

On Being a Farm Wife (and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



It's time to hang it up. Hang up the stockings. Hang up the mistletoe. Hang up the bright icicle lights across the porch, out the wreaths, hang up all the pretty holiday cards we've received. Hang up the bells and the bows and the brightly-shining baubles.

Time to hang up the cows. What? You don't hang up cows?

Well, get with it. It's the Christmas-cow season.

Our Christmas-cow decorations are a tradition of the season in our farmhouse. They're especially precious because each one reminds us of the friend or family member who gifted it to us.

So now our six-foot-tall, potted Norfolk Island Pine (which scrapes the ceiling of the greenhouse where it winters after holiday engagements), is once again decked out with tiny white lights illuminating the assorted, colorful members of our Christmas herd.

There are cows on tiny, red

skis. Cows with minuscule Swiss-style bells around their necks. Bejeweled cows. Wicker cows. Solid cows carved of wood. Shiny, ceramic cows. Sparkling metal cows. Soft-hided cows. Paper cow streamers. A cow which preens itself in a lighted, Hollywood-star-type mirror.

And, of course, the carved wooden cow which is part of our quarter-century-old manger scene.

Cards with cows — sent by both farm and nonfarm friends — are lined up for display on one countertop. A stuffed, cow-fabric tree decorated with red pom-poms has, as grandson Caleb gleefully chuckles, "cows all over." And a delightful wall hanging, creation of the same nimble-fingered maker as the stuffed tree, brightens our kitchen with a cheery holiday farm of all sorts of animals complimenting the focal centerpiece, which is — are you surprised? — a black and white cow.

The Christmas herd is not a

Make The Holiday Magic Last Longer

Christmas is here! Rejoice!

A wonderful time of celebration, thankfulness, and sharing with ones we love.

This beautiful day, along with the preceding weeks of anticipation and preparation, is often a magical time for children and adults alike.

Once the holiday season has passed, however, many people, young and old, find themselves feeling rather "blue." This is not unusual, because the post-holiday period can be a letdown.

Balloon Has Popped

Family members may be returning to homes far away. Decorations must be packed and re-

turned to storage. The children are restless — caught in limbo between Santa Claus's coming and getting back to school to see their friends. It's almost as if a balloon has popped!

What can be done to prolong the festive, warm feeling of the Christmas season, yet still readjust to the normal everyday routine? Is there anything that can be done to make the magic last a little longer?

Giving is an important part of Christmas. It is also a gesture that can be continued throughout the year. With so many children receiving new toys at Christmas, now is a time to clean out toy boxes and closets.

Toys which are no longer used or interesting may be donated to your church or favorite charity. These toys will be a welcome gift to a less fortunate child and give your child the joy of making some other child happy.

Too Many Toys
Many children receive an enormous array of toys at Christmas. To help excitement over toys last longer than a few days, try this:

After the initial excitement with new gifts has worn off, ask your child to choose his/her favorite three or four. Let him keep these to play with. Put the others in storage.

These "hidden" gifts can then be taken out at regular intervals throughout the winter, making for great excitement. Children

will be far more interested in these toys than if they'd had them all at once.

Children need to learn to show appreciation and the holiday season is a perfect time for this. The days following Christmas are ideal for writing thank-you notes. Even the youngest child can be involved in this endeavor by making a drawing and having a parent write out what he dictates.

Snapshots are fun to enclose in thank-you notes. A child who writes Grandma and Grandpa to say "thank you" for the red sweater can include a picture of herself wearing the sweater. What a special way to say thanks!

Taking decorations down and getting the house back in order need not be drudgery. It can also be made a family affair. It is fun to safely tuck two or three special snapshots taken on Christmas day into the box decorations are stored in. That way, when you get the decorations out next year, you'll have some happy memories of last Christmas to talk about as you decorate the tree.

While these suggestions are not meant to be the cure-all for post-Christmas blues, they may help lift your spirits. Be creative! Develop your own post-holiday traditions which will be meaningful and memorable.

If your family has something to look forward to after Christmas, the after-Christ-

mas letdown can be replaced with other activities.

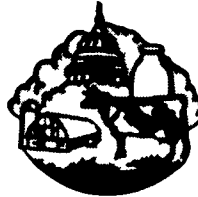
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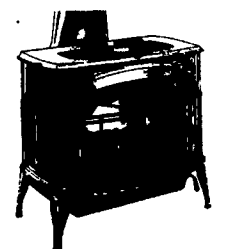
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