

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

With the "end" in sight, it seemed appropriate to try to dispose of the pile of clippings accumulating on the desk. Start the new year with at least a semblance of desk organization. Yeah. Right.

'Cause I promptly got hung up on the first couple of clippings.

Topping the stack was an article about a York County farm in the center of a controversial rezoning. From agriculture to houses. So what else is new?

That, sadly, is what I had sighed to the Farmer when I first found the article in a local newspaper. It did clear up a puzzling phone message found a few days earlier on our machine, too late to respond to because of another meeting. Attempts to return the call were not successful; my apologies to the caller if he happens to read this.

Anyway, the proposed rezoning would turn some 170 acres of farmland into about 400 new houses. The developer claims the land is not very productive. Residents of the area are

protesting because they don't want to lose any more of the area's rural character.

Member of municipal boards caught in these no-win, vise-grip positions between laws and emotions have my deepest sympathy and respect.

Two clippings down came another of a similar ilk. This one addressed the pressure being put on farms in Lancaster County. (Pick a county around here, any county, and this problem fits.)

That pressure has landed Lancaster County on the "endangered list" of the World Monuments Fund. I never heard of it before, but this group maintains a list of 100 of the world's most endangered sites. If you've ever run Route 30 around Lancaster (or York) on a Friday evening, you may have felt you had just landed on an endangered list, too. Definitely a related side-issue to the whole land use problem.

The bottom line here is that, despite the interest in farmland preservation, there just aren't

enough bucks out there to stop this land erosion from sod to subdivisions. And, increasingly, it seems that the focus of that funding is being directed toward farms already surrounded or bordered by houses, roads, and the problems that come with those.

Does that really make sense? Would it not be more feasible, long-term, to focus the limited dollars there are on preserving blocks of more rural, contiguous farmland, where one can haul manure or stir up a bit of chisel dust without irritating 400 new neighbors?

The day an impatient driver smacked into the side of a tractor our son was legally driving on the public road left me with serious, permanent doubts as to why anyone in the future would want to farm around ever-growing, people-intense areas, with hordes of impatient drivers. That incident gave me "road-rage" before anyone had coined the term.

Stuck in between these two articles was the clincher clipping. It's message, that world population is outgrowing our food sources.

Well, duh. Actually, we've been reading those sorts of headlines for the last—at least—25 years. So far, the problem has not been with production, but with distribution. Of food. And of wealth.

Latest statistics I've heard on food costs—in this country at least—is that consumers in 1996 paid only 11.7 percent of their income for food. That's down from 13.2 percent in 1990. Our lowball food costs are balanced

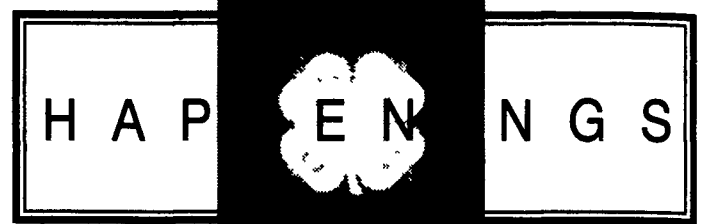
on the backs of the nation's farmers who increasingly find the only answer to reconciling their bills or having any sort of retirement program is to sell the farm and get out. If they can.

One day, friends, we will have to pay the piper for our cheap food policy. Or our grandchildren will.

Make food production profitable, and farmers of the world will feed those billions of hungry mouths. Make farming profitable—and the sod to subdivision erosion will surely slow.

That's my wish for the New Year.

I'd hope it might be yours, too.



SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY SIZZLIN' STEAKS

The Sizzlin' Steaks beef club had its first meeting on November 23. It was held at the home of 4-H leader Joan Stalter. Julie Stalter opened the meeting. Enrollment papers and books were passed out. The club earned a certificate for 100% of project completion and also one for community service. Club officers were elected as follows: president, Julie Stalter; vice president, J.J. Paolucci; secretary, Jason Corey; treasurer, Amy Paolucci; new reporter, Becky Demarest; and county council representative, Jason Corey. The members discussed some different activities for the

summer. Refreshments were supplied by leaders Joan Stalter and Ralph Lewis.

Hoofs in Clover

The club had a meeting on November 5 at the Elk Lake High School. During the meeting members studied the parts of the horse and talked about the fund-raiser they would have at the Springville Women's Club Bazaar. They elected officers as follows: president, Megan Wescott; vice president, Lindsay Place; secretary, Carly Epley; treasurer, Kailey Place; news reporter, Erin Karpich; game leader, Heidi Liebegott.

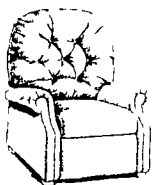
The club members held a Christmas party on December 7



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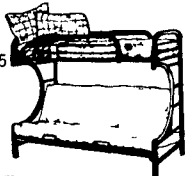
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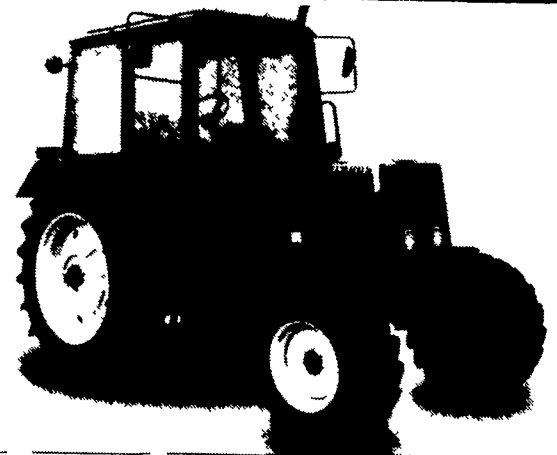
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