutant general for veterans affairs, and includes members such as former state representative Sam Hayes, of Blair County, a well-known supporter of agriculture.

The theme particularly befits the state Farm Show because the Farm Show Complex itself had been used for military uses from December 1943 to February 1946. However, the stories of what it

was like to be a farmer during that time, the incidents, the anecdotes of producing food, fiber and materials during a time when necessities were rationed and farm help was difficult to find would be helpful in making the presentation as meaningful as possible.

According to Walters, the committee and the general public would deeply appreciate stories or photographs that can be used to help tell the story of farming during World War II.

To help, please write to: Fred B. Walters, Press Secretary, Pa. Dept. of Military Affairs, Public Affairs Office, Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, Pa., 17003-5002.

All photos will be returned, Walters said.

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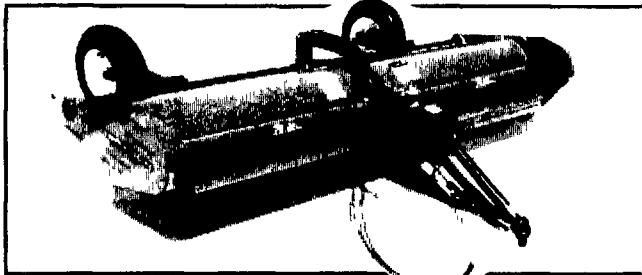
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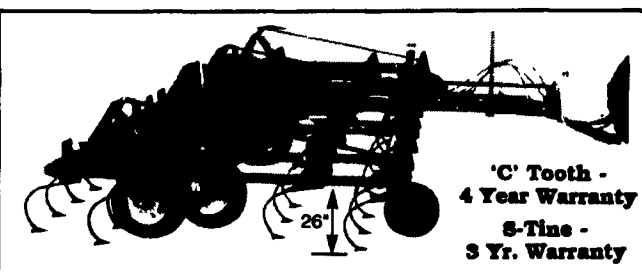
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