

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Looks like a record year in the making.

Just a couple of weeks ago, we broke the record for chilliness around our area when the temperature dropped down into the two-blanket level one mid-July night. A two-blanket night — two blankets being needed to sleep with any level of comfortable warmth — is way more common about late September.

It brought to mind those rare instances, I recall reading about when snow has fluttered at isolated spots in the state during mid-summer.

Less than two weeks later, we either tied or set a record for heat — depending on whose thermometer one was reading that day — when the mercury inched up to the other extreme. Though we rarely set up a fan, an old one was hauled up from storage in the basement, just to get some air moving. Which, in reality, is far more typical for this season than two-blanket nights.

Also, while it may not be record dry, the lingering moistureless-skies continue to drag us in that direction. After a relatively dry winter, following by a relatively dry spring, would we really expect anything else? So, day after day, as the corn leaves curl tighter under the midday heat,

The Farmer haunts The Weather Channel. His frustration deepens with each eastward creeping front which slides away up along the front edge of the Appalachians, or scoots out to sea across Eastern Shore leaving us high and dry. High temperatures, high humidity, dry skies.

If folks could "will" it to rain just by concentrating on it, I'd be packing to move into an ark, with all the moisture-wishful thinking energy The Farmer has been directing at the TV remote. We rejoiced when a gentle, if sparse, shower last weekend at least slightly rinsed off the dust-plagued corn stalks and crinkly-dry, third-cutting alfalfa stubble. A week of 'em would be more than welcome.

And, if temperature and moisture records weren't enough to set, along came this string of record-setting calf happenings.

In late March, we established what might be a new farm calving record when the 40 heifers that freshened out over about six weeks gave us an uncommonly high percentage of bouncing, baby girls. For weeks, the calf pens practically ran over with bawling little heifer babies loudly begging for bottles twice each day. By the time they had been weaned, our calving had swung a

complete 180-degree turnaround and gone into calf nursery drought period. Three babies to feed is a record low that I can remember.

It didn't last long.

"Boy, you have a bunch of calves again," chuckled a visitor recently.

"And a bunch less than could be there," I had to add. But not for lack of our girls trying to fill up those pens.

Indeed, the barn crew struggled one morning last week with a heifer stretched on her side, laboring to calve. When it was determined just how tangled the legs and heads of the two yep, two — babies were, they knew a different approach was needed. The Farmer managed to get her up and on her feet, which took some of her "push" pressure away and allowed the calves to recede a bit. That enabled him to disentangle the calves limbs just enough to deliver them. Dead. A pair of bull calves.

Just a few hours later, our daughter spotted a laboring cow in distress in the meadow. She was quickly brought into the barn calving pens and — again — after some assistance from all of us anxiously waiting, delivered a calf. Heifer. In an unwanted summer rerun, yet another dead heifer calf followed.

But, our luck was changing. Sort of.

Less than 24 hours later, yet another cow calved. With another pair of twins. Alive and healthy, it was a bull-heifer set.

As all veteran cattlemen are aware, a heifer calf born twinned to a bull, in about 98 percent of all cases, lacks her major reproduction organs. No sensible explanation, just Mother Nature's quirk with cattle twins. So, our twins, for all practical breeding herd purposes, were a bull and...a



George and Julie Holmes collect seeds for Albania.

Seeds Needed For Albania

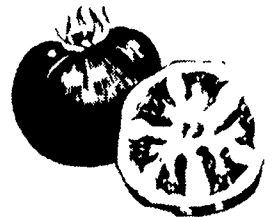
TRUMANSBURG, N.Y. — Soon local stores will be discarding vegetable and flower seeds. If that is the case in your area, the Holmes could use them for their mission work in Albania.

George and Julie Holmes have been short term missionaries in Albania for eight years. This time of the year, local stores throw good seeds in dumpsters or burn them. Help the Holmes out and ask store managers to donate those seeds to Albania.

In January, the Holmes along

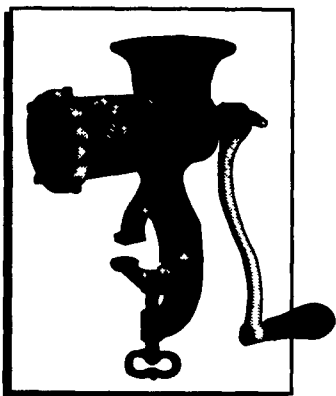
with other farmers, helped to put together 3,446 family seed packets of 10 vegetable and two flower seed and the "History of Jesus." Those family seed packets went to 48 villages in Albania this year. Holmes got to see results of last year's seeds and the people were so thankful to receive them. The seeds are a gift from Americans to help the Albanians grow more nutritious food for their families.

If you would like to contact the Holmes with questions or donations of seeds, phone (607) 387-6538 or write 3220 Jacksonville Road, Trumansburg, NY 14886.

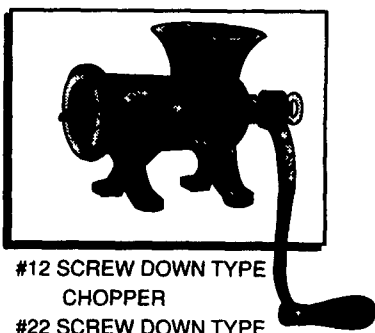


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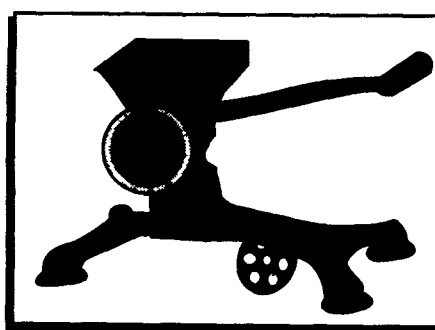
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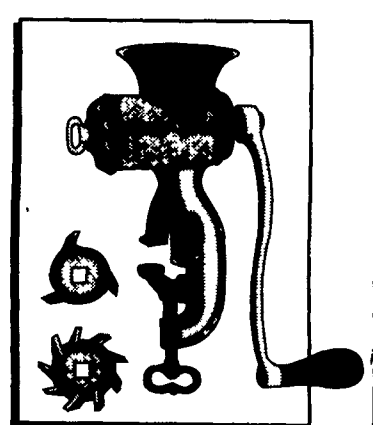
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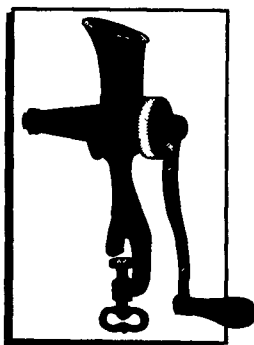
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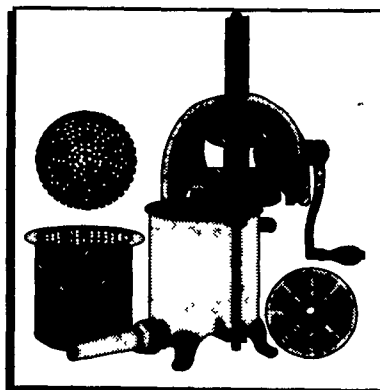
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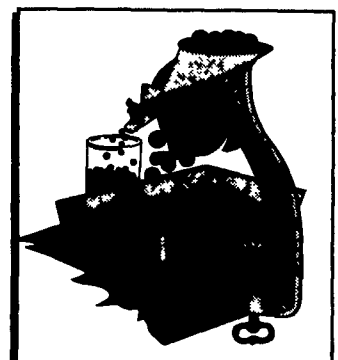
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