

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



"What's the plan?" I asked The Farmer.

"No plan," he replied. Like most dairy farmers, our lives are structured by cows. Twice daily milkings, no exceptions, no holidays. No excuses. But harvest delays from a lengthy stretch of soggy weather, the milking schedule covered, and fall leaves still pretty on the hillsides offered the perfect "no plan" opportunity. We tossed a couple of bags with extra clothes and a few snacks in the car and departed. With no plan.

There was a general destination, the Finger Lakes region of central New York. Some folks escape to shop, some to antique, some to paint, some to camp, etc. Our "no plan" adventures inevitably wend through at least some agriculture country, since The

Farmer thrives on studying other farming endeavors, sometimes gleaned ideas from what he spies in passing. Central New York promised lots of ag to eyeball.

Bright sunshine highlighted the hills of gold, orange and red against Cayuga Lake's sparkling waters, bordered with rolling plateaus of grain farming, and scattered dairies. Mid-afternoon, an ominous, blue-black cloud front ambushed us from the west. Our bright day flipped to a blustery mist as snow squalls chased raindrops.

Farmers take pride in not being stopped by a little "weather," so we continued northward through farm country veiled in mist and intermittent snow. As we topped the lake, with daylight not quite gone, The Farmer altered his "no plan": "Let's head for

the big lake."

So northward we continued as darkness fell and supertime looked like midnight. Less than an hour farther into the inky-black evening, we wound through quiet, bayside town appearing to be tucked in for the night. Winds blew fiercely off Lake Ontario, sending unseen waves crunching onto the shore, sounding not particularly hospitable to strangers with no plan.

Weary and hungry, we stumbled onto the sort of place that turns such adventures into memories — a stately bed and breakfast just yards from the lakeshore, with off-season rates and no other guests. I managed to stay awake just long enough to enjoy a tasty hot meal at a small restaurant nearby.

At daylight, I pushed aside the curtain and babbled: "Look, look, look, look..." Outside the windows was a Christmas-card scene, snow piled several inches

high on the bushes and weighing heavily on the yellow-orange leaves of huge, overhanging sugar maple. Our hostess was less enthusiastic at winter's unexpected early onset as she shoveled away five inches of the heavy, wet "lake effect."

Her hearty breakfast fueled us southward, though disappointed that lake visibility had been a mere few hundred yards in the falling snow. Orchards of apple trees bent low under their leafy burden, snow-capped red fruit still dangling in some trees. Snow squalls repeatedly beat back overtures of sunshine as we wound back down through the Finger Lakes. Still, it was lovely, with colorful hillsides muted by the mistiness and snow, acres and acres of orderly vineyards, neat dairy and crop farms, with inevitable pauses as we passed farm equipment dealers.

Darkness was descending as we turned in through the pines

toward the hunting cabin that evening, only to be stopped short by a driveway full of fallen limbs. "Lake effect" had piled up on the colored leaves of the tall hardwoods around the cabin, scattering limbs large and small as they broke from the weight. But soon the humble cabin, warmed by a crackling woodstove, was as cozy as our gracious Victorian accommodations of the previous evening. Hot, canned soup, with our fruit and snacks, provided an adequate supper. "No plan" ventures generally at least include sleeping bags and a few extra provisions for possible cabin stays.

Blue skies, bright sunshine and the hugs of grandchildren welcomed us back late the next afternoon.

And how nice it is to be able to plan on any brief escape coming to such a pleasant ending.

Montgomery County Extension Agent Receives Achievement Award

COLLEGEVILLE (Montgomery Co.) — Mary Concklin, Montgomery County extension agent for horticulture, was honored with the Achievement Award at the National Association of

County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference recently in Savannah, Ga.

The AA is presented to the top one percent of agents in each state who have less than 10 years of service in extension. The selection is made by the agents' peers in each state. This year 60 agents won the award at the national level.

Concklin is responsible for commercial and consumer horticulture, vegetable, fruit, and Master Gardener programs in her county. She initiated a quarterly newsletter, bringing readership to 5,100 in nine issues. Master Gar-

dener numbers have increased from 25 to 85 in three years. She delivers courses, symposiums, workshops, and conferences as a chairperson, educator, facilitator, and a committee member. She also initiated research in "Developing Nutrient Management Guidelines for Woody Ornamentals."

Mary had been an active member of the state association and also belongs to a number of other horticultural associations. In addition to national recognition, Concklin will receive a Nittany Lion statue and an award from the Pa. Rural Electric Association.

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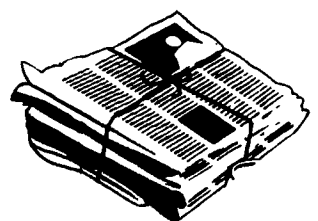
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