

**On Being a
Farm Wife
(and other
hazards)
Joyce Bupp**



More and more Americans, we hear, are into "home work."

Not homework, the stuff that teachers give students to do when they'd rather watch cartoons or play computer games or eat pizza. But "home work," performing one's method of earning a living by working out of one's home.

Farmers, homemakers and various self-employed professionals and craftspeople have worked out of our homes for years. But with the explosion of technology—computer, modems, faxes—home work has become a lot more com-

monplace for those who can tie-in electronically with their boss at some other location.

A survey I recently read about, done by a computing magazine, came up with home-work habits that interestingly parallel what we homeworkers on the farm have done for years. Though I wouldn't have guessed it, that poll found that about 80 percent of homeworkers have their noses to the grindstone before nine in the morning.

Actually, by then, many farmers have already put in half of an

eight-hour work day, especially when they begin by milking cows. And by nine at night, it's not unusual for lots of farmers to still be on the job—especially during peak planting and harvest times. Or when heifers rip across their back yards at 2 a.m., sows farrow all night long, or midnight finds them but 30 acres away from finishing soybean harvest and a snowstorm is bearing down from the northwest.

That poll also related the homeworkers tend to "dress down." They needed a poll to figure that out? Who's going to put on a tie or pantyhose to work at home? That's what shorts, tee-shirts and bib overalls were invented for.

Occasionally, I yearn to put on a clean pair of jeans in the morning and be able to look at least somewhat presentable for a couple of hours. That will be the day that we put cows back into the barn before lunch and I tangle with the tail of one that managed to drape it through the smelliest corner of the exercise lot.

Or I'll give chase to a heifer and

slip on what I wasn't paying attention to while keeping both eyes on where she was headed next. Or be drafted to help with a difficult calving.

Yet another revelation of that survey was that home workers may often goof off.

Hey, isn't that the point of working at home?

No, no, not really. But it's a distinct fringe benefit of giving up an office for bookkeeping at the kitchen table or trading off the social aspects of the workplace to share your day with cows, your office with a chair-stealing cat and a dog sprawled underfoot.

In fact, I abandoned this computer keyboard just a minute ago to prop the extension ladder to the maple tree and fill the bird feeder.

It was either that or listen to the mob of bluejays screech all afternoon. Where else could I work and do that?

I've also been known to goof off picking flowers, feeding the fish in the pond, snuggling one of the new kittens at the barn or baking brownies. Or even steal away for a walk in the middle of the afternoon on a stunning, late-fall day.

Though the survey didn't cover remuneration, I'd betcha' that home work, overall, lags well behind the wages/salary generated by more tradition on-site jobs.

But at least no one has figured out how to tax a temporary escape from the computer to feed the birds. Yet.

**Farm Women
Societies**

**Berks
Society 3**

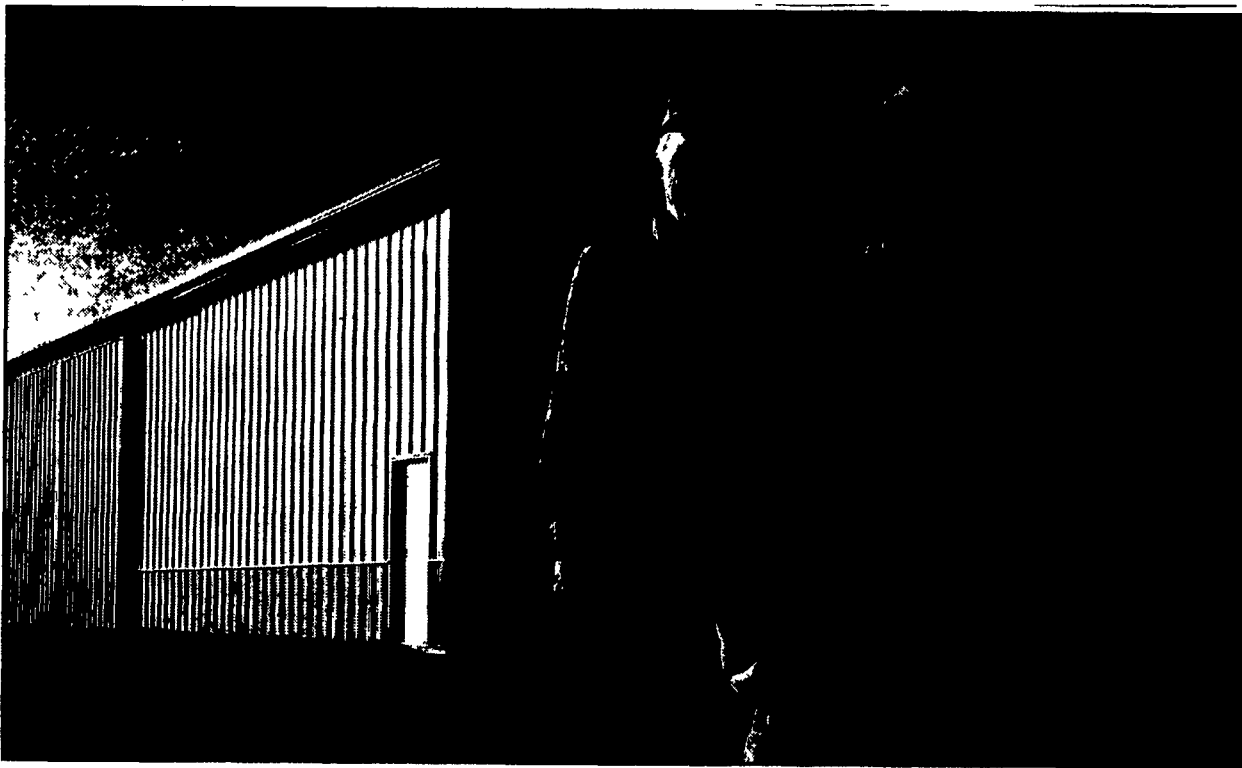
Group #3 of the Berks County Society of Farm Women held a mystery dinner for its October meeting at the home of Mayetta Shane, Valley Road, Boyertown. Fifteen members attended.

A report was given on the recent bake sale. It was decided to hold another bake sale in November to raise funds.

Plans were made for the Christmas banquet which will be held at Schaeffer's Family Restaurant, Boyertown, on Thursday, December 28.

The next meeting will be a craft night at the home of Lora Oswald, Oley Meadows, Oley.

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