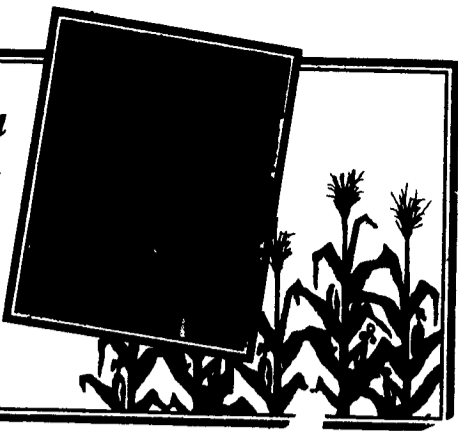


**On Being a
Farm Wife
(and other
hazards)**
Joyce Bupp



shirts, and socks swinging gently back and forth under the trees. That's reinforced a little later when that wonderful, freshly-dried-in-a-sunny-breeze scent wafts up from each piece as you fold and stack it in the basket.

No matter what the detergent manufacturers say, no synthetic fragrance comes close to touching that indefinable, all-natural, fresh scent. Like that of new-mown hay or a mow tucked full of fresh straw or corn pollinating on a hot August night, the perfume of sunshine-dried laundry can't be replicated by a chemical formula.

Nor can yanking a pile of clothes from the dryer come close to the entertainment value of handling them outside in our backyard. For instance, by assessing which equipment, driven by which operators, headed

in what particular direction, I can usually come up with an educated guess as to what's on the farm and neighborhood agendas for the day.

In one corner of the yard, a lone, old rooster scratches for tasty tidbits hiding under a pile of leaves. One lone Canada goose rests on the sparkling surface of the pond, recovered, but still not flying great distances, victim of last year's first day of goose hunting season. And the single remaining aged guinea fowl goes sneaking off up around the upper side of the bank barn.

These three should all be with flocks, but age and circumstances have rendered them loners. While they aren't birds of a feather, they'd surely be less lonely if we could somehow get this trio to flock together.

Several cats hover about the yard, finally learning to tolerate one another. Monk, the housecat, joins me in the yard to stretch out in the sunshine under the drying clothes. Butch, our affectionate black-and-beige tabby, curls up in the washbasin for a snooze. And Midnight, the shiny-black, former stray, perches on the porch, still a trifle leery of the other two. Just have them accept being in sight of one another is progress.

The fields have regreened after several inches of rain reju-

venated the lagging alfalfa and spurred growth in the fall cover crop of rye. So once again the cows are being turned out daily for a couple hours of extra grazing, the all-natural way to harvest these fresh, tasty forages. Watching them hasten out over the green fields (behind temporary fencing), heads down munching young blades of grass is gratifying entertainment as I hang up a last laundry load of sheets and pillowcases.

Annuals in the border bloom with a fierce determination to make the most of these lingering days. A clump of tall dahlias sports fat, glow-yellow blossoms, flanked by red roses, purple clusters on the butterfly bush and zinnias in shades of fuchsia and pink. Bumble bees haunt the vivid-blue spikes of the salvia clumps, frantically storing up for the coming big chill. And a reflection of the yellows and reds of the woodlot trees shimmers over the pond.

So beautiful. So peaceful. So special because these seasonal moments are so fleeting.

As I snuggle in between freshly-washed, sun dried sheets at bedtime and inhale their earthy fragrance, it's obvious that "they" (as in "they say...") are right.

Some of the best things in life really are free.

Farming In The Old Days

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) - Children and adults can learn about agriculture prior to the 1930s in two new educational videotapes, available from Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Narrated by Jerome Pasto, volunteer curator of the Pasto Agricultural Museum and associate dean emeritus in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, the videos walk viewers through the history of the production of small grains and corn. Using antique implements inside the museum, Pasto demonstrates how foods were harvested before the advent of electricity and power equipment.

"The videos are suitable for early grades of elementary school - or anyone interested in our agricultural heritage," Pasto says.

"Farming in the Old Days: Small Grains" describes how farmers produced, harvested and threshed small grains from 4000 B.C. to the 1930s. The 31-minute video traces early tools used for harvesting, including a 6,000-year-old clay sickle from

the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, flails made of wood and leather and a winnowing tray that used windpower to clean the chaff from the grain.

"Farming in the Old Days: Corn," a 25-minute video, covers planting methods used by early Native Americans and pioneers, and traces progress in corn planting and harvesting through the 1930s. "This video traces progress in corn planting, from the 'poke-a-hole-in-the-ground' method, to a corn planter with hopper, to a horse-drawn corn planter," says Pasto.

The Pasto Agricultural Museum is an unusual museum located nine miles southeast of State College at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research center at Rock Springs. The museum houses more than 300

rare, antique implements once used for farming and homemaking. Items include early lamps made of animal fat and rushes, a charcoal-heated clothes iron and a dog-powered treadmill used to churn butter and wash clothes. For information about group tours, call (814) 865-2541, or send e-mail to pastoagmuse-um@psu.edu.

For more information about the videos, contact Ag Information Services, The Pennsylvania State University, 119 Ag Administration Building, University Park, PA, 16802; phone (814) 865-6309; FAX (814) 863-9877. Price is \$35 for one video, or \$50 for both. Allow three weeks for delivery. Make checks payable to Penn State or include a purchase order.

Reading Before Six?

TOWANDA (Bradford Co.) - "Learning to Read Before Six?" and informational workshop for child care providers will be held on Thursday, November 12 at

7:00 p.m. at the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office, 701 South Fourth Street, Towanda. Register by November 9. Call (717) 265-2896.

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