

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

It works. The system works. And several thousand farmland owners here in York County are tickled pink about it. Because, after a couple of years of protesting a real estate reassessment and its resulting tax hikes on land with no improvements, there appears to be some relief in sight. And we can gratefully thank a handful of our farm leaders, especially current and past county Farm Bureau presidents Doug Kilgore and Bill Buser, and their boards of farmer-directors. It was they who really grabbed hold of the reins of this issue and helped guide it to what landowners can only see as a successful conclusion. The end result? Lower real estate taxes on land used to help feed the nation. What really "tripped their trigger," enough for thousands of farmers and open land owners to file tax protests and voluntarily contribute funds toward addressing the increases, was across-the-board higher values put on farmland, with no consideration given to soil type or productivity. Also raising the collective landowner ire was a high valuation on farm houses, which are an integral part of a farm. What farmer is likely to sell the farmhouse, which usually sits in the midst of, or very near, production-related buildings, to someone to move into, absent of buying the rest of the farm? So how much extra value is a house which is basically worth almost nothing unless part of the package? This welcome and highly-sensible decision to re-evaluate farmland taxation is a bright spot in an otherwise somber financial picture for the average-sized "family farm" in York

County. (Whatever a "family farm" means is tenuous, at best, when relating to size. We have friends who operate "family" dairy farms ranging from 50-cow herds nearby to Florida and California ones with upwards of 10,000 milking cows each). On our own farm, the reassessment which was completed a couple of years ago, jacked up our real estate tax 43 percent. Yep, 43 percent. That, mind you, on land which is producing crops and milk which are currently valued at 20-year lows. And we don't even talk about the sudden escalation in price of the considerable volumes of diesel fuel to produce it. We've beaten this drum repeatedly, but it's worth banging on one more time: land kept in agriculture does not demand even close to the volume of municipal services (read, tax \$\$\$) as do commercial or residential uses. Crop acreage doesn't generate tons of landfill trash, create more roads which need to be kept paved, plowed and

patched, demand curbing, sewer, water, street lights or gas lines. It doesn't generate the need to build more schools or playgrounds or community centers or mass transit systems or traffic lights or hire lots of extra policemen. Crop acreage does produce oxygen for us to breath, soaks up moisture which helps restore the water tables, helps to provide food and cover for wildlife and plays a large role in maintaining that vital "open space" which most people feel is a necessary part of quality of life. Not to forget its importance in feeding our people so efficiently that it takes less than one percent of us to feed the other 99 percent. Could you really grow and harvest and grind the wheat for the bread and pasta you ate today? Could you milk and process and age the cheese on the pizza you enjoyed the other evening? Could you grow in your backyard, or back porch, the variety of fresh vegetables in that salad you had for lunch yesterday. Sure you could. But do you want to? Revaluing our taxation won't save every acre of farmland that helps produce our dinners. But it may help a bit in the overall picture. Death and taxes may be certain. But it's satisfying that—by pulling together—we could have a modifying effect on at least use of them.

Growing Up On Farm

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Early morning dairy princess events have also helped Amanda become more of a morning person. Normally Amanda needs the first couple of hours she is awake to gradually work into being social. "When I am at home, nobody bothers me for the first two hours that I am awake," said Amanda. "I don't mind doing things in the morning. I'm just

not ready to be social that early." But being dairy princess has helped her overcome her early-morning shyness. "It's only when I am away," admits Amanda. "My parents would argue that I am still not a morning person when I am at home."



Amanda joined her state dairy princess team, including Lori Connelly and Rebecca Kilgore, to model 18th century garb during the ladies program at the Pennsylvania Holstein Association annual convention.

Craft Show

RUTGERS, N.J.—The Seventh Annual Breath of Spring Craft Show is scheduled for March 18, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hunterdon County Extension Center on Route 31 north of Flemington. Admission is \$1. This show is made up of excellent crafters with handmade crafts: wood carvings, weaving, folk art, quilts, hand painted lamp shades, American Girl Doll clothes, dried herbs & flora, jewelry, Easter items and much more. There will be crafts for children to make and a visit from the Easter Bunny. Also available will be a variety of spring plants, baked goods, and a delicious lunch menu.



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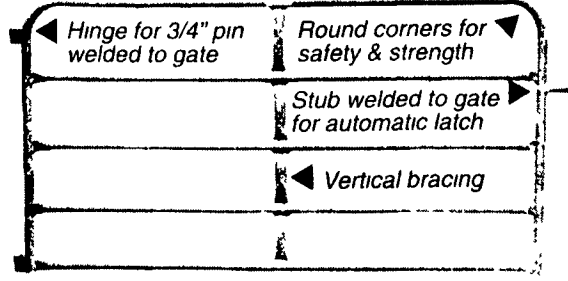
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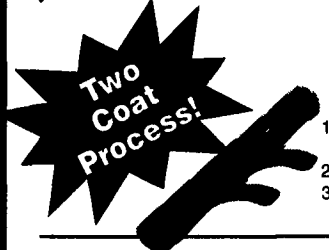
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