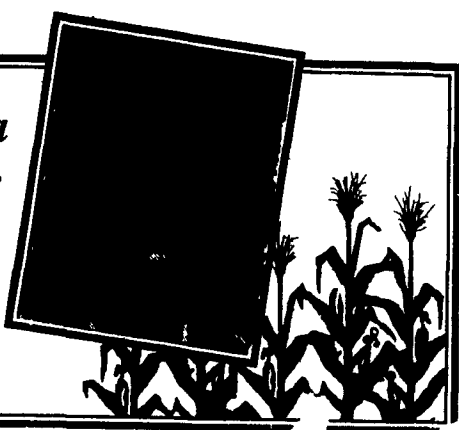


What A Way To See The World

On Being a Farm Wife
(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Silent sentinels they stand, a testament to the season.

Leaves of these cornstalks are still erect, though browning from the tips and ragged from the relentless beating of the wind which moved in with delightful cooler weather. A lonely row, these stalks are the sole remnants of what was once a lush stand of the summer's corn crop, tall and green and thick. Often a refuge for the cats, especially house-porch visitor and loner Midnight, the stand of corn, like so many before it, has passed into history.

Wide at the center, narrowing to points on each edge, the field just across the road from our farmhouse office door is somewhat of a "what's left," uneven-cornered plot not fitting into the neat pattern of contoured strips which wrap around the rolling hill. Because it is fairly small and irregular, the corner field offered an ideal section for trial-running the corn planter this spring, close to the shop and tools needed to make adjustments. And, since the test-trial field was planted early, it also was the first chopped to test-run the forage harvester on the silage corn.

Only this single row of stalks from that early field, standing too near the edge of the road-bank for the silage harvester to cut without courting an equipment rollover, remains in this strip just steps from to the house. They stand brave and defiant, albeit lonely-looking, battling the breezes sweeping down the backdrop of fields now barren of former corn kinfolk. Fate alone extended the stalks' lifespan, the closeness to the roadbank sparing them from

being a drop in the tons of corn silage curing in the in-ground bunk silo, a blessed, stockpile of feed giving off a richly-fermenting smell.

I wonder sometimes, if our neighbors suspect we are fermenting something other than cow feed? (We aren't)

The cows love this new corn silage, especially since our short supply after last year's drought ran out months ago. So they dig into their mixed rations with renewed gusto, relishing the plentiful kernels of yellow grain in the salad-mix of alfalfa and grasses and high-protein concentrates, laced with vitamins and minerals.

And around the farm, the coming of fall is obvious in other ways than the fragrance of fermenting corn.

Stands of goldenrod, with thick, fluffy tops, turn forgotten corners and fencerows a warm yellowish shade of fading summer. Milkweed pods are beginning to dry down, soon to split and spill out their innards of silky white threads, each attached to its own diminutive brown-parachute seed to float off in the wind.

Heavy clusters of deep purple pokeberries have mostly disappeared, relished by the backyard birds which then dispense the staining residue on anything within range, including laundry left hanging out to dry. In defense against the purple poke splatterings, anything relatively good in the garment line goes in the dryer rather than flap in the breeze. It doesn't much matter for barn clothes, which shortly after donning will be liberally laced with manure anyway. A couple of additional purple

ORWIGSBURG (Schuylkill Co.) — Have you ever wondered how things are done differently in other parts of the world?

To many people, finding out first hand would be a dream come true. For Melissa Moll, it is the opportunity of a lifetime. She recently left for Australia to learn, first hand, about farming "Down Under."

"I will be living and working on

patches just add color.

The cloying, oppressive humidity that cloaked much of the late summer has been banished by the return of September's refreshing and welcome breezes. With the disappearance of the excessive moisture in the air which makes us feel sticky and uncomfortable, the sky's brilliant blueness has also returned.

That clear, deep Montana-sky blue provides a dramatic backdrop to the ever-changing pattern of clouds. I love to watch clouds, especially the puffy-fluffy kind that look like you could bounce on them from one to one, and the rolling, boiling ones that pile sky-high, their whiteness tinged with the last pink rays of sunset. The crispness of late September just enhances the beauty of the ongoing cloud parade.

As fall has her way with our straggly row of lonely corn stalks outside the window, the fading green will give way crisp brown. In an amazing maneuver of nature, each ear will turn upside down from its former upright, growing position, so that in maturity, the sturdy husk will shed off rain and snow to prolong the life of each kernel until another annual cycle is ready to begin.

But, the ears on that lonely row don't remain for another year. Their proximity will save me the effort of finding a field where the harvest equipment knocked corn over to salvage the ears in a personal annual rite of harvest for winter feed.

Squirrels have to eat too you know.

a farm for seven months. Even though I live and work on a farm at home, this will be a great learning experience," Melissa said.

The International Agricultural Exchange Association (IAEA) made this trip possible. IAEA is a non-profit organization that provides opportunities for young people, between the ages of 18 and 30, to learn about agriculture in other parts of the world. With placements in about 20 countries, trainees can choose from programs ranging from four to 13 months in agriculture, horticulture, home management, or mixed programs.

These programs offer more than just agricultural experience. The trainees also experience different ways of life and culture, as well as a better understanding of people from foreign countries. New friendships and memories are made that will last a lifetime.

"Being a 1998 graduate of Blue Mountain High School, this was a chance I couldn't pass up. I didn't feel I was quite ready to start college and I didn't know what exact-

ly I wanted to do, Melissa said.

Agriculture has always been a large part of her life. She has been working on her father's dairy heifer farm since before she can remember. She has also been active in 4-H and FFA for many years. This past year she served as the Schuylkill County dairy princess and Schuylkill County FFA president.

For fairs and other shows she raised everything from dairy heifers and beef steers to sheep and goats.

Melissa wishes to further her education in agriculture and farming and hope to keep them a large part of my life.

"Everyone I have talked to about this program has said that they wish they would have had a chance like this when they were younger. Many people still do have this chance, don't pass it up," said Melissa. For more information about IAEA and programs contact them at IAEA, 1000 First Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59401, Phone (406) 727-1999.



Melissa Moll

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