

## On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



A tall, lovely tree graces the living room of our old farmhouse.

Beneath the reflection of a luminous gold star at the top hang shiny ornaments of red and blue, green and silver. Golden tinsel shimmers in the air currents stirred by a wintery wind outside our slightly-drafty old home. Piles of gaily-wrapped gifts be-decked with pouffy bows are heaped beneath.

White icicle lights highlight the house's porch and exterior, outlining windows lit with flickering candlelight reflecting off the snow. Greens loop around the deck, interspersed with red-bowed wreaths and a twinkling outside Christmas tree.

Yeah, right. In my dreams.

Year after year, I oogle those lovely layouts of holiday havens in home-garden type magazines, designed by professional decorators and fueled, obviously, by unlimited time and budgets. Also apparently homes with no kids, no dogs, no farmers tracking endless mushy, muddy footprints through the kitchen.

And each year I am convinced anew that, while such layouts are beautiful for dreaming, holidays are about family. And family here is kids, farmers, dogs, and, of course, cows. All of which, except for the occasional near-frozen, newborn calf brought to thaw at the basement woodstove, are part of our household.

So once again we celebrate with our "eclectic" holiday decorations, some old, some new, some experimental, many hand-crafted gifts, but all with particular personal meaning.

Our living tree of several years, a Norfolk Island pine purchased nearly a decade ago as a potted plant in a post-Christmas sale, finally outgrew our ability to house it. It has moved to the higher calling in the higher-ceilinged bedroom of our grandsons, where the kids can decorate it, undecorate it, and redecorate it to their hearts content.

Replacing it are two smaller "trees," living topiaries of perennial English ivy I've trained for

two years into tree-shaped forms. One has tiny white light (and cow ornaments if I can ever remember to go retrieve them from the attic, while the other is simply wrapped with gold tinsel and topped with an angel crafted by a friend.

An assortment of gift, scented candles top the television in the living room, adding a cozy glow and fragrance to the house on cold, dark nights. Also handy during our recent ice-storm power outage. Candles absolutely fascinate our grandkids. We have to pick up and smell the various scents of each one whenever they stop by, though I never light them with little folks in the house.

But the eclectic seasonal display piece d'resistance is our manger scene, a mixed melange of miniature pieces accumulated over the years. Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus in the manger are colored plastic statuettes from one set. Our Wise Men are carved from wood, as are shepherds, some whimsical little sheep and a donkey missing part of one ear, from another set. Joining the group over time is a plastic black and white cow from a long-ago toy farm set and a rusty-red horse, maybe from the same place.

Completing the manger, finally, is a rustic stable to go with the pieces, one of ideal size and shape that I stumbled across a few months ago at a "dollar" store. The price was affordable.

The whole point of this display is that small hands can pick up, play with and rearrange the pieces, offering an opportunity to

talk about what it means. This also means that our Baby Jesus may turn up on the coffee table or a wooden Wise Man could be keeping company with the Teddy bears on the rocking chair.

When I recently lamented the appropriateness of this mismatched, mish-mosh of a manger scene, our daughter gently reminded me that the original manger scene certainly did not "match." And, she added if I wanted something resembling

originality, there should probably be some chickens scratching around in the background and at least a cat or two curled up in a corner of the stable.

So we'll celebrate with our mismatched eclectic tributes of the season and memories and love they represent. Which, after all, is what this holiday season is all about.

Merry Christmas — and we wish you a season filled with hope, love, joy and peace!

## Pennsylvania Lamb And Wool Queen Contestants Needed

ROCKWOOD (Somerset Co.) — Young women who desire to promote the sheep and wool industry have an opportunity to compete for the Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen title Jan. 11, during the state Farm Show.

Candidates must be between the ages of 16-21 as of Jan. 1, 2003.

Contestants will be judged on the following four categories:

- Consumer Promotional Display — A display that promotes the sheep and wool industry should measure no more than 3x3 feet and be sturdy enough to display on a tripod provided by the contest.

- Public Speaking — Each contestant must give a 2-5 minutes speech before judges and the audience Jan. 11 at 4 p.m. in meeting room E, second-floor of the Farm Show Building. The presentation should address some aspect of the sheep and wool industry, be informative, and in-

clude how the contestant would help promote the industry.

- Interview — Each contestant will be interviewed by a panel of judges beginning a 3 p.m. Jan. 11, in meeting room E of the Farm Show Building. Contestants will be evaluated on general sheep production knowledge, the sheep and wool industry, communication skills, poise, personality, enthusiasm, and availability to fulfill responsibilities of the Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen title.

- Writing Skills — Each contestant is required to submit an article introducing herself and future plans for promoting the lamb and wool industry. The article must be 200 words or less and double spaced. Judging will be based on clarity, use of language, writing skills, and ability to express thoughts and ideas. Submit three copies of the article, along with a wallet or snapshot-size photo at the time of judging.

Appropriate attire for judging participation is a dress, pants, skirt, or suit that contains wool.

Contestants should arrive at the meeting room E no later than 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 11. The contest will take place from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. The queen and her family and friends are invited to attend the royal banquet at 7 p.m. following the contest, where the new queen and her court will be crowned.

Applications must be submitted by Dec. 31. Request more information and an entry form from Heidi Svonavec, 887 W. Mudpike, Rockwood, PA 15557. Or phone (814) 926-2779.



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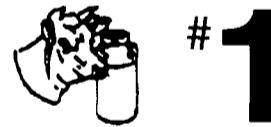
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