

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



A birdbath was never on my backyard agenda.

Why would we need one?

Several ponds bless the meadow below the house, the first almost within the proverbial "spitting distance" of the back porch. Plus, a stream — sparse at the moment — resurfaces just past the ponds. So we have lots of places for birds to bathe and drink.

"Mom, you must get Grandma's birdbath," our daughter admonished me as our extended family was winding down the intensive several-week cleanup of my parents' home. The old, poured concrete birdbath which sat in their terraced backyard garden had never even entered my mind. Along with my broth-

ers, nephew and nieces, we had been concentrating simply on sorting through household "stuff."

Stuff. Our place has its share; your's may, too. Cleaning out a parent or relative's property can convert one into an avowed disciple of getting rid of stuff. (Except that probably won't happen and our kids will be lamenting in future years: "Where did they get all this stuff?")

Based on personal experience and similar tales related by friends, I've concluded that there are three categories of things which people accumulate in their lives, beyond significant property such as real-estate, investments, vehicles, etc.

At the top range of personal

accumulations are "things." Things are those pieces which have antique, historic, or serious sentimental value to someone. Old family photos and letters. Special pieces of china or furniture or jewelry or collections or things passed down through the family. If only some clue had been left as to who or why or what their relevance is exactly.

At the other range is "junk." And that's pretty much self-descriptive. Not to forget that what is junk to me, may be, things to you. And vice-versa. Which keeps antiquers, flea market, and yard-sale enthusiasts busy.

Most everything else falls into the category of "stuff." Some of the stuff from our parents house has found a home here (hence the boxes of stuff still upstairs). My youngest brother has become the keeper of a large trunk of stuff and some things until some future date, when it may all become junk to others a generation or two down the DNA trail.

To some, the nondescript concrete birdbath would have been junk. None of us has a clue where it came from, most likely one of the public sales dad loved to attend, accumulating more junk. The birdbath bore no sentimental memories from our childhoods. It was just an ornament in the

backyard of the home our parents had moved to after we had all grown and moved away. Except when it rained, I don't recall ever seeing it filled with water.

But, for our household of bird lovers and gardeners, the birdbath did seem a natural fit. And no one else wanted it. The Farmer, who moved it with numerous other pickup-truck loads of things, stuff and junk, plunked it into a then-barren bed outside the east kitchen window, mostly because it was a handy spot.

In recent weeks, tulips, hostas, columbine, lilies and a nearby small rhododendron bush pushed up around the base of the birdbath, leafed out, filled the bed and begun blooming. When the weather warmed, I began filling it, dumping the water every few days to clean and refresh it. The morning I glanced out the window to spy two robins vigorously splashing in the shallow basin, chasing off other wannabe bathers, cemented my sentiment that the birdbath had come home.

Surrounded by greenery and blossoms, our backyard birds obviously enjoying it as it was intended, the old concrete yard ornament has been elevated from stuff to a special family thing.

On this Memorial Day weekend, when our hearts remember and prayerfully offer thanks for those who gave their lives for us, in many ways, and those we loved and lost, many folks will take flowers to graves.

And some of us will freshen the water in a memorial birdbath.

Home-Canning Workshop

COLLEGEVILLE (Montgomery Co.) — Remember those delicious home-canned goods that Grandma used to put up from her backyard garden? Canning procedures have changed dramatically over the years, but many folks still look forward to eating the "fruits of their labor" over the winter months with home preserved foods.

To make sure you don't endanger your family's health by following out-of-date canning instructions, Penn State Cooperative Extension is offering a hands-on workshop to teach to proper methods of home canning.

The three-hour session will be conducted on Thursday, May 30 session A from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and session B from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Montgomery County 4-H Center on Rt. 113 in Creamery.

Participants will learn the latest methods of using a boiling water bath and a pressure canner. They will receive a comprehensive Cooperative Extension canning book and take home two jars of properly processed fruits and vegetables.

Registration is required and class size is limited. There is a cost of \$20 per person. To register, call the extension office at (610) 489-4315

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