

Kathryn Hamrick

For me, the road paved with good intentions ends in the maternity ward. The last time I wound up there, on a snowy February evening, what helped me make it through the night was knowing that I was trendy.

I almost gloated; older women are having babies and I was in on the craze.

It is not an exaggeration to say that having a baby is a hassle. Seriously, it does not rank high on my list called "favorite things to do." I've got maternity burnout.

We needed a new roof, not a new baby. But friends were kind and protected me from Planned Parenthood. The farmer said we'd manage, that it wasn't any worse than a dry year. I hid from my mother. I laid out of Deacons meetings.

When it became obvious that not thinking

about it wasn't going to make it go away, the maternity clothes came out of the closet.

They were scandalous. It was too late to save the baby shoes, they'd been bronzed. The diapers had become jelly bags and the diaper pail a garden bucket. Dr. Spock had lost his covers and the chapters on rashes. We were out of unusual Hamerick names.

Four years and three boys earlier, we had gone through that sad ritual of putting the crib away for the grandchildren. I don't know when I cried the most -- when we put it away for the last time or when we got it out for the fourth time. (Next time I'm burning it.)

I didn't think I could bear to have a fourth boy. The farmer, who made it through the delivery again, promised he'd cover up my mouth when baby boy was announced. I didn't want recorded in the baby book that mother's first words were: "Expletive deleted."

But in the middle of the night we got Miles instead. Next morning the doctors remarked that they knew I was sure relieved that the baby came at 2:00 A.M. rather than inconveniencing the cows by coming at milking time. The doctors got the expletives. The farmer, who promised not to call our friends until morning, did just that at 4:30 A.M.

That was eight months ago. The fourth boy has a special place in the family even though we didn't think we had enough room for him. We feel so wealthy because of him that the expense of his existence make him a bargain. And Miles himself has had so much fun that the tread is completely worn off his new stroller.

Folks ask if we'll try again. Unfortunately, we don't have to try. I appreciate my blessings, welcome a challenge, and enjoy the unexpected, but I hope I've retired my splattered maternity jersey for good.

Cleveland Voices

DEAR NEWSSTAND MAN: I am in charge of organizing a party for a group club. All the planning went all right until yesterday. The boy responsible for getting the food told me he doesn't have time to collect money and shop. The girl who was supposed to decorate the room told me she has no time to help with the party. No one else can help me with the details -- I already asked. I feel like cancelling the party. Should I? — B.L.

Ask The News Man

DEAR B.L. You are learning a lesson fast. These kinds of situations will constantly arise during your lifetime. The decision to cancel the party or try to make it a happy success might become a learning step which could help to develop you into a fine leader.

If only one person says, "Thank you, B.L.," I am sure you will feel good about yourself and the hard work you accomplished. This decision will help determine, for yourself, whether you are a leader or a follower. — Newsstand Man

Questions for "The Newsstand Man" may be sent to The Foothills View, P.O. Box 982, Boiling Springs, N.C. 28017.

The Humble Farmer

By Robert Skoglund

A cold November drizzle had been coming down all day. Folks who had something to do outside conducted their business quickly and rushed back in to be by the fire.

An extra armload of wood had been lugged into most homes. It was one of those days when you sipped your coffee by the stove and ignored the kids as they fought in front of the TV set.

The weather was so bad that Gramp Wiley, who was even more pious than most of his nearest neighbors, had decided to stay home from church that morning.

"At my age there's no excuse for going out on a day like today," he said to his wife Gladys as he walked over to the window and looked out at the thermometer.

Gramp dropped into his soft swivel chair and said, "A man would have to be a fool to go out today if he didn't have to." Then he swung his chair around so he could look out through the window and watch the cars creep by in the rain.

A few minutes later his grandson rushed in and said in an excited voice, "Gramp, Bob just got back from his trip to the big woods. He got a 345-pound, 15-point buck and there's a photographer there from a big sports magazine."

Bob wants you to have your picture taken with the deer and him because you taught him how to shoot. Everyone in the country will see it."

The great hunter's instructor swung his chair back and forth as if he were trying to make up his mind.

Then he said, "There ain't nothing going to get me out on a cold day like this. Look at that rain. Thank Bob for thinking of me when you go down, and tell him ain't fit for a man of my age to be out."

The young man scurried off to see his neighbor's deer, and Gramp continued to watch the cars go by as he savored the stiffness in each of his tired old joints.

The telephone rang. Gladys had been told many times that "A man of my age can't leap out of the chair when that thing rings," so she answered it.

Putting her hand over the mouthpiece, she whispered to Gramp, "It's your old neighbor, Marjorie Simmons, who married the Du Pont. She's here from New York visiting her granddaughter and wants us to come down tonight for a quiet supper."

She says she'll send her car and chauffeur up to get us if we'll come. Says there's no one there but Lawrence Welk, Dolly Parton, Charles Kuralt and Senator Muskie." "You know how scared I am I'll catch a cold," Gramp replied. "You can go if you want to, but I don't dare get out. There's nothing more dangerous than getting a chill on a cold, dark, drizzly night."

A half-hour later he had just begun to attack a plate of warmed over baked beans when the phone rang again.

Gladys answered it, nodded and said, "It's Jim Skoglund. He says the trout have started to bite in the cove back of his house and that Burt Ervin and Merrill Wall are out there pulling them in two and three at a time."

Pushing his plate aside, Gramp jumped lightly to his feet and hollered, "Dig out my boots and coat. I'll be back in about four hours."

Fodder Field Revisited By James Henson

Editor's note: Just as little puppies grow up to be walking appetites, so corn that is planted in spring grows up to fodder that must be pulled in fall.

Dr. James Henson, an education professor at Gardner-Webb College, recalls in his guest column below some of his adventures and misadventures with fodder-pulling last year.

Sometime ago my wife developed the notion that our domesticated rabbits might like corn fodder. To test her theory, she proceeded to gather a few already dried corn leaves and poke them into our rabbit cages, where they were avidly consumed.

This led to the suggestion that we should pull and preserve some of the fodder in our one-terrace corn patch, bringing us to the scratchy title of this piece.

The trial run, just to see if I still remembered how to tie a "hand" of fodder, was made in our two-row popcorn patch.

Parenthetically, it will be necessary from time to time to interrupt the graceful flow of this article to define certain "technical" terms for the education of the younger generation who have never labored among the rustling leaves of Maydeae Gramineae.

A "hand" of fodder, therefore, consists of all the corn leaves plus one that a fellow can hold in both hands and keep pulling.

When this "plus one" blade has been gathered, the fodder puller grips all blades tightly near the stalk with his left hand while selecting a few of the sturdier blades with his right.

He then wraps these sturdier ones around the entire bunch and brings the end to rest in a crevice by dividing the blades at the stalk end.

When he's so secured the corn blades, he has on his hands a "hand" of fodder. To rid himself of this precious commodity so that he can keep pulling, he breaks off a corn stalk at the first joint above the ear and stashes the hand in a spearing manner on the stalk.

There it is left to cure for two or three days in the sunshine.

When the bundles of fodder have been thoroughly cured, they must be "toted" out of the field; conventional hauling methods such as trucks are impractical because of knocking down too much corn.

"Totin' out fodder" involves grasping three or four blades from each bundle and slinging the entire collection of bundles over one's shoulder onto his back, braving the saw briars, bull nettles, copperhead snakes and pitched darkness while carrying the prized cargo to the end of the field.

The next major step typically was hauling the fodder to the barn, usually in big-wheeled wagon propelled by two fodder-powered, gas-producing (not guzzling) units known collectively as mules.

The fodder was carefully stacked on the wagon with the thicker stalk ends facing outward. This led to load stability and had the added advantage of keeping the load level.

The trip to the barn was as near as a country boy could come to floating on a cloud. High atop a wagon load of fodder, one was well-cushioned from all the humps and bumps which the ravages of time and erosion had inflicted on the world below.

Indeed, it seemed that the fodder somehow converted those bumps and potholes into pleasant buoyancy, without which the ride would have been far less enjoyable.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to address more of life's problem bumps as from a wagon load of fodder?


At the barn, the bundles were thrown into the loft and dribbled out to the livestock for feed over the following months.

A typical feeding for a working mule of average size was two bundles of fodder and ten ears of corn. In conclusion, the pulling of fodder has considerable educational value for the young. There's probably nothing more likely to encourage further education to be sure that fodder-pulling is not regularly included in one's life's activities.

I myself can report that despite my higher education the sights, sounds, smells, and feels of the fodder field are the same as they were 40 years ago. I cannot say for sure about the tastes because I saved all the fodder for this article.

While not being scratched in a corn field, Dr. Henson has been a member of the college faculty since 1968, and makes his home in Forest City with his wife, Dorothy, and two children, Kathy and Peter.

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