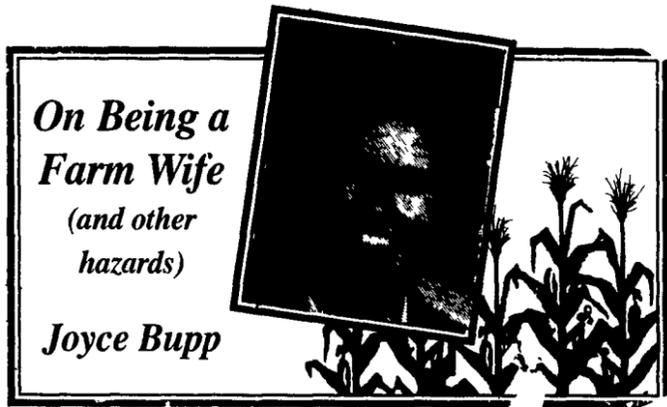


Wood Stove Safety



Here we go again. Maybe.

The world did not shut down at 12:01 a.m. on this past January 1. Computer networks did not roll over and go belly up. Banks did not lose all our money (or debt data), credit cards charged on, and the phones kept ringing off the hook.

Fact is, the whole Y2K thing turned out to be mostly one big yawn. Except for some government defense and spy technology. Which, fortunately, the hackers didn't know about until later.

Or maybe they did. It didn't seem to matter.

So here we go again. Maybe.

Because Sadie Hawkin's Day is coming up.

You know. Said Hawkin's Day. February 29. The Leap Year calendar catchup. Even in our long-esteemed, down-to-a-nano-second practice of keeping time, every fourth year we have this extra day that has to be tucked in to even everything out.

Sadie Hawkin's Day, by the way, is the traditional day on which women are allowed to

openly pursue men, a role reversal of the old-standard, male-pursue-female behavior. Sadie Hawkins, I think, was a man-chasing character from the Li'l Abner comic strip. (If that's wrong, someone with a better memory will update me.) But I don't know the exact tie between the comic character and February 29.

No, you probably won't find Sadie Hawkins Day listed on the February calendar, unless you have one of those off-the-wall ones which keep track of observations like National Pickle Day or Don't Forget To Floss Month.

Not that it probably matters any more. Or, that anyone even cares.

More likely, in this Leap Year 2000, we're going to be uptight one more time over possible observation of Will You Computer Fail This Time? day. For awhile, those same computer consultants who ranted and raved about Y2K, while making megabucks selling correction software, were chanting the same thing about the first Leap Year day of the millennium.

Our PC rolled over to the new

century with nary a hiccup on the stroke of midnight as the last one bid farewell. So, I haven't worried that it will somehow mislay this February's extra day. And if it does, does it matter if my checks for that day are dated February 28?

(I guess it would matter if you had a gazillion bucks sitting in some investment fund and missed a day's interest, but somehow I can't get too uptight about that.)

Why, though, when this day only comes every four years, don't we observe some really unique celebration? Why not set it off the calendar completely? Just shut down for the day. Monday would be February 28 and Tuesday would be March 1. And February 29 would be Worldwide Non-Day Day.

We could take those 24 hours and sleep in. Visit with our families. Play with the dog and cat. Kind of like an international "snow" day. Without having to run to the supermarket for milk and bread ahead of time.

No meetings or conference calls. No cell phones. No traffic jams, no music lessons, no team practices. No malls open. No mass transit. No bills. No telemarketers. Boggles the mind, just to think about it.

Only critical emergency services would be acceptable business functions. Stores would close. Electronic mass media would go blank. No computers, no internet, FAXs or pagers, unless strictly personal. (Let's not get totally carried away and do away with power, heat, or running water.)

Basically, the day that normally doesn't exist, wouldn't this year, either. Think we could

With a few more weeks of winter remaining, wood burning stoves will still be in full force. Every year there are many unexpected fires, property damage claims, and personal injuries associated with wood burning stove use.

Most problems occur due to carelessness, lack of proper information and poor maintenance and inspections. The following ten safety suggestions may help reduce possible dangers:

1) Burn dry seasoned wood, which produces more heat and also prevents soot (creosote) buildup. Flue vents should be inspected according to manufacturer guidelines, and cleaned as appropriate by a qualified individual.

2) Keep the area around the heating unit and flue clear.

3) Keep a fire extinguisher in a central location known to all household members. Be certain that it is in good working order and that everyone knows how to operate it.

4) Place smoker detectors throughout the house (at least one in the room containing the wood stove) and test regularly.

5) Children must be supervised at all times when using wood stoves.

6) Other household venting

handle 24 hours of very basic simplicity of life, without going stir crazy?

A small personal problem with this whole concept, however.

How do I convince the cows to go along with it.

appliances (down draft exhaust fans) can diminish proper venting of your wood stove, causing possible smoke damage. During appliance installation, test all other appliances (bathroom fans, stovetop venting, HVAC units, etc.) to ensure that they don't interfere with proper stove venting.

7) Wood stoves should be safety tested and bear a label from a recognized authority such as a testing lab (UL) or building code group (NFPA).

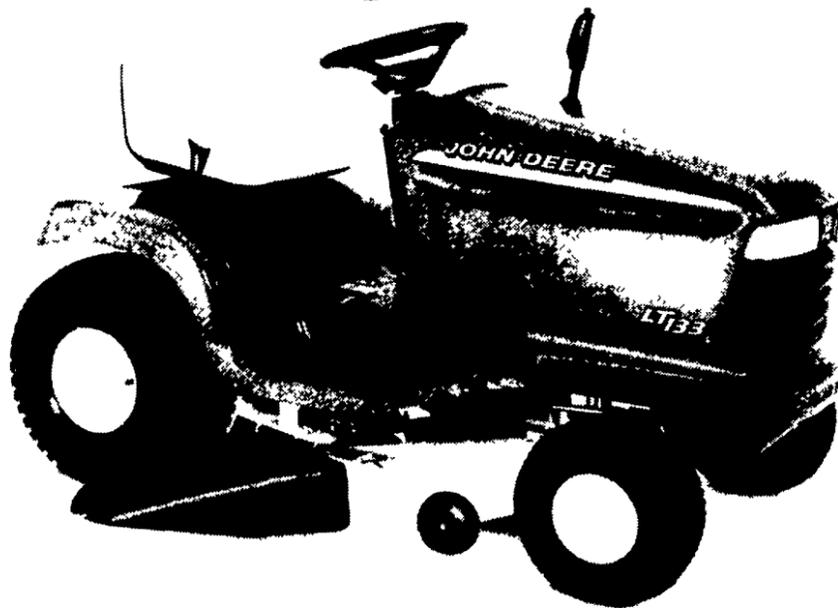
8) To start a fire in your wood stove; crumple up paper on the stove floor and cover with small kindling. Open the draft/damper fully and light. Hold the door slightly ajar for a few minutes and then close tightly. Once the wood is burning brightly, add additional dry seasoned wood to the fire. Use the draft control to adjust the burn rate. Never light or rekindle a fire with kerosene, gasoline, or charcoal lighter fluid.

9) When re-fueling, open the door slowly to prevent smoke spillage.

10) Store ashes in a non-combustible metal container with a tightly fitted lid. Place the closed container on a non-combustible floor, well away from combustible materials. If ashes are to be buried or otherwise locally dispersed, store in a sealed container until all cinders have cooled.

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