

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

Joyce Bupp



The older one gets, the more one values "old" things. Or at least, it seems that way.

Maybe it's from the perspective of "experience" (I like that word better than "aging" that a person can evaluate something on its real worth — and not shiny, new paint, glitzy buttons, or flashy digital readouts. The bright, the newest, the improved, the latest version of "progress"...isn't always.

But, among this constantly changing, upgrading, modernizing, (or maybe because there are so many of us baby boomers hitting the sombering mortality-reality stage of life) there seems to be a renewed interest in our histor-

ic roots. Witness the booming — pun intended — interest in encampments and re-enactment of the area's major Civil War battles. Not only do thousands turn out to observe and learn this sort of living history exposure, but thousands subject themselves, at least short-term, to the inconveniences and discomforts of tent housing and battlefield lifestyle. Like itchy, wool uniforms worn in July and August.

Having been incorporated in 1749, York County is already looking ahead two years to a 250th anniversary celebration. And, the roots of York County are truly deep in our rich soils, since agri-

culture was and continues to be a foundation of our economy. Sadly, we continue to steadily diminish the volume of our acreage devoted to farming from our earlier, agrarian-society days. More of that progress.

Nevertheless, we are rich in agriculture history, a little bit of which is being honored this weekend by our local Early American Steam Engine Society. For 40 years, these folks have been celebrating our farm heritage by repairing, restoring and sharing their love for "old farm stuff." Stuff like huffing, puffing steam engines which pulled plows and harvest equipment, tiny put-putting, one-cylinder engines that might grind corn or power a washing machine, and the early tractors "like my dad first started farming with" many of them will say.

Only in recent years have I come to realize how much of that "old farm stuff" originated here in York County. And, this weekend, the EASES's Steam-O-Rama at their Windsor showgrounds is featuring farm equipment that was manufactured right here in our own back yard.

My first job out of high school was a clerical one, near York's Farquhar Park. But it was years before I realized that this spacious, wooded, open space was named for an individual whose firm manufactured an impressive variety of agriculture equipment, including threshing machines.

Threshers were the forerunners of today's grain combines, performing the same basic function of separating the wheat or barley or oats from the chaff, the dried husk part of the plant that surrounds the grain as it grows and ripens. A.B. Farquhar's mechanical threshers would have been a tremendous technological leap for our forefather farmers who had grown up "flailing" grain. Flailing, in simple terms, is beating a pile of harvested stalks on the barn floor with a piece of hand-held equipment until the grain falls out.

An added draw at the Windsor steam show this year is a national gathering of the Sheppard Diesel collectors. The Sheppard firm, still in business in Hanover, made one of the first diesel-powered

tractors in the country. Their first model was a one-cylinder lawn-and-garden type and only three of those are known to exist today. One is to be on display at the Steam-O-Rama.

Interestingly, Sheppard Diesel collectors relate that local farmers never widely embraced the only tractor ever made here in the county; they were more commonly put to work in the Midwest. Apparently, there was a bit of reluctance to accept the new diesel technology, not to mention the fact that the full cost of the tractor had to be paid up-front. And that was probably no easier to do in those early post-World War II days than it is today. Most equipment firms now have their own financing plans for that reason.

Every year, we plan to attend the Steam-O-Rama and every year, something seems to come up to prevent that. Maybe this will be the one.

We can check if the tractors we're currently using around the farm have become official "classics" yet.



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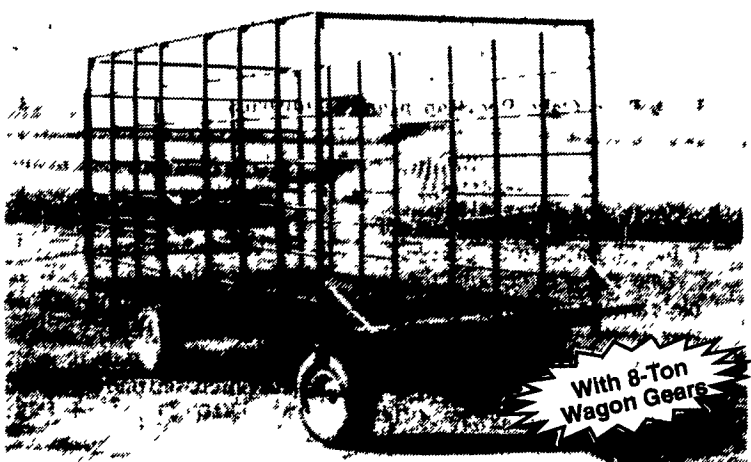
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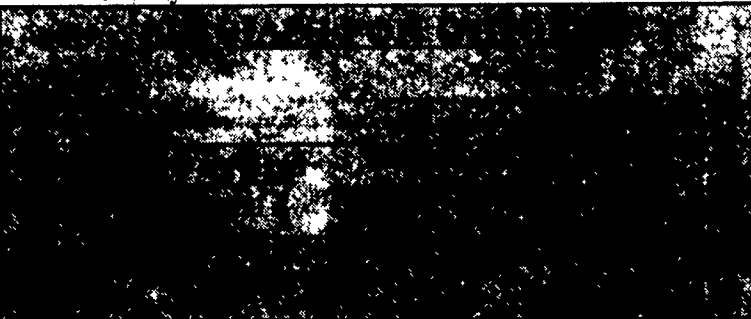
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