

On Being a Farm Wife

(and other hazards)

Joyce Bupp



Man, I was really feeling boxed in.

In the shadowy atmosphere of the place, the ceiling seemed ominously low, the walls confining. Tiny windows allowed the entrance of light, but the day outside was misty, dark, and, like

the inside, overall gloomy. Into this environment I had thrust myself, intent to take on this gloomy interior on this gloomy day and bring some brightness and sunshine to the dark, oppressive space.

But the boxed-in feeling persisted.

Tackling our attic is not on my short list of preferred things to do. It's not even at the end of my long list of preferred things to do.

Nevertheless, there I was, square in the middle of the dark, dusty, fourth-floor of our house, lacking even the amenity of a light for better visibility. Two very small windows at each end provide daytime lighting, which on a bright sunny day is adequate. But on this gloomy, dark, rainy afternoon, under our heavily-canopied maple trees, the attic had all the cozy ambience of a candle-lit cave.

Push had come to shove on this dank afternoon, too wet to work in the garden or yard and

with a deadline of sorts looming. Someone, someday, was going to have to tackle this mess. It might as well be me, now, rather than someday when I am unable to run up and down the stairs. And I really don't want to leave it for the kids — despite the fact that much of it is theirs.

But plans for an upcoming yard sale loomed. In fact, the promise of a rainy, dark weekend had actually postponed the planned extended-family yard sale, offering the perfect push to tackle the attic. Now, our attic holds no family heirlooms or treasures or even slightly valuable stuff. What our attic abounds in, I discovered, is — boxes.

There are big boxes and little boxes. Square boxes and odd-shaped boxes. Holiday boxes in decorative colors, mostly red and green, some shiny and glittery. We have packing boxes — computer boxes, printer boxes, window fan boxes, appliance boxes. There are gift boxes, handsome, square and shiny white. Well, they were shiny white at one time.

Reality is, these boxes accumulated for years, in the good old family characteristic that we might have use for them sometime. And, some we have, for Christmas, birthdays, special occasions. But usually, they are too big or too little or too inappropriate. Or too dusty and bird-dirt speckled, because I do occasionally open the attic door — usually in the summer — and have a sparrow fly out over my head.

I marched back down two sets of stairs, grabbed a broom, a dustpan, re climbed the stairs and

began tackling the accumulated floor dirt. Several years ago, a bumper crop of dried flowers landed in the attic for future use, tied in bunches and hung from the sloping rafters. Unused bunches have deteriorated into bits and pieces littering the floor, along with a liberal scattering of styrofoam packaging pieces. The occasional bird didn't help, either.

Then, it was on to the boxes. Small boxes got squished into bigger boxes. Those were shoved into even bigger ones, and then I squashed them into the giant computer packing boxes. And began lining box-filled-boxes at the top of the stairs for disposal.

Then, it was on to the bigger challenge: filled boxes. Several of the largest, hold items stored there years ago by our daughter, who happens to be the yard sale planner.

One of the bonuses of accumulating years in one's life is that, once in awhile, you can turn the tables on your kids. Her boxes, filled with her stuff, will be most of my contribution to her yard sale. And most likely her kids will find stuff they absolutely want to keep. Like a stack of games. Old toys. The last box of children's books. A small child's chair or two. Best of all, our attic will hold less stuff.

One thing, for sure. There are plenty of boxes to stash it all in for moving.

Now, if I can convince the grandkids that they really need their uncle's old, sprawling, toy-train layout, the attic afternoon will have been a resounding success.

And, I'm not feeling nearly as boxed in anymore.



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