

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



This is a losing battle. I get up. She gets up. I put her down. She gets back up.

You can teach a dog to stay. To lie down. To speak, roll over, catch a frisbee, herd livestock.

You can teach a cat zip. (I'm sure there are exceptions to that rule, but not with most of the cats I've ever known.) They're independent, yet playful, strong-minded but with a need for affection. When it suits them. Cats train you. You don't train them.

Monk has ruled "her" household for about 10 years. She's a very clean and well-behaved cat. Stays off counters and tables. Goes outside or uses her litterbox. Is too sneaky to eat most anything but certain cat food, so does not bother any food left temporarily unattended. And is "fixed," so we've eliminated her original tendency to glut the place with kittens.

But, where I sit, Monk wants to sit. Where I am, Monk wants to be. Not all of the time, but usually when it is not necessarily convenient to have a cat on your lap. Like while you're eating breakfast. Or working at something required jumping up and down from the table to tend to something else you're trying to do at the same time.

Or at the desk. Monk has a fixation for my cushioned desk chair. Usually when I'm in it and working at the computer. It is doggone inconvenient to have a cat stomping around on your lap when you're trying to work on a keyboard just inches away.

So I put her down. And she hops back up.

I get up from the chair to do something in the kitchen, come back in a few moments and she's curled up on the seat. Purring.

I put her down. And she hops back up. On occasion, I'll even lay the fuzzy black and white blanket on the bench next to the chair and

gently lay her on it. She hops off and back into my lap.

Some days we engage in this battle for an entire morning. She finally wins when I leave to do something else and she gets to stay on the chair. Curled up on the soft, warm cushion. Purring. And will usually stay there for several hours. Simply basking in squatter's rights, probably.

Late evenings, when I finally plunk down into a living room chair, Monk is right there again. It doesn't matter where she was, even curled up sound asleep, she'll know the instant there's lap space unoccupied.

You have to admire cats for their single-minded attentiveness to creature comfort. Cats have an inbred instinct for finding the softest, warmest, cushiest spots available, wherever they live.

One of my favorite barn cats, a black one with a few white and yellow splotches around her face, hangs around until I fill the heifers through with fresh, soft hay. Then she promptly crawls into the soft, dry grass, curls up and closes her eyes. While the heifers nibble away all around her. And we generally have at least one barn cat, that on a cold night, can be found curled up next to — or on top of — one of the baby calves in the nursery.

The cows are almost as bad. They've taken to piling together in the edge of the pastures along the fencerow, where falling leaves have created soft, insulated beds in which to lay. But, at least cows don't come hunting laps to curl up in. Thank goodness.

After battling with Monk the entire time I've been writing this, we have declared a truce. I put the blanket out for her on the bench. She curled up at my feet.

I'm afraid to think what kind of strategy she might be plotting.

But I may go put on my hard-toed hiking-boots.

Berks Farm Women Hold Convention

READING (Berks Co.) — The 45th annual Berks County Farm Women Convention was held on Saturday, October 5, at the Berks County Ag Center with 108 members and guests in attendance. The convention was called to order by County President Wendy Lingle with the singing of God Bless America, devotions from Psalms #104 and the Pledge to the Flag.

Berks County Farm Women participated in the State Farm Women project by contributing \$250 to the county 4-H. John Valter accepted this donation on behalf of the 4-H. Valter said that Berks County's 4-H was started in 1912 as the "corn club" and has been active in rural areas for more than 80 years. Youth today still have the desire to possess skills in farming, sewing, and cooking. 4-H is still growing in Berks County.

State Dairy Princess Angela Werley performed a skit, "I'm a little Milk Drop," and told of her involvement in legislation that would honor farmers with "Farmers Appreciation Day." Little Dairy Princess Kelly Rohrbach also performed a song with her cow puppet.

The following livestock organizations representatives set up displays at the convention: Jason Manbeck, State Pork Ambassador; Emilie Miller, State Polled Hereford Princess, and Nicole Knepp, Sheep & Wool Queen of Berks County.

Fern Phillippy, state historian, has printed a book on the history of Berks County Farm Women and it sells for \$2. President Lingle honored Marion Leberman, Group #1, and Sally Manbeck, Group #2 by presenting them with 80 plus pins. Evelyn Becker, Group #4, and Jean Waldo (deceased) Group #4 were honored prior to the convention. Members remembered eight of deceased members during a memorial service: Grace Dietz, Group #7; Ada Wolfe, Group #2; Nora Sweitzer, Group #6; Betty Boyer, Group #2; Mildred Emerich, Group #2; Mary Youse, Group #6; Pauline Hefflinger, Group #1 and Jean Waldo, Group #4.

After lunch, members were en-

tertained by "Country Keys" singers Linette Mertz and Terry Hertzog.

Winners in the state youth project "something made by hand" were Kindergarten and first grade, Shawn Stoudt, first Alyssa Prutzman, second. Second and third grades: Ken Swank, first, Sheen Stoudt, second, Steven Gehris, third. Sixth-eighth grades: Josh Taylor, first, Katrina Prutzman, second and Justin Gaff, third. Ninth-12th grades: Daniel Folk, first. Each winner received a monetary gift and a certificate.

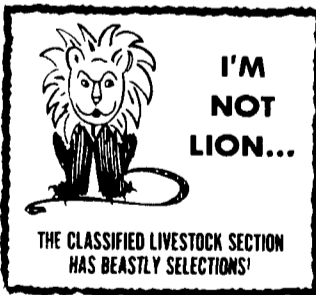
State president Dottie Stricker installed Ruth Walters Group #1 as the county president; Betsy Satazahn Group #5 as vice president, and Pearl Hoffman Group #6 as secretary. County president, Wendy Lingle, was presented with a past president's pin and a bouquet of flowers in appreciation of her two years of service as president.



On behalf of Berks County 4-H, John Valter accepts a \$250 check from Wendy Lingle, president of the Berks County Farm Women.



Pennsylvania Dairy Princess Angela Werley performs a skit, "I'm a Little Milk Drop."



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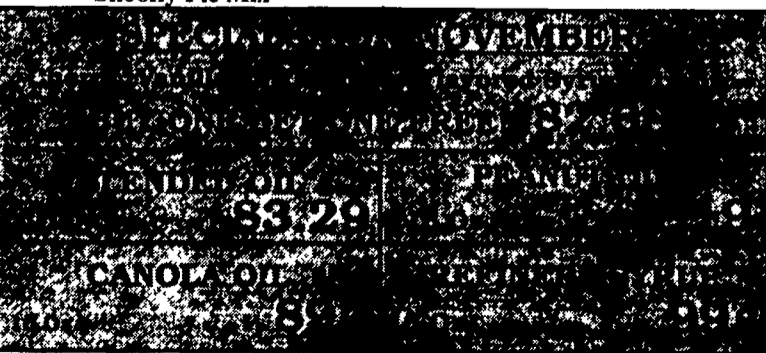
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