

On Being a Farm Wife
(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Oh, deer. It's that time of year again.

Powered with the lingering calorie punch from Thanksgiving feasts, the million or so white-tail deer hunters that actually trek to Pennsylvania's mountains are making tracks for their favorite sites.

One person not participating in the mountain-destination trek will be The Farmer. Though he tremendously enjoys the fellowship and camaraderie of hunting with the 20 or so that gather at the family/neighborhood hunting camp to which he belongs, deer

week usually finds us short-handed for the barn work.

So, in recent years, he has grown more interested in taking to the woods during archery and wild turkey seasons. Hunting competition is far less—and the weather generally much more pleasant. Or, sometimes, we just head for the camp to hunt a few hours of peace and quiet from ringing phones and bawling calves. Every trip is an adventure of sorts.

Thus, on a recent dark, gray afternoon, we drove north through mist and drizzle that threatened to become more of the slushy snow

already coating the fields. Darkness already wrapped around the cabin when we pulled in through the low-hanging hemlocks and tracked through the unblemished light snow coating the small clearing of the thick forest.

Then The Farmer spied what at first glance looked like a pole stretched across the opposite end of the "U" shaped driveway that circles in from the road. A close look revealed it to be a barrier fashioned from that "Police Line—Do Not Cross" yellow plastic stripping which is stretched around a crime scene.

Huh? We looked at each other and wondered what in the world was going on.

Unlocking the door, he threw the main electric switch. Nothing. Tried a couple of more times. Still lead blackness. A closer look at the police-line barrier revealed what we by then suspected.

The heavy storm a few days before had brought down the power lines feeding into the cabin. Someone had barricaded the area where the lines still hung down in

the drive. We had no lights. No lanterns.

Our flashlight batteries were blessedly fresh and provided adequate light to stoke up the woodstoves. And a supply of candles stashed for just such a power failure would provide at least enough light to read by. Sort of.

Then, opening the shutter to one window, he crunched through glass on the floor. And found a fist-size hole poked right through one of the panes. But nothing inside appeared to be missing or even disturbed. This was proving to be an adventure of a different sort than anticipated... The Farmer found a replacement pane in storage, and while I held the flashlight, replaced the window section broken by apparent "visitors."

Within an hour, the cabin had warmed enough to be reasonably comfortable. A pan of water for mint tea began to bubble on the stove. Feeling a bit like Abe Lincoln, I hunched over a card table near the light of several candles, reading and making notes. The

Farmer bagged his farm magazines and stretched out on a couch.

Actually, it was rather cozy there, with no sounds but the crackling of the woodstove and a faint gurgling from the creek. Outside, fat snowflakes were falling.

By morning, a few inches of thick, white "icing" coated every surface...every bare limb...every drooping hemlock and white pine branch. It was stunningly beautiful—and exactly what we'd anticipated, weather-wise.

For deer hunters and for us simple adventure hunters, the mountain trek is a way to stay connected with the beauty of nature and the surprises it holds.

But, for the most part, I still appreciate adventures complete with electricity.

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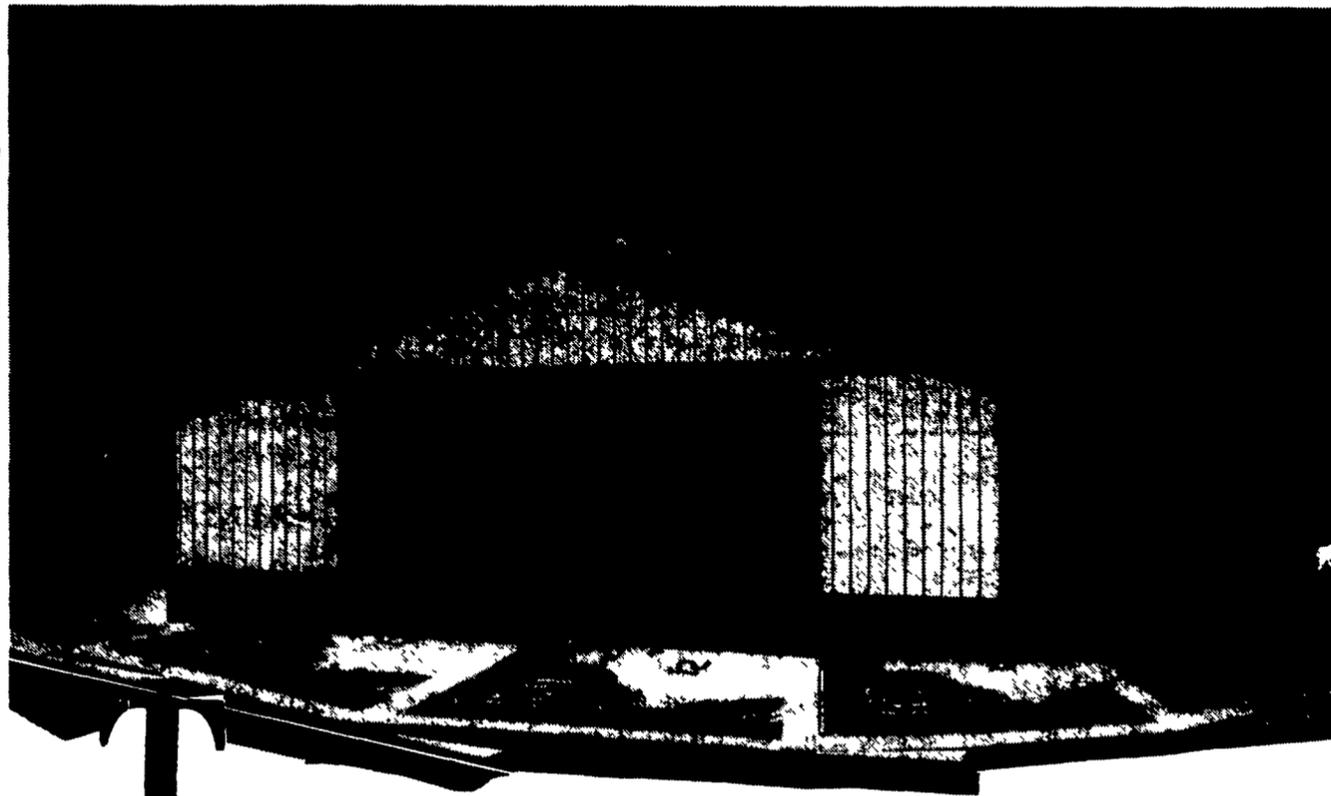
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