

It's getting dangerous out here on the battlefield.

The latest skirmish came concurrent with the 5 a.m. alarm clock on recent morning, warring sounds echoing through the dawn light and our wide-open bedroom windows.

"Ggrroooowwllllllllll!"
"Sssnnnaaaarrollllllll!"
"Hiiiiisssssss!"

And good morning to you, too, tomcats.

"Cat fight" time of the year, usually limited to feline mating seasons, has been waged on a continuing basis this summer, splitting normal quiet time with the screeching, squalling, and snarling of feline combatants. With no less than four grown male cats stalking the farmstead—at least that we know of—we have not shortage of feline fodder for the battlefield brawls.

Pest, the gray and white cat nearly old enough to vote, has mostly ignored the fray and gone into retirement, preferring to spend his days underfoot at the calf barn, pestering (hence his name) for catfood handouts. His minimal ambition level stirs

little more than to snatch the latest mouse catch from Calico, a petite female with deadly rodent-aim.

Butch, our dark tabby, is just maturing enough to begin posing a threat to the bigger boys. Even at a year-old-plus, Butch frequently reverts to playful kitten behavior. His threat to other critters is evident from the arrogant squirrels that parade past him enroute to the bird feeder, while he snoozes on a lawnchair cushion.

However, Butch does become entangled in an occasional territorial squabble, as testified to by an injury sustained recently to his raccoon-striped tail. The open wound about mid-point on the tail was quite sore, tender and probably inflicted by Big Yeller, our reigning tomcat. Treatment with first-aid spray was not particularly appreciated by this affectionate cat, but effective.

Big Yeller—descriptive of both his color and vocal abilities—has hung around the farm for several years, but only recently grown friendly. That's largely

due to generous feedings of milk and catfood to our mother cat and her first batch of kittens, for which he is generally races to be first in line. Current reigning and unbeaten boss, cat, he nevertheless was gentle and almost protective of the four barn kittens he helped to sire.

Those four half-grown kittens now have a batch of maternal siblings somewhere in the barn granary. Not wanting to disturb the mother so that she moves the litter, we haven't searched out the nursery's exact location. And the Big Yeller security patrol guards against other intruders.

Chief foe of the big yellow guy is Midnight, beautiful, black adoptee who still spends most of his time as a cornfield, meadow, and garden-stalking hunter. Actually, he would be very content to be a porch and backyard cat, except that his presence has an extremely irritating effect on Big Yeller.

It was the ongoing feud between those two which greeted our early-morning wake up and continued until I stomped out of the house in an effort to divert their attention. That maneuver at least resulted in a temporary cease fire, though Big Yeller snagged the highest spot available to keep an eye out for his adversary. I glanced out sometime later and spied him keeping vigil perched atop the cab of The Farmer's pickup.

Inadvertently, I, too, have become a victim of the catfights, ending up wounded as an involuntary draftee. While bedding heifers a few days ago, I backed up to move my wheelbarrow full of newspapers and stepped

squarely on Butch's battle-battered tail. He instinctive defense left me with a scratched and bleeding ankle, requiring a

quick trip tot he field hospital medicine cabinet of peroxide.

Another innocent victim of Scar Wars.

Midsummer Night's Tales

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.)

—An evening of fun and magic for the whole family is in store, when the Susquehanna Teller Guild presents A Midsummer Night's Tales on Saturday, July 25, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the air conditioned Centennial Barn at the Fort Hunter Mansion and Park.

Masters of Ceremonies for the show will be Yarn Spinners Two (Thelma Bitzer and Judy Chabanik) who hosted the popular Tellabration '98! storytelling concert last November.

"We plan to take the audience on 'A Walk Though A Summer Garden,' complete with a garden backdrop and decorations," says Judy Chabanik. "Thelma and I will create a friendly mood starting with Saint John's Wort and introducing each storyteller with a short tale involving a different summer flower."

This annual summer event holds something for everyone. The first half will feature stories that appeal to the whole family, including younger children. The second half will emphasize more complex stories adults and older children would also enjoy.

Featured storytellers will include Madeline Blackway, Tom Coughlin, Grace McGrough, Ben Nebroski, Dennis Strain and Yarn Spinner

Two. Admission will be \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children 12 and under. Complimentary light refreshments will be served during intermission.

Fort Hunter Mansion and Centennial Barn are located on Front Street, north of Harrisburg, between Interstate 81 and Fishing Creek Road.

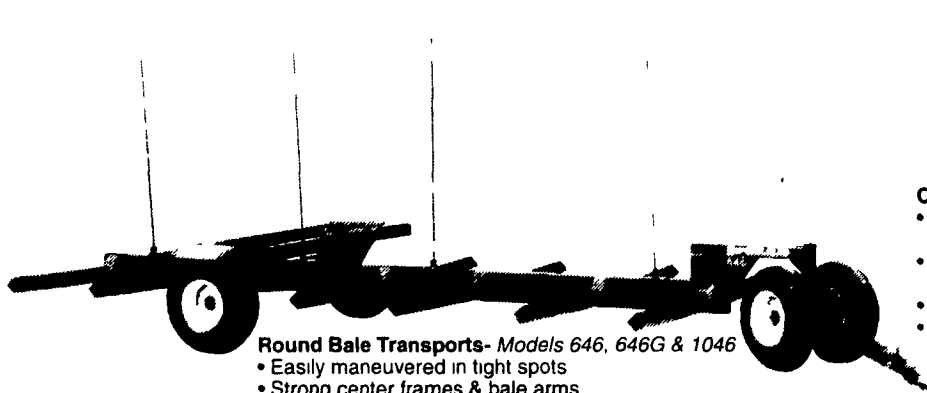
For information, call Judy Chabanik at (717) 938-8133 or Thelma Bitzer at (717) 292-3800.

The Susquehanna Tellers Guild, promotes the art and regular practice of storytelling, from folk tales to personal experiences. Its members include professional storytellers, people who tell for personal enjoyment and "just listeners." The group holds monthly story swaps open to tellers and listeners, on the fourth Sunday of the month, at the Centennial Barn. The groups meets at 1 p.m. and telling starts at 2 p.m.

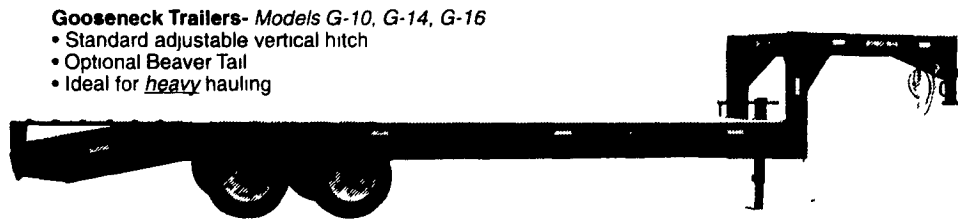
Enjoy the historic attractions and recreational facilities at Fort Hunter, and drop in to hear or share a few stories. Upcoming story telling events at Fort Hunter include Out of the Ordinary: Tales for Halloween on October and Tellabration '98! on Saturday, November 21.

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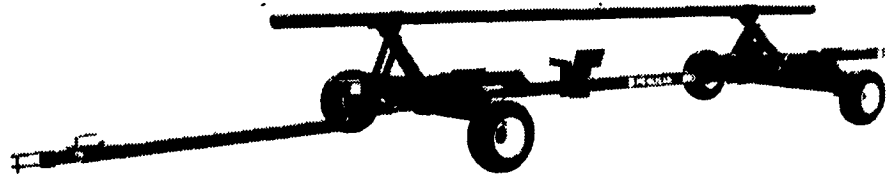
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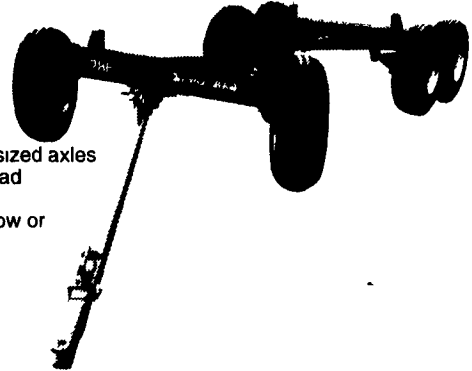
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